

The Hyphen Vote Was Practically a Myth

With the Possible Exception of Oregon, the German-American Vote Was Not an Election Factor Anywhere in the United States

LET us bury, this Sunday morning, the Hyphen. The grave need not be very long, nor deep, nor wide, and in a few years from now there will be hardly a trace of its mound in the cemetery of bogies, freak movements, and short-lived isms of American politics.

Throughout the weeks of the campaign that the Hyphen was more or less of a political issue it was repudiated by many German-Americans as an insult to themselves, and on election day they made the repudiation good by the way they voted or didn't vote in the very sections of the country where the Hyphen was most feared by the Democrats and where the Republicans expected to derive the most benefit from it.

Nowhere in the country did the Hyphen vote help Hughes so much as the Hiram vote in California hurt him. And that Hiram vote, no doubt, will be talked about a great deal four years from now when the Hyphen is forgotten.

And, for the sake of another comparison, the Hyphen was probably no more of a real factor in shifting votes than was the trainload of Social Register Ladies sent out from the East to tell the women of the West to vote the Republican ticket.

Still, the thing was just enough more than a myth to justify a post-mortem before the burial, an analysis of the Hyphen vote in the New York City Congress fights, where the German-Americans themselves say it counted for something, and a summing up of the matter in the West where the German-Americans, as a rule, voted as American Democrats or American Republicans, regardless of the war in Europe and the attitude of the Wilson Administration toward the nations in that war.

If there was any real exception to this rule it was in Oregon, the only State in the Far West won by Hughes. Here the Hyphen agitators claim that the people did what they told them to do and that, as a consequence, 25,000 German-American voters supported the Republican nominee. His total vote in Oregon was 125,000, and his plurality about 10,000. Taft's plurality in 1908 was 24,000.

In any matter concerning the German-American population of the United States you instinctively think first of Cincinnati, Ohio; Milwaukee, Wis., and St. Louis, Mo., for the West, and of New York City, with an afterthought of Hoboken, for the East. The Hyphen stories from those cities and States together make the Hyphen story of the entire country.

Here is the opinion of Henry T. Hunt, former Mayor of Cincinnati, in response to a request by THE NEW YORK TIMES for information on the German-American vote in that city:

"An analysis of the returns here seems to show that the effect of the Hyphen was inappreciable. Hamilton County, with its large German vote, returned a plurality of only 12,000 for Mr. Hughes as against something like 20,000 for Mr. Taft in 1908. There is also a large German-Austrian population in Cuyahoga County, the county in which Cleveland is, yet the Democratic vote in that county was well up to previous records. In the northwest corner of Ohio, where a large part of the population is of German origin, the Democratic vote was also well up to previous records.

"I am inclined to believe that Hyphenism has been overemphasized, and that all but an inappreciable fraction of American citizens of Germanic descent voted as Americans. The editors of German newspapers and some Americans of German descent educated in Germany have created the contrary impression."

If the Hyphen vote had been of value to Mr. Hughes anywhere in this country it surely would have saved for him the normally Republican State of Ohio, which has given its electoral vote to the Democratic nominee, backed up by a popular plurality of more than eighty thousand

To be more specific as to Hamilton County, in which is the City of Cincinnati, with one-third of its total vote German-American, Mr. Hughes carried the county by only 12,000, but in 1908 Taft carried it by 18,374, and in 1912 the combined Taft and Roosevelt vote exceeded the Wilson vote by 16,036.

Mr. Taft carried the whole State of Ohio in 1908 by 69,591. Taft and Roosevelt together in 1912 had a vote that ex-

ceeded President Wilson's by 83,341. But now, in this year of war and Hyphens, Ohio, with its big German population, reverses herself to the tune of more than one hundred and sixty thousand votes and gives the President a plurality of 81,280. If the Hyphen was a factor in that State, it was because it was a roorback, not of the eleventh-hour variety.

Next, Missouri. The State, as a whole, was carried by President Wilson by 27,426. But four years ago his vote was about fifteen hundred less than the combined vote of the Republicans and Progressives, and in 1908 Taft carried Missouri by a handful of votes over a thousand and in 1904 it went to Roosevelt by 25,000. So there was no evidence of the Hyphen in the State at large.

