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

L

y as lurry, this Sunday morn-

ing's the economic situation, the

need not be very long, nor
deei, nor will it be a jolly task for

ny one to do. True, the United

States has made a marked change

in its political life in this respect.

a hardy a trace of its mounds in

the countryside, of its rural agri-
monts, and short-lived lines of American politics.

Throughout the weeks of the campaign that the Hyphen vote was more or less of a political issue it was resented by many German-Americans as an insult to them-

selves, and on election day they made the Republicans their lawful choice. But they voted or didn't vote in the very sections of the country where was most feared by the Democrats and where the Republicans expected to derive the most benefit from.

Nowhere in the country did the Hyphen vote make its mark. Its total vote in Oregon in California hurt him. And that Hiram vote, no doubt, will be talked about another four years from now when the Hyphen is forgotten.

And, for the sake of another compar-
bility, the Hyphen was probably no more of a real factor in shifting votes than was the trashcan of Social Reform Leaders sent out from the East to tell the women of the West to vote the Repub-

lican 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 light of the New York City Con-

gress, where the German-American-
as themselves say it counted for some-

thing, and are making it count for the matter in the West where the German-Ameri-
cans, as a rule, voted as American Dem-
orats or American Republicans, regard-

less of the war in Europe and the situation of which was supposed to be the situation toward the nations in that war.

If there is one real exception to this rule it was in Oregon, only the State in the Far West won by Hughes. Here the Hyphen agitators claim that the people did what they told to do and that, as a consequence, 20,000 German-American voters supported the Repub-

lican nominee. His total vote in Oregon was 172,000, and his plurality of about 10-

0,000. Taffy's plurality in 1916 was 24,000.

In the same section of the same popula-

tion of the United States you can think first of Cincinnati, Ohio; Milwaukee, Wis., and St. Louis, Mo., for the West, and New York, N.Y., and South-

ern California, for the East. The

Hyphen vote in both of these States and St. Louis made the story of the entire country.

Here is the letter of Henry T. Hunt, former Mayor of Cincinnati, in response to your request 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, instead of the 29,000 for Mr. Taft in 1908. There is also a large German population in Cuyahoga County, in the county in which Cleveland is, yet the Democrat's vote in that county was well up to previous records. In the northern section of Ohio, where Hyphen is of German origin, the Demo-

cratic vote was also well up to previous records."

"I am inclined to believe that Hyphen-

ism and all the other factors had it all lost an invaluable fraction of American sentiment in all but a popular sentiment as Americans. The editors of Ger-

man newspapers and some Americans of German descent have long been making and have created the counterfeit Imperialism."

If the Hyphen result in Ohio is applicable to Mr. Hughes anywhere in this country it would merely have saved him for the nominal Republican. He has given his electoral vote to the Demo-

crats and added the Hyphen vote to his plurality of more than eighty thousand.

To be more specific as to Hamilton Coun-

ty, in which is the City of Cincinnati, with one-third of its total German vote, this was done by approximately by only 12,000, but in 1908 Taft carried it by 10,000. This in 1916, Taft and Roosevelt exceeded the Wilson vote by 18,000.

Mr. Taft's vote was the State of Ohio in 1908 by 69,000. Taft and Rosse-

velt together in 1912 had a vote that ex-

ceeded 63,000 in the State of Ohio in 1916, but his ratio of vote was virtually the same as Taft.

Hughes polled 6,900 votes more in those wards than Taft and Roosevelt, but this, also, was because of the in-

creased registration and not because of an increased percentage of Republican voters. The combined Republican-Progressive percentage of the total vote in these wards was 63.1, while the Republican percentage of the total vote this year was 61.2.

