

# CAMPAIGNING FROM PORCH AND STUMP

By CHARLES WILLIS THOMPSON

**S**TUMPING may have a large advantage over front-porching—that is, front-porching of the new Senatorial brand, which is as much like the old-fashioned McKinley front-porching as a prizefight is like a moonlight sonata. But it has its disadvantages, too. One of them is that it takes a long time to get in motion, while front-porching can begin at the word "Go!" Stumping is heavy artillery not yet cast, while front-porching (of the new brand) is like a rapier.

Hence we see Governor Cox and the Democratic leaders as busy as a swarm of black ants on a hot rock, rushing hither and yon, conferring and then conferring again, making preparations, then making some more preparations, getting things in shape, and you can see that when the time comes a real campaign will bloom and boom. But meanwhile Harding has been campaigning right along, not very strenuously as yet, but firing off a dart in whatever direction he thinks will give the most pain.

When one speaks of Harding, of course, one means the unincorporated syndicate that goes by that name, headed by Senator Lodge and consisting of perhaps a dozen members of the Senate, including the one from Ohio, Mr. Harding—what Mr. Harding himself would call "plural government." He is himself a plural candidate. He was nominated by plural government, not too plural, but just plural enough—not by the whole convention, but by about fifteen Senators. They arranged his plan of campaign for him and are directing its movements and his. The Republicans are highly vocal about the part played by Brennan, Taggart and Murphy in Cox's nomination, but have not yet dreamed of insinuating that those gentlemen are directing Cox's campaign or making him their mouthpiece. When Harding speaks one can see the vocal cords moving in the throat of the Senate, as happens sometimes with amateur ventriloquists. So, it may be, would be the case if Senator Harding became President Harding. It is what he means and they mean by "plural government," though, of course, the President would have a voice in the caucus, as, indeed, he has now.

It therefore falls out that Governor Cox decides on subordinating all other issues to that of progressive legislation. The Senatorial Government is not in favor of progressive legislation, at least of the kind Progressives want. If it is progressive at all, which it is at all times ready to assert, it is progressive only along conservative lines. In ancient American politics there was a happy phrase, "a Northern man with Southern principles." The Senatorial continuing caucus may be described as progressive with conservative principles. And the Progressives do not want that sort of progress.

So Cox goes angling for Progressives, with all other issues subordinated, including the League of Nations. This decision, only reached last week, was dictated by a recognition that the West is the battleground and that Progressivism is very popular there, while the League of Nations is—shall we say debatable? It is inadvisable to use extreme words. Very well, let us say debatable. In using this mild word we have in mind the whole stretch of territory from Indiana to the Pacific.

The decision is not pleasing to the Republicans, who also regard the

West as the battleground and who would prefer the League of Nations as an issue there. They might not make much of a hit with it in the East, but the Senatorial management has shown a capable ruthlessness in disregarding the loss of votes for a greater gain. Besides, it does not believe that even in the East the slam in the jaw which Mr. Harding administered to the League will lose them any States. They think people even in the East talk ten words about domestic problems to one about the League, and that the high cost of living interests the man in the streets of New York more than the Armenian mandate. As to the West, they have not a doubt of it.

Neither has Governor Cox, apparently. There was a conference

turns out later that one side or the other was bluffing.

This was good politics. The Harding-Senate candidacy has from the first played with a boldness and an audacity, which show the brand and earmarks of Senator Lodge. In countering all the Democratic moves it has not failed to notice that Governor Cox began by being extremely open about everything, ready to talk on any subject and meet any question, and that this was making a hit. So Harding was seen in the same rôle, answering with great gravity and fullness even Mr. Christensen's demand that he petition the President for the pardon of Debs. Nobody can complain of any lack of frankness in that reply. He would not make a petition without a study

fore, Harding prepares to make his first appeal to the farmer vote. This, of course, is put on the ground that Governor Cox has never "done anything for the farmers." Actually the reason is that the farmers are plainly discontented this year and that the Republicans cannot get along without their votes. There are several weak spots in the Republican column, and some of them are in farming States, while in all of them the weakest places are in agricultural communities. It may be, too, that the Republicans are getting a little uneasy over the unlimited activity of Parley Parker Christensen, the candidate of the Farmer-Labor Party.

