

Hokum on Parade

By JAY LOVESTONE

IT'S A SULTRY Sunday in June. Cleveland is all set to welcome the G.O.P. (Republican Party) convention. The cops look spic and span; their horses' tails seem trim; bunting abounds; loudspeakers everywhere; merchandise signs literally hit you in the face. Three hundred W.P.A. workers—boondogglers to Landon—are putting the 'finishing touches on the auditorium, are preparing and polishing it at the cost of thousands of dollars to the New Deal Administration, so that the Republican solons can be in a better mood in which to grapple with the grave problems of the hour.

All hotels and near-hotels are actually sold out in anticipation of the big show. I am compelled to try my luck in a veritable joint, let us say, Brawley House by name. A fancy monopoly price is asked for a hole in the wall—telephoneless, water-less and dirt-ful. As if to make up for these crying deficiencies, self-offering unattractive but cheerful "attractions" are at one's disposal in the hastily set up lobby. One has a hunch that to take the "absolutely last vacant room" at Ritz prices means to run the fatal risk of being taken over by these peroxidized would-be partners. A suitable setting for a Republican convention that is to make history, eh? But what the heck, why then call this a holiday?

On all sides, unsought for generosity seems to grip you and get the best of you. Everything but apples is sold on the streets here. At least on the surface, everybody appears to want to be nice to you, the moment your convention badge is spotted. It's business, you know! Especially sweet to you is the Republican Convention Committee, if you are an active newspaper man. A midnight supper with lots of good drinks and as good smokes free—"in the quarters of the Admiralty Club, aboard S.S. Moses Cleveland," awaits you on Monday night. First class club facilities are at your beck and call. Golf? Of course. "Just call MAin 7700 and say 'I want to play golf.'" The Women's Hospitality Committee is on the alert to "request the pleasure of your company at a reception in the Fine Arts Garden." In fact, "the City of Cleveland," thru Mayor Burton and Chief of Police Matowitz, makes you "the city's guest during the 1936 Republican National Convention" with "all courtesies." More woes for the poor pedestrians. . . .

Sad but true, Tuesday approaches. The lucky opening day for all Republican and Democratic national conventions! Well, what are we here for anyway? Delving for an answer into the package given me by the Republican National Committee, I find a neat little card bearing on one side the American flag over the inscription "Eternal Vigilance is the Price of Liberty." Here there was neither enlightenment nor surprise, so I turned to the other side. At once my brow is wrinkled when I find a message from the late Democratic Senator Oscar Underwood of Alabama to the dele-

gates and newspaper men at the convention of Hoover, Taft, Roraback, Bingham, DuPont, Dawes, Watson, Hilles, Ruth Pratt, Wadsworth, Ogden Mills, David Reed, Colonel Knox, and Vanderbilt. Surely stars must have fallen on Alabama when the Republican Party, classical party of government centralization, goes down there to have the deceased Underwood strike for it the following keynote:

"The men and women of America who desire the preservation of their individual rights under the Constitution of their country and are opposed to the establishment of a system of paternalism in the U. S. must above all else and at all times stand steadfast to the first principles of government, and see to it that their representatives in Congress do not sacrifice principle under any circumstances, no matter how alluring the bait may be.

"We should divorce the Federal Government from any intimate association in the domestic affairs of the people; confine its active function to the national endeavor contemplated in the beginning; as far as possible abolish the numerous boards, commissions and bureaus that are now exercising powers of government . . . In other words, we should abolish the discretions that are now vested in a bureaucratic government and restore in its entire integrity the government of law we inherited from our fathers."

It was against none other than Herbert Hoover himself that Underwood first divested himself of this wisdom in 1928!

Pessimism pervaded the air as chairman Fletcher rapped the gavel at 11:40 to open the Convention. It stayed with the delegates thru the final session on Friday. Prayers were offered aplenty in regular procedure. The Catholic invocation was so partisan and so militantly anti-Roosevelt that it evoked much applause—registering over 60 on the noise meter. This was in marked contrast with the drab and unsolemn silence which greeted the Tuesday morning prayer for freedom from "commercial greed and social irresponsibility." The wooden words of welcome chopped by Mayor Burton fitted into the whole lifeless picture. Not even the noble efforts of the quartette—two Black and two White—could lend any spirit to the conclave. One got a feeling of double distilled dullness as the Convention Call was read. At last the delegates and alternates showed the first sign of life, the first motion in their seats: they responded warmly to the announcement for adjournment.

