

# ELECTING A PRESIDENT

## How it is Done in the U.S.

THIS is presidential election year in the United States, and for some time the fact has cast its shadows before, over national and international politics. This month and next the national party conventions will be held to choose the candidates. The election itself, together with an election for one-third of the Senate and the whole of the House of Representatives, will be held on November 2 (the first Tuesday after the first Monday in that month). Here, in the form of question and answer, are set out the main facts of the choice of candidates for President and of the method of election.

*What are the legal qualifications for a candidate?*

The President of the United States must be a "natural-born citizen," resident in the country for 14 years, and at least 35 years old.

*How is he elected?*

In theory the President is elected indirectly by a vote of the whole nation, through members of the Electoral College. In practice this amounts to direct election, because all the members of the College, who are called electors, are pledged beforehand to vote for one or other candidate. When the citizen votes for electors in his particular State, he knows with absolute certainty that he is voting for the Republican or Democratic candidates, or the candidate of any other party. In some States this pledge is enforced by law, but in most it has been established by custom. The electors chosen by this popular vote meet in their State capitals in December, and cast their votes. The votes of all the electors of all the States are opened and counted in the presence of both Houses of Congress early in January. But the result of the election is known on the night of the popular poll in November, or the day after.

*How did the United States come to adopt this peculiar procedure?*

The framers of the Constitution, who were exceptionally able men, set up the Electoral College with the deliberate purpose of taking the actual election of President and Vice-President (who are elected simultaneously) out of the hurly-burly of popular politics. They had the idea of a select body of citizens meeting in quiet and choosing, without fear or favour, the best men in the country for these two exalted positions. However, this ideal of the Constitution-makers didn't last any time. Almost at once the electors chosen by popular vote came to be nominees of parties, and this has been the condition ever since.

*How is the Electoral College composed?*

The composition is such that the more populous States hold the main power. Each State chooses a number of electors equal to the whole number of Congressmen (Senate and House of

Representatives) to which it is entitled. The number of members of the House of Representatives from any State is determined by its population, but the number of Senators is fixed—two to each State. According to the latest figures, New York State has 47 Congressmen, and therefore 47 electors; Pennsylvania 35, Illinois 28, Ohio and California 25, Texas 23, Michigan 19; and so on down to several States, including Delaware, Vermont and Wyoming, which have only three. It is, therefore, extremely important that a party should



capture all or some of the States that send a large contingent to the Electoral College. New York is the chief "key" State; the party that carries it gets 47 votes in the Electoral College. Bear in mind that under the system of voting a party takes the whole Electoral College vote of the State with only a bare

majority of popular votes. A party can win the whole College vote of New York or Pennsylvania with a majority of one. There may be a big disparity between the aggregate of popular votes and the strength in the Electoral College. For example, in 1944 Roosevelt polled 25,602,505 votes and Dewey 22,006,278, a majority for Roosevelt of just over three and a-half million; but Roosevelt got 432 votes in the Electoral College against his opponent's 99.

*It is possible then for a President to be elected on a minority vote?*

Yes. Presidents Hayes and Harrison were beaten by their principal rivals in the popular vote, but won a larger number of electoral votes. In the critical election of 1860, which led up to the Civil War, the Democrats split and put up two candidates against Lincoln, the Republican. Lincoln obtained the largest number of popular votes, and was elected, but he did not obtain an absolute majority.

*Is there any limit to the number of parties?*

No. There have been many parties besides the two main ones. For example, Eugene Debs was Socialist candidate for the Presidency five times. But no third party has ever won an election, or gone within striking distance of it. What third parties do is to split votes and influence policy. Some of their ideas are incorporated in the platforms of other parties. They are closely watched by the two chief parties.

*What is the franchise? Can everybody vote?*

In theory everybody can vote, men and women, but in practice there are exceptions. It may seem curious to British minds, but the franchise is a State affair, not Federal, and States differ in their qualifications. This goes back to the foundation of the Republic, when Federation was achieved only by making a compromise between the Federal idea and the very strong feeling for State rights. The States are regarded as partners in the government of the country, not subordinates to



## KEEP

## FOODSTUFFS

## PROTECTED—

### FROM THE CUSTOMER:

Disease spread by food does not always start with the cook or waitress. The customer may infect food by coughs or sneezes. He may have dangerous germs on his hands.

Food should be stored and displayed so that the customer cannot handle it or spray it with droplet infection from coughs and sneezes. Glass fronts and tops do this effectively.

### FROM DUST, FLIES, COCKROACHES, RATS AND MICE:

These can all infect our food. Food on display should be under glass so that dust and flies are excluded. Sweeping of dining rooms and kitchens should not be done while food is being prepared and served.

Storage of food must be under cover, and constant war waged on flies, rats and mice, and vermin.

### FROM INFECTIOUS DISEASE AND SEPTIC INFECTIONS:

By seeing that people whose daily work is to handle food are healthy and well. Those who have infectious diseases, or have them in their homes should not handle food. Neither should those with septic conditions of hands, or elsewhere on the body; with boils or septic pimples, or those with common colds or influenza. By leaving foodstuffs alone they protect it from infection.

### FROM MANUAL CONTACT:

Washing hands cannot be done every time food or drink is handled, so avoid manual contact as far as possible. Use a fork, spatula, or knife to serve or pick up foodstuffs. Keep fingers away from the rims of cups and glasses and the food surfaces of dishes, knives, forks and spoons.

*(This is the THIRD of a series of advertisements issued by the Department of Health, in the interests of safe and clean food handling.)*

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