“Though this be madness, yet there is method in ’t.”

—SHAKESPEARE: Hamlet, Act II, Scene ii

How to Predict Elections

Alfred A. Knopf

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Preface

Twelve years ago I fell "in love" at first sight with a half-page tabulation of election statistics, and I have been grateful to the World Almanac ever since. This half page contained nothing more than the percentages of the presidential vote received by the Democratic candidates in the elections from 1896 to 1932 in each of the forty-eight states; but that compact record showed so many systematic facts about the nation's political behavior and suggested so many fascinating possibilities for fruitful research that much of my spare time since then has been devoted to cultivating that vast field. Even with the primitive, easily understood tools that I have used, the field has yielded well.

My first effort to share my enthusiasm in the newly acquired hobby was a brochure entitled Ballot Behavior, published in 1940 by the American Council on Public Affairs. In the present book I have incorporated the results of further research and continued interest. The methods of analysis first set forth in 1940 I have used in connection with subsequent elections. Some of the findings constitute the main body of the present book. Several passages from Ballot Behavior have been used in presenting similar topics in this book.

The presentation and analysis of political facts in both Ballot Behavior and this volume are still, I believe, unique. In 1948 as in 1940 the findings and forecasts are offered to the public with the reserve inherent in presenting any new method of political-science investigation. Both the investigator and the reader must keep their minds open for modifications in approach and the possibility of other interpretations.

This book purposely avoids discussion of personalities and organized political effort as factors in elections. By dealing strictly
Chapter 1:

Politics in a Statistical Mirror

Between the first part of this book, which analyzes the New Deal political tide, and the last chapter, which depicts the political tide of the future, the reader will find many of the hints, cues, and data useful in predicting elections. Political fluctuations are no more mysterious than business fluctuations. It is now quite common for variations in the nation's business and agriculture, in employment, production and prices, and wages and profits, to be portrayed and explained statistically. Much has been learned about the cycles of business and agriculture, but forecasting them is still an art rather than a science. In similar manner I have found that voting behavior, portrayed statistically, offers valuable keys to an explanation of the marked swings in American politics and helps to form a basis for judging political trends in the immediate future.

The New Deal political tide reached its peak in 1936 when Democrats obtained 62 per cent of the two-party vote for president and elected nearly 80 per cent of their candidates for
Congress. In 1946 the Democrats elected only 43 per cent of the 80th Congress. Republicans took this to be a mandate to undo much of what the New Deal stood for. Did that mark the end of the New Deal Democratic tide and the beginning of a prolonged period of Republican dominance? As the reader becomes familiar with some of the major reasons given in this book for changes in the Republican-Democratic balance, he will be able to answer this question more on the basis of facts and less on wish, guess, or intuition.

The two major parties that now control the political and economic destinies of the nation have alternately dominated the presidency and Congress for nearly a century. During that period American citizens have responded at the polls to liberal and conservative issues and personalities, to prosperity and depression, and to crises of war and peace. The past century has witnessed three major conflicts—one civil war and two world wars. We have had several business and agricultural depressions which affected all regions and population groups so profoundly that the party in power was thrown out of office, not to return until a later and similar depression occurred. We have had some unusually strong presidential candidates campaigning on major issues, such as Bryan's demand for the monetization of silver in 1896, which pitted the conservative, money-minded East against the mineral-minded West; or Al Smith's Catholic faith, which divided North and South, and his promise to repeal prohibition in 1928; or the threat of war that split the country in a more complex manner, East and West against the middle, in 1918 and 1940. There have also been elections in which the so-called liberal citizens of the metropolitan areas, Boston, New York, and Chicago, voted predominantly Democratic while their rural cousins in up-state New York or down-state Illinois supported the Republicans as usual. Most of these cleavages are reflected in the statistical mirror of national and regional voting behavior for the period 1928-46, which embraces the New Deal tide.

Every presidential and congressional campaign offers the analyst an opportunity to isolate particular elements that promise to dominate the election and to correlate them with the political factors always present. In this series of studies I have used the familiar adage: "As Maine goes, so goes the nation," for predicting the 1936 election; business factors in forecasting the 1938 congressional campaigns; the trend in the New Deal tide and prewar isolationist sentiment in determining the outcome of the 1940 presidential race; and a combination of past trends, size of the expected vote, and economic conditions in assaying Democratic chances in the 1946 congressional elections. Each of these factors, supplemented by an examination of third-party impact on voting behavior, has a bearing on what happens in 1948 and later elections.

