

POST-MORTEM AT A POLLING-BOOTH

(continued from previous page)

"But radio is here. It is no use refusing to use it," said the serious young man.

"I agree: we'll just have to learn to use it," said the woman. "Most speakers don't yet know how."

* * *

A PARSON had drifted up to the group and was listening-in. "What I like about listening-in to the radio by the fireside—that is when your wife will allow you to listen—is that you do get a better chance to judge the issues put before you in an unemotional frame of mind."

Having delivered himself of this, the parson drifted off again.

A YOUNG man came out of the hall and joined the group.

"Hullo, young fellow," said the older man. "Just been exercising your vote? Your first, I suppose? How did it feel to have reached an age when you're old enough to elect someone to govern you?"

"Blowed if I can see what there is to make all the fuss about," said the young voter. "Talk about anti-climax! Silly, I suppose, but I went in there feeling kind of exalted."

The serious young man became interested, and listened for what the young voter was about to say.

"You know, I couldn't help remembering that this high privilege and sacred duty which now became mine for the first time was the very essence of democracy—something which my forefathers once cut off a king's head to secure, and which my friends are now fighting to retain, and for which I may have to do a bit of fighting on my own account. And what did it all boil down to—taking up a pencil and crossing out the names of people I didn't like at all and leaving in the name of one man I didn't like much better. Now I know what they mean by 'Democracy'!"

"Oh, no, it's not as bad as all that," said the older man. "You've been taking it all a bit too seriously."

"Why the devil shouldn't I take it seriously—especially as all the politicians, all the parsons, and all the editors in the country have been telling me for weeks past that I must?"

"And especially as I may have to go and get killed for it," the young voter went on. "No, I don't mind admitting that I've listened to a lot of the broadcast speeches, I've gone to about half-a-dozen meetings, and I've at least skimmed through all the election pamphlets that came to our house."

"And now you don't think there's much to make a fuss about in democracy?" asked the older man.

"No, I didn't really mean that. It's just that voting seems such a little thing to do when you actually come to do it, and when you realise that the choice of candidates, which is just as important, is something you've got no say in. But if I hadn't got the right to vote, or if I lost it, I expect I'd kick up plenty of fuss till I got it back—and that's the real test."



"No malice in the old days"

"As one who's never taken an active interest in an election campaign before, what's your opinion of the respective merits of listening to election addresses on the air and actually going to meetings?" asked the serious young man. The young voter seemed flattered at being asked for his opinion. He reflected a moment, and then began confidently:

"I'd answer that by saying that if democracy is going to mean anything at all, if it's going to mean more than just crossing out names on a piece of paper, people have got to keep interested in politics. And if we aren't interested enough to go out to hear what our candidates have to say for themselves, then God help democracy!"

"But you said you listened-in to some of the addresses yourself?"

"So I did, but I also went to hear all my candidates. And I'm quite convinced that two hours is too long for any speech, especially when you aren't there to hear the interjections or make any yourself, and when you can't ask questions. In the end, I became just a fireside nark—just listening for the speakers to make slips of the tongue or tie themselves up in ungrammatical sentences—like the North Island Mayor who drew attention to Sid Holland's profit-scaring scheme."

"That's nothing," said the serious young man. "You should have heard Sid himself; he got a bit excited and worked up to this climax: 'We're going to Sweep Away Democracy! . . . I mean Bureaucracy.' And then there was Bob's beauty—hospitals full of men 'wounded, torn and quartered!'"

JUST at this point, the serious young man noticed an acquaintance of the older generation, a lawyer, getting out of his car, and obviously on his way to the booth. So he went over and opened up on him.

"What do you think of this election? Do you think broadcasting was a help or a hindrance?"

"Well, I wouldn't say the wireless has altered our elections for the better," said the lawyer, when the journalist had got him on to the rails. "You want to know what I'd say if a man came up to me and started complaining that this election was bitter and vicious and there'd been too much backbiting. Well, I think I'd agree with him. Because I

don't remember bad tempers and bad behaviour in the old days. I was starting to take notice in the 'nineties, and we used to have heckling then, but it was pure fun, and it wasn't often done out of nastiness."

"You don't think you're forgetting the worst things and remembering the best?"

"No, because it's the same decline that you've got in other things—conversation, entertainments, and so on. When there were no picture-shows and a theatrical company came, say, three times a year, people cultivated the art of conversation and acting and even oratory. Naturally an election was a great event in those conditions."

"Tell me, this time did you listen to the radio appeals or go to the meetings?"

"I did both. But it struck me that none of the speakers knew how to use the radio. Their speeches had no form at all. To have form you've got to condense and compress—you've got to trim your sails right back; you've got to weed and prune your work just as you have in any other art, if your speech is going to come to anything. But I think the worst fault was what was done, or not done, before the candidates even cleared their throats—I mean, I think the party candidates should all have been allocated special subjects which they could exhaust. As it was, instead of the candidate exhausting his subject, you had the subject exhausting the candidate. You had each one trying to cover the whole platform instead of just sticking to his own hobby-horses. What do you think, Wilkins?"

WILKINS was a business man, no longer young, who had joined the group.

"I think the trouble is that people are too apathetic these days. I don't know if it's the weather, although this year it certainly didn't help, or if it's the broadcasting or what. But the broadcasting did have a dampening influence, don't you think? You know there's a lot of the snob in most people—they would sooner stay home and listen to the Honourable So-and-So than go down the street to hear and help—and help, mind you, even if it's only by their presence—the up-and-coming man who's not so well known. Then, too, lots of the married men, although they won't admit it, couldn't muster an excuse for going out. The good lady of the house said to her husband 'if you're interested in politics, you can listen to the radio.' And as far as they were concerned, that was that. But even those who turned out for the meetings didn't seem to have the same



almost."

"But our lawyer friend here says that there was no malice in election fights in the old days; only fun."

"Well, I'm not going to argue with a lawyer."

WHAT'S YOUR HURRY?



The new and fascinating GAME that all New Zealand will soon be playing. Ensures evenings filled with thrills and action for your family and friends. It's great fun and excitement capturing Tanks, Aeroplanes, Air-bases, Forts, Infantry Divisions—winning Naval battles, controlling the English Channel. The French didn't, but maybe YOU can hold the Maginot Line. Anyone can learn to play "SUPREMACY" in a few minutes. For 2 to 7 players. The coloured moulded miniature aeroplanes, tanks, forts, battleships, guns, etc., used in the game add to its appeal. Price 19/6, post free, complete with all equipment and printed instructions. Send for your set to-day, and be the first in your district to introduce "SUPREMACY"—the game no one can resist.



Obtainable from all leading stores and book-sellers, or post free from the Lamphouse.

To . . . **ELECTRIC LAMPHOUSE Ltd.**

11 MANNERS STREET, WELLINGTON.

Please post me a set of SUPREMACY, for which I enclose 19/6.

NAME

ADDRESS

TOWN

..... L.I