

Comment by the Editor

POLITICAL TECHNIQUE

This is the political season of the year. Candidates for public office, from the Presidency of the United States to township trustee, are striving to win favor with the sovereign voter. All of the wiles of time-honored practice are employed in the wooing of public opinion. Office seekers state their views on questions of the day as boldly or mildly as their temperament dictates or the exigencies of the campaign seem to warrant. Meanwhile their zealous adherents wax eloquent in behalf of some "vital issue" or try to throw dust in the eyes of the people. If it is no longer the fashion to

march in processions, an' git up hooraws,
An' tramp thru the mud fer the good o' the cause,

other means of arousing the vox populi are just as effective though somewhat less juvenile. Newspaper comment has grown dignified and often sedate—quite in contrast to the bitter partisanship of earlier sheets. The radio is even now sounding the knell of appeals to class rancor and sectional interests.

Devices of practical politics tend to seek the level of current standards of popular intelligence and integrity. With national maturity has come a certain refinement and subtlety in political behavior. Cam-

paigns are less boisterous and more sincere; there is less platitudinous sophistry and more earnest discussion. Perhaps there is less downright dishonesty, though petty deceit and misrepresentation will probably always prevail. People are influenced far more by emotion than by reason: prejudice is more potent than logic and facts. A century of experience seems to substantiate the opinion of Fisher Ames that "political science will never become accurate in popular states; for in *them* the most salutary truths must be too offensive for currency or influence."

The major features of campaign strategy have always been fairly apparent, but only the political actors themselves know what has happened behind the scenes. Clever maneuvers have been executed by party leaders that even the active politicians knew nothing about: political destinies have been shaped in secret caucuses. The full significance of the action of a party convention is seldom revealed in the official proceedings. It was not until Senator Hoar published his autobiography that the real reason why William B. Allison missed the Presidency in 1888 became generally known. Students of Iowa politics sought in vain for an adequate explanation of Kirkwood's dramatic nomination for Governor in 1875, until Herbert Quick told the inside story in *The Invisible Woman*. And any one who supposes that such tactics are confined to the past should be counted a confirmed optimist.

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