

One of the essential elements in the lifeblood
of Democracy is . . .

Public Opinion

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PUBLIC opinion is any expression on a controversial topic. It results from the reaction of persons on any public or political issue that concerns them as citizens.

The kind of public opinion implied in the democratic ideal is tangible and dynamic. It springs from many sources deep in the day-to-day experience of individuals who constitute the political public, and who formulate these opinions as working guides for their political representatives. This public opinion listens to many propagandas, most of them contradictory to each other. It tries, in the clash and conflict of argument and debate, to separate the true from the false. It needs criticism for its very existence, and through criticism it is constantly being modified and molded. It acts and learns by action. It believes in the value of every individual's contribution to a voice in deciding the fate of the nation and in their individual fates.

What has been obvious these past few years is that the right to vote, to choose between this candidate or that, is by itself not done in a true democratic environment and in a truly democratic way. Alleged terrorism of the party in the administration in the 49 bloody poll operated without regard for the Bill of Rights to secure ends in the interests of a person or a small group under the dictates of only one person or source, talking into consideration that the devilish pattern was the same in so many provinces. The real terrorism in our polls did not come from the better knowledge of how majorities feel about the questions of the day which press for solution. Terrorism in our polls comes from utter disregard by the powers on the helm of our government for the rights of individuals. It thrives when the media of information are

gagged, not when they are free for everybody to use . . . free from the claws of the unscrupulous and vested party interests. These violate the precepts of true democracy. Democracy guarantees rights, privileges and liberties to individual citizens of a democratic country. It involves the citizens' participation in civic duties, information on public issues, and the capacity to make up one's own free mind. The people, it has been truly said, must understand, live and, if need be, die for the basic ideals of democracy if these ideals are to be safeguarded properly from the insidious forces that act like Trojan horses in our midst. They must learn that it is not a mere shibboleth but a vital truth that the state is their own, that they are free citizens with rights, privileges, duties, and responsibilities.

With a vast number of people in a community, these democratic privileges have not always been easy to emphasize. We are not living in an age like that of the Spanish regime when, participation in the choice of persons to run the government and in the running of that government was limited exclusively to the crown influenced by a few bureaucrats. There was no such thing as public opinion then. Today, we are supposed to be capable of formulating public opinion if only to put into action the rights, privileges, duties, and obligations as granted to us explicitly by the constitution and the laws of our land. Unless the ordinary citizen can find channels of self-expression, the common man may become the forgotten man. When such a situation develops, when public opinion cannot get itself expressed, democracy is lost. For public opinions can be satisfactorily guided only if we know about them.

How does public opinion express itself and what should be be-



The Author

lieved and how, since individual opinions often contradict one another? How can we discover and determine which of them speak most truly for the masses? The most reliable index of public opinion is the popular vote at local and national elections. After the campaigning the shouting, and torch-light parades . . . when the last ballot has been cast and the final announcement of defeat and victory has been declared to the populace . . . the will of the people is said to have been expressed. It is presumed that the national presidential elections reflect the main divisions of public sentiment, and the elected is regarded as the symbol of the desires and aspirations of the majority. But even elections do not provide completely infallible indices of public opinion.

For how can we tell whether the people are voting for principles and not for personalities? At all elections rival candidates are chiefly concerned in getting votes, and the heat of party battle does not always provide the best atmosphere for a clear discussion of issues. Immediately before elections, the spirit of party or class and the combative ardour which such a spirit inspires, becloud and confuse the minds of many voters, making them think of party triumph rather than a candidate's merits or his principles. A large percentage of the votes may be given with little reference to main issues involved. It is true, then, that some elections have failed completely to represent the will of the people. Democratic safeguards have not eliminated the oc-

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Nail It Down

By Nestorius Moresco

Where's that hammer! I want to knock some soluble sense into your heads. Don't blame this hombre for being a too nossey-mosey sort of a gringo. But here's something interesting for the studs of this univ. Just stomp your decaying teeth into this column and we will keep things humming. Brace yourselves. . .

The Fr. Rector saunters into the Carolinian office (where's that place?) and solemnly says, "Boys, no political cackling. That's one. Don't use too many slangy phrases and statements. That's two. The studs have to scurry and scratch for the nearest dictionary whenever they manage to peep into your columns." That's on the level.

