

# What We Do Not Know

(Editorial)

The choice which the voters of America will make at next Tuesday's election is one as nearly irrevocable as any of its kind can be. There will be no second guess; if we make a mistake in this, probably the most important popular decision in all our history, its destructive results will be with us not merely for four years but in all probability for a great deal longer.

For if we discard our unwritten law against the third term, we shall break down our chief safeguard against the form of government we have come to recognize as the greatest enemy of personal liberty and free institutions and against whose trespasses from without we are even now mustering all our resources. The President last night to the contrary notwithstanding, the situation and its inevitable sequels which are described as requiring four years more of Roosevelt will not be past in four years, nor in eight. They can and inevitably will be urged again as strongly in 1944 as now, and by then both the precedent and the power which now resist the perpetuation of one-man government will have been destroyed. The political machine of pay roll, relief and subsidy votes which was so large a factor in Mr. Roosevelt's re-election in 1936 has increased by 50 per cent since then; in another four years it will be invincible and ineradicable save by a general economic debacle. So long as it endures it can retain in power its creator and his heirs-designate to dictatorial control. Our last chance to dislodge it is now.

In this campaign a great deal of stress has been laid on the Roosevelt record as indicating, because of its inescapable continuation and acceleration, what four years more of it will mean to the country. Soaring debt, soaring taxes, continued depression but little relieved by sporadic spurts of artificial prosperity, increasing relief demands, unemployment undiminished by any normal means, industrial losses doubled and trebled by deliberately promoted labor strife, swelling bureaucracy, one person in every five dependent in whole or part on government, national finances so completely out of control that the administration's apologists dare not even mention them, a runaway inflation in early prospect, normal peacetime processes at low ebb, billions of investment capital in hiding from sustained government hostility to business, the defense program in delaying confusion and the country drifting unprepared into war—these are the things we see. These are the things we know will, under Roosevelt, continue and get worse; some because he cannot stop them, many because he will not try to.

But what of the things we do not see? What is in the President's mind as his next long step, should he be re-elected, in the making over of our system of free and representative government under the Constitution?

We do not know. And in that fact, it seems to *The Times*, lies our greatest danger. The people are not in the President's confidence. He does not trust them with his plans. To him they are as children who do not know what they want or what is good for them. When the support of their votes is needed he makes an appearance of consulting and considering them; other times his judgment is paramount; his decisions final and not to be questioned.

In this campaign, as in those of 1932 and 1936, Mr. Roosevelt and his spokesmen have paid lip service to the fundamentals of democracy, the principles of sound economics, the elements of constitutional government, the means to avoid war. But in the light of the Roosevelt record, what are such pledges and protestations worth?

We know that, almost immediately after his first inauguration, he reversed, repudiated or ignored in action virtually everything which, to win election, he had promised in the campaign. We have Col. Farley's word for it that his real plans, as they then developed, had been in preparation for a year; in other words, that while Mr. Roosevelt was pledging one thing he was planning the opposite. The excuse advanced, that new conditions required new methods, was simply not true; the "new" conditions were at their worst while the pledges were being voiced. If the voters had known they were merely vote bait, would Mr. Roosevelt have been elected?

We know that, almost immediately after his second inau-

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guration, Mr. Roosevelt sprang, out of a clear sky, his plan to break down the constitutional safeguards of the judiciary by packing the Supreme Court with political appointees to make it subservient to the Executive will. We know that that plan, though also in preparation for more than a year, was never mentioned in the 1936 campaign. Had it been, Mr. Roosevelt would probably have been defeated. We know that he sought further to centralize government in his own hands with the departmental reorganization scheme which Congress defeated. We know that that attempt, also long in incubation, formed no part of the President's outgivings in his campaign for re-election.

Mr. Roosevelt accepted and proclaimed his re-election as a mandate to go farther in the direction of dictator government. He said, even before his election, that he hoped to be a "master." Is there any reasonable doubt as to how he would interpret a second re-election? If, in defiance of a governmental tradition which usage has invested with the force of law, he is given a third term as the one indispensable leader out of 130,000,000 people, is there any reasonable doubt as to its effect on an already exaggerated ego?

We know what Mr. Roosevelt has been. We know the lengths to which he has already gone. But we do not know—though we may suspect—what he might become and the lengths to which he might go if, by our votes, we declare, in effect, that we believe him a greater President and a more infallible leader than Washington.

In all the millions of words spoken and written in this campaign, its real issues have not been better or more succinctly told than by Mr. Willkie himself in his magnificent speech at Madison Square Garden last night. Its full text appears elsewhere in this issue. Read it; it is short—and powerful. And in reading, weigh particularly the passage in which the speaker declares that, in this battle of America, victory will not be his nor that of his party. "Wendell Willkie, the man, has little meaning in this campaign. This is the victory of the people."