By the time the first night session got around, the convention leaders were determined to put some life into the proceedings. This was to be the gala night—the keynote address was to be delivered, the war cry of the campaign was to be raised, the delegates were to be inspired with a hope and determination to win—at least inflamed with a spirit of fighting to a finish. But not even the most excited Republican advocate, not even the most incited G.O.P. office-seeker, could draw the slightest spark of hope, the faintest glimmer of enthusiasm from the keynote speech by U. S. Senator Frederick Steiwer, the temporary chairman of the Convention. He belabored his listeners with moth-eaten commonplaces, with time-worn illiteracies, with outright Brisbanalities. The virulence of his personal attacks against F.D.R. was his real achievement. So bad a keynote address had not been heard, so flat a failure had not been seen at national conventions in years. One wondered at the suicidal politics behind the scenes responsible for this flop, in view of the fact that everything was planned to the minutest detail outside of the convention hall.

Here are some of the pearls cast by the Oregonian before the office-hungry hundred-percenters: "*The nation deserves a government by conscience.*" Shades of Teapot Dome! "*The chief reason for the present unemployment in this country is the blocking of the progress of the American system by trying out plans and ideas borrowed from the poverty economics of Europe.*" "*Ours is an economy of profit and loss. It cannot thrive without both. Law or regulation to guard against the losses inevitable in competition freezes industry and prevents progress.*" This was the height of his eloquence in appealing to small business!

Steiwer took a deep bow to Hearst when he fumed against the New Deal for "*harboring aliens who are not entitled to remain in America,*" for "*depending on bookworms for practical experience and on hookworms for energy.*" Forgetting about Hoover's mobilizing tanks and troops against the Veterans, the keynoter of the Republican morgue shed crocodile tears for the "*disabled veterans of our wars.*" He quickly proceeded to tell the world that "*above all else is the need for the old fashioned idea of thrift.*" Merited applause greeted Steiwer when he, accidentally but effectively, declared: "*If the Salvation Army had used its good work to build a political organization, as was done by the New Deal Army, it could have claimed the whole world—not merely the 48 states claimed by Farley.*" No sooner had Steiwer finished: "*To Him let our prayers be offered that an aroused America . . . will vindicate the faith of the fathers,*" when the band struck up the tune of "*Three Blind Mice*" for the words of a campaign song, "*Three Long Years.*"

Another session. Another invocation. More milling about. The rules of order are adopted speedily as the chair disregards totally the loud No's.

After more prayers for deliverance were performed, Congressman Bertrand H. Snell, veteran lackey of the giant power interests, was selected as permanent chairman. What he said in his address was poorer even than the manner in which he said it. The leader of the Republicans in the House told the unresponsive audience: "*Let us here begin our march to sanity and to safety. . . . Come forth from the sepulchre of defeat and the dole. This way lies life, and hope and opportunity. . . . This is not a partisan issue; it is a moral issue. . . . Free competition has been throttled and honest enterprise intimidated. . . . All the great primary driving forces of American life . . . have been sacrificed for the sentimental glamor of the bureaucratic boondoggle. . . . What a fantastic scheme of life we have been living! . . . Against this demoralizing reign of incompetence I hear today America's earnest prayer for deliverance . . . to resist the encroachments of an alien system of capricious personal government. . . . This precious light of American freedom must not fail! This Convention beckons America forward!—forward in the paths of orderly progress under law! . . . We are here—as George Washington said at the Constitutional Convention—to raise a standard to which the brave and patriotic may repair. The event is in the hands of god. . . .*"

While Snell was calling on the Constitution, the flag, the Bible, the family, and while he was hailing the G.O.P. as "*a political force which personified the deeply-rooted American instinct for law and order,*" it was becoming clearer and clearer why he so frequently begged for God's help. The delegates appeared to be a lump of frozen assets. They couldn't collect

themselves to any warmth of response. Some of them were busy reading a leaflet issued by John B. Chapple of Wisconsin telling the world: "*Delegates, America is dying under the present trend. Nearer and nearer we approach to the time of collapse. Little by little the spirit of Americans is being broken. . .*"

Chapple apparently had his fingers on the right heart-strings. That's just how most of the delegates felt—and behaved.

By this time we were well on the way to the big event of the circus. Believe it or not, it was a speech by Hoover! The Party machine was all set for it. The claquees were well trained. The solemn atmosphere bordering on the funereal was prepared. Cheering but not cheerful crowds welcomed Hoover at the Union Station in a spirit of duty rather than joy. One ageing California woman in the reception committee said to me: "*Ah, but he's a grand man. He's honest. His life is like a fishbowl. He's got something upstairs, tho he's not a handshaker. I love him.*" It was to be Hoover's triumphal exit from politics. Hence fifteen minutes of applause was prepared for him as he was presented and 32 minutes of ear-splitting, girder-shaking noise were presented to him as a farewell—as a send-off into political oblivion. It was a synthetic finish—artificial flowers for the dead but unmourned.