Yep, I really have a very poor estimation, if you pardon my English. I saw a curtain... e-ne... certain cute piece of property. She was sportin' a plume... e-r-r... a pony's tail. My attention was caught by the way she wore her upp dress done in sequins and lace. Her batterin' skirt flew like the esteros in Manila and her shoes were a dreamy Open-Mandaw bridge creation. Her long dark tresses were fluttering like wings of a sparrow, hopefully trying to catch the dying golden rays of the colossal sunset, sinking solemnly to end the life of a glorious day. Atta Boy! She even look extra pains to punctuate her face with periods to make it look like a sanctuary of the eloquent moles. She really appeared to be rich, healthy, and well. Rouge, lipstick, chalk, eyebrow liner, sandpaper were very much in evidence. My ugly pass dropped to my boots when she entered a barong-barong. She was a s-q-u-a-r-t-e-r. Meow-meow. Barranco, baranco, barong-co!

Still crazy about the Barranco mamba, eh? Want to get acquainted with it? Here's the pitch: Get set. Hands like a boy scout doing semaphore signalling. Fundamentals. Take a 100-meter dash. Stop. Crawl 50 yards more. Take a high jump and jactknife 5 times. How's your joints? Another fundamental. A skip-hep-jump routine. Snares, net swars, 14 times. Lie flat on your back. Roll to

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Thrills of Travel

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studying and writing the whole day long. In the evening he honored me with his presence at my slide-lecture, and I appreciated deeply his hearty applause. I should have liked to spend a few more days with these ascetics of scientific research, but a pre-arranged schedule urged me to proceed further North, where "those at home" were waiting impatiently. A journey of twelve hours brought me from Bern to Bonn, West Germany's Capital. When crossing the border I saluted my fatherland with a prayer for all those who had died, and for those who had done wrong to the world. When in 1934 I bade farewell to European shores, heavy clouds hung over them, and a co-passenger sighed, "Clouds over Europe!" Yes, these clouds had developed into a devastating thunderstorm, and now—how was Germany now? Heavy fog deprived me of the pleasure of seeing anything worthwhile, but as the train was rolling on, my thoughts travelled ahead, always pivoting around one question: my home, my folks, and friends, how would I find them? At times the train was crowded, but people disturbed me little in my reverie; they hardly spoke to one another, as if they were used to carry their worries alone and would not share their joys, either. One lady made an exception. My foreign-made suitcase and Philippine-Air-Line-travelling-bag caught her attention and stirred her curiosity.

The information I gave her netted me an apple as a token of "welcome and hospitality in a homeland that rose from the dead." Stopping a while at the big city of Mannheim I was frightened by the sight of death and destruction; large districts lay still in ruins; war had been wild. At my arrival in Bonn, Fr. Jung, our Mission-Procurotor, was waiting for me. With searching eyes we took in one another's appearance and experience of the 20 years that lay between our last handshake and this thrilling moment. We had been friends and still were. It was already dark; of Bonn I could not see much. Soon the car stopped in front of the Mission-Seminary of St. Augustine, which had been my Alma Mater in 1925 and 1926. The gigantic 600-room building, which in part we students had built with unskilled, though diligent, hands had been greatly damaged in the war but had been fully repaired. As we entered the huge parlor, the old porter of former years greeted, remembering my name, a classmate grasped my hand in a cordial shake, the Father Provincial, and the Father Provincial, and many other friends of old, former professors or schoolmates,—all men matured in service and suffering—their eyes spoke and their mouths, asking more questions than I could answer; the emotions were strong, the joy deep; brothers, co-officers in the army of Christ.

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casional demagogue who claims to represent the popular will that he himself has created by using techniques ranging from simple deception to the more robust forms of vote-getting.

What about the expressions of sentiment which crystallize in public meeting, and in the claims of countless political, economic, religious, racial, and welfare associations? Such associations have great importance in the development of public opinion, for they arouse attention, excite discussion, formulate principles, submit plans, embolden and stimulate their members, and produce that impression of a spreading movement towards the upholding of right principles with a sympathetic and sensitive people.

Yet as we well know, this ability to produce the impression of a spreading movement, has its dangers, for there is such a thing as an artificial and illicit opinion. The art of propaganda has been much perfected in our times. And it has attained a development which enables its practitioners to skillfully and sedulously apply false or one-sided statements of facts to beguile and mislead those who have not the means or the time to ascertain the facts for themselves. The twentieth century is the age of the expert who knows how to build a private interest with public support and to the prejudice of the common good.

Our rights and liberties must be secured by eternal vigilance!