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Taft's Chances: A Professional Analysis

Joseph and Stewart Alsop devote an issue of their syndicated column to what they call a "professional" analysis of Taft's chances in the race for the Presidency. "Professional" means that the analysis was made by seasoned political insiders who not only observe voting records and voting trends with great care but who also have close contacts with, and get reports from, political workers throughout the country.

"This attempt to answer the question, can Taft win the election?" write the Alsops, "is made by men who are admittedly friends to the Eisenhower candidacy. Its results, which are unfavorable to Taft, are admittedly speculative." Yet the facts presented are so interesting, in and of themselves, as to be worth recording."

A condensed version of the analysis is as follows:

All the states in the Union are placed in the Taft column except those in the South and the small group of industrial seaboard states where defeat for Taft has already been predicted by local Republican leaders. The South, as the term is used here, does not include the border states of Maryland, Missouri, and West Virginia. It includes 14 states with 146 electoral votes. The group of industrial seaboard states is made up of California, Connecticut, Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island, with 137 electoral votes. The total of the electoral votes in these 6 seaboard states and the 14 Southern states counted as lost to Taft is 283. Since 266 are necessary to election, this would give the victory to the Democratic candidate by a majority of 17; or, if some Southern votes were registered for a bolters' candidate (commonly called a Dixiecrat), the lack of a majority for any candidate would throw the election into the House of Representatives.

An immediate flaw that many people will find in the analysis is the assumption that Taft will lose New York and Pennsylvania. "Yet," say the Alsops, "Truman was only barely defeated by Dewey in Dewey's own home state in 1948 because 500,000 New York voters went for Henry Wallace. With those votes in their normal place New York would have gone Democratic by more than 400,000." The reasons given for counting Pennsylvania lost to Taft are (1) that the Republican machine in Philadelphia, which used to decide elections in the state, was soundly beaten by the Democrats last year, and (2) that the strong sentiment for Eisenhower shown by recent polls indicates that Pennsylvania's independent voters will not support Taft.

The Alsops say that while the conclusions of this analysis are open to question, "it cannot be said that its concessions to Taft are ungenerous. It gives him Illinois and all the other mid-Western states carried by President Truman in 1948; every one of the normally seessaw Rocky Mountain states; the usually Democratic states of Washington and Oklahoma, the disputable border states of Maryland, Missouri, and West Virginia, plus one big break (New Jersey) in the seaboard industrial line-up. Altogether, the analysis shows Taft carrying 14 states with a total of 147 electoral votes that went for President Truman last time."

The column ends with the following comment: "In order to win, Taft must either break the Solid South, which his warmest friends among the Dixiecrats say he cannot do, or he must pass something of a miracle above the Mason-Dixon line, winning an extremely high proportion of the nation's independent voters. The real question is, therefore, whether orthodox ultra-

Republicanism has great potential appeal to the independent vote."

After making a liberal discount for wishful thinking, and for the errors of judgment to which even the most experienced political observers are liable, the thoughtful reader of this analysis, I believe, will be left with serious doubt that Taft can win the election. The opinion you hear on all sides is that he has a much better chance to be nominated than he has to be elected. As of now he has a lead in convention delegates. Most of the Republican insiders, the machine men, much prefer him, of course, to Eisenhower. But even the insiders want to win, and, if they become convinced that Taft will not be a winning candidate, a large part of his following will melt away.

It is the independent voters of the country, the men and women not hitched to a political organization, who will swing the election, and the indications are that the candidacy of Taft does not have a strong appeal to them. If the Republicans want to win the independent vote, and the victory, they had better nominate Eisenhower.

George Washington

This is Washington's Birthday.

I am not able to enlighten my readers by anything new in the way of comment on George Washington, but, since in these days he is not getting the attention that he used to get in the form of patriotic ceremonies, I feel moved to pay him at least the tribute of putting his name in the paper.

I telephoned the information desk at the University, the office of the high school, and the office of the elementary school, to ask if any of these institutions would have any sort of observance of Washington's Birthday, and at all three places the answer was no.

If anybody supposes that I am now about to proceed to lamentations over the lack of respect shown by present-day educators and their pupils for our national heroes, he is mistaken. I can't be sure, because my memory is not clear on the subject, but I do not remember that when Washington's Birthday rolled around the faculty and students of my undergraduate days here, fifty-odd years ago, were deeply thoughtful about Washington and his services to the country. But the day was a holiday then, and that fact was bound to build up in us a gratitude to Washington that is not felt nowadays when classroom work has to be done on his birthday just the same as on other days.