Yet the king of all Republican liabilities scored two points in his behalf. He was the first one to get some attention and arouse some interest and response among the delegates—despite his droning delivery, his agonizing monotone. Then, he was the first one at the show to attempt to deal with the issues of the campaign. In doing this Hoover sought to vindicate his past and his policies. The "great engineer" clumsily tried to don the garb of the "greatest moralist." He mumbled about "*principles which came into the universe along with the shooting stars of which worlds are made.*" He blurted: "*No matter what the new platform of the New Deal Party may say, the philosophy of collectivism and that greed for power are in the blood of some part of these men. . . . Less than 20 years ago we accepted those ideals as the air we breathed. We fought a great war for their protection. We took upon ourselves obligations of billions. We buried our sons in foreign soil. But in this score of years we have seen the advance of collectivism and its inevitable tyranny in more than half the civilized world. In this thundering era of world crisis, distracted America stands confused and uncertain.*"

Having buried the ghost of Hoover, all was ready for putting over the platform and pushing thru the candidate. In the lobbies of the auditorium one could hear a highly politically minded youngster yell, "*Get behind your standard bearer. Buy a noise-maker.*" He did a thriving business. Outside, prairie carts drawn by oxen and followed by corn-fed women aroused warm admiration for Landon and his boomers.

About the platform adopted, the less said the better—for the Republican chances in November. Evasion, omission and contradiction wrapped in phrases of the thread-bare liberalism of Borah, sum it up. It looks upon all social security as a state problem. It is utterly vague on the constitutional issue. It hypocritically bows to the old Republican position on the tariff. Labor is given the usual promise of freedom from interference with the right to organize "*without interference from any source.*" The "*from*

any source" phrase is a notorious fraud that has time and again been used to thwart trade unions from organizing labor, particularly in the big plants.

Of course, the Republican Party is against monopolists—in its platform of 1936. The new G.O.P. jimmy-artists went back to the Democratic campaign platform of 1900, written by William Jennings Bryan, to pilfer from its section on "*Trusts and Monopolies*" platitudes, pledges and promises. Thus the Democratic platform of 1900 opens: "*Private monopolies are indefensible and intolerable,*" while Wall Street's Republican platform of 1936 begins: "*A private monopoly is indefensible and intolerable.*" Thorns for McKinley, but flowers for Bryan! Times do change—but politicians remain the same. And so it goes down the line, plagiarizing phrase and substance in order to get the votes of the little fellow to help the biggest fellow.

By this time all was ready for selecting publicly the presidential nominee. It was clear to all that once Vandenberg and Knox dropped their idle chatter about deadlocking the convention, Landon would win uncontested.

The nominations ceremony opened with Alabama passing and Arizona yielding to Kansas. This meant John Hamilton putting Landon in nomination. Here the telegram stunt from the "Kansas Coolidge" was pulled. For one thing it put Landon in the light of being a strong character, straightforward in his reservations to his party's platform on the currency and constitutional questions. Then, Hamilton's interrupting his nomination address with the telegram afforded an excuse for an additional demonstration for Landon. It all worked. Even the cynics and the skeptics on the press benches muttered recognition and appreciation.

And as the screaming, shrieking, cheering, and hammering split the air, Hamilton was calmly and happily posed on the platform—all smiles and leisurely puffing at his cigarette—as if giving notice to the world that Kansas is not all Bible belt and that people in Kansas are permitted even to smoke! Hamilton's address was a glorification of ignorance sandwiched in between glorification of Landon and character-assassination of Roosevelt. When Hamilton howled for Landon "*He has never been removed from the common people. . . . He has been simply and kindly one of the common folk,*" a wit next to me was led to remark, "*Then give him ham and eggs.*" But the convention responded with carefully prepared bedlam and balderdash. No sooner had Hamilton begun to laud Landon for his anti-monopoly stand when delegate Henry B. duPont grabbed the Delaware standard to start a parade to demonstrate the transformation of his state from a satrapy of the monopolists to a haven of small pants-pressers and little kosher chicken dealers.