To develop statistical proof for the adage "As Maine goes, so goes the nation," was a fruitful venture. According to the popular historical interpretation of this adage, the party that wins in the September election of state officers in Maine triumphs in the national elections in November. In September 1932 Maine elected the Republican slate of state and local officers, but the national result in November was a Democratic landslide. The adage seemed thoroughly discredited. An examination of the record, however, restored my faith in the old saying; fundamentally it still spoke truth. The Democratic (or Republican) percentage of the total vote cast in Maine fluctuated in accordance with the variation of the Democratic (or Republican) percentage of the total national vote. On the basis of this parallelism, I predicted in September 1936, when Maine went 45 per cent Democratic, that the nation would give Roosevelt about 60 per cent of the popular vote. He actually received 62 per cent.

With the voting record for every state reduced to a simple formula—the Democratic or Republican percentage of the total ballots cast in a number of elections—further examination revealed that not only Maine but many other states are barometers of national voting behavior. Despite the many influences that shape the course of elections in the forty-eight states, there emerges a fairly systematic pattern for the nation. Any oscillation in the national pendulum has reverberations in each state and even in many counties. The behavior of one state in a given election can consequently be translated into the corresponding behavior of the nation as a whole, which can in turn be translated into the corresponding behavior of each of the other forty-seven states. This principle, which I first used in 1936, enabled me to predict that if the nation went 60 per cent Democratic, as foreshadowed by the Maine election and other local indications, the Democratic Party would carry all but three states: Maine, Ver-
mont, and Pennsylvania. It actually carried all but two: Maine and Vermont.

This systematic pattern of political behavior (elaborated in subsequent chapters) has been generally overlooked. It is an important tool, however, in political research and analysis as well as in forecasting the 1948 and subsequent presidential elections.

It may be likened to the relationships that exist in our commodity markets. Ordinarily, fluctuations in the price of wheat at, say, Chicago, are accompanied by similar fluctuations in all other central or local markets where dealers, millers, exporters, feeders, farmers, and speculators deal in the commodity, because the essential facts with regard to supply and demand are known everywhere. Prices at local shipping points in rural Kansas, for example, differ from those at Kansas City and Chicago only by the amount of freight and other minor costs. Consequently, if wheat at a Kansas shipping point rises ten cents per bushel, it is reasonable to assume on the basis of long experience that there has been a comparable change at other shipping points and central markets, unless some unusual local factor of supply or demand is responsible.

The existence of an extraordinarily uniform voting pattern in many states and counties must be due to the fact that there are similar economic and social groups in each state and locality. Some communities may have more laborers than others, some more farmers, professional people, or businessmen. This economic composition of the population tends to determine whether a community is predominantly Republican or predominantly Democratic. In every state and county there are people who respond alike to certain nation-wide economic and social issues. The mere fact that a county or state has never given the Democrats more than 40 or less than 10 per cent of its vote does not mean that its political behavior is not useful for analytical or forecasting purposes. The important point is that fluctuations between 10 and 40 per cent in that community correspond to fluctuations in the same direction—but not quantity—in many states, counties, and the country as a whole. In fact, a 10 per cent loss or gain by the Democrats throughout the nation may result in a corresponding shift of more or less than 10 per cent in many communities, depending on their political flexibility.

In judging the outcome of a presidential election, knowledge of the party line-up by states is an absolute necessity, since candidates must obtain a majority of electoral votes. A majority of the popular vote alone is not sufficient for election. Therefore the systematic relationships, which can be reduced to arithmetical terms, between the way the nation and each state vote are extremely useful and for that reason will be presented in this book in some detail.

