

High Spots in the Campaign

Sinclair Wanes

IN CALIFORNIA the fight is essentially a man-hunt, with Republican posses hot on the trail of that arch-radical and disrupter of ancient tranquilities, Upton Sinclair. "Blast him with his own words," has been the cry of an aroused Republicanism. In no sense is it a political campaign (parties and platforms are meaningless); class warfare, with the issues and alignments somewhat obscure, has broken into the open. A press unanimous in its opposition has sought to establish that Sinclair is a communistic-atheistic-imbecilic irresponsible. The effort, however, has not been a smashing success. Take the atheism item. It is conceded that Sinclair has the younger (*i. e.*, the more active) clergy throughout the state; many of them are chairmen of his committees.

But the Californians would be governed by a Mohammedan if he promised enough, and the Christian sects delight in the abuse of their rival orders. Mr. Sinclair, moreover, has waxed increasingly pious as the campaign has proceeded. He has a very convincing little speech on the Brotherhood of Man and the Fatherhood of God under Capitalism, with just the right tone of apology for the sensationalism of his youth. His campaign manager has contrived a popular preaching on "Upton Sinclair as the Friend of God" that has been made into a phonograph record (curious Eastern editors might try this on their victrolas). And so with the other red flags. The Republican editors have, for the most part, selected for their screaming quotations the very portions of Mr. Sinclair's journalism most likely to attract a wide circle of new admirers. It is hard, today, to damn a banker too violently.

A powerful attempt has been made to drive a wedge between Sinclair and Roosevelt which, with Mr. Moley's carefully timed assistance, has been fairly effective in offsetting the cleverly staged trip to Hyde Park. Sinclair headquarters have announced speeches by Secretary Ickes and Senator Norris, only to be embarrassed by subsequent refusals. McAdoo, the gallant, hides in Mexico while his law partner campaigns for Merriam; long before George Creel repudiated Sinclair his organization, to a man, was supporting the Republicans.

The personal assault on Sinclair, however, has not injured his chances materially. He is the type of candidate who would make himself the sole issue in any campaign; consequently he dramatizes, Messiah-like, the opposition: he is endangered, there is an enormous price on his life which varies with the audience and the occasion. Such emotionalism diverts attention from the demonstrably shaky eco-

nomics of the Epic Plan (taken it now appears from Edward Bellamy's "Mutual Maintenance" plan of 1893) and effectively focuses the spotlight.

The Merriam campaign, moreover, has been poorly coordinated, stupidly directed, dangerously confined to a narrow negative issue. The great Merriam *Putsch* was timed too early and there is some likelihood of a sharp reaction. In sheer desperation, a suit has been brought in Los Angeles County to cancel some 29,000 allegedly illegal registrations (mostly transients and unemployed) and to intimidate voters with the threat of criminal prosecution in cases of mere technical irregularities. (This stunt was used in the famous Harriman-Alexander mayoralty campaign of 1910 in Los Angeles.) Stupidly patronizing campaign advertisements on billboards have aroused an audible resentment. Although the Merriam managers have spent money freely, no one knows what they have bought. So-called "Democratic Clubs" have been purchased wholesale. But have the Merriam people purchased the Democratic vote or merely the Democratic organizers?

The blunders have been about even; both Merriam and Sinclair have generously tried to elect the other. Mr. Sinclair, by hedging on his Plan and accepting a McAdoo-dictated tablet of generalities, has created an unfortunate impression. And, in an unguarded moment, he told the press that, if he were elected, California could expect a deluge of unwanted immigrants. Made at a time when the seasonal migration to California was at its height, this statement was susceptible of a specious verification. And unquestionably excited Epicites are on the road. Several hitchhikers have been surprised to discover, on arriving in Los Angeles, that Mr. Sinclair was not actually Governor.

As the campaign has drawn to its close Sinclair's chances have continued to shrink. His own equivocation, plus an unscrupulous Republican campaign, aided by the regular Democratic machine, at first covertly and at the end openly, seem to have destroyed his chances. Every tool of reaction has been brought against him, the most effective of which has been the use of the newsreels. Thousands of feet of film have been shown in California theatres picturing the draggled hitchhikers hurrying to Sinclair's promised utopia. Those lucky enough to have jobs have been made to feel that only Merriam stands between them and a horde of the unemployed, who would have to be supported by taxation or who would take their jobs away from them by being willing to work for less. For the first time since the primaries there is no longer doubt about the outcome—Sinclair has lost.

Los Angeles.

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