Now look at the so-called very German heart of it, the six German wards in the City of St. Louis. Here, if anywhere, we should find the Hyphen a potent thing in the voting. But it isn't there. These wards are the Ninth, Tenth, Eleventh, Twelfth, Thirteenth, and Fourteenth. So far as ancestry, at least, is concerned these six wards of St. Louis are as German as Berlin. They are also Republican on normal city, State, and national issues. They remained normal in the Presidential election of this year, going Republican as usual, but with no increase due to any non-American consideration.

Analysis of the returns from these six German wards show, that the Republicans made a gain of only two-tenths of

1 per cent. over the vote cast for Taft and Roosevelt together, four years ago, when there was no Hyphen talk. Because of an increased registration in these wards of 11,145 votes, Wilson polled more votes this year than four years ago, but his ratio of gain was virtually the same.

Hughes polled 6,903 votes more in these wards than Taft and Roosevelt, but this, also, was because of the in-

creased registration and not because of an increased percentage of Republican votes. The combined Republican-Progressive percentage of the total 1912 vote in these wards was 61.3, while the Republican percentage of the total vote this year was 61.5.

Comparison of Wilson's vote with that of Gardner and Reed, Democratic nominees for Governor and Senator, shows that Wilson ran slightly behind Gardner in the Ninth and Tenth Wards, even with him in the Eleventh, and well ahead of him in the Twelfth, Thirteenth, and Fourteenth. Wilson ran behind Reed in the first four wards and ahead of him in the last two.

Mr. Hughes did carry the State of Wisconsin, but by a plurality so ridiculously small, when compared with that for Republican Presidential nominees of previous campaigns, that the only possible inference from the returns of this State, with its numerically strong German element, is that the Hyphen worked the wrong way. And that is just what happened. Thousands of German-Americans of both the Socialist and Republican Parties, abandoned their own tickets to vote for President Wilson, not because of any issue closely or remotely connected with a foreign war, but because of the record of the Administration at Washington for the last four years.

The Hughes plurality in Wisconsin was 23,953, about a thousand less than the excess of the Taft-Roosevelt vote in

1912. But going back to the normal days before the Bull Moose split, just compare the present year's 24,000 for Hughes with these Republican pluralities of the past—in 1908, Taft, 81,000; in 1904, Roosevelt, 156,000; in 1900, McKinley, 106,000.

But it was in Milwaukee itself—German-American Milwaukee—that the sharpest rebuke received anywhere in the United States by those who thought they could win an American election by appeal to un-American prejudices was administered by the voters. President Wilson received more than thirty-four thousand votes in Milwaukee County. Mr. Hughes got less than twenty-seven thousand. In other words, Wilson carried this normally Republican, German-American city and county by a plurality of seven thousand in an election in which every Democratic nominee for a State or county office was defeated. Taft carried Milwaukee eight years ago by nearly three thousand.

In the Illinois returns, showing a plurality of 175,000 for Hughes, (about five thousand less than that of Taft in 1908,) there is nothing to indicate that the Hyphen was a factor in that State. There are about one hundred and sixty thousand German-American voters in Illinois, with something more than half of them always listed as Republicans as a matter of course. With the exception of a possible Democratic gain among the Germans of the agricultural counties there was nothing unusual in the voting in this State.

