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SATURDAY, MAY 5, 1956

Can The Country's Public Opinion Polls Be trusted?

By STEWART ALSOP



something sad and mysterious has happened, to tarnish the public image of Adlai E. Stevenson.

Editorial Book Review

Affairs Of State: The Eisenhower Years

'I BELIEVE,' says Richard H. Rovere, 'that it is at least theoretically possible to bring to public affairs the sympathy, interest, hope, objectivity and rigorous discrimination that a conscientious critic brings to literature, painting, music, architecture or any other form.'

As readers of his pieces in THE NEW YORKER, HARPER'S and THE REVIEWER will be aware, Mr. Rovere is an eg-hound with a conscience. He was convinced in 1952 that Dwight D. Eisenhower would be a dismal failure as a president.

The background for this judgment forms the best and surely the most provocative analysis of the Eisenhower years yet produced.

IT IS NO ode to Ikeism. Mr. Rovere has abandoned none of his liberal inclinations. His examination of the President's first three years is critical and occasionally biting. But his conclusions are generally fair and reasonable if not as antiseptically 'objective' as the dust cover blurb would have us believe.

The report, drawn generously from Mr. Rovere's magazine journalism, begins in 1950 when the Eisenhower boom was just being launched and ends in December 1955 when the President was recovering from his heart attack.

The Community Attacks A Dilemma

A DILEMMA, the dictionary says, is a situation involving choice between equally unsatisfactory alternatives.

This community has been imbedded on a multiple-horned dilemma presented by two Negro children, refused admittance to a crowded state training school, too 'incorrigible' to be free, and yet too young to be held in a common jail.

Yesterday, County Commissioners struck off a horn by estimating \$25,000 to help build a juvenile detention home so that boys such as those in the city jail may be treated humanely and wisely—and legally—and all of society protected.

From The Houston Post

AIN'T IT NICE?

DEFENDERS of the King's English should give Prof. Thomas Dunn a hand. He, the head of the English Department at Drake University, Des Moines, has had the courage to defend the word 'ain't.'

are moderate, middling, median figures in character and in doctrine. Neither has the vocation for leadership that the two Roosevelts and Woodrow Wilson had—or even for that matter, Herbert Hoover and William Howard Taft.

But there are also essential differences, even in Mr. Rovere notes, that if he has not brought all Americans into a startling degree of agreement, he has created an atmosphere in which the opinions of men like Styles Bridges, actually more representative of Republican thought than his own, are looked upon as deviantist in character.

HE HAS," says Mr. Rovere, "done as much as any man of his limited gifts could do in this era of bad feeling to maintain before the world an image of an America as being still a nation of free men and free institutions engaged in an experiment of some splendor and one that derives its justification from the hope that it will be useful to all humanity."

Summing up Mr. Rovere says: "In making a trial balance we accept the moment for what it is, and what Eisenhower's moment is, and what Eisenhower's moment most urgently demanded, was the holding together of the Western world and a determined effort to avoid the destruction of Western civilization."

THIS IS the book of a liberal who has searched his soul and the record and found rather startling things there. They are things that not every liberal will agree with at a time when political temperatures are rising.

JUST how do the public opinion polls work, how reliable are they and what do they really mean? The question is worth asking, because the polls have become a major influence in American politics.

PULSE-FEELING For such reasons, this reporter has just spent two long days here in the industrial town of Gary, and in the slums and suburbs of Chicago, ringing doorbells and buttonholing political voters. Louis

Harris, partner in the respected Elmo Reper polling organization, and a brilliant political analyst in his own right, has acted as guide and mentor of this pulse-feeling operation.

TECHNIQUE The first thing you do, if you are as careful and diligent a pulse-feeler as Louis Harris, is to make a very careful analysis of a given area — its racial composition, its

income level, its past voting record. Then you prepare a detailed political questionnaire, and then you go out and ring doorbells.

ART OF QUESTIONING Once in a while the door is slammed, but usually, once the first question is answered, the

rest is easy. Often, the chilly pollsters are asked to step inside, and when they thankfully do so, they see almost exactly the same material and children clustered in single-minded silence before the new heart of the American home, the television set.

TALKING FREELY A couple of days of poll-taking serve as a reminder that Americans are not as free as they appear, who talk freely. But the experience also serves as a reminder that political matters are far removed from the daily life and daily interests of most Americans.

UNPREDICTABLE When the young steel worker says he expects to vote for Stevenson, will he really go to the polls? When the tattered old Negro

Production Genius



Democrats Worried

Negroes Can Swing House To GOP

By CONGRESSIONAL QUARTERLY

NEGROES now hold the balance of power in enough congressional districts to assure the success of Republican efforts to capture control of the House of Representatives in November should they vote Republican.

Whether or not this switch assumes tidal proportions could be determined by the outcome of congressional action on civil rights legislation. A Senate filibuster by southern Democrats could be the signal of a stampede by Negroes to the GOP banner.

TROUBLE IN DETROIT The dilemma has two horns left. One of them sits in city jail with the boys there Police Chief Littlejohn has said they will stay until the state training school can take them, or a detention home is provided here.

