

PSYCHOLOGY

Conventions on TV

Political speakers of the Republican and Democratic parties, aiming their oratory both at delegates and viewers across the nation, influence the latter more.

► FOR THE first time on a nation-wide television hook-up the ordinary American voter is seeing for himself the bursts of enthusiasm with which convention oratory is greeted.

He can watch on television the "demonstrations" of perspiring delegates, raucously cheering, and carrying bobbing banners up and down crowded aisles.

The floods of extolling speeches, recounting the virtues of each candidate as he is nominated, are aimed not just at the ears of the hard-boiled delegates. They are directed to the voter himself, listening and watching in his easy chair at home and at the same time making up his mind how to vote in November.

The delegate is known to party leaders as a "20-minute egg." He is not much swayed, really, by convention oratory. He comes to the convention with his vote pledged to a certain candidate; leaders can count well in advance the votes they are sure of.

The element of uncertainty in the convention is due to those delegates who are pledged to a "favorite son"—someone who has strong support in his own state, but is not well known elsewhere. At a critical moment, these delegates swing to one or the

other of the leading candidates, but these "deals" are probably cooked up in some smoke-filled room away from the eye of the television camera.

It is characteristic of the American voter, and of the American politician that he likes to be on the winning side. For this reason the "band wagon" appeal is a much-favored psychological device.

Each candidate tries to show that he is bound to win. There is much talk about nomination on the first ballot. This is undoubtedly the purpose of the shows of strength in preliminary committee meetings—trying to convince everyone that the outcome is a foregone conclusion.

But a nomination for president is seldom determined on the first ballot, as it was in the case of Gen. Dwight Eisenhower. There is usually a great deal of haggling, boasting, pleading and arguing before the business is done.

Events are much more powerful in determining the outcome of a convention or an election than are words. If the cold war with Russia should suddenly turn into a hot war, if a break in the stock market should bring with it a business depression, even a paralyzing nation-wide strike might cause a complete change in the picture.

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PSYCHIATRY

Homesickness in Reverse

► SOME MEN go through the hardships of war in Korea and distinguish themselves in combat without a sign of war neurosis only to break down when they return home.

This kind of homesickness in reverse was found to occur in seven out of a hundred cases treated at the Veterans Administration Mental Hygiene Clinic, Hartford, Conn. It has been named "nostopathy" which means "disease on return."

First symptoms of this homecoming illness sometimes struck the men when they received orders to go home or when the ship entered San Francisco harbor. As they approached the end of the journey, the illness might develop into an actual psychosis with delusions and hallucinations. They become tense, irritable and depressed. They may get into trouble with police. They develop stomach ulcers.

Study of the homes to which the patients were returning showed that they were cold; the men complained of lack of affection from parents and from brothers and sisters or wife. Some homes had been changed during the patient's absence by death, mar-

riage, or by the birth of babies. Some men had married just before leaving or were expected to marry upon their return and faced the task and responsibility of setting up a new home. Some had become fathers.

Some were returning to unchanged homes but remembered only unhappiness there. In fact, they had enlisted to get away from home.

Nostopathy is not blamed entirely on the home by the physicians who report it in the AMERICAN JOURNAL OF PSYCHIATRY (July), Drs. Richard Karpe and Isidore Schnap. The nostopathy patients had had extensive combat experiences and had endured the hardships at the front longer than others. They had all adjusted to the life well and had not broken under it. But nevertheless, the severe strains they went through may have damaged their ability to adjust to life as a civilian, the doctors conclude.

Nostopathy is not confined to returning veterans. It may also affect those coming home after a long time in a hospital or prison.

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QUADRUPLE AMPUTEE — Cpl. Robert L. Smith, the first quadruple amputee of the Korean conflict, is seated behind the wheel of his specially-equipped automobile. He recently traded his Army uniform for a civilian suit, then drove from the Walter Reed Hospital, Washington, to his home in Middleburg, Pa.

INVENTION

Hand-Controlled Auto For Legless Persons

► VETERANS AND others who have lost legs may operate so-called clutchless or hydraulic clutch type automobiles with new hand controls invented by Raymond K. Wilson, Louisville, Ky.

Both the throttle and the brake are controlled by the same handle in this invention, so the driver can control both with one hand. Moving the handle from side to side moves the accelerator pedal, pushing the handle forward, pushes the brake on.

The handle is linked mechanically to the accelerator and brake foot pedals so it is not necessary to have the automobile in operation to operate the controls. Mr. Wilson received patent number 2,602,348.

Science News Letter, July 19, 1952

PSYCHOLOGY

Machines to Correct Errors of Operators

► IT MAY be possible some day to design complicated machines, such as airplanes, so they will correct for normal errors made by men who operate them, if research under way at Indiana University, Bloomington, is successful. Psychologists there hope to find formulas for human muscular responses, to design machines to "filter out" human errors, just as the steering mechanism of an auto "filters" the tremors of the driver's arms so they have no effect on the wheels.

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