Hamilton set the pace and gave the tone for the delegates sentenced to unburden themselves of seconding speeches. A bore from Massachusetts delivered a high school valedictory for Landon because his own state has valleys while Kansas has prairies—and the twain shall meet. An adenoid-blessed lady delegate from Connecticut had a tough time getting the ears of the men delegates and in despair shrieked: "*I am a lady and you have got to listen to me. . . . We must find men and women unafraid. We must have men. . . . We must have the milk of human kindness. . . . We must have a real leader, a typical man.*" (Too much of it is now consumed by

Democrats—according to this unsatisfied lady.) These were magic words. They brought on another parade with banners proclaiming "*Landon a typical American*," "*Landon the Coolidge from Kansas*" and "*Off the Rocks with Landon and Knox*". The last one did not last long, since a wise cracker's amendment "*On the Rocks with Landon and Knox*" spread like wildfire from the newspaper section to the delegates' ranks. North Carolina soon hauled down this standard.

A Negro delegate from Mississippi in a splendid voice orated his bit to "*the greatest political conclave on earth*," invoked the spirit of John Brown, waved the flag, revered the Bible, honored the Constitution, denounced the New Deal with special vehemence because it "*endangered the lives not only of Negroes but of pigs*," and wound up by nominating "*Landon of John Brown's state*" in behalf of "*twelve million people*."

Ruth Hanna concluded the regular seconding speeches with a pledge to battle against monopoly and a plea for Landon as a sworn enemy of the trusts! Shades of Mark Hanna! What hard times and political tides will do even to dead heroes of the Republican Party!

An intimation of who was going to be forced into becoming Landon's running mate was given to the weary delegates when Knox, making one of a special set of seconding speeches, pompously proclaimed: "*In a time of great national crisis, there is no room for personal ambition. We need a united front. We are in a holy crusade to which I pledge my all*." The Colonel was obviously playing with hyperboles.

Dickinson of Iowa, also in the select set as an ex-contender, spoke to the point when he hailed Landon by emphasizing: "*The Supreme Court has led the way and the Republican Party must follow*."

Much noise is being made by superficial observers that the Old Guard is out of the picture and that the Republican Party has gone west. This is plain poppycock. It is still true that the "*Old Guard may die but never surrenders*." The old interests prevail; momentarily, new and fresh spokesmen are to the fore. This is the need of the times. In 1920 the Big Boys needed a man of normalcy;—Harding filled the bill. Later, Coolidge was manufactured as the symbol of silent thrift, and Hoover was pushed up as the "*great engineer*." Now Wall Street needs a "*typical man*." A man who hasn't the handicap of character or capacity. From the point of view of its interests and strategy, the Street has made the best choice.

And what about Hearst and the Liberty League? Landon's lieutenant realizes that this lodestar of yesterday has become a lodestone today and that from the point of view of votes the Liberty League is a curse in disguise and in fact. We may leave it to Hamilton not to present Landon in the same picture with Herr Hearst or the Liberty League blackmailers.

The Republicans realize that things today are in a state of flux, confusion and transition. The powers that be in the G.O.P. fear that if the Democrats win again they will consolidate their position so firmly as to be at the helm of affairs for years. We have here a desperate struggle within our ruling class for the dominant position in influencing and guiding the country in this period of transition. Hoover was more than right when he lamented that "*distracted America stands confused and uncertain*."

The "*typical American*" today is vaguely aware of the fact that his

country is changing. He is bewildered at the complicated conflicting trends. In the eyes of Wall Street, Landon is the safest symbol of this bewilderment; he is a well-to-do business man in the rural areas and speaks for the upper brackets in the farm country. Even if such a type were not friendly to Big Business, he couldn't actually be hostile because he'd love to win the approbation and confidence of biggest business. This is the myth from the prairies whom Lower Broadway will try to sell as "*the man from the prairies*," the horse and buggy candidate running for savior in our highly mechanized socio-economic order. Landon, the typical American? That's how and why.

II.

At Philadelphia the air was still more effectively charged with demagogic oxygen. It was a Farley Roman holiday—five days of them.

In the gathering of the Donkeys the five horsemen led by "Alcohol" Smith could get nowhere. The letter of the erstwhile hero of the "*Side-walks of New York*" was quickly dumped into the sewers. Somehow the efficient Postmaster General Farley managed to succeed in not even receiving the Smith-Ely epistle. Thanks to his Liberty League speech, the Smith venture was greeted like a cold potato by the delegates.

