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Editor and Proprietor

**EDITORIALS**

**THE REAL LOSER?**

The average rates of municipally-owned utilities in Minnesota are higher than those of the private utilities in the state, in spite of a substantial tax advantage, according to an exhaustive survey by Arthur M. Borak, professor at the University of Minnesota.

Comparing the taxes of municipal and private utilities in that state, Mr. Borak found, in general, municipally-owned utilities contributed funds and free services in lieu of taxes about equal to the state and local taxes paid by private utilities, measured by gross earnings. But privately-owned utilities carried the heavy added burden of Federal taxes.

His study of tax rates and municipal indebtedness in the cities and villages of the state revealed that, for the most part, localities with municipally-owned generating plants had comparatively larger debts. Likewise, the tax burden was higher in these localities. The tax levy per capita (on tangible property) for

1946 levies payable in 1947 was \$10.25 in 63 communities served by municipally-owned generating plants, \$6.25 in the 609 communities served by private electric utilities. In addition to the private electric utilities had lower rates than municipally-owned plants and they paid more in taxes than the publicly-owned systems contributed in the form of direct payments plus free services.

Rates or taxes, however, are smaller matters compared with changing a nation's political and industrial economy from free opportunity to the socialized state, and that is what public ownership of industry on a large scale leads to.

**Economic Highlights---**

There is nothing in the world quite like an American political race. In these disordered times, the voters take the candidates and their platforms seriously, as the unusually heavy primary votes in various states demonstrate. However, there is also a touch of the sporting event and the amusement enterprise to the campaigns. That is why otherwise dignified candidates, with few exceptions, pose in Indian war bonnets, pretend to fish while wearing natty lounge suits, and join weird organizations which demand that the new member sign the oath in his own blood.

This year the active candidates have followed the tradition and given the photographers what they wanted. Dewey and Stassen, of course, have been the most active by far, with barnstorming tours reminiscent of the days before radio. And now, on the eve of the nominating conventions, the experts are turning out their final guesses which, like financial statements, are based on information believed accurate, but are not guaranteed.

Curiously enough, a real show-

down fight came in Oregon—a state which will have only 12 of the Republican convention's 1,094 delegates, and so will have practically no voting influence on the outcome. There are various reasons why Dewey and Stassen chose Oregon for a battleground. It is reported that Dewey said that he was sick of seeing delegations go to Stassen by default, and he was determined to take his case to the people. Then, Oregon is supposed to be a pretty accurate barometer of sentiment throughout the West. Finally, it is small in population, which made it possible for an unusually large percentage of its voters to see the candidates in person, and shake their hands.

Even the strongest Stassen backers reeled at the result. It was felt, before Dewey appeared on the scene, that Stassen was a cinch. The former governor of Minnesota got exactly what he wanted when Dewey accepted his challenge to a nationally broadcast radio debate on what to do about the communists in America. Whether or not that debate determined the issue is an unanswerable question, but it was the high spot of the campaign. A few days later Oregon voted and Stassen lost.

This has probably reduced Stassen's chances to within a dangerous distance of zero. As columnist Doris Fleeson has said, "It will take shrewd maneuvering to produce even the vice-presidency for the young Minnesotan." His defeat in Oregon is roughly comparable to the ruinous setback Willkie received in Wisconsin when he made his second try.

However, it is doubtful if the Oregon victory has particularly improved Dewey's chances. He had to get it just to stay in the race. His margin—around 9,000 votes—was substantial but not sufficient to make him look like an overwhelming choice of the people.

No candidate, it must be emphasized, has anywhere near enough

early-ballot delegates to win. It will take 548 to nominate. Dewey has 273. Taft has 111, and Stassen 141. A long list of favorite sons will get the rest. So, it is the second choice votes that all the leading contenders have been trying to sew up. And this is a very complex affair. A state's delegations may be solid as cement when it comes to first choice, but be divided among several aspirants after that.

That is why the fact that a candidate may go to the convention with a big lead over the next contender doesn't necessarily mean a thing. Talk is still going around to the effect that once Taft or Dewey sees that he can't get a majority they will combine their votes to nominate one or the other. It might happen that way, but the realists who have been watching politics for a long time don't think so. They haven't sufficient iron-clad control over their delegates to vote them the way they want indefinitely. On top of that, no candidate has behind him the terrific, last-ditch enthusiasm that can overcome all obstacles.

The United States News recently polled Congress as to what Republican candidate would be most competent at the helm of State. A majority of the senators and representatives replied, and Taft came out on top by a goodly margin—some 60 per cent of those offering opinions thought

that he would do an excellent job. This is a testimonial to the Senator's undoubted grasp of the involved mechanics of government, his integrity, and his courage to fly in the face of popular sentiment when he thinks the majority is wrong. But, even so, Taft's chances are only fair.

A great deal will depend on the number of ballots that are cast. If it goes on long enough without anyone getting near to a majority, the organization may get behind a candidate who isn't particularly in the public eye, and put him over. That always happens if the leaders cancel each other out.

Both conventions will probably give more than usual attention to the selection of their vice-presidential candidates. It may not be pleasant to say it—but the burden of the presidency is so vast these days that the qualities and characters of the second man on the ticket are nearly as important as those of the first.

Miss Donna and Jean Lavin left Thursday for Fresno, California to visit relatives. They will return at the end of a week, Jean to her duties at the local telephone office. The trip was made by plane.



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