

Big Decline in Total Vote in New York State

Although Population Increased Thirty Per Cent from 1900 to 1915 the Neglect of Citizenship Duty Has Become Noticeable

DURING the last fifteen years there has been an astonishing decline in the total vote for candidates for public office in New York State. This steadily increasing neglect of citizenship duty, whether due to carelessness or to disgust with political conditions, constitutes a problem which may well challenge public attention.

From 1900 to 1915 sudden shifts were made from one political party to another; there are multiplying signs that a large body of voters in the State are dissatisfied with both of the old parties, but few, if any, appear to have observed the surprising decline in the total vote

head of its State ticket. That was the year when the Republicans had ample money with which to conduct their State and national campaign. Theodore Roosevelt was the candidate for President, and his vote in New York State exceeded even that of Governor Higgins. Mr. Higgins received 813,264 to 732,704 for D-Cady Herrick, his Democratic opponent. For all candidates for Governor the vote that year totaled 1,625,907, or only 14,235 fewer votes than were cast for candidates for Governor in 1912, during which time the population of the State had increased from 8,000,000 to 9,300,000.

The largest vote ever cast for a Democratic candidate for Governor was in

than 140,000, but the county's vote increased only about 7,000 from 1900 to 1912.

Two principal reasons are given by politicians for the steadily decreasing vote, in proportion to population, during the last decade. The first is the law of 1906 requiring publicity of campaign receipts and expenditures. Under that law contributions for political campaigns are made with the name of the contributors accompanying them. The result has been to reduce the amount of money available for campaign purposes, and the political workers, especially those in the rural districts, complain that they have not sufficient funds with which to get out the vote on election day.

The second reason is the signature law of 1908. Voters in the cities are required to sign their names in a poll book or admit their inability to do so.

Whatever effect these restrictive laws may have had on the neglect of citizens to vote on election day, it is evident that there must be other and more potent causes to account for the surprising decline.

The national and State campaign of 1904 was memorable because of the amount of money collected by both parties and used in the campaign. Theodore Roosevelt was the Republican candidate for President and Alton B. Parker his Democratic opponent. Subsequent events proved that the Republican managers in this State were greatly concerned over the popularity of D-Cady Herrick, Democratic candidate for Governor. An urgent appeal for funds was made to Republican national headquarters to elect Frank W. Higgins, the Republican nominee, and keep New York State safely for Roosevelt. The unusual activity by both parties to get out the vote was shown on election day by a vote of 813,264 for Higgins and 732,704 for Herrick. Roosevelt's vote in the State exceeded that of Higgins by 46,269, while Herrick polled 51,208 more votes than did Parker.

In 1906 came what has since been known as the Hearst campaign. William Randolph Hearst was nominated by the Democrats at a convention held in Buf-

year for Governor Higgins. But Governor Hughes did receive the bulk of the independent vote, and his total came within about 9,000 of that polled by Higgins four years earlier.

The same year Lewis S. Chanler, who had been Lieutenant Governor for two years, was the Democratic nominee for Governor and received more votes than ever were given a Democratic candidate for the office. He polled 735,189.

The year 1910 is notable in New York State politics as marking the biggest drop in the vote of both the old parties. On the Republican side two reasons stand out prominently to account for it. During his second term Governor Hughes had grown more and more independent of the Republican State organization, and it was evident that the party voters were being more and more divided in their allegiance between the Governor and the organization leaders, who then became known as the Old Guard. That was one reason for the great decrease in the party vote in 1910. The other cause was the Allds scandal, resulting in the expulsion from the State Senate of Senator Jotham P. Allds, Republican leader. Henry L. Stimson, the choice of Roosevelt and Hughes Republicans for Governor, was not supported by the regulars, that element in the party voting either for John A. Dix, the Democratic candidate, or remaining at home. Stimson received only 622,289 votes. Compared with the Republican vote for Hughes of four years before, it fell behind 126,713. That may be said to be the beginning of the schism in the Republican Party in New York State from which it has not yet recovered.

John A. Dix was elected by a plurality of 67,411, but this was not due to any growth in the Democratic vote in the State. His total vote was 689,700, about 45,000 less than that given Chanler and 1,400 less than the vote of Hearst four years before.