At this point somebody may ask: "But why isn't it a holiday now?" I think the answer to that one is that the educational schedule is less haphazard than it used to be. It is more scientifically regulated. For the public schools, a formula based on a certain required number of "student attendance days" has been set up by the State, and no school may vary its program so as to violate this formula. The University, forced to hold to a schedule that provides a minimum number of classroom days in the year, has abandoned patriotic holidays in order to allot more days to the seasonal interludes—the Thanksgiving holidays, the Christmas holidays, and the March recess between winter and spring terms. It is easily understandable that faculty members and students would rather have their non-working days placed in these recess periods than to have the recess periods shortened by the scattering of non-working days through the year.

It is really a good thing that the University is not observing Washington's Birthday. If the observance took the form of a holiday, that would mean only a one-day earlier beginning of the week-end exodus. If it took the form of the cancellation of an hour of classwork for a convocation in Memorial Hall, only a handful of people would attend, and the rows and rows of empty benches would be anything but a compliment to Washington.

The real cause of the present-day lack of interest in the celebration of the birthdays of national heroes is to be found in modern inventions: the automobile, the airplane, the moving picture, the radio, and television, and expanded and improved spectacles and amusements of various kinds. In my student days we attended ceremonies willingly because there was almost nothing else to do. Now there are so many things that most young people—and most older people too, for that matter—find more interesting than going to ceremonies and listening to speeches. At the turn of the century the whole student body would flock eagerly to hear a lecturer for whom today the sponsors would have to engage in high-pressure propaganda for weeks in advance in order to fill half the chairs in Gerrard hall.

The Chances We Take

An editorial in the New York Herald Tribune about the recent airplane disaster at Elizabeth, N. J., contains this passage:

"So far as is yet known, there seems to be no pattern in the three recent accidents, no connecting thread of causation between them, no linkage except a random conjunction in time and space. They seem, rather, to represent one of those twists or distortions in the laws of chance—laws to which all of us, incidentally, necessarily trust our lives every day in the week—which are as unpreventable as they are unforeseeable."

The parenthetical clause here, about how everybody's life, every day, depends on the operation of the laws of chance, reminds me of the many times that I have heard people say they do not travel by air because it is dangerous. It reminds me, too, of people who are constantly traveling by air and give the danger of it no more thought than they give to the danger of travel by train or automobile. The number of these latter is increasing tremendously year by year.

I happened to be discussing this subject with Miss Elizabeth Branson the other day. She goes to New York on business several times in the course of the year, and always by air. Since she has become accustomed to it she doesn't like to travel any other way. "It never occurs to me," she said, "to be afraid to ride in an airplane."

Other air-traveling Chapel Hillians I think of are Howard W. Odum, Collier Cobb, and Harold Meyer, and of course there are many I don't know about.

Like everybody else these people hear and read of airplane accidents, and they know that there is an element of danger in flying. But they also know that the same thing is true of riding in trains and automobiles. There is not one of us that is not running some risk of being killed or injured in one way or another every day of his life. If it's not when you're in some sort of vehicle, it is when you're trying to cross a street, or walking along a sidewalk, or resting safely (as you suppose) in your home. An oil tank car may explode when you're standing on the curb beside it. A piece of furniture may topple over on you. You may lose your footing and fall out of a window or down the cellar steps. Insurance company statistics show that far more accidents happen to people in homes than to travelers.

But you don't spend your life quaking in fear lest one of these accidents happen to you. You know—it is apt to be a subconscious awareness rather than something you have reasoned out—that the chance of your being killed or injured is a remote one. The

Russell Tells How to Be Happy in New Orleans

(Continued from page 1)

place a big tin box stands near the door. You pick up a plate and fill it with crackers from the box. A glass of cocktail sauce and a slice of lemon come with the oysters. The price of all of it is 35 cents.

Then I crossed over to Gluck's and sat at the U-shaped counter where I intended to order a plate of Creole gumbo, equal to anything in New Orleans. This costs 35 cents and is a complete meal for a thin man like me. But a Junoesque brunette who sat next to me ordered a dish that stirred up my curiosity. It was a round white wheel about 5 inches across and nearly an inch thick. Over this she poured a pitcher of cream and loaded the whole with sugar. I asked her what it was.

"Just cream cheese," she said. "It's all I have for lunch, and it costs only 45 cents. And it doesn't fatten."