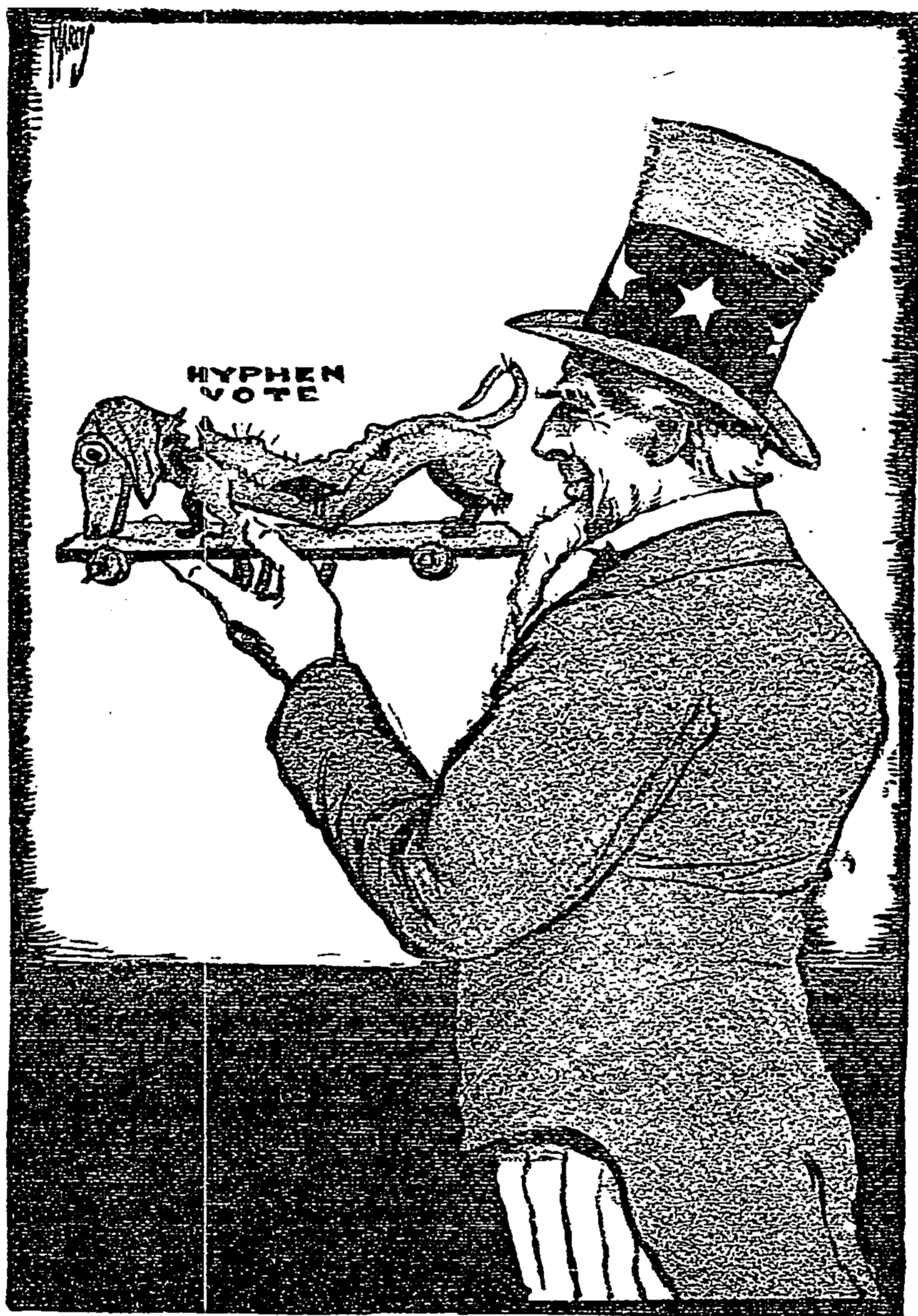
Following the trail of the Hyphen to the Middle Atlantic States, you will not find that the scent gets any stronger. In Maryland, which gave Wilson a plurality of 20,000, (Bryan carried it by only 2,000 eight years ago,) there are about forty thousand German-American voters, most of them in Baltimore. And, so far as can be determined by the election figures, a big majority of these American citizens of German birth or parentage voted for President Wilson.

A most significant thing happened in the Thirty-second Congress District of Pennsylvania, in which the German-American element outnumbers everything else and which has been represented in the House of Representatives for the last twelve years by Dr. A. J. Barchfeld, a Republican. The Democrats carried the district. It includes the industrial centres of Allegheny County, where the satisfaction of labor with the Wilson Administration was too strong, evidently, to be even dented by the Hyphen.

Now, before taking the ferry across the North River to New York City in this hunt of the elusive Hyphen, let us just glance at the election returns of Hoboken, that thoroughly German city in New Jersey, famous the world over as the American port of the big German steamship lines. It is perhaps more German than those six wards of St. Louis to which reference has been made.