Unlike his opponent who, from the same platform four years ago, proclaimed his ambition for a personal mastership, Mr. Willkie declares: "I do not ask to be any man's master. I ask you to make me your servant." And that, in less than 20 words, is the core's core of this contest between a would-be dictatorship and a menaced democracy. It is the summing up in a phrase of Franklin Roosevelt and Wendell Willkie and what they stand for. It is the whole issue.

It has been said by Messrs. Ickes, Wallace and others that there is no reason to replace Mr. Roosevelt with Mr. Willkie because the principal declared objectives of the two are similar. It is true that Mr. Willkie stands for many of the things for which the President stands, or says he stands; the difference is that Mr. Willkie can attain them and Mr. Roosevelt has demonstrated, by nearly eight years of failure, that he cannot.

To object, in behalf of either, that their avowed purposes are alike is to imply that there can be two opposed sets of worthy social, political and economic ends. It is much more to Mr. Willkie's credit and a better reason for supporting him that he recognizes and indorses the good in what the New Deal purports to have sought than if, because of the failure of mistaken and political methods, he condemned it all to create additional campaign issues. Such an attitude would be mere demagoguery.

Mr. Willkie urges quick arming for national defense. What he criticizes and would do away with is the spending of billions purportedly for defense and getting little or nothing for it but partisan advantage. He criticizes the chaotic planlessness and headlessness of our defense effort, as demonstrated by the fact that in five months we have shown only 1/28th the progress in rearmament that we showed in notoriously slow and inefficient 1917. He pledges that, if elected, the program will be organized on a businesslike basis put in the hands of experts with full authority, politics eliminated, mass production methods applied and quick results secured. His own record as an extraordinarily successful businessman and organizer and the confidence reposed in him by the country's industrial interests, almost unanimous in his support, is a guaranty that he can do so and will do so.

Mr. Willkie urges all possible and practicable aid to

Britain. What he criticizes and would do away with in our international policy is the extralegal methods of the Roosevelt administration, its secrecy, its needlessly threatening and provocative attitude toward nations with which we are at peace, its unmistakable trend toward our involvement in war, particularly at a time when we are pitifully unprepared for war. Without appeasement or concession of our rights, he believes we can avoid such involvement and, by quick and efficient arming, forever discourage aggression against us and ours. He pledges his utmost efforts to that end, together with a policy of complete frankness to the public. His own record of accomplishment, including his rise in a year from private to captain as a soldier in France, attests his ability and his knowledge of what he is talking about. If it is humanly possible to do so, Willkie will keep us out of war. What the belligerent Roosevelt will do if he is given the unprecedented power and authority implied in a third term we do not know. We can only suspect—and fear.

Mr. Willkie urges domestic recovery, the restoration of normal employment, the balancing of the national budget and the bolstering of impaired national credit by a cessation of borrowing for peacetime purposes. What he criticizes and would do away with is the damming of natural recovery and re-employment channels by government hostility to and harassment of business and employing industry, constantly increasing taxes, squandering of billions in futile pump-priming attempts and continued deficit financing. His years of successful conduct of one of the country's largest utility companies evidences his understanding of the needs of business and industry, of economic processes and finance.

Mr. Willkie advocates continuing and extension of the social security program, old-age pensions, unemployment insurance, relief for the needy, government co-operation with and aid for farmers and the rights of labor. What he criticizes and would do away with are the unnecessarily high costs of security benefits in proportion to money paid in, the misapplication of insurance reserves, the playing of politics with relief and the promotion of professional indigency, the contradictory farm policies which make agriculture continually more dependent on government and less on itself, a labor policy meant to serve the interests of only one-fifth of those who work and which treats employers as the enemies rather than the friends and collaborators of labor. Mr. Willkie has been a wage earner. He has been an extensive employer of labor. He owns and operates several farms. He has known hardship and poverty. He knows the difference between the needy and the leeches. He speaks whereof he knows.

On Tuesday the country must choose between a man who has learned how to do things by doing them and one whose conceptions of practical affairs are had at second-hand from visionaries and radical theorists. It must choose between a professional politician, wealthy from birth, who has learned little but politics from his experience in office and one who has come up from the grass roots by his own efforts and who can deal with the problems of a workaday world with the knowledge gained from personal experience.

It must choose between a man who has mortgaged his administration to America's most corrupt boss politicians and one who will go into office completely free of any obligation save to serve the people. At a time when national unity is needed as never before, it must choose between an administration which, for nearly eight years, has promoted class and labor strife for political purposes and one with which every element can make common cause. It must choose between a program about which no one but its secretive planner knows anything but what can be inferred from past "surprises" and one which has been frankly detailed in advance by a man who can be trusted to carry it out.

It is, as the President's supporters have said, a choice between an indispensable man and one whose leadership the country can get along without. But the indispensable man is not the President.

Because he is the only possible alternative to Roosevelt and all for which Rooseveltism stands, the indispensable man in this time of national crisis is Wendell Willkie.