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The Shape of Things

SINCE OPA WAS CLEARLY DYING FROM THE multiple wounds inflicted on it in the past four months, the President was well advised to put it out of its agony. Once controls had been abandoned over a wide area of the economy, it was not possible to maintain them in other sections. That could only lead to the diversion of materials and labor from the production of articles subject to ceilings to those enjoying a free market. Moreover, once it was certain that controls were on the way out, it was natural for producers still under ceilings to hold goods off the market until they would be free to charge higher prices. With both production and inventories at new post-war peaks, the effects of the President's move on the general price level may be less serious than many people fear. In some lines, where shortages remain serious, prices will rise sharply, but since it is probable that over-all production pretty nearly balances total available purchasing power, such increases will reduce the capacity of consumers to absorb other goods. Hence, prices of articles which are relatively plentiful, or the consumption of which is postponable, may tend to decline: that is to say, there is reason to expect a period of sharp price fluctuations in both directions rather than a sharp jump in the cost of living.

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THE GRAVEST DANGER ARISING FROM THE abandonment of controls is its probable effect on the housing situation. Although rent ceilings are to remain, Mr. Truman indicated that they would probably have to be raised, and the real-estate interests will certainly now redouble their efforts to boost revenues. Yet a rise in rents would give a justified impetus to demands for higher wages and prove the surest way of setting off an inflationary explosion. OPA investigations have shown that, thanks to 100 per cent occupancy rates and to reductions in service, most landlords are in a better position than before the war. Only if and when prices as a whole move to a substantially higher level, should they be permitted to raise rents. Meanwhile, it is all too probable that veterans will be forced to pay more for new houses, even though the \$10,000 ceiling is to be maintained for the present, together with the system

of priorities and allocations designed to channel building materials into low-cost housing. Thanks partly to measures taken in the past year by Housing Expediter Wilson W. Wyatt, production of some building materials has been greatly expanded. But adequate supplies of many essentials are still lacking, and a free market may well increase the difficulty of their procurement. For instance, although the steel industry is operating practically at capacity, demand is far from satisfied. Manufacturers of the many building components made of steel may therefore be forced to pay more for it in order to outbid the hundred and one other steel-using industries. That kind of thing is going to add to housing costs and so is the shortage of skilled workmen, to secure whom many contractors have been paying illegal premiums above union scales. In these circumstances, it is going to be hard to avoid an increase in maximum prices for houses; it will be impossible unless restrictions on non-essential building are rigidly maintained.

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THE REPUBLICAN VICTORY HAS LED TO A good deal of despondency and alarm in Europe. Of course, it is understood that foreign policy in many important aspects has bi-partisan support in this country and was not an issue in the election. However, as James Reston has pointed out in the *New York Times*, the Republicans have underwritten the political phases of the Administration's international program but are not committed to its economic phases. The British loan, for instance, was opposed by a majority of Republicans in both houses, and there is no reason to suppose that the G. O. P. has lost its faith in high tariffs. It is extremely doubtful whether the new Congress would be willing to ratify an International Trade Organization charter framed in accordance with the State Department's draft now under discussion in London. Of course, the Reciprocal Trade Agreements Act, against which a majority of Republicans voted, remains in effect until 1948 unless repealed—an unlikely contingency since not enough votes could be mustered to overcome a Presidential veto. But knowledge that there is no guaranty of permanence in the lower-tariff trend which began in 1933, may make

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by *Jack Barrett* 568

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the eighteen foreign countries with which multiple negotiations are to begin next April chary of granting concessions. Moreover, a Republican Congress is going to hamper American economic foreign policy in another way. In Britain, the Dominions, and many European countries it is a firmly held conviction that the greatest obstacle to economic cooperation with the United States is not the tariff but the fundamental instability of America's economy. The rush to abandon controls which we may now expect and the hostility of the Republicans to economic planning are likely to induce efforts by foreign countries to insulate themselves from the next American depression. Nothing could be less reassuring to the world at large than Mr. Hoover's pronouncement that America is "again moving to the goal of free men" in which he so successfully imprisoned us during his Presidency.