The political horizon in 1938 was dominated by the setback to the New Deal recovery programs. Industrial production fell sharply during the last half of 1937 and first quarter of 1938, and unemployment, which had been diminishing since 1933, again increased. This unexpected recession boded ill for the Democratic candidates in the congressional elections in November. An examination of the effect of similar business recessions on elections in the previous eighty years, and on shifts in the position of the major party in the lower house, showed us that the Democrats were bound to lose many seats. I predicted in March 1938 that their membership in the lower house would decline from 79 per cent in 1936 to between 60 and 65 per cent. In the elections eight months later the Democrats retained only 61 per cent of the seats.

It was not until 1946—and this may surprise many readers—that a decline in industrial activity and curtailment of consumer purchasing power again appeared as a factor in determining election results. Will a business depression again appear in the foreground of the political scene in 1948, 1950, 1952, or later?

In 1940 the outcome of the presidential election seemed to hinge on whether the so-called Republican tide, beginning with the Republican gains in 1938, was rising or ebbing, and whether the third-term bogey and isolationism would fatally reduce Roosevelt’s chances. The issue of isolationism versus internationalism, so far as it could be studied historically in the analogous election of 1916, pointed to losses in Democratic strength in the Midwest and Northwest, with offsetting gains in the East and Far West. The net effect of the third-term issue could not be adequately appraised except through current polls of public opinion, and these indicated that the Democrats would not lose many votes on this score. Assuming that the course of the New Deal tide might be the dominant factor in the 1940 election, I examined the characteristics of the several political tides since
1854 and the reasons for their upturns and downturns. This analysis led to the conclusion that if no major business depressions set in before the fall of 1940 and no nation-wide third party entered the race, the country as a whole would give 54-55 per cent to the Democrats, compared with 62 per cent in 1936. Roosevelt was elected with 55 per cent of the two-party vote.

The 1944 election offered an opportunity to study the factors of turnout and its influence on the Democratic-Republican balance, a factor that is ordinarily more important in off-year congressional than in presidential elections. The Republican victories in the congressional election of 1942, and the several by-elections in 1943 to fill vacancies, made political analysts sensitive to the size of the vote. While these gains were hailed as a continuation of the Republican tide that had set in after 1936 and as foreshadowing a Republican victory in 1944, an examination of the 1942-Republican gains showed clearly that they were largely the result of voting apathy. Few citizens took congressional elections seriously when the country was engaged in war. It was found that as a rule, the smaller the total vote cast, the smaller the Democratic proportion. On the strength of this fact, it was possible to predict early in 1944 that the Democratic candidate would receive about 53 per cent of the popular vote. Roosevelt actually won 53.8 per cent. What does this method of forecasting a presidential election reveal for 1946 and after?

The 1946 election offered an opportunity to examine in greater detail the behavior of voters in mid-term congressional elections and to develop a unique method of measuring the effect of such elections on the number of seats each party is likely to control. It is fairly common knowledge that many Congressmen have been elected by virtue of running on the ticket of a winning presidential candidate. This analysis was important in 1948, clearly indicated that if the Democrats failed to bring many apathetic citizens to the polls, their margin in the House would be wiped out and their membership reduced from 56 per cent in the 79th Congress to only 45 per cent in the 80th. Actually, they elected only 43 per cent of their candidates. An understanding of the forces that shaped the 1946 elections made it possible to point out, even before the opinion polls of 1947 were taken, that the Republican victories in 1946 were in part ephemeral and did not necessarily mark the beginning of Republican domination of Congress for a prolonged period.

It has been observed that, in the ninety years from 1856 to 1946, the party that gained control of Congress in a mid-term congressional election usually placed its presidential candidate in the White House two years later. When in 1946 the Republicans captured the Congress, many people expected them to win the presidency in 1948. My analysis indicates that this mid-term formula should not be accepted blindly. Indeed, there is no guarantee that the elections in 1948 and after might not give us the reverse of 1946, a Republican president and a Democratic Congress.

Most of the factors which have been dominant in elections from 1928 to 1946 will influence the 1948 and succeeding campaigns. For this reason they are treated separately in this book; first historically, and later in relation to the 1946 and future elections.

In spite of the fact that several statistical analyses which have proved useful in appraising and anticipating the results of presidential and congressional elections are presented here, the reader is warned against expecting this book to give him a precise and fixed method of predicting elections. The main objective has been to present basic facts so organized that they may serve as a foundation or springboard for the application of one's judgment.