William Sulzer was elected Governor in 1912, his vote being 649,559, a reduction of more than 40,000 from the Dix vote and 85,000 less than Chanler was given in 1908.

The figures of 1914 are supposed to represent a reunited Republican Party,

Table Showing Decrease in Republican and Democratic Vote in New York City and in the State Outside the City.

Year.	Republican.		Democratic.	
	New York City.	Outside.	New York City.	Outside.
1900.....	272,130	532,729	316,393	377,340
1902.....	203,499	461,651	323,754	331,644
1904.....	268,362	544,902	348,498	384,211
1906.....	251,463	497,539	339,530	351,575
1908.....	261,386	543,265	321,290	413,899
1910.....	197,727	424,562	302,989	386,711
1912.....	*111,630	*332,475	304,000	345,559
1914.....	191,808	494,893	†269,622	†267,883

*Year of Progressive revolt. Vote for Oscar S. Straus, Progressive candidate for Governor: New York City, 194,479; outside New York City, 198,704.

†Includes vote for Glynn, Democratic candidate for Governor, on Independence League ticket.

cast on election day. During the period mentioned there was an increase of population, according to the census, of more than 30 per cent., while the number of votes cast for all political parties either has fallen off or is at a standstill.

In 1904 there was a total vote in the State of 1,625,907, or about one vote for every four and one-third of the citizen population—excluding aliens. Taking the citizen population of 1915 as a foundation—which is 8,059,515—there should be nearly 1,900,000 voters in New York State in 1916. But recent elections indicate that the vote is likely to fall short of that number by 250,000 or 300,000 this year. Were the votes of ten and fifteen years ago abnormal? Were the political issues and public conditions more agreeable to a larger number of citizens than they are today, or are the people more indifferent to public questions in these latter days? These questions and others naturally suggest themselves when the election figures are studied.

The total vote for all parties in New York State in 1900 was 1,556,520. Twelve years later, when the population had increased by about 2,000,000, the total vote was 1,611,672. That is, these two million more inhabitants produced only 55,152 more voters, whereas, under the usual reckoning, there should have been between 350,000 and 400,000 additional voters.

The years 1900 and 1912, just compared, were Presidential years. Who shall say that the campaign of 1912, when the Progressive revolt from the Republican Party occurred, was lacking in public interest? With Taft, Roosevelt, and Wilson in the field as Presidential candidates, and the minor parties represented to attract voters of every shade of political opinion, we have the remarkable fact that in 1900 the combined vote of Benjamin B. Odell, Republican candidate for Governor, and of John B. Stanchfield, Democratic nominee, exceeded by 11,745 the combined vote of Job E. Hedges, Republican; William Sulzer, Democrat, and Oscar S. Straus, Progressive, in 1912.

The same tendency to slump is shown by a comparison of non-Presidential years. Only 97,076 more votes were polled for all parties in the election of 1914—when there was unusual excitement among the voters due to the Sulzer impeachment of 1913—than in 1902. More votes were cast in 1906, also a non-Presidential year, than in the last non-Presidential year of 1914.

In the election of 1904, when Frank W. Higgins was elected Governor, the Republican Party reached its high-water mark in the number of votes cast for the

1908, when Lewis S. Chanler received 735,189, as against 804,651 for Governor Hughes. It is significant that ever since both the Republican and Democratic vote, measured by the support given the heads of the tickets, has decreased. Compare the 804,651 given Hughes in 1908 with the 686,701 given Governor Whitman in 1914, and the 735,189 of Chanler in 1908 with the 537,505 of Martin H. Glynn in 1914. Only 412,253 of the Glynn vote was Democratic, 125,252 being cast by adherents of the Independence League.

The decrease appears to be general all over the State—in New York City, in the up-State counties, rural and urban. There has been almost a constant diminution of the vote in New York City for the two old parties since 1900, notwithstanding the great increase in population and in citizenship in the five counties which comprise the metropolis. In 1900 the Republican and Democratic vote here was 588,523, and in 1914 it was only 461,430. In 1904, a Presidential year, the vote in New York City for the two parties was 616,855, but in 1912, also a Presidential year, it had fallen to 610,109. The smallest vote for the two parties in the metropolis during the fifteen years was in 1914, and the next smallest in 1910, when it was only 500,716. Of this total 302,989 votes were given to John A. Dix, Democratic nominee for Governor, and 197,727 to Henry L. Stimson, Republican candidate.