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THE UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA, WHERE ONLY white men enjoy the rights of citizenship, wishes to annex the territory of Southwest Africa (which it has held under a League of Nations mandate since the last war) and so obtain a new supply of native helots to work in its fields and mines. Supporting this proposal in a committee of the U. N. Assembly, Marshal Smuts, South African Premier, declared that the native population of the territory had been consulted by special commissioners and that a large majority had indicated approval. What he did not explain was that only tribal chiefs and headmen, who are subject to removal by government officials, were consulted, which gave the proceedings about the same value as a Hitlerian plebiscite. Marshal Smuts sought to bolster his case by favorably comparing his country's procedure with that of Russia when it annexed the Baltic states without consulting "the comity of nations." While two wrongs do not make a right, it is worth noting that the inhabitants of the Baltic states enjoy full Russian citizenship. But with what rights and privileges will the 300,000 natives of Southwest Africa be endowed after annexation? E. S. Sachs, prominent South African labor leader, answers that question on page 554. They will enjoy the right to be indentured for work in the mines at a cash wage of 35 to 45 cents a day, the right to live in segregated areas, the right to go to church provided employers consent to sign a pass, the right to be represented in Parliament by a white man. How Marshal Smuts, a godly man, reconciles racial dictatorship in South Africa with the U. N. Charter is a secret known only to him and his maker. But whatever arguments he may offer in defense of his proposals, the U. N. should flatly refuse to extend South African rule until present conditions of discrimination are ended. The United States ought to be leading this fight; unfortunately it has forfeited the opportunity by its own cynical proposals for the Pacific mandates.

WITH WORLD FOOD OUTPUT UP SEVEN PER cent from 1945, most Americans apparently believe that the need for belt-tightening on our part has passed. But recent reports from the International Emergency Food Council and the Department of Agriculture indicate that a new crisis, nearly as severe as last year's, may be expected in the spring. The situation in Austria is particularly grim. Domestic supplies are far below the pre-war level and are sufficient to sustain a daily ration of only 800 calories. Even with UNRRA aid, half of the population has been getting no more than 1,200 calories of rationed food, and the announcement that the amount will be temporarily raised to 1,550, as in Germany, caused great public rejoicing. In the British zone of Germany, substantial imports from the United States have been necessary in order to bring the level of nutrition up to this minimum figure. Elsewhere in Europe, conditions are reported to have improved somewhat over last year, but there are forecasts of possible famine in Rumania because of drought and continued shortages in Italy, Yugoslavia, and Greece. Famine reports have been received from three provinces in South and Central China. For the world as a whole, the current supply of food grains remains 12 to 14 per cent below demand. International shipments of fats and oils are only half of the world demand, and sugar production is still 15 per cent below the pre-war average. Plans to meet next year's crisis are even less adequate than last year's bungled efforts. UNRRA is scheduled to terminate its activities in Europe on December 31, and the proposals for continuing its functions under the U. N. have become hopelessly snarled in politics. If international action proves impossible, the United States, singularly blessed with bumper crops, must be prepared to finance substantial relief shipments for yet another year.

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ASPIRANTS TO WORLD CITIZENSHIP WILL find useful a newly issued, paper-bound, charted, indexed guide to the U. N. This is "The United Nations: A Handbook on the New World Organization," by Louis Dolivet, with a preface by Trygve Lie. The book is a complete yet concise description of the structure of the whole U. N. edifice and the nature of each part. It is published by Farrar, Strauss and Company, 580 Fifth Avenue, New York City, and sold for \$1.75.

Coming in The Nation for November: a fortnightly report from Russia by Alexander Werth, who interviewed Stalin; a look at the resurging Ku Klux Klan by Carey McWilliams; a biting portrait of the "complete AMG officer" by John Pauker, who served with the AMG in Germany.

Picking Up the Pieces

IT WAS exceedingly shrewd of the Republicans to focus last week's election on the question "Had Enough?" The returns indicate beyond doubt that the voters *have* had enough—but because of the magnificently calculated vagueness of the question nobody can say just what it is that has sated them. Have they had enough jobs, enough protection against the ups and downs of the business cycle, enough security for their bank savings, enough cheap electric power and land reclamation, enough freedom to organize in labor unions, enough cooperation with other nations in the promotion of world peace? Or have they only had enough of weariness after a long and bitter war, of vexations that are an inevitable part of the transition to peace, of that sagging of the spirit in high places and in low that marks the end of a monumental national effort?

The Republicans are in power now and free to interpret the results as they choose. But in spite of the magnitude of their victory, they will be taking a long chance if they ignore the emotional reaction of a tired people in favor of a strictly political interpretation; if, in short, they flatly assume that they have a mandate to destroy the achievements of the Roosevelt era. They won control of Congress not because the country longed for Republicanism—whatever that might be—but because in almost every state in the country a vote for the G. O. P. was the only way in which a hazy discontent could be expressed. Where this was not the case, as in New York, the minority parties of the left ran up impressive totals. The American Labor Party had one of its best years, the Liberal Party won a place on the ballot with a substantial vote of 181,000, and even the Communists enjoyed a boost to almost twice their usual modest return. It is worth noting, too, that in a number of cases victorious Republicans had campaigned, some genuinely and some strategically, on more or less liberal platforms. Typical of this group are Senators-elect Thye of Minnesota, Ives of New York, and Flanders of Vermont; and Representatives-elect Bender of Ohio, Javits of New York, and Fulton of Pennsylvania.