As in the field of economics, it is necessary to distinguish between the art of describing relationships that have held good in the past and the art of forecasting. Forecasting is often practiced with no more than the assumption that trends observable in the past, and relationships based on past experience, will hold in the immediate future. The real art of forecasting, however, involves an accurate appraisal of whether new factors may or may not appear to alter the observable trends and past relationships.

Anyone who has an elementary knowledge of arithmetic will be able to move comfortably through the following chapters. Political tides over a period of years are here represented simply by the changing percentage of the presidential vote cast in the various elections by the Democratic Party, or the proportion of the House or Senate seats won by either party. The effects of
business conditions, various political issues, and size of the vote are all measured in the same statistical terms. There is, of course, no particular reason for expressing these political facts in terms of Democratic rather than Republican percentages, except that these studies have been made during a period of Democratic dominance. Any Democratic percentage of a two-party vote, say 45 per cent, can be converted readily—merely by subtracting it from 100—into the Republican figure, 55 per cent.

Forecasting elections during the course of a campaign, or even before the campaign is under way, may at first glance appear to have no practical utility. Actually, knowledge of what is likely to occur, and the magnitude of the forces that will bring it about, may be of considerable practical use in politics as in economics. Politicians and campaign managers interested in shaping election results can more readily plan their strategy if they know whether their candidate leads with a narrow or a wide margin. Organizations can more effectively conduct a doorbell-ringing campaign, and candidates more intelligently choose when and how to run, if they know whether time, tide, business conditions, and political issues are in their favor and, especially, by how much.

It is hoped that even a cursory perusal of the material presented here will enlarge somewhat the average voter’s knowledge of political fluctuations and give new interest to presidential campaigns and elections.

To accomplish this aim, the next chapter will acquaint the reader with the general course of the Republican-Democratic tides so that he may see where the two-party balance stood as of November 1946, and where it stands on the eve of the 1948 presidential race. This will be followed by an examination of the rise and decline of the New Deal tide in the light of political and economic forces.

I shall measure the pulling power of the president’s coattail, the influence of voter interest or apathy as reflected in the turnout at the polls, and the effect of business and agricultural conditions. I shall gauge the extent to which religious preferences sway normal voting habits. Then we shall conduct a statistical tour to selected parts of the country to observe how national or cultural groups respond to the issue of internationalism versus isolationism. I shall note how and where third parties affect the fortunes of the two major parties. Then I shall examine the presidential voting record in the forty-eight states to see which follow a common pattern and which depart from the general trend, and why. On the basis of these findings I shall show which states go as the nation goes, and then draw up a master tabulation to indicate at a glance, first, which states would fall into the Republican and Democratic columns if the nation voted 46, 48, 50, 52, 54, or 56 per cent Democratic; and, second, how many electoral votes each party could expect in each contingency.

I shall take a look at election polls, since the sampling of public opinion is now a generally accepted feature of political analysis and judgment and serves to bring historical trends up to date. I shall note how well they foreshadow later election results. Polling is essentially the art of obtaining from a remarkably small sample an indication as to how the entire population of the country, state, or community reacts to a particular issue or candidate. To illustrate the problem of getting a good cross-section of public opinion, I shall describe how I organized a hypothetical corporation in 1940 with Roosevelt, Wallace, Willkie, McNary, Hoover, and Garner—all expert poll-takers in their home counties—as the regional field staff and board of directors; and then, on the strength of the success of this parent corporation in predicting the 1940 election, how we created two equally successful hypothetical subsidiaries.

Finally we shall synthesize the several political elements studied in this book and launch the reader on his own venture in forecasting the results of the 1948 and subsequent elections. For this purpose we shall supply him with a guide (not a forecast) in the form of a typical tide from 1936 to 1958, with which his own forecasts may be compared. If there are readers who, like me, enjoy prospecting for gold among systematic facts as well as theoretical speculation, they will find appended to this book suggestive materials for such prospecting.
third-party movement, Democratic chances with Truman as a candidate for 1948 took a nosedive as one political issue was heaped upon another in quick succession. The extent of the deterioration is indicated in the next chapter. The relation of this abrupt change in Democratic prospects early in 1948 to this chapter on the use of polls in relation to historical political analyses is this: while historical analyses of political trends and relationships and political polls have their many uses, neither separately nor in combination can they reveal the outcome of an election early in an election year when much depends on the candidates to be selected and on the net effect of the powerful issues that have reared their heads before the election campaigns are set in motion. It is after the conventions have chosen the candidates that the combination of political history and opinion polls find their greatest usefulness in predicting the outcome of elections.