Here gayety was supreme and somewhat wild. More than one hundred additional expert bartenders from all over the country were brought in to stir drinks for the satiated donkey obstinately clinging to the well-stocked national trough. The first whiff of the New Deal for Philadelphia came with the city throwing its bars wide open on the normally sacred and drab Sabbath day. It was a real Sunday for once. . . . Five hundred hostesses and two hundred Quaker maids lent a surface touch of peace to the plenty of everything which seemed to be at hand. Towering Texas delegates in tergalion hats strutted about the narrow streets. Congressmen could be gotten for a nickel a dozen. Statesmen and high-ranking diplomats for little more. Senators could be had at the call of the shrillest police sirens I have heard anywhere. A band of 150 pieces was thrown together to rehearse and rehearse and rehearse "*Happy Days Are Here Again*." Here there were to be seen many more women delegates. And more Negroes—and sprightly attractive Negresses fluttered about without fear of being lynched or attacked by "*pure*" whites from the land of Scottsboro. Here one could hear more freely and more often the mention of the word "*labor*."

At least half of the delegates hailed from the government payrolls—as officials in one capacity or another. Add to this majority, the Democratic party officials and some would-be government officers and party captains as well as a sprinkling of plain citizens and you have the convention assembled. "Jim," as they call Farley, knows all of them by their first names. Obviously financial irrigation helps breed fruitful intimacy. Thru ultra-skillful management, Farley could always replace serious snarls with happy-endings. Aided by a whole coterie of celebrities and supernonentities, Jim could do it with ease, if not always with grace. For this he owes no small measure of thanks to his guests and aides among whom were "Dizzy Dean," David T. Wilentz, James J. Braddock, "Jafsie", Dempsey, Tunney, champion hog-callers, ear-splitting, noise-makers, and a parade of more than 9,000

Mummers cavorting in their best display. Everything was in first rate order down to the pettiest detail. It seemed as if even the neighborhood of the convention hall was reborn for the occasion. Taking a short stroll in its direction, delegates would be put into the proper spirit by a huge sign of warm welcome blazing forth. "*Green River Welcomes Delegates!*"

Tuesday the convention is formally opened with posing and still more posing. Flashlights go constantly "blink-blink." Farley is taken with Robinson who appears proud of his new red tie. Comes the invocation: "*We turn to Thee for light from on high.*" The powerful searchlights in the top balcony forthwith throw their lights on the pastor as if to answer his prayer. "*Stand up for Will Rogers,*" orders Farley. And now Mayor Wilson of Philadelphia is presented to reel off a talk in the spirit and substance of an experienced rubber-neck auto guide. "*Philadelphia embraces you*" he drones thru the microphone to the hundreds of substantial he-Democrats and ample she-Democrats. And they all like it . . .

Now the former Empire State Boxing Commissioner takes his gloves off. He deals blow after blow to the Republicans whom he charges with preferring platitudes and vague promises to the New Deal. . . . Truly a black crime! Next, the big financial interests themselves are floored by Farley because they have not appreciated and do not appreciate today the fact that they had been rescued by the New Deal and its pilot Roosevelt. The "*dictator*" charge is brushed aside by a repudiation of the "*Socialistic and Communistic State*" and an adoration of the "*plain people*". A gesture to Borah is coupled with a taunt to the G.O.P. for not nominating Hoover. A knock-out blow is aimed at the Liberty League in the declaration, "*We have had a People's Government. Our job is to keep it.*" Finally, the climax leading to a mentioning of Roosevelt, and Farley has the entire hall on parade. Demonstrations galore. They are usually shorter and snappier than at the Republican convention. Here is a thirty-minute victory march before the very fight is even started. Senator Pittman has the delegates all smiling as they cheerfully adopt his motion of thanks to Farley for a great address by the "*plain, simple guileless man who never lost and never will lose a fight.*"

Joy is still unconfined as the night session gets under way. A Quaker minister leads in drab soporific prayer. A balloon escapes somebody's drowsy hands and breaks amidst prayer. "*Whoopee,*" yells a merry young lady delegate from Tennessee as the sad pastor moans "*Pour Out Thy Spirit Upon Us.*" The noisemakers are all ready—the first night and not the last as at Cleveland. Governor Earle, who as Ambassador to Austria once hailed Dolfuss as a great and noble soul, is presented. A rousing reception greets him with clock-like precision. The band strikes up, "*Hail, hail, the gang's all here; what the hell do we care.*"

The Keystone State governor delivers one of the most effective ghost-written orations ever uttered thru the microphone. He denounces wage-slavery. He raps hard the twelve long years of Harding, Coolidge and Hoover. He even speaks of the "*capitalistic system*" and warns it to beware of the "*thunder on the left*" thru Lemke! He minces no words in chiding the Liberty Leaguers for their failure to realize how to save the capitalist system. A wild demonstration led by tipsy delegates from South Carolina and Tennessee punctuates his address as he rather effectively proclaims "*and*

then came Roosevelt". Frenzy siezes the delegates as this dynamic ex-Republican dramatically declares: "*The Democratic Party is the bulwark against Big Business Fascism and is leading a crusade not against the Republican Party but against the subversive interests which have seized the Party of Lincoln.*"