Whatever the motivations of the voters, the returns are admittedly devastating in their effects on Congressional personnel. On the thin credit side of the ledger are the victories of McGrath, elected to the Senate from Rhode Island, and the return to that body, all by narrow margins, of Kilgore, O'Mahoney, and Chavez—the triumph of the Senator from New Mexico being welcome primarily because it spares us the spectacle of Pat Hurley in action on Capitol Hill. We are grateful, too, for the return of a quartet of California liberals—Havener, Holifield, King, and Helen Gahagan Douglas—though such other good Californians as Tolan, Outland, Voorhis, Healy, Doyle, and Izak will be missed.

Melvin Price (Ill.) and Mike Monroney (Okla.) narrowly escaped defeat, and Denver succeeded in bucking the tide by replacing a Republican with John Carroll, a progressive Democrat. So did Worcester, Massachusetts, which dropped a conservative isolationist in favor of H. D. Donahue, a Democrat indorsed by the P. A. C.

That about completes the good news of November 5. Connecticut's four liberal Democrats are out—a particularly sad loss in the cases of Herman Kopplemann and Mrs. Chase Woodhouse. Emily Taft Douglas, of Illinois, is to be replaced by William G. Stratton, an extremist of the McCormick school. And Martha Sharp in Massachusetts took a bad trimming at the hands of Joe Martin, who will now ascend to the Speaker's chair. Other important casualties in the House are Hook and Rabaut of Michigan, James Delaney of New York, Flood of Pennsylvania, Neely of West Virginia, Biemiller of Wisconsin, and Coffee and Savage of Washington.

In the Senate, such stalwarts as Tunnell, Murdock, Mitchell, and Guffey are gone, as well as such milder New Dealers as Huffman and Briggs. Potential Senate liberals like Rogers, Donart, Lehman, Erickson, McMurray, and Bunker were swamped in the Republican tide and will have to try again. Meanwhile, the Taft-Wherry-Butler nucleus of diehard Republicans in the Senate will expand to take in such luminaries of the right as Martin, Baldwin, and Lodge from the Atlantic states; Kem, Jenner, Bricker, and McCarthy from the Middle West; Ecton and Dworshak from the Mountain States; and Watkins and Cain from the Far West.

Without attempting to minimize the gravity of the shift in Congress, it is still possible to see in the Republican sweep a paradoxical ray of hope: the coalition of Republicans and Southern Democrats which so bedeviled both Roosevelt and Truman is not likely to survive for long. The Southerners could indulge in this device as long as their own party was in power. With committee chairmanships and patronage safely at their disposal, they could afford to play fast and loose with party regularity. The picture is very different now. They have already lost their chairmanships, and if their party is defeated in 1948 they will lose much of their patronage, too. But that result is precisely the objective of the Republicans, who no longer need their Bourbon allies now that they have a working majority of their own. For a few months, the Coxes, Rankins, and Georges may be expected to help the Republicans frustrate the President. But as we move into the shadow of the 1948 election, they will once more see the advantages of party loyalty.

The point is important not because such solidarity has any ideological advantage for liberals—if anything, the contrary is the case—but because the development could greatly strengthen the hand of a hard-pressed President. The coalition was strong enough to override a veto; the

Republican majority alone is not. In this *technical* fact may lie the salvation of Harry Truman. If he uses the veto, and the threat of the veto, with shrewdness and courage, he may get better results from an opposition Congress than from an undisciplined mob of legislators only theoretically controlled by his own party. He has the choice of taking a strong lead, with the hope of preserving the prestige of his office and his party, or of allowing the government to wallow for two years in uncertainty—with sure defeat at the end of the road and something like national paralysis en route.

Toward a New Beginning

BY FRED A. KIRCHWEY

THE election put a seal on what had happened long before. The era of Roosevelt had declined prior to his death; it had ended when he died. Last week the nation only summarized the accomplished fact, in totals of votes cast, in men elected and men defeated. The unreality of an interlude which deceived no one in spite of pious appeals to the Roosevelt name and tradition was exploded, and the particles came to earth in their natural political shape.

Now, looking back from the vantage point of defeat, we can scrutinize more sharply the era we have lost. We shall be able to see how much of the New Deal was solid gain and is fixed by law and custom beyond possibility of destruction by Roosevelt's successors, how much was vitiated from the start by the inner conflicts of what Henry Wallace still hopefully extolls as "democratic capitalism," and by the necessity of working through a machine so cynically concerned with power and perquisites as the Democratic Party. We can mark the disintegration of many of the Roosevelt reforms under the impact of war, an inevitable process, hastened by the need of appeasing the dominant business interests in the country and by the capture of the chief policy-making jobs in government agencies by Republicans and anti-New Deal industrialists. We can begin to calculate the effect of the immensely increased power over national policy of the military, a normal concomitant of war but no less a danger in any democracy. And, finally, we can trace as if on a military map the retreat of the machine Democrats from advance positions which had become politically exposed into comfortable rearguard posts, sheltered behind the euphemistic camouflage of "bi-partisanship." The Roosevelt era died bit by bit. Now that it has been officially interred, despite the nominal survival of Mr. Truman, progressives are free to abandon both pretense and illusions and get to work laying the foundation for a new beginning.