Chapter 14:

1948 and the Incoming Tide

The reader has been promised a summary of the major influences affecting the political tide since 1946 and a long-range projection of the political tide beyond 1948. The developments of 1947 are not difficult to review briefly, but to anticipate the outcome of the 1948 election and the future trend is obviously a venturesome and hazardous undertaking. One doesn't need to stick one's statistical neck out, but there isn't much fun in figures unless we can ride them into the future.

The evidence is clear that the year 1947 will go down in our political history as marking the end of the downward trend of the New Deal tide and the beginning of a new one. What kind of tide would be initiated with the 1948 election, and what course it would take during the decade of the 1950's can only be tentatively suggested by the sketch of a typical two-party tide drawn from the past.

Historians, like Professor A. M. Schlesinger, Sr., of Harvard, read the political record and projected the tide in terms of liberal-
ism and conservatism, promising us the latter as the probable trend of the immediate future. On the other hand, I project the political tide more specifically in terms of a two-party balance, which does not necessarily imply that conservatism will dominate the 1950's. That balance will be determined by the success or failure attending the efforts of the party in power, Republican or Democratic, to smooth out the business cycle without creating unemployment and to establish peace. Should a strong third-party movement develop in 1948 and after, our history suggests that its most probable effect would be to revitalize the political alliances of the early 1930's that were weakened during the last half of the New Deal period and fell apart in 1947-8.

My summary of developments in the first year following Republican return to power in Congress will indicate why I conclude that 1948-7 may mark a turning point. To begin with, numerous signs at the end of 1947 pointed to another presidential term for the Democrats, the fifth in succession since 1928. The popularity of President Truman had risen sharply from the low point to which it had fallen in 1946. Independent voters, whose failure to go to the polls in 1946 helped to restore control of both houses of Congress to the Republicans, showed at the beginning of 1948 considerably greater preference for the Democrats than for the Republicans. The crisis in prices had not been solved. One of the major political questions of the day: "Whom will the voters blame for the postwar rise in prices and living costs?" was being answered in opinion polls and local elections. The Republican Congress was apparently blamed more than the Democratic President. The term "communism," with which Democratic candidates were unjustly labeled in the 1946 congressional elections, particularly in Catholic communities, was being applied instead in 1948 to a convenient new scapegoat, the third-party movement.

Business conditions in 1947 were good; production, employment, and profits high. This did not mean that many voters were not bothered by bread-and-butter problems. Nearly three fourths of them, according to the polls, found it more difficult to balance their personal and family budgets in January 1948 than in January 1947. Fifty-eight per cent of the farmers, who as a class were generally assumed to have fared unusually well under war and postwar high agricultural prices, indicated greater difficulty in meeting their bills in 1947 than in 1944. Labor unions complained that the Taft-Hartley Act had deprived them of the equality in bargaining with management that they enjoyed under the New Deal Wagner Act, and announced plans to raise funds for political action against 200 Congressmen who had voted for the Taft-Hartley bill.

There could be no doubt that the Republicans in 1947 had failed to hold the gains made in 1946. Practically all the special congressional elections during the year, and state and municipal elections in November as well, signified a Democratic revival. For example, in the Second Congressional District in Wisconsin only 36 per cent of the two-party vote went to the Democratic candidate in 1946, but in a special election in 1947 he received 49 per cent. The Democrat lost by a small margin, but his party had improved its position by 13 per cent of the total vote in one year. Another is the special election in the Third District of Washington in 1947. Although the Democratic candidate, ex-Congressman Savage, lost by 1 per cent, his party had gained 3 percentage points since 1946 and 6 points since the 1942 elections. His defeat was erroneously attributed to the charge of communism leveled against him and also against Henry Wallace, who campaigned in his behalf. A more likely reason was the failure of the Democratic organization to get out the vote: only 63,000 votes contrasted with 111,000 in 1944. The 1947 turnout was about as small as in 1942; more nearly normal participation would have elected the Democratic candidate.