The parade is part of the strategy for 1940. Earle has his eyes on that year. 1936 is all Roosevelt. It's a curious sight—yet an accurate picture of the conglomeration making up the heterogeneous outfit known as the Democratic Party. The Rhode Island delegation, wearing red paper helmets, is strutting about and bearing a sign, "*We Will Keep Crowing for the New Deal and Roosevelt—Rhode Island Reds.*" Behind them follow the delegates from the party organizations of Scottsboro, the Arkansas flogging case, lynch law, Jim Crowism—all parading for the left-liberal speech of Earle. The latter obviously aimed to steal the thunder from Lemke whose appearance on the scene has forced the Democratic party to talk more left.

Keynoter Barkley of Kentucky rose to his occasion far better than Steiwer. As the Senator throws himself into an impassioned plea in behalf of the Democratic Party which has "*for more than a hundred years justified liberalism in government,*" a gentleman on a donkey is being led around the hall. The mule gets all the attention as this Southern Senator is lavish with his words for dealing with national problems in national ways, for an "*approximation of justice among all classes.*" The orator works up some fire as he makes a scathing denunciation of the capitalists who are ungrateful "*because, in lifting them out of the water, we pulled their hair.*" Barkley appeared to be bitter as he raved against those who are now kicking against the very government which gave them two and a quarter billion dollars, lent them five billions, raised government bonds from 83 to 104, saved the railroads and banks for them and taught frugality to a million and a half young men in the Civil Conservation Camps.

His first reference to the Supreme Court as not being infallible and his exposure of Landon and Knox who now style themselves as "*Bull Moosers*" despite the fact that Theodore Roosevelt, unlike they, vigorously attacked the Supreme Court, finally gets Barkley the audience away from the donkey. A slashing attack on Hearst and the Liberty League and a feverish plea that "*some day these men and women and children will thank God for Franklin Delano Roosevelt*" finishes Barkley's contribution and sets off another well-staged demonstration. From the press section it appeared that the delegates would get bunions not only on their feet but even on their well-greased palms.

It is interesting that at the Republican Convention Hoover was the only one who dared attempt to state the issue. This was because he was getting out of the picture. All the other figures and figureheads did not dare tackle the issues because they were trying to get into the picture. The Democrats, however, were more ready to touch the issues because they felt themselves securely in the picture. To illustrate. In 1932 the Republicans demanded control of production; today they denounce it because it means some regulation and control of the "*biggest boys.*" This issue is acutest in the agricultural field. It is precisely here where the G.O.P. is given to silence by plowing under all talk about the AAA.

This convention was really an occasion for "first times." A Negro Baptist was called to lead the flock in prayer. His invocation was promptly drowned out by an all-white Glee Club following his sacred words with, as Barkley put it, "that immortal song, Dixie." Except for "Cotton" Ellison D. Smith, all the Southerners were appeased by this musical correction. But the Senator from South Carolina walked out in a huff, muttering monosyllables at his party being defiled by Negroes praying for him to his white god! To bring everybody right down to earth, Governor McNutt, who put Indiana on a sort of martial law and sought to call off elections altogether in his state, was given the floor to make some routine motion; and to put everybody in good cheer and harmony. Seymour Weiss of Huey Long's brain-trust fame, was put in the convention limelight; a full-blooded Indian princess was gotten to sing "By the Waters of Minnetanka"; Harry Hirshfield was rushed up to tell tales; a Southwestern delegate challenged Iowa to a hog-calling contest; some of Major Bowes talent was brought in to sing, and Edward J. Dowling to think, look, and act funny. However, behind and beneath all this superficial harmony, deep-going social and economic forces were operating for changing alignments and for fatal discord in Democratic ranks in 1940. In fact the highest spots at the convention were those so staged as to indicate preparations for 1940.

Thus sharp struggle in the Minnesota delegation delayed seriously the report of the Credentials Committee. While inside the hall the Arkansas delegates were marching about with a sign bearing the legend, "The New Deal, Never a Step Backward," workers were picketing the convention hall outside with signs announcing protests against flogging of sharecroppers and their organizers in Permanent Chairman Joe Robinson's state of Arkansas. And imagine the Zionchecked delegation from the State of Washington coming to the convention of the Democratic Party with a demand that the Roosevelt platform contain a plank providing for "production for use"! Only Zioncheck was missing, being detained, for various reasons, in another asylum in Washington. As Robinson was being prepared for his speech, the Michigan delegation started a march around the hall. Its leaders proudly carried signs proclaiming "Michigan, Playground of America" and "Michigan Auto Industry Thanks Roosevelt: 1932, General Motors Profits \$100,000; 1935 General Motors Profits \$200,000,000."

