

# Non-Voter Object of Attention as Close Election Forecast

By William B. Dickinson, Jr.  
Washington—Forecasters of an extremely close presidential election this year have made the habitual non-voter an object of unusual attention. Democrats and Republicans are wooing him as never before. Both political parties recognize that drastic turns in political history have been brought about by marked increases in the voting turnout. Spokesmen for each party contend that a large increase in registration will favor its ticket on Nov. 8. Democrats are pushing their registration drive on the announced assumption that seven of every ten new registrants will vote for the Kennedy-Johnson ticket. Republican strategists cite statistics showing that increases in registration may bring victory to Nixon and Lodge.

**Strong Risk Factor**  
At least one study—by the Survey Research Center at the University of Michigan—indicates that partisan registration drives carry a strong risk factor. The habitual non-voter frequently is a person of little political stability who is likely to hop aboard a psychological bandwagon. For example, 82 per cent of non-voters polled by the Survey Research Center after the 1948 election said they would have cast their ballots for President Truman if they had gone to the polls—as against only 18 per cent who said they would have voted for Gov. Thomas E. Dewey. But a similar poll taken after the 1956 election indicated that only 28 per cent of non-voters that year would have cast Democratic ballots, whereas 72 per cent would have voted Republican.

Certain political scientists long have questioned the value of get-out-the-vote campaigns. They argue that a large vote is not necessarily an informed vote, and that in the words of one critic—campaigns to bring out any kind of vote result in "a dilution of whatever thoughtful-ness others have contributed to the electoral process with an unmeasured portion of the poison of indifference, irresponsibility and civic stupidity." Persons of this mind assert that a small vote is part of the public record and itself a significant voter reaction.

**Representative Government**  
The counter-argument, and the one which appears to have the widest following, is that maximum exercise of suffrage rights makes for the most truly representative government. Thomas Jefferson wrote in 1807: "That government is the strongest of which every man feels himself a part." Yet, unless many former non-voters have a change of heart, fewer than two-thirds of the men and women of voting age will go to the polls this year. The Census Bureau estimates that there will be about 108,900,000 Americans of voting age by November, including 1,900,000 members of the armed forces. The largest proportional turnout for a presidential election was recorded in 1952 when 61,522,000 men and women, or 62.7 per cent of the civilians of voting age, went to the polls. The 62,027,000 persons who

voted in 1956 constituted only 30.4 per cent of an estimated total of 102,743,000 civilians of voting age. Communist nations long have used American voting percentages to ridicule the idea that this country practices true democracy. However, when the American record is looked at in the light of obstacles to voting raised by the states under their power to prescribe qualifications for exercise of the franchise, it appears more favorable than the raw statistics suggest.

**Voters Discouraged**  
The American Heritage Foundation has reported that

in 1956 six million potential voters were unable to meet state residence requirements. The poll tax and literacy tests discourage or bar the voting of hundreds of thousands, if not millions. Nearly half a million citizens of voting age domiciled in the District of Columbia lack the franchise. Convicts, idiots and the insane are barred from voting anywhere. In all, at

least 13 million of the more than 100 million Americans of voting age are believed to be legally disqualified. Reform of antiquated voting laws has been slow to materialize. But at least six states in the last seven years have adopted plans under which a registered voter does not lose his right to vote for President and Vice President solely because of a change

of residence. One plan, adopted first by Connecticut, permits a resident who moves out of the state prior to a presidential election to cast an absentee ballot. The value of literacy tests, still required of persons seeking to register to vote in 19 states, has been questioned. Some observers contend that literacy tests have not perceptibly improved the quality of voting any-

where, and that they lend themselves readily to abuse. In the case of millions of Americans, political apathy probably is chiefly responsible for failure to vote. These are the persons aimed at by the current registration campaigns. Chronic non-voters frequently justify their inaction by stating that a single vote can have no real effect on the outcome of an election. But politicians recall that President Truman carried California and Ohio by a margin of less than one vote per precinct in 1948, and that it was the electoral votes of these states that enabled him to pull his upset.


## SOC Staff Member Co-Author of Item

Ashland—Dr. Frances Horowitz, of the Southern Oregon college psychology staff, has had an article, "Attitudes of Mothers of Female Schizophrenics," published in the Journal of the Society for Research in Child Development. Co-author for the article was Lloyd L. Lovell of the University of Oregon.

Testing was done on 30 normal females and 30 mothers of schizophrenic females in the Midwest, and sought to compare the attitudes of mothers of female schizophrenics and mothers of normal females as measured by Form IV of the Parent Attitude Research Instrument develop-

ings of other investigators; however, it was concluded that possibly more significant patterns would emerge if more scale items and a larger sampling of subjects were employed.

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**Rain Helps To Control Fire Near McMinnville**  
Dallas, Ore.—Light rain Thursday night helped firefighters contain a forest fire which broke out about Thursday afternoon about 25 miles southwest of McMinnville.

**TYPHOON KILLS 14**  
Manila—Typhoon Kit caused 14 deaths in southern areas of the Philippines, an official report said today. The typhoon with center winds of 90 miles per hour, was moving toward the northern part of Luzon island and the Manila area.

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