The 1947 Democratic revival was evident even in city elections. In Indiana, of about one hundred cities more than half elected Democratic mayors in 1947 compared with only a fourth in 1937 and 1942. In Pennsylvania more than half of a selected list of thirty-one cities elected Democratic mayors in 1947, only about a fourth in the previous two elections. These special congressional and city elections and the public-opinion polls all told the same, and to most people surprising, story that had a presidential election been held at the beginning of 1948 the Democratic candidate, in a straight two-party contest, would have won with about as large a popular margin as Roosevelt's in 1940 and 1944. According to one national poll, the Democratic candidate would have obtained 52 per cent of the votes of white-collar workers, 58 per cent of the farmers, 61 per cent of the manual workers, and 43 per
that of 1944—has been marked by a subnormal turnout. The wartime reasons for that subnormal vote had largely disappeared in 1948. Fewer than a million and a half persons of voting age were in the armed services at the beginning of 1948, compared with over 10 million in 1944. Many war plants had been closed down or put on a peacetime basis, and war workers had either returned to their former communities or established themselves in new ones. Compared with 50 million votes cast in 1940, the normal vote for 1948, based on past participation and population increase, could reasonably be estimated at well above 55 million.

All these indications prior to the Democratic troubles of early 1948 nominating conventions could be taken as pointing to victory for the Democratic candidate in 1948, with a popular vote of 54 to 55 per cent—in a two-party contest. Such a vote could return the Democrats to power in the lower house, giving them about 55 per cent of the seats.

The remarkable recovery in Democratic popularity in 1947 was followed by an even more abrupt reversal in the first four months of 1948. The nosedive came in the three months after the third party revealed considerable strength in New York and other metropolitan centers. In that brief period there were concentrated also a number of politically potent developments. There was further deterioration in our relations with Russia as revealed by the President and the Secretary of State, and the President proposed legislation to increase military expenditures, to institute universal military training, and to again draft young men into the armed services. The President also sent a message to the Congress asking for legislation on civil liberties which aroused the South to talk of bolting the Democratic Party. The United States, having secured a United Nations decision to partition Palestine into two states, one Arab and one Jewish, reversed its position and thereby alienated not only Jewish voters in metropolitan areas and elsewhere but many others who saw in that reversal a severe blow to the United Nations.

For political forecasters a situation of this sort called for patience to allow the boiling political pot to quiet down to a normal pre-convention simmer.

The Gallup polls revealed the effects of this political turmoil in a decline in Truman's popularity in relation to possible Re-
publican candidates. In Truman-Dewey-Wallace and Truman-Taft-Wallace polls in January, Truman outran both Dewey and Taft. In a similar poll in April, Truman outran only Taft and lost ground in relation to both Dewey and Taft. The third-party candidate in the Truman-Dewey-Wallace polls showed a slight gain from 6 to 7 per cent, and in the Truman-Taft-Wallace polls he gained two percentage points from 7 to 9. Of the combined Truman-Dewey sentiment, Truman had 53 per cent in January and only 45 per cent in April, and in the combined Truman-Taft sentiment, Truman had 62 per cent in January and only 54 per cent in April, a loss of 8 percentage points in three months.

By April 1948 it was common to hear that the Democratic Party was going to pieces. Democratic political leaders and other supporters of the Democratic Party in the South, in the large cities, and in various organizations were demanding a new Democratic candidate for 1948.

When so much is in flux statistical devices for short-range forecasts must be held in abeyance. It is wiser to lay out the long-range most probable political trend in the form of a typical political tide. From this we may judge whether the Democrats surmounted their 1948 pre-convention difficulties, or the Republicans capitalized on them sufficiently to counteract all the 1947 indications that their 1946 victory would be short-lived.

That the Republican victory in 1946 could be short-lived is suggested by my analysis of the course a typical political tide could take in the decade beginning with 1948.

In view of the irregular political record, what do we mean by a typical tide, and how does one project it into the future?