Of course, no picture of the convention or of the Democratic Party would be complete or accurate without the parade of Curley's gang. This hoodlum governor of Massachusetts, with an eye toward 1940, organized for himself a triumphal entry into the convention hall. He was led into the gathering by an American Legion band and two-score legionnaires with bayonet-set rifles on their shoulders. This dime-store would-be Fascist Fuehrer announced himself as "a man of destiny." All in all, it is the sheerest idiocy to declare that the Republican Party is the sole gathering basin of America's actual and potential Fascist forces. There are loads of them in the Democratic Party—and not only in its solid South.

Robinson spoke to a listless and constantly shrinking audience as he repeated in poorer and clumsier fashion what others had said before him. He loudly defended the Roosevelt Administration against the charge that

it did not comply with its 1932 platform. It appeared as if Robinson did not have his heart or head in his effort.

Boredom and lassitude were beginning to show their effects on the delegates, as the Credentials Committee was preparing to report. When its report was made it was adopted unanimously; but, of course, no actual vote was taken. The volume of negative noise was terrific. Robinson then became permanent chairman, with the adoption of the report of Committee on Rules and Order. Things looked awfully drab. Someone gave the signal for life, that is for noise. Up went a terrific din and "yips" of cowpunchers and "wa-wa-wa-was" of Indian yellers from Oklahoma. It was clear that cowbells have become very popular in this convention of donkeys. Another march by doddering young Democrats, some booing and hissing and punches for a handful of hired Smith boosters in the left corner of the topmost balcony added some variety and a spice of life to the show. The young Democrats in a jiffy became fighting Democrats. Soon some color was lent to the performance. There were signs of blood as fists flew. Also, the Negro Congressman Mitchell was called to the platform to blast Dawes, and to tell the world how "Roosevelt saved a farm for a poor Negro." This speech led to Senator Smith taking a longer and more furious walk right straight back to his South Carolina bailliwick.

All of this was merely stage setting for the extremely important report on the two-thirds rule. Senator Bennett Champ Clark reported in behalf of the committee a unanimous decision abolishing the century-old rule requiring a two-thirds vote of the convention in the selection of the presidential nominee. This came only after a terrific battle in the committee and only after the Southern opposition was appeased by a promise of reapportionment of delegates to future conventions on the basis of Democratic Party voting strength rather than population. Senator Clark concluded his report "and with this I move the previous question." Robinson forthwith put the question. He declared the unopened debate closed despite a terrific yell of "nay." The permanent chairman was heavy with his iron hand and light with his swift mind in declaring, in the same fashion, the report of the committee as unanimously adopted. Here was a juggernaut and not a steamroller at work.

Senator Wagner then mounted the rostrum to report for the Committee on Resolutions. He presented a platform with plenty of slippery planks of adequate width and sufficient length. The expected straddle on the currency question was there. No better treatment was accorded to the constitutional issues, though it challenges the theory that States are capable of handling the social and agricultural problems. The document as a whole was so worded as to make not its contents but its interpretation rather decisive in the campaign. The platform struck a new note in American big party politics by declaring that the Democratic Party is "dedicated to a government of liberal American principles" and "determined to oppose equally the despotism of Communism and the menace of concealed Fascism."

According to Wagner and his platform we are living in a Roosevelt paradise. The worker has been returned to the road of freedom and prosperity. So has the business man. And of course our liberties are to be guarded. All of this was leading up to the nomination of Roosevelt.

It was now time to nominate Roosevelt. Mr. Mack of New York

performed this chore by hailing Franklin Delano Roosevelt as a Sir Galahad! Alabama's Governor made the first of 58 seconding speeches. This great "liberal" joyfully told the world that Roosevelt *"gave us the greatest bill of human rights in our history."* A Democratic miss from Arizona followed with a proclamation that Roosevelt is *"democracy's Good Samaritan."* McAdoo, now on the shady side of seventy, who had been busy with the younger female set of the Convention throughout the sessions, announced himself as coming from *"the sunkissed state with native kissed women."* The Senile Senator from California was followed by a lady Democrat who seconded Roosevelt's nomination because *"he has saved the American home and family. We wish to dedicate our tomorrows to you . . ."* She knelt before Roosevelt as the Democrat's leader—*"their Saviour."* Governor Alva Adams of Colorado seconded the nomination by telling the frog and turtle fable and by saying, *"Roosevelt is our Moses."*