Comparison of Wilson's vote with that of Gardner and Reed, Democratic nomi-

nates for Governor and Senator, shows that Wilson ran slightly behind Gardiner in the Ninth and Tenth Wards, even with him in the Twelfth, and well ahead of him in the Twelfth, Thirteenth, and Fourteenth. Wilson was 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 ridicu-

iously small, when compared with that for Republican Presidential nominees of previous campaigns, that the only pos-

sible inference from the returns of this State, with its numerically strong Ger-

man element, is to vote for the Hyphen vote, the wrong way. And that is just what happened. Thousands of German-Ameri-

cans of both the Socialist and Repub-

lican Parties, abandoned their own tickets to vote for President Wilson, not be-

cause of any sense closely or remotely connected with foreign war, but be-

cause of the record of the Administra-

tion in Washington for the last four years.

The Hyphen plurality in Wisconsin was 2,500, about a thousand less than the "preliminary" of the Taft-Roosevelt vote in

1912. But going back to the normal days of 1908 and subtracting from the present year's 34,000 for Hughes with these Republican pluralities of the present year we get 10,000 for Wilson in 1908. Hughes 106,000; in 1908, 50,000.

But it was in Milwaukee itself—Ger-

man-American Milwaukee—that the Hyphen vote was absolutely negligible in the United States by those who thought they could gain an election by appeal to anti-Teutonic prejudices, was administered by the voters. President Wilson received more than forty thousand votes in Milwaukee County. Mr. Hughes got less than twenty-seven thousand. In other words, and this normally Republican, German-American city and county by a plurality of seven thousand in an election in which every Republican, no matter if a State or county office was defeated. Taft carried Milwaukee eight years ago by nearly twenty thousand.

In the Illinois return, showing a plac-

ity of 175,000 for Hughes, (about twenty thousand less than 1908,) there is nothing to indicate that the Hyphen vote was a factor. As a matter of fact there are about one hundred and sixty thou-

sand German-American voters in Illinois, with something more than half of them always listed as Republicans as a matter of course. With the possible exception of the possi-

ble Democratic gain among the Ger-

man of the agricultural counties there were more than a hundred thousand of the votes for President Wilson in this State.

As it is a matter of the trail of the Hyphen in the Middle Atlantic States, you will not find that the vote gets any stronger. In New Jersey, the plural-

ity of 20,000 (Grevy carried it by one vote) was the result of the efforts of about forty thousand German-American voters, most of them in Baltimore. And, as it was in New York, it was the election figure, a bit magna of those American voters and their parents or vote relatives or parents or voted for President Wilson.

A most significant thing happened in the Thirty-second Congress District of Pennsylvania, in which the German-American element outnumbered everything else in the district, which is in the House of Representatives for the last twelve years by Mr. Schmidt, a Republican. The Democrats carried the district, and the influence of the liberal centre of Allegheny County, where the satisfaction of labor with the Wilson Administration might be even denominated by the Hyphen.

Now, before taking the ferry across the East River, I have one more word. On the subject of the plural vote, I am just gleaves at the election returns of the last week and think, that thoroughly German city in New York, where the world over all the American port of the big German shieship lines, it is perhaps more Ger-

man than those six wards of St. Louis to which reference has been made.

Here, as in New York, those who were talked to thought that out of the Hyphen, they did their very utmost to swing the Ger-

man vote in Chicago. They flooded the town with anti-Wilson reading matter. They put anti-Wilson speakers on every street corner, and Wilson voted for Wilson. There were 9,063 votes cast. The ratio for Hughes was got 4,201, with the rest scattered. The Hyphen vote was got 4,862. Governor Wilson and for Wilson the Democratic nominee for Governor. But this was not the result in six wards of Chicago. They were also urged to vote for Wilson, and in the six wards of the United States Senate. Martinez ran 409 behind the President.

In Missouri, the story of St. Louis, where the German dock workers live, Wilson got 769 votes, Hughes 730, Winpenny 720, and all the rest voted down. This is, which is as already been a very strong voting district for the Republicans, and the members of the Deutsche Club reside, Wilson got 794 votes, Hughes 1,061, Win-
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 inure 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.”