For they cannot go on living in the shadow of their

great leader or try merely to resurrect and refurbish the New Deal. During the campaign, it was natural that they should have invoked the name, and even the voice, of Roosevelt. It was all they had left to cling to. For the future, it will not be enough. The progressive movement will never be rebuilt on the basis of a program improvised piecemeal to meet the successive crises of a worldwide economic breakdown. Today's problems are different. The New Deal is old and largely out of date. One doesn't prime a pump that is overflowing; one devises means of controlling the surplus—directing it into dry furrows or empty cisterns. One doesn't rest on a system of legislation to protect labor's right to organize and bargain collectively at a time when anti-labor feeling is riding high on a tidal wave of strikes. Instead, one takes a running start and tackles the whole system of wages, prices, and productivity in terms of labor's firmly established power and its right to a voice in the control of industrial production.

These are items. They only illustrate the inadequacy of the old New Deal to cope with the problems created by our incredible post-war productive capacity and our obsolete methods of distributing the things we produce—problems which will be multiplied to incalculable totals when atomic energy begins, sooner perhaps than we think, to be plugged in to the industrial machine. New thinking is needed, new planning for the organization of America's economic life and our relationship with a world in revolution. The Republicans, busy consolidating their new-won gains, busy reducing the few remaining New Deal strong-points, will offer little competition in constructive political ideas; nor will the old-line Democrats, struggling to hold on to a power already lost. The next two years are likely to be a period of futile truce or inter-party bargaining. Nothing better can be expected while, at worst, the country may be plunged into an interlude of reaction expressed in all the ugly forms that marked the years of Harding. Only the progressives, inside or outside the two old parties, will be free to face the necessities of the situation.

Let us not fool ourselves in this hour of appraisal. The routed progressive forces in America are not equipped with a program or even prepared to unite on any program. They have emerged from the election reduced in strength, splintered and dispersed. The old struggle with the Communists in the unions and in the political groups is gathering fresh impetus. Strong leaders are lacking. The most effective men on the liberal wing are themselves so much the children of the pre-war era that they may not be able to provide the ideas and dynamics for a new start. The groups that fought for the election of progressives in this last campaign—the two Political Action Committees, the Independent Citizens' Committee, the Liberals and the Labor Party in New York, various

unions and independent voters' groups throughout the country—had only two things to hold them together: the heritage of the New Deal and their fear of Republican rule. No common program; no organizational unity; no effective leadership. Defeated, they must start from scratch, for the fight they have just lost was only the start of a much tougher one ahead.

In some ways it would be a comfort to believe the prediction of the omniscient Alsops, printed in the *New York Herald Tribune* two days after the election, that a left-wing third party was about to emerge from the débâcle. They even reported that the coming organization was already named—the "People's Party." If we could believe all this, at least the present political scene would have more coherence. But it is hard to credit. The only third-party proposal I have heard about is definitely anti-Communist, related to the Liberal Party in New York.

As for the progressive leaders who gathered in Washington last week under the chairmanship of Henry Morgenthau, their tentative proposals for broader coalition definitely excluded the possibility of a third party. A later meeting will be called to develop a plan of coordinated action, in and out of Congress. But nothing in the history of the groups involved, or in their leadership, suggests that any systematic social-political program, much less a new party, is in the making.

This was to be expected. Neither the reorientation of ideas demanded by the period we face nor the integration of forces on the left can be hastily improvised. Both will mean hard work by individuals and groups all over the country. In this effort, *The Nation* intends to take an active share. Even before the election, a conference of liberals on the West Coast called by the *Nation Associates* produced an immense amount of creative thinking on the issues that last week's vote crystallized in such concrete form. We hope to conduct similar discussions in other places. And in the pages of *The Nation* we shall analyze the practical as well as the theoretical problems that confront democratic Americans. Harold Laski's series, beginning in this number, will be a significant contribution to our analysis. Attached to no man or party, we can comment without constraint upon issues and leaders, programs, parties, and strategies. Out of such discussions, in which we warmly invite our readers to join, we shall formulate as the weeks pass *The Nation's* program for a new American progressive movement.

[*Can the progressives regain effective control of the Democratic Party or are they faced with the difficult alternative of attempting to organize a third party? What is the probable future role of Henry Wallace and Claude Pepper? Miss Kirchwey will discuss these questions in next week's issue.*]

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