Decrease in the vote of the counties outside of New York City also has been marked from 1900 to 1915. While the total polled by both the old parties in 1900 in that territory was 910,071, it was only 762,776 in 1914, a reduction in fourteen years of 147,295. Comparing two Presidential years, it fell from 929,113 in 1904 to 876,738 in 1912.

Analysis of the up-State slump by counties reveals that it has been general. It is not confined to cities, to villages, or to rural communities. One of the most remarkable changes appears in St. Lawrence County, one of the northern tier and the largest in area in the State. The total vote in that county in 1900 was 21,584, and although its population grew from 89,083 to 90,291 by 1915, the vote fell to 17,723 in the last Presidential year. Here was a decrease of nearly 4,000 in twelve years.

What is true of St. Lawrence County appears to be true of nearly all the up-State rural communities—the vote has fallen off tremendously in the last fifteen years.

Erie County, containing Buffalo, the second city in the State, added to its population between 1900 and 1915 more

Election Returns Showing Decline of New York State Vote.

Year.	Population.	Total Vote.	Rep.	Dem.	Minor Parties.
1900.....	7,268,012	1,556,520	804,859	693,733	57,926
1902.....	7,500,000	1,389,799	665,150	655,398	69,251
1904.....	8,067,308	1,625,907	813,264	732,704	80,939
1906.....	8,200,000	1,492,219	749,002	691,105	52,112
1908.....	8,700,000	1,653,856	804,651	735,189	114,016
1910.....	9,113,614	1,445,249	622,289	689,700	133,250
1912.....	9,300,000	1,611,672	444,105	649,559	*518,008
1914.....	9,500,000	1,486,875	686,701	†537,505	†215,763

*Includes 393,183 for Progressive candidate for Governor.

†Includes Independence League vote.

‡Includes Progressive and American Party votes.

falo. Owing to differences which had arisen in the Republican Party and the probability that Mr. Hearst would attract most of the independent vote in the State, Republican leaders at once perceived the necessity of nominating a candidate strong enough to overcome this advantage. Charles E. Hughes had just made a reputation as counsel for the Armstrong Insurance Investigating Committee, and was offered the nomination. He accepted it, imposing the condition that, if elected, he would act as his conscience dictated. The campaign which followed was well calculated to roll up a big vote for the two old party candidates, even if it was not a Presidential year. Many Democrats voted for Hughes and many Republicans supported Hearst. But the vote for Mr. Hughes was 64,000 less than that given to Mr. Higgins two years before. There was the same slump in the Democratic vote, Mr. Hearst falling behind Mr. Herrick by 45,000.

Governor Hughes, because of his advocacy of race track and direct primary legislation, incurred the enmity of his own party organization during his first term. It was not strange, therefore, that his vote in 1908, when he was a candidate for re-election, should have been less than in the previous Presidential

but what do they show? Charles S. Whitman, with the full support of the organization behind him and a large proportion of Sulzer Democrats for him, to make sure of the defeat of Martin H. Glynn, Democratic nominee, received as the Republican candidate for Governor 686,701 votes, or 62,301 fewer votes than were given Governor Hughes in 1906, and about 118,000 less than the vote of Governor Odell in 1900.

As the State campaign of 1910 was notable because of the many stay-at-home Republicans, so 1914 was remarkable for Democrats who either stayed at home or voted for Whitman, the opposing candidate. The disaffected Democratic vote largely is traceable to the bitterness provoked by the Sulzer impeachment of 1913. Governor Glynn was considered the candidate of Tammany, which led in the attack on Sulzer, and he suffered the penalty at the polls. Glynn's vote was only 537,505, including 125,000 he received from the Independence League, and was the smallest vote given a Democratic candidate for Governor for more than twenty years.

What has become of the 250,000 or 300,000 votes which may be reasonably expected from the increased citizen population?