Here, as in New York, those who were trying to make capital out of the Hyphen did their very utmost to swing the German vote for Hughes. They flooded the town with anti-Wilson reading matter. They put anti-Wilson spellbinders on every street corner. And Hoboken voted for Wilson. There were 9,863 votes cast. The President got 5,167 of them and Mr. Hughes got 4,201, with the rest scattering. The German voters were urged to vote against Wilson and for Wittpenn, the Democratic nominee for Governor. But Wittpenn ran 500 behind the President. They were also urged to vote for Martine, the Democratic nominee for the United States Senate. Martine ran 400 behind the President.

In the First Ward of Hoboken, where the German dock workers live, Wilson got 760 votes, Hughes 730, Wittpenn 730, and Martine 710. In the Second Ward, which is and always has been a very strong Republican ward, and where all the members of the Deutsche Club reside, Wilson got 794 votes, Hughes 1,041, Wittpenn 832, and Martine 789. That ward



"There ain't no such animal."

has always gone Republican by from 350 to 425 majority. But at this election, in spite of all the work of the Hyphen leaders, that majority was cut down to 274.

In New York City the German-American drive was made particularly against the Tammany candidates for Congress, and, in the opinion of those who engineered it, it was successful, in some cases the success being indicated by the election of the man supported by the Hyphen vote, in others by the reduction of the winning plurality of the opponent below normal.

"Our fight," says Bernard Ridder, as spokesman for the German-Americans of New York City, "was not primarily against President Wilson, but against Tammany Hall. Of course the war and the attitude of the Administration was a factor, but not the controlling factor. And the German-Americans throughout the country were not opposed to President Wilson because of his European policy, but because we resented his intimation that American citizens of German birth or parentage were not loyal American citizens.

"He evidently entered the campaign

with the mistaken notion that he could not have the German-American vote, so he tried to offset that prospective defection by winning other votes with the plea to their Americanism, as against the so-called anti-Americanism of the Germans. It was resentment of this unjust suspicion thrown upon their loyalty to the United States that made German-Americans oppose the President. That it was unjust was shown by the vote itself throughout the country. The Hyphen was not a factor, and it never can be in this country at a national election. There is no such solidarity as that would imply. Neither the German-American, nor any other single element of the American people, can swing a Presidential election.

"We wanted Mr. Hughes to win for reasons I have already mentioned, and because we did not think for one moment that he would be able to undo the good things accomplished by the Wilson Administration. If we had had the slightest fear that the Republican campaign threats to wipe out the things that Mr. Wilson has done for the country could have been carried out we would have

voted for his re-election in spite of the Hyphen and the intimations that we were not loyal Americans. For the Wilson Administration has been progressive in domestic affairs, the sort of administration that German-Americans want and will indorse when they get it.

"But our main fight in New York was not on the national ticket at all, but on the Tammany candidates for Congress—or some of them. We had asked these men in Congress to say a word for us on the floor of the House and to protect us against the charges of disloyalty. They had refused, and so we opposed their re-election.

"To that extent our campaign had some connection with the war. But we would have fought them just the same if there had been no war and no Hyphen question, because they are unfit. The fact that Germans were drawn more closely together in this city because of their feeling about the war, and the cooperation of the Irish-Americans for the same reason, gave us a more effective instrument with which to fight Tammany Hall and the unworthy men it sends to Washington to represent us. We shall

keep on fighting Tammany Hall in the same way long after the war is over.

"Our activity in three of the Congress districts is sufficient proof that the war was not the controlling factor for the German-Americans in this city. In the Fourteenth District, the German-Americans supported and elected F. H. La Guardia, giving him a plurality of 550 over the Tammany man, M. F. Farley. Farley is an Irishman. La Guardia, the man that we, the Germans, supported, is an Italian, son of a man born in Italy, one of the countries with which our Fatherland is at war. In the Sixteenth Congress District we supported W. S. Taft, a nephew of ex-President Taft, and in the Seventeenth we supported L. T. Bates, whose brother was lost on the Lusitania.

"We did not support Taft and Bates because we thought they were against Germany in the war; they probably are not. We supported them because we, as German-American citizens of New York, knew they were better fitted to represent us in Congress than Dooling and Carew, the Tammany candidates, who were opposed to them."

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