Dispelling The Fog

While the Democrats find no difficulty in pointing out flaws, errors and omissions in Governor Landon's speech of acceptance, the Republicans are having a hard time countering by calling attention to the "high lights" in their candidate's address.

Indeed his friends' encomiums are as vague and general as the Governor's own declarations. They applaud his charges of waste and extravagance in dispensing relief but have no answer to the challenge that he specify how he would remedy these alleged faults. They echo his complaint that the President has usurped Congressional powers, and get as reply quotations from the minority party candidate's own speeches insisting that the delegation of these powers to the Chief Executive was wise and necessary.

Mr. Landon's difficulty lies in the circumstance that he was running for the Kansas Governorship as an ardent New Dealer when he made these approving speeches and no small part of his solicitation of votes then was his support of and cooperation with President Roosevelt in effectuating the New Deal policies.

For that matter, his chief backer and most influential adviser, Mr. William Randolph Hearst, recorded in his own newspapers his appreciation of President Roosevelt's greatness and wisdom. This was, of course, before the tax law, raising the levies on huge incomes, was enacted. Part of the incongruity of the Republican candidate's position lies in the fact that the very laws at which he now looks askance were voted for by many Republican Senators and Representatives, some, but by no means all, of whom are now backing Mr. Landon to the limit.

These folks are seeking to explain their apostacy from the measures of relief and reform by saying that conditions have changed. At the same time they refuse to accept the President's failure to cut Government costs because of a change in conditions, chief among the changed conditions being the result of Congress having nullified his economy program by Congressional enactment, even to the extent of overruling his veto of the Nullification Bill.

G. O. P. Blocked Civil Service

Some of my fellow columnists, whose newspapers happen to be committed to the up-building of the minority party candidate, have been telling their readers that President Roosevelt's recent executive order placing all postmasters under civil service was timed for and aimed at taking the wind out of Governor Landon's sails, in the matter of the latter's inference that politics had wrecked the civil service. They had forgotten, or did not choose to remember, that at the very beginning of President Roosevelt's term—when the Republican appointees, accumulated during twelve G. O. P. years, were still, for the most part, in office—the President sought to have Congress enact the very same provisions he has now instituted by executive order. The minority leaders then advised him that they did not care to so tie the hands of possible future Republican Presidents.

But to get back to Mr. Landon's speech. The Republican press in general and the Hearst press in particular naturally hailed it as a great state paper. The independent press caviled at its lack of definiteness, the absence of anything constructive and its general commonplace level. The candidate's friends made a virtue of the obvious monotony of the utterance, with some sneering reference to Franklin D. Roosevelt's power of oratory and rhetoric. That is all right; it is part of the political set-up to decry eloquency and exalt the homely qualities of simplicity if your opponent has the first, and your own man lacks it; but politics is not always logical. It would be a strange philosophy to hold that an economic or social issue was bad because it was presented pleasingly, or that such an issue was good because it was inadequately expressed.

Similarly, it is hardly a valid argument to advance that a speech of acceptance need not cover the whole field of campaign controversy; that something must be held in reserve for future campaign speeches. Nobody expected Mr. Landon to recount every detail of his reason why people ought to make him President of the United States. But there is another side to the question.

The Wherefore Still Unrevealed

Here was a gentleman of practically unknown views. He had been built up, to be sure, in the approved political fashion, by much use of printers' ink. Mr. Hearst had given him his O. K., and other anti-Rooseveltians had concurred in the verdict, just as they would have done if John Doe or Richard Roe had been labeled "Republican candidate," but the country had still to size him up and see if he justified the flattering portrait presented by the processional political picture-makers.

So Governor Landon's speech of acceptance was awaited with great interest, for in it he was due to reveal the wherefore of his being chosen by one of the two great American parties for the highest responsibility possible for an American citizen. We already knew that he had been elected Governor of a banner agricultural state, that he was a moderately successful business man, of correct life and simple habits.

After he had delivered his acceptance speech we knew nothing more. He rehashed the phrases of indictment of things as they are; he indicated that he was in favor of health, prosperity and contentment; but never did he indicate, by as much as a word, how he would bring about the millenium, which Democrats and Republicans alike would be delighted to see.

Had he merely read the Ten Commandments and announced that he was 100 per cent for them, he would have enlightened his audience as to his governmental principles and purposes about as much as he did in the Topeka address.

Possibly it was wise policy at that.

In a nation beset with as many problems as we are facing; with partisan spirit ranging high; with a candidate seeking to ride the horse of privilege, backed by the duPone Liberty League in one direction and the horse of his own Democratic section of the country in a contrary direction, it may have been bright to remain veiled, as impressively as he could do it.

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