Mr. Christensen seems to have an especial delight in whacking Repub-

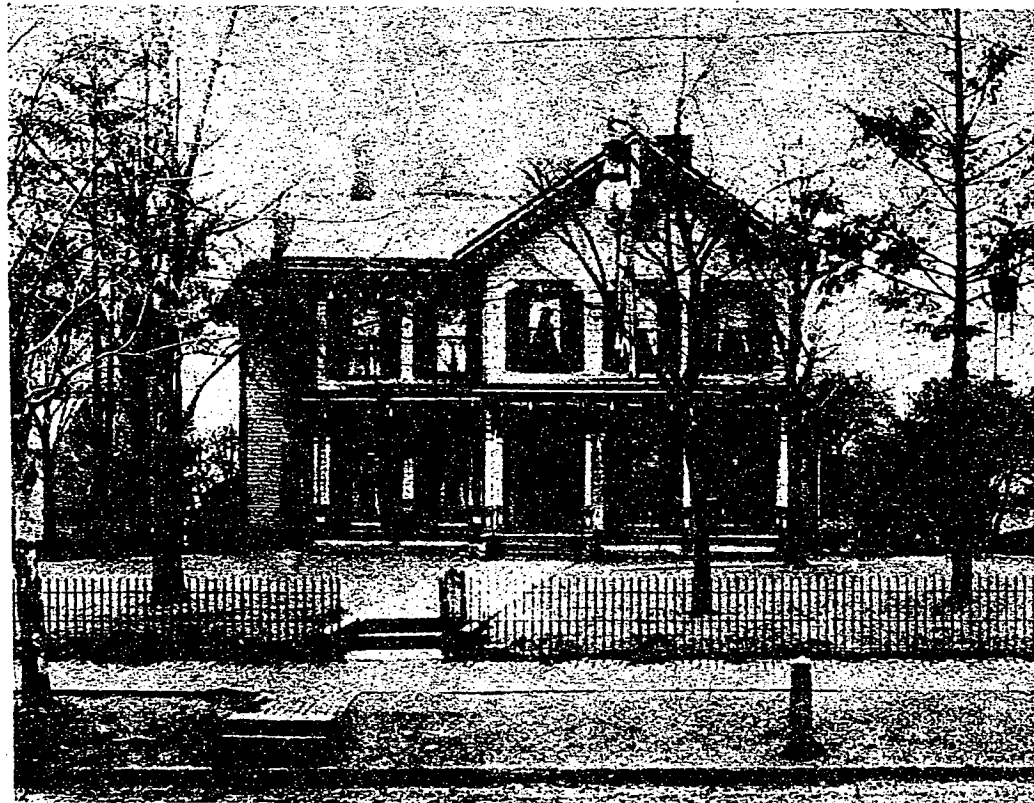
Mr. Christensen does not stop with telegrams. When he is not making speeches or writing telegrams he is making statements, and the moment Senator Harding's speech of acceptance had been made Christensen sprang to the typewriter with a statement that that venerable oration was "bunk." He seems a most virile and extensive person, this Mr. Christensen, and though the country knows nothing about him he is evidently determined that it shall. He opened his campaign by promising that it should be one of twenty-four hours a day and seven days in the week, and this is only July. Compared with him Harding is as idle as Debs, and Cox is a slow poke.

All the candidates concede that the West is the battleground. Governor Cox implies it when he plans to begin with the East and save the West for the finish, while the second star, Mr. Roosevelt, reverses the procedure. This may seem cryptic to persons guiltless of political knowledge except in campaign times, and other times interested in the financial or sporting page, but it is simple enough. In a campaign you reserve your heavy fighting for October and, if the campaign lasts long enough, the first week in November. August is negligible, but there is a beginning of the real fight in September. Therefore, when Governor Cox purposes to go East first and then head West, he is implying that he thinks the West the place to put his artillery in. He is going there as early as September, according to his present plans, relieving Roosevelt, who will come back and see that the East is not left uncovered. For, of course, though the battleground is in the West, there is a campaign in every Northern State.

It is significant that he purposes to begin his Western trip with California, for it is the progressive vote he is after, and California has become more aboundingly progressive as the years have rolled on. There is as much chance for a reactionary in California as there is for a snowball in—a furnace. It will be for Mr. Cox to prove to California that Harding is a reactionary and running on a reactionary platform—not that the platform amounts to anything, or ever did since candidates ceased to be mere mouthpieces of their parties. It is not likely that he will have much trouble about it. Of course, Senator Johnson's indorsement of Harding will have a lot of effect in driving the discontented into line, but not so much when you remember that Johnson rested the indorsement solely on Harding's stand on the League of Nations.

That kind of indorsement will not do much good with the Progressives of California, who are more interested in home topics than in "abroad." Many of Johnson's own supporters were for the League of Nations, but advocated his nomination on the ground that while he might be wrong about that question he was right on the more important questions of industrial justice. And now Johnson asks for support of Harding solely on the ground that he is against the League of Nations! That, all by itself, is not much of a rallying cry in California.

Besides, Johnson had already announced that when he had impatiently waited until the election was over he intended to open war upon "the system which he saw in its ugly nakedness exemplified at Chicago." He means the rule of the Senatorial caucus which nominated Harding and dictated the form of his campaign. It is somewhat like William Allen White's famous announcement in the campaign of 1916, that while he was supporting Hughes he had up in his garret a hatchet and some cannon which he intended to begin using on the first Wednesday



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William McKinley's Home at Canton, Ohio, and the Original Front-Porch Campaign Platform

the other day between him and National Committeeman Edward Quinn of Massachusetts, of which it was reported that Quinn "went over the situation in that State at length." If he did, he must have told Mr. Cox that there would be no hope of holding the Irish vote in that State if he insisted on playing up the League as the leading issue. The Governor has given the strongest proof that he thoroughly approves President Wilson's policy. That's enough, Mr. Quinn may have said; now let's drop it, or at least not ram it down the Irish throat as Mr. Lammle rammed salt and snuff down the throat of Mr. Fledgeby.

