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20 October 1968

THE ELECTION: DOES IT MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE?

The ponderous processes of electoral politics have about ground to a conclusion for this year. An electorate which wishes overwhelmingly for peace is presented with a choice among three pro-war candidates. A nation whose laws embody the most sweeping guarantees of individual liberty ever known has to choose among three men whose appeals to "law and order" embody a concentrated attack on those liberties. A nation whose major domestic problem is poverty will have as its next President a man whose political career includes cut after cut in anti-poverty programs.

Under these circumstances we have seen an increasing amount of alienation from the whole political process. This alienation expresses itself in the Yippie demonstrations against the candidates, in a proliferation of minor party candidates, in a widespread determination to protest by not voting, and a general impression that, no matter who is elected next month, things will continue to go aimlessly downhill.

The editor has no doubt that most of his readers fall in the category of liberal Democrats or moderate, Rockefeller-style Republicans. These people will probably find Hubert Humphrey less distasteful than his rivals. However, Humphrey has erected an impregnable wall between his own candidacy and the millions of hopeful people who worked for the nomination of Kennedy, McCarthy, or Rockefeller. During the Democratic National Convention he unreservedly endorsed the tactics used by Mayor Daley's cops against these people - tactics of deliberate brutality which we all saw on television and in our newspapers. We know now how Hubert Humphrey plans to deal with dissent if he is elected to the presidency.

Nor will an exasperated protest vote for Nixon or Wallace help anything. The sort of bargain-basement Machiavellianism which says that these men would be more likely to produce a revolutionary reaction has often proven false in the past. An argument of this sort persuaded German Communists not to resist the Hitler take-over, on the theory that Hitler would be more likely to provoke a Communist revolution.

No matter which of these three virtually indistinguishable men is elected in November, we will be in for four rough years. The best we can do is to establish a position now, so solidly that after four years of repression and incompetence it will stand as a beacon for the electorate in 1972.

"What assurance is there that we will even have an election in 1972?" some disillusioned Leftist might ask. Inertia, probably. If the regular recurrence of presidential and congressional elections was not interrupted in the dark days of 1862-4, 1930-2, and 1942-4, it certainly won't be interrupted now.

It then remains to find a way to establish this position, to make it clear to the supporters of Nixon, Humphrey, and Wallace that there is a large anti-war, anti-poverty, pro-equality vote which can be delivered to an acceptable candidate in 1972. This will not be done by refraining from voting. There is no column headed "Abstentions" in which these votes are counted.

In almost every state there will be tickets pledged to goals other than those endorsed by the "Big Three". Some of these will be venerable socialist tickets, such as the Socialist Labor Party (Marxist-DeLeonist), and the Socialist Workers Party (Marxist-Leninist-Trotskyite). Others will be Negro protest groups, such as the Black Panthers. Still others will be coalitions of black and white pacifists and/or social reformers and revolutionaries: the Peace & Freedom Party. Still others will be independent candidacies for Senator McCarthy in states where the election laws do not permit him to withdraw his name for the ballot. In a few states, even the Communist Party will be on the ballot. In New York, owing to the perennial schismatropy of the Left, there will be a Peace & Freedom Party and a Freedom & Peace Party.

The voter who doesn't want to endorse the Nixon-Humphrey-Wallace policies should

Look over his ballot for the name of Eugene McCarthy, or Fred Halstead, or Herring Flamer, or Charlene Mitchell, or Dick Gregory, or Eldridge Cleaver, or Coretta King, or Benjamin Spock. If a large number of votes are cast for these candidates, then in 1972 the major parties will start competing for them. We may yet be treated to the spectacle of the Democratic National Committee coming, hat in hand, to Senator McCarthy and asking on what terms he will consent to lead the party.

(Your editor plans to vote for Dick Gregory. At least he's a professional comedian.)

And, of course, your vote should be cast for congressional and local candidates whose election would represent a victory for the McCarthy position. This includes such senatorial candidates as Paul O'Dwyer in New York, Alan Cranston, in California, Ernest Gruening (running as an independent) in Alaska, Wayne Morse in Oregon, Harold Hughes in Iowa, and Thomas Eagleton in Missouri.

In New York the election of the following candidates for the House of Representatives is recommended:

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| 5: Allard Lowenstein, Dem. | 19: David McReynolds, Ind. |
| 8: Benjamin Rosenthal, Dem.-Lib. | 20: William F. Ryan, Dem.-Lib. |
| 12: James Farmer, Rep.-Lib. | 21: James Scheuer, Dem.-Lib. |
| 16: Joseph Kottler, Lib. | 27: John G. Dow, Dem.-Lib. |

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The early impression that Richard Nixon would win the election handily does not seem to be supported at second glance. Many people who, in the first flush of indignation against the war, civil rights, or "Crime in the streets" supported Nixon or Wallace, are beginning to have second thoughts about what the defeat of the Democrats will mean to them, personally, in an economic sense. People have always preferred their economic interests over more abstract matters; note that the bulk of the Negro vote goes not to the party that gave them freedom but to the party that gave them jobs.

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Under these circumstances a Humphrey victory is not to be ruled out altogether. As we saw in 1952, an unpopular war reacts against the party in power. But economic facts persist as a day-to-day reality. When the landlord asks for the rent, or the grocer tallies the bill, he is not interested in whether you support Our Boys in Vietnam, or don't want them to marry your daughter. Hubert Humphrey is going to make this a close election. He might even win.

Now how about George Wallace? Well, some people are trying to compare this election to 1948, when the left and right wings of the Democratic Party split off to support an anti-war candidate and an anti-Negro candidate. Some have 1952 in mind, when a war administration was rejected at the cost of slowing down social welfare programs.

The editor would like to call your attention to the 1936 election. That year there was a right-wing, third-party candidate who is almost forgotten now: William Lemke. Lemke, backed by the popular conservative radio propagandist Father Coughlin, threw a great scare into the major party candidates that year. Through most of the campaign it was feared that he would have enough blue-collar appeal to pull low-income voters away from Roosevelt, thus electing his Republican opponent. He appealed to the people who thought that New Deal reforms were going too fast, or in the wrong direction.

A major concern that year was the potential effect of the Lemke candidacy, plus the conservative efforts of the American Liberty League. Yet, when the votes were counted, Lemke got less than 900,000 votes. He ran third or worse in every state. The American Liberty League and Father Coughlin were so discredited that they soon gave up the fight. And no one has ever heard of William Lemke since then.

So the worries of masochistic Leftists, including the New York Free Press, that George Wallace will be elected can be dismissed. As voters continue to consider his pro-war and anti-labor attitudes, his support will decline. The history books of 30 years hence will give him about as much space as our history books give to Lemke.

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DAWN is published whenever there is something worth saying by John Boardman, 502 16th Street, Brooklyn, N. Y. 11218. Send a stamped, self-addressed envelope for back issues. This publication is not edited under the supervision of Bangs Leslie Tapscott. "Humphrey, Muskies?" Well, he smells, but I wouldn't call him "muskies".