With dire reports coming from the farm belt, the Republicans were almost frantic in their desire to pass something to put immediate cash in the farmer's pocket.

Gentle Reminder Appearing before the House Agriculture Committee, Benson was asked by Chairman Harold Cooley, North Carolina Democrat.

Secretary of these Democrats are in trouble in their own backyards. In Detroit's First District, Negroes numbered 77.5 per cent of the 1950 population, Polish-born Rep. Thad-

deauz, a Negro — got 572 votes, while the unopposed Republican candidate — Horace Scott, also a Negro — got 225 votes.

Rep. Earl Chudoff (D-Pa) also is in trouble in Philadelphia's Fourth District — 448 per cent Negro in 1950. Although he won re-nomination easily with 13,470 votes in last week's primary, one of his two opponents — Earl F. Dales, a Negro — got 5,072 votes, while the unopposed Republican candidate — Horace Scott, also a Negro — got 2,225 votes.

These are two of only 14 districts outside the South in which Negroes numbered 20 per cent or more of the 1950 population, giving them a preponderant political influence. Except for the rural First District of Maryland, which has re-elected Republican Ben Edward T. Miller since 1946, all are big-city districts which regularly roll up heavy Democratic majorities.

But there are many more districts in which Negroes, even though relatively less numerous, could exercise the balance of power in close elections.

There are 61 districts outside the South where the percentage of Negroes in the 1950 population exceeds the winning candidate's margin of victory in the 1954 congressional election.

Thirty-two of the 61 districts elected Democrats, 29 Republicans, many by narrow margins. Other things being equal, a substantial shift of Negro votes would tend to strengthen Republicans in their districts and weaken Democrats in theirs — especially in 10 districts in which Democrats re-elected Republicans in 1954 by narrow margins.

Putting It On The Line "Now, can you tell me today," concluded Cooley, "one authority you need for a soil bank that you don't already have in the bill passed 20 years ago by the Democrats?"

Benson turned to his lawyers for advice. Before they could answer, Cooley continued: "I can think of two — authority to make long-term contracts with farmers and authority to protect the future basic allotments of farmers."

Curious Jumble The rather exhausting experiment of interviewing all some 75 American voters of various shapes, sizes, and shades of political opinion leaves you with a curious jumble of recollections.

You remember how nice and friendly people are, even when their privacy is invaded by total strangers. You remember how informed many are ("Harriman? Well, I can't rightly say who that is") and how articulate ("Why couldn't I like Ike? Well, he just seems like an awful nice sort of person").

You remember also certain totally unscientific, purely personal, but nevertheless very vivid political impressions. This reporter has brought away with him two such impressions.

One is that President Eisenhower is stronger with the voters — at least outside the farm areas — than in 1952. The other is that

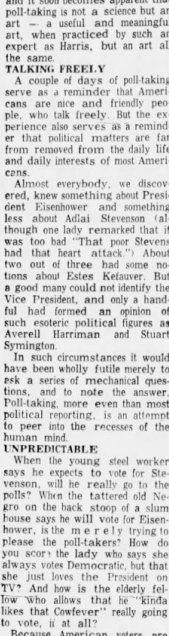
Republicans, however, refused to accept it. Even Republicans from the farm belt who had voted for the first farm bill in 1949 wanted what was called a modernized, revamped Democratic bill, but a new bill bearing the trade mark of Benson and Eisenhower.

Modification Benson's notes, the Democratic high command figured it was about 20 House Republicans necessary to pass the Whitten-Cooley soil plan.

So overcame a modified Brannan plan with a subsidy to farmers.

Howls Of Protest "You already have a Brannan plan for wool. A crop chiefly raised by the Republican sheep men of Utah and Wyoming. And Benson is supporting sugar at 98 per cent of parity — a crop highly important to his State. So let's get the farm and vote the Brannan plan for other crops."

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'End Of Civilization'

PEOPLE sometimes say now-adays that the next war will mean the end of civilization. It might mean the end of an era in civilization. We, our surviving remnants, and our children might go savage again for a time. But as long as the planet is livable and as long as we possess, unimpaired, the faculties of our brains, we shall not only be able to reconstruct civilization, we shall be compelled to reconstruct civilization — Gilbert Highet in "Man's Unconquerable Mind."

Drew Pearson's Merry-Go-Round

THIRK backstage maneuvering over a farm bill has been happening with such lightning speed that the press, let alone the public, can't keep up with it. However, you have asked us so wrapped up in any legislation, even in an election year.

Putting It On The Line "Now, can you tell me today," concluded Cooley, "one authority you need for a soil bank that you don't already have in the bill passed 20 years ago by the Democrats?"

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Tar Heel Puts Pressure On Benson

call a soil bank. "I remember last February," continued Cooley, "I wrote you a letter asking you in detail about setting aside an acreage reserve in the form of a soil bank. And you kept my letter from February until July. Then, after conferring with all your advisers, you finally answered that it was too expensive and impractical."

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