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Outlook

October 17, 1928

▶▶ Election By Emotion ◀◀

By HARVEY O'HIGGINS

“A MAN is not elected by his friends but by his opponent's enemies.” That is an axiom of American politics. And in any election campaign, the professionals on the campaign committees do not worry too much about winning favor for their own candidate; they busy themselves mostly with plans for stirring up animosity against his rival. This is inevitable. It is inevitable because it succeeds. You might as well object to the use of dramatic love-interest in a stage play as resent the appeal to hate and prejudice in an election. The amateur may plead that the campaign should be kept to the issues and the appeal be made to an intelligent electorate to decide each issue on its merits, and all the rest of it; but the practical politicians know that people do not vote with their intellects but with their emotions, and the emotion easiest to arouse in an American community is hatred. Certainly it is much more easy to arouse than any more affectionate or loyal and friendly feeling.

Why? And why is the present contest between Smith and Hoover so largely a campaign of prejudice, a whispering campaign, with appeals to religious enmities and moral animosities, and the use of anti-Irish incitements against Smith and anti-English ones against Hoover? And counting up the currents of hatred on both sides, which candidate will win?

I know that the proper way to make an election forecast is to consider how many farmers will vote for a candidate's measure of farm-relief, and how

Mr. O'Higgins thinks that Mr. Hoover will occupy the White House after next March. He draws this conclusion, not from conventional sources of information, but from his long study of the American mind. Right or wrong, his analysis is certainly an exceptionally interesting contribution to the discussion of the candidates and the issues. This is the first of a series which the author has written for The Outlook; all will deal with current thought and action in terms of the new psychology.

many business men will support his tariff, and how many laboring men be won by his record on labor, and how many drys go this way and how many wets the other, and so forth. But this is to suppose that people vote more or less intelligently and in response to considerations of “enlightened self-interest,” as the socialists used to call it. And if the experienced politicians do not act on that belief, why should we? And if the whole socialist program has obviously gone to smash because of this Marxian delusion about “enlightened self-interest” being a ruling motive in man, why should we continue to court on it even in an election forecast?

WHEN the late world war was first threatening Europe, the socialists predicted confidently that it would be stopped, before it began, by the refusal of the workingmen of France and Germany to kill one another in a quarrel between their employers. And when the French and German workingmen rushed to arms without a moment's consideration of their “enlightened self-interest,” Max Eastman wrote bitterly in his socialist weekly that it was evident to him men were “governed not by

intelligence but by instinct.” How do you suppose Max Eastman ever attained the age of reason without learning this first and most obvious truth about mankind? And if even the most Marxian socialists have learned to apply it to a war, why should we not apply it to the forecast of an election campaign?

Of course, when you say that men are governed by instinct and not by intelligence, or vote

by instinct and not intelligently, you are not expressing yourself with any attempt at scientific accuracy. What you mean is that men commonly act upon instinctive impulses, emotionally and automatically, and not upon reasoned conclusions, consciously arrived at after intelligent thought. And the so-called new psychology has a lot to say about that matter, because reasoned conclusions are an affair of conscious intellect, and instinctive impulses come from the subconscious mind; and the doctors discover that conscious intellect has almost no control over ordinary human conduct, whereas the subconscious mind has every control over it; so that in wars and elections, as a matter of fact, people behave exactly as they do at any other time—only more so, as it were.

To pursue the point a little further, one may say, without being too technical, that the instinctive impulses in the subconscious mind seem to divide themselves into two main currents—the impulses of the egotistic instincts and of those that appear altruistic. In the one stream are the instincts of fear, self-preservation, self-love and so on. In the other are the instincts of affection,