It is true that the record, as measured in chart 1 by Democratic membership in the House, does not represent a smooth or regular course. Throughout this book, in fact, I have emphasized the causes of some of the greatest irregularities. For the past hundred years there have been only three distinct alternating periods of power for each major party—hardly a sufficient basis, perhaps, for establishing the contours of a typical tide and projecting a normal long-time pattern. In spite of so many irregularities and so few cases, can we discover the characteristics of a typical political tide? We can get around the irregularities to some extent by the commonly used statistical device of averaging.

Let the reader examine once more the record in chart 1 and

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What are the features of this average or typical tide? From a peak in 1935 it declines sharply for ten or eleven years (to about 1946); remains relatively unchanged for two congressional elections; then, about twenty-two years later (1956), rises sharply to another peak. It is rather amazing to find how closely the downward trend of the 1936-46 portion of the tide has paralleled the average of the three previous tides. It suggests a brief rather than a prolonged period of Republican dominance. It shows that the 1946 Republican gains were greater than normal for a midterm election at the bottom of a Democratic tide and that the recovery in Democratic strength in 1947 is in line with the upper level of the typical tide beyond its (1946) mid-point.
This, the beginning of 1948, is about as far as we can travel with the record. Beyond this point the political tide may be charted in several directions.

The projected course of our typical tide is not so much a forecast as a stimulus to political speculation. It is not to be taken as anything more than one of several possible developments in the two-party or three-party fight for control of the 81st to 85th Congresses. It is not a prediction of the shape of political things to come.

The first point to observe before we begin on our own long-range speculations is that my analysis of the two-party tide and its projection is not the same as that of Professor Schlesinger's referred to in Chapter 2. Professor Schlesinger says:

... energies greater than those residing in parties have swayed popular sentiment and bent Congresses and Presidents to their will. The nature and import of these energies become clearer if one forgets the much publicized role of presidential Administrations, masterful personalities, and political parties, and considers only the course of governmental policy as recorded in legislation and executive decrees. Certain trends immediately become manifest. Jefferson once observed that “Men, according to their constitutions, and the circumstances in which they are placed, differ honestly in opinion.” One group, he said, “fear the people, and wish to transfer all power to the higher classes of society”; the other “consider the people as the safest depository of power in the last resort; they cherish them, therefore, and wish to leave in them all the power to the exercise of which they are competent.” He called these contrasting attitudes Tory and Whig, aristocratic and democratic, Federalist and Republican. Today we should call them conservative and liberal.

Any scrutiny of American political development discloses the alternate predominance of these opposing points of view. A period of concern for the rights of the few has been followed by one of concern for the wrongs of the many. Emphasis on the welfare of property has given way to emphasis on human welfare. An era of inaction—for stability generally suits the purposes of the conservatives—has usually been succeeded by one of rapid movement. Change in itself is, however, no index of purpose; the important thing is direction, whether it is towards less democracy or more.

These swings of opinion can be plotted with reasonable definiteness. In some instances, historians might quarrel as to the exact terminal years, but at most such differences would involve only slight alterations. The analysis cannot be pushed back of 1785 because not until then did anything resembling national political movements exist in America.
Thereafter, according to Professor Schlesinger, there were the following ten periods ending with 1931. The eleventh he predicted would end in 1947–8 and the twelfth in 1963.

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<th>Periods in American Politics</th>
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<tr>
<td>PERIODS OF LEFTWARD TRENDS</td>
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<td>1. 1765–87</td>
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<td>3. 1801–16</td>
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<td>5. 1829–41</td>
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<td>7. 1861–69</td>
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<td>9. 1901–18</td>
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The periods in the column on the left are called by Professor Schlesinger “Leftward Trends.” I have, therefore, given the periods in the other column a comparable title.

The latest cycle of liberalism in this tabulation, 1931–47, approximates closely the period covered by what I have called the New Deal tide. But Professor Schlesinger’s projection calls for this tide to be succeeded by a cycle of conservatism—a prediction that must be taken with caution. His tide for 1947–63 may not err materially in duration, but it could err greatly in character. While he predicts an era of conservatism, my studies suggest that the opposite is possible, that the 1950’s might again see the dominance of liberalism in the national government.

What are some of the possible developments of the future that will affect the shape and character of the incoming political tide?