Then the Convention was introduced to Attorney General Cummings, *"father of the G-men."* This snooping father spoke of *"the dawning future aglow with promise"* and of Roosevelt *"having carried the government, the constitution and the people to safety."* He was followed by a gentleman from Florida who announced himself as *"coming from the land of flowers and oranges"* and pledged his support of Roosevelt because he had a *"heart of varnished gold"* and was *"the Christ of the Mount."* The seconder from Georgia nonchalantly told the convention that under Roosevelt's leadership *"the Democratic Party has shut the door to Fascism, to Communism, to 'lazyfair' and has given us the Sermon on the Mount."* Delegate Boyle of Nevada called Roosevelt *"the flower of the desert"* who *"went out and dragged in prosperity and placed it in our laps."* For Boyle, Roosevelt *"made our deserts bloom."* New Mexico's contribution was to the effect that Roosevelt was *"without a peer in the public service."* North Carolina hailed Roosevelt as the *"idol of their heart and political redeemer, the restorer of the national faith."* New York's Lehman was greeted with a demonstration stored up weeks in advance. Scarcely a delegate listened to him as he made a sober and important speech.

West Virginia's poetic upstart was for Roosevelt because he was *"like a spring of ice water to burning lips"* and because his work could be compared *"to creation."* Wisconsin ballyhooed for the President as *"a man who had kept faith."* Wyoming's advertiser painted his state as *"a land of bright clear sunshine, with warmth in the heart of our people who are close to nature."* Therefore, he was for Roosevelt. In behalf of the Philippine Islands, Governor General Murphy merely said *"the P. I. gratefully seconds the nomination of Franklin Delano Roosevelt."* Alaska put in its two cents by hailing F.D.R. for his *"policy of the good neighbor and the Good Samaritan."* Hawaii divided its seconding speech in two parts, part two being a ukelele group. Delegate Spinoza of Porto Rico showed his wisdom by declaring Roosevelt *"the greatest friend we have had in our 38 years associated with the United States."* A woman from the Canal Zone ran short of adjectives and whined for Roosevelt as *"one of the greatest humanitarians the world has ever known."* The spokesman for the Virgin Islands, as the morning minutes were rolling by fast, wound up the parade by hoarsely saying *"Roosevelt opened the gates of prosperity. Before him the Islands couldn't get a hearing."*

The whole performance reminded me of the dramatics, showmanship, mass spectacles, color, searchlights, police, secret service men, etc., etc. of the Nazi gatherings in Hitler's paradise. It all came to a climax with Roosevelt's speech at Franklin Field. Here the convention was brought to a close with at least 100,000 men and women waiting for hours despite intermittent rain to listen to the Chief Executive. Over their heads as they were waiting patiently there circled a plane bearing a streamer, *"Dine, wine at Benny the Dope, Pine Street."* Lily Pons graced them with a song. And finally came Roosevelt, to tell them, *"We have conquered fear,"* without telling them who are the *"we"*, whose fear was conquered and who were the *"we"* who did the fearing. Scores of thousands were spellbound by this angel of the microphone, as he talked of *"the war for political and economic freedom."* Not a syllable came from our President about the freedom to lynch in the South.

It was a well-delivered speech, replete with glittering generalities and sweeping generalizations. It was Populism revived and liberalism aflame! It offered labor, the unemployed, the farmers, *"freedom of the market"* and eloquent tirades against the unnamed and unaccounted for *"economic royalists."*

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The two conventions reveal clearly that America is at the elbow of the road. Powerful social and economic forces are operating behind the backs of the Party leaders to make for a realignment in the political arena. Coming to the fore as issues are the whole problem of the Constitution, the question of social legislation, the need for the captains of finance and industry not merely accepting but also preparing some governmental regulation, if need be, at the expense of some of their individuals—in the interest of the stabilization and perpetuation of their bourgeois social order as a whole.

In this historical moment in the life of our country, in these hours and months of flux and reflux, the liberal verbiage of the Republican and Democratic platforms is unimportant. What is decisive is the crystalization of clashing class forces. And this—in the face of the chronic disequilibrium of the economic machine—is of far more vast historical significance than even the question of who will win or lose the coming presidential election. Just now, it appears certain that only if the Democratic Party will expend more energy in refusing to be elected than in fighting to be elected will Landon win. But come what may, we are on the threshold of a new and decisive day in American political life.