The Republicans will find a way to meet Mr. Cox's new bet. It has been the practice to watch Mr. Cox's moves and counter them. For instance, when he charged that the Republicans were preparing to raise a campaign fund "sufficient in size to stagger the sensibilities of the nation" and demanded publicity, Senator Lodge replied that he favored the idea, adding, "We will give Governor Cox all the publicity he wants before the campaign is over." At the same time Treasurer Upham of the National Committee announced that Senator Harding had requested that a \$1,000 limit be placed on all contributions. The Democrats were invited to place a similar limit. The reason they gave was that most of their contributions would run under \$10, anyway. However that may be, bang went another issue. It will stay banged unless it

of the case, it was not his place to make that study, but he believed "in generous amnesty for political prisoners."

It was adroit, too. The words "political prisoners" concede a point for which the radicals and semi-radicals have long contended. It has been the ancient belief of the United States that there were no political prisoners and could not be; that a man was either a condemned criminal or he was not, and that there was no reason for treating a Communist convicted of inciting to riot any differently from a yegg. Most other countries do not treat the subject so sketchily. In the last few years there has come about a gradual change in the old belief, and Debs, for instance, is not treated as a common malefactor. But Harding is probably the first public man in either of the old parties to use the European phrase "political prisoners" and acknowledge in his form of phrase the distinction.

If it had been a Democrat who used the words he might have been charged with playing for the radical vote, or if it had been a Republican like Senator Johnson. But the Harding-Senate candidacy is not playing for the radical vote; it is repelling it. It wants the vote of the old Roosevelt Progressives, but it has done everything it could to declare war on what is now classed as "radicalism"—a far different thing from the radicalism of fifty or even ten years ago.

While Cox rearranges his alignment by putting progressivism to the

Republicans over the head. All the trouble he has made so far has been for the Republicans. As the bulk of his support is supposed to be derived from labor men who were formerly Democrats it seems as though he might take some interest in Governor Cox, and perhaps he will in time, but just now he is earnestly engaged in swatting the Republicans, as if he were interested chiefly in the farmer end of his support. Perhaps he had a prevision that Senator Harding was going to make that appeal to the farmers.

At any rate he adopted the practice of sending telegrams to Senator Harding asking him to do impossible things, without paying Governor Cox the courtesy of sending duplicates to him. He first asked the Republican candidate to help get Debs out, and on receiving an ample reply to that communication instantly sent him another. In this one he asked Harding to oppose the sending of aid to the Poles in their campaign against Soviet Russia. He rather put it over Harding by quoting the Senator as having said: "It is no business of ours what form of government the Russian people choose."

Taken in connection with the Senator's telegram about "generous amnesty for political prisoners," Christensen seems to be endeavoring to draw Harding into the ridiculous position of being a friend of the Bolsheviks and the I. W. W. nominated by a Senatorial clique whose blood runs cold at the very mention of either.

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(Continued from Page 3)

after the first Monday in November. The California progressives will be a good deal more interested in Senator Johnson's description of the Harding-making caucus and its "ugly nakedness" than in his enthusiastic support of it solely on the ground that it is against the League of Nations.

Of course, it is not to be denied that many of the Californians will support Harding merely because Johnson does so, without regard to the reasons. Taking that fact into full consideration, the fact remains that California is a good deal more than debatable for the Republicans and that Cox ought to have a good chance there. At present it is not as good as Wilson's was in 1916, but in that year Johnson carried the State by 275,000 majority and Hughes probably got a good many votes from citizens who voted straight Republican for Johnson's sake. The charge that Johnson himself knifed the Hughes ticket is merely political meanness on a low scale. But his supporters did as they had a right to do, and many of them will do the same thing again—more of them, perhaps, since Hughes

was at least a "liberal" with Roosevelt support and Harding is an out-and-out reactionary.

If Governor Cox does make the record-breaking stumping tour that he plans, there should be a good test of the relative merits of that sort of campaigning and front-porching. There was a similar test in 1896, when McKinley occupied the front porch and Bryan made the first "whirlwind campaign." Bryan had to introduce himself to the country, which knew McKinley very well. Cox, however, is at least as well known to the man in the street as Harding is, so that the test is more equal.

Besides, as I have said, this sort of 1920 front-porching is different from the McKinley kind. Harding is seated on his front porch with a gun, taking a shot at everything in sight, and doing it with a shrewdness and light-heartedness that did not characterize his ponderous predecessor in the practice of front-porching. That again makes the test more equal, especially as Harding is planning to divagate from the front porch occasionally in some large city, as the need becomes evident.