The first possibility, suggested by the records, is the election of a Democratic congress and president, but if a third party enters the field, one of the results might be a Democratic congress and a Republican president. Either of these possibilities could take place without either major party in the lower house having much more than 55 per cent of the membership. This would be no improvement over the near stalemate in the Congresses of 1942, 1944, and 1946.

What, in the meantime, might be happening to the price and business situation? Assuming no recession in 1948–9, but a continuation of high prices and great domestic and foreign demand for our goods, Congress undoubtedly will be called upon, as it was in 1947–8, to provide legislation for an orderly control and adjustment of a highly inflated price level.

Now suppose the third-party movement has gained strength as an almost evenly balanced Congress continues to withhold the necessary price legislation and authority for planning for the maintenance of full employment. In that situation, the congressional elections might return fewer Democrats to the 82nd Congress, partly because it will be a mid-term election (following our assumed Democratic gains in 1948), and partly because of the assumed third-party inroads. If the balance in Congress is thus further narrowed, the chances of legislative action proposed by either party to assure economic stability would be further reduced.

If in that impasse leaders in some of our basic industries assumed that the hour had come for the great postwar depression—that all the long and short so-called business cycles as popularized in 1947, the 54-year, the 18-year, the 9-year, the 3-year—were at last converging to produce a major depression in 1952, then we would see action. And if their fears actually fathered their actions and prices collapsed and unemployment mounted, the stalemate in the Congress of 1950 would give way to action as expeditious as in 1932.

The reader may set out a different sequence of political and economic events and he may wish to add assumptions with regard to international developments, which I have purposely refrained from doing. He may then wish to check his speculations with the second half of the typical tide projected from 1948 to 1960, which I present not as the political tide of the future, but as a reasonably likely one. If the actual course of Democratic strength in the lower house of Congress were to parallel the rising phase of the typical tide as it has the downward phase from 1936 to 1948, the Democrats—or their equivalents—will control more than 70 per cent of the seats in the lower house and dominate our political life during the last half of the 1950’s.

Having thus laid out the shape and direction of the incoming tide, who will most likely sponsor it, and what shall we name it?

We are bound to hear more and more about the similarity between the political developments in 1948–56 and those of 1846–56, when the several varieties of Whigs and Abolitionists, and the Know-Nothing and Free Soil parties formed the Republican Party. Presumably the analogy will be used to suggest that out of the several liberal and progressive groups of 1948 will emerge
a revamped party under the Democratic or some other name. If that is so, it has certain implications with regard to the support of labor, farm, and other organizations. Labor unions entered politics vigorously in 1924 in support of the La Follette third party and reached, perhaps, the peak of political participation at the high point of the New Deal tide. Their preparations for 1948 and later campaigns are on a much larger scale than ever before. If labor and agricultural groups discover their mutual interest in a balanced relation between agricultural prices and wages, they might again support the Democratic Party or its 1950 model, as they did in the 1930's, and as they did a century ago when they endorsed the new Republican Party.

The most appropriate slogan of the dominant party in the next political tide, if history repeats, should bear some relation to the hopes and long-time aspirations of the majority of voters, particularly of the 1930's and 1940's. At the turn of this century, when labor was no longer welcomed in Republican councils, men made their way in political life with promises of a full dinner-pail but no promise that the dinner-pail would be full three hundred and sixty-five days of the year. Then came Theodore Roosevelt's Square Deal for business, labor, agriculture, and the professions. The next political era centered on Woodrow Wilson's New Freedom from trusts, monopolies, and the money power. After World War I, the brief interest in normalcy gave way to unwarranted faith in the continuation of the New Era of the 1920's. The inadequate measures for agricultural aid, labor's concern with evidences of technological unemployment, slow progress in social legislation, the free use of surplus profits in rigging the stock market, all brought on the great depression of the 1930's with its vast unemployment and its remedial political tide, the New Deal.

The New Deal era was concerned first with war on unemployment and then with war on foreign aggressors. Full employment was in part restored by the New Deal programs and in full by the war.

But in 1948 more than half of the nation—business, farmers, labor, and the professions—expected a business depression to develop in the immediate future and hoped their government would take the necessary action to prevent unemployment or mitigate its consequences. Many of the resource-development programs that were urged before the war and during 1946–8