We had an affable conversation during which I asked her for the names of the three best French restaurants. The waitress attending us overheard the question and joined her reply. This attracted a couple of men on either side and they gave their opinions. This stirred up a debate which ended with a consensus that eventually narrowed down to three names—Antoine's, Galatoire's, Arnaud's.

The food at these places is superlative, but it's good and savory at Gluck's too, and also at Kolb's, which is across Canal street near the St. Charles Hotel. In New Or-

leans, joints excepted, you don't feel you are being robbed. It had not the hard cynicism of New York or the cool suspicion of Los Angeles. It is friendly to the stranger in the unpretending way that San Francisco is.

But to return to the cream cheese dish. The next time I ate it I asked the man next to me, thin and elderly, if it had any special name.

"None that I know of," he said, "but it's a good healthy dish." He looked me up and down. "It'll put meat on yo' bones."

At a small bar where I got a glass of beer a man sat on my right trimming his finger nails. On my left a huge fat man came in and announced that if he didn't belch soon he was going to die. He belched, "Give me something to make me belch!"

The bartender offered him various concoctions. He drank them all. No results. The gray-haired bartender came over and advised the sufferer to hold his nose and blow air through his ears. Everybody gathered around sympathetically. The fat man tried. His face grew purple. Suddenly his face beamed. Everybody congratulated him and slapped him on the back. It was a triumph.

The head barman leaned over. "When you can't belch," he said, "it's serious business." I agreed.

The street car named Desire (a section of town) used to run through this street (Royal), only now it's a bus.

chances are many thousands to one—for some kinds of accidents, many millions to one—in your favor.

It is because they realize how the chances lie—how vast is the ratio of the planes that arrive safe at their destinations to those that do not—that so many people keep on traveling, unconcernedly, by air.

A Threat of Censorship

An editorial in the Vineyard Gazette, Edgartown, Island of Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts:

"It is a curious thing that censorship bills should be introduced as serious business into the legislature of the state of Massachusetts, which historically has been devoted to the cause of liberty. To be sure, this state was not the home of that matchless advocate of individual freedom, Thomas Jefferson, who said that the utterance or publication of error made no difference so long as reason was free to combat them, but it was the home of Sam Adams and a great number of others we like to remember.

"And now we are witness of attacks upon the freedom of the press in the form of legislation so vicious that it would make every printed page subject to censorship lest some unwelcome word or idea be permitted to reach the inhabitants. Unwelcome to whom? That's the point. All these proposals for censorship—and all are vicious and ignorant—assume that there is somebody better qualified than the people themselves to decide what may and may not be read.

"Censorship requires a censor, someone whose ideas and purposes are to rank above the interests of the people who thus surrender their right, inherent in real democracy, of deciding for themselves what they will read and think and feel. The legislators responsible for introducing this year's three censorship proposals are not attacking evil literature—this can be and regularly is prosecuted in the courts under present laws—but they are attacking the free men and women of the state.

"It is time that such proposals should not only be defeated, but the advocates rebuked at the polls. Surely there is more offense in these schemes than in the espousing of so many things involving high taxes or restrictions or foolishness which regularly arouse the voters to retire the proponents to private life.

"It isn't enough to be on the defensive against these attacks upon traditional American liberties, or to rest on the ultimate protection of the constitution. There ought to be a crusading counter-offensive against the attackers."

Three Unitarian Services

The Unitarian Fellowship of Chapel Hill has announced three events of interest to Unitarians and other religious liberals. The first of these is a talk on "Individual Freedom and the Bill of Rights" to be given by Robert H. Wettach at the fellowship's next bi-weekly meeting at 7:45 p.m. Sunday, February 24, in the Graham Memorial. Mr. Wettach has been a faculty member of the University's law school since 1921 and was dean of the school from 1941 to 1949.

The announcement says that the Rev. A. Powell Davies, noted Unitarian minister of All Souls' church in Washington, D. C., will conduct the 11 a.m. chapel service at Duke University on Sunday, March 9, and that his appearance will mark the first time the service has ever been conducted by a Unitarian. Other meetings with Mr. Davies and the Duke Unitarian Fellowship are planned for the same day. The Chapel Hill Fellowship will arrange transportation to the Duke campus for those who wish it.

The Rev. Frederick May Eliot of Boston, the president of the American Unitarian Association, will conduct the regular service at the Unitarian church in Charlotte on Sunday, March 16. It is expected that he will give an address in Chapel Hill the same day. Further details will be announced soon.

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