

They Watch the Graph on the Wall

By JOSEPH NORTH

The first thing, I would say, that strikes you at the Flynn headquarters is the spirit. You have scarcely entered the large, spare room, so like the many bare rooms of Labor you remember through the years, when the hubbub of cheerful, confident voices gets to you.

The assembly of canvassers you encounter range from young men and women, most of them in their prime, the middle-thirties and forties, and some are in late middle age, but this is no boxing match at Madison Square Garden and you can do better at this good work than Archie Moore did in the ring. The shine of victory is in the faces of the people.

They watch the graph on the wall: the figure is heading toward two thousand, fast. There is almost as much to go, and time is running short. One after another tells you earnestly, "Yes we can do it, if only enough people come out to get the signature." No few say, as the housewife who brought her two children to wait while she went out to canvass: "I came at first, more or less opposed to the idea, came out of a sense of duty. Now I am on fire."

One after another tells you there has been no slamming of doors, no hostility or virtually none: the team that has just returned with 20 signatures—a Negro man of thirty, a white in his late fifties—tell you that they knocked on the doors of 80 apartments on Catherine Slip, and were rewarded by the 20 names. One name to each four knocks. And only one person gave them the cold eye. The others, minus one, even when they did not sign, listened respectfully and took the kit of literature.

You are told that the average per canvasser this campaign is four signatures, and they enthusiastically compare that to the Flynn campaign in the Bronx several years back when it was "one to one and a half names per canvasser." Many Doubting Thomases come away exhilarated, yet sobered, wondering why they had been so skeptical only a few days ago. One woman says to you, at the outset when you came in to the headquarters, and later, four hours later, when she returned from her round of duty, "Be sure and write that this is the best way to heal the wounds in the movement."

"Whatever side you're on before, after you come down here and work together, and see the results, you feel the difference disappearing." Her face is intent, desperately in earnest, as she asks you to make this point. For, she insists it is in "action, action on behalf of the people, that will resolve the fight" and you promise her that you will convey her thought to our readers. And that is it.

"On behalf of the people" . . . The success of this signature campaign to date, can be measured by that phrase, which double-talking politicians have worn thin and threadbare. But on the lips of these canvassers it regains its original purity. The team that just returned with 20 names describe, in graphic detail, their argument and the public's response. "Don't overwhelm them with words," the elder said. "Ten minutes is enough. Tell them plain as you can what the campaign about, who Elizabeth Gurley Flynn is, what she did, and what she stands for."

The purpose is the old, traditional right of the minority political party to be heard. "I tell them 'the underdog has a right to his say,' the older of the two recounts," and maybe I shouldn't use the word 'underdog.' But they understand it, and they agree. So I use it."

And what is the underdog's say? It deals with the daily, vital issues of the people to whom they speak. The Puerto Rican voter living in jammed decrepit rooms, paying



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high rents for inadequate shelter, responds to the Flynn pledge to fight for better housing. As do the Negroes. "We heard the Republican and Democratic candidates make their pledges, and the plaster is still falling from the ceilings." The Puerto Ricans, often as not, take the canvassers on a tour around their apartments, thrusting an accusing finger up at the cracks in the walls, and, as one young Puerto Rican woman told this couple of canvassers. "The others did nothing. If this lady will fight for us on this, here is my name."

What is happening in Arkansas is especially near to the Negro voter. One family looked over the literature, listened to the arguments, but were loathe to set their names down. But the father, thumbing through the leaflets, noticed the name of Benjamin J. Davis as an endorser. He passed the leaflet to his wife, placing his finger on Davis' name. "He's for her," he said, "and if she is good enough for him, she is good enough for me." The wife agreed, and both put their names down.

That Elizabeth Gurley Flynn is a Communist has no horrendous meaning to most of those visited. "No doors slam," the young Negro man said. "We tell what she has done for labor through her life, why she has gone to prison, and what the Supreme Court has said about it." They briefly tell of the various judgements of the High Court on this score, and it is readily understood. After all, this is the Lower East Side where no few residents, especially the older Jewish population, remember the trampling hoofs of horses, and the imprisonments, as the garment unions were being built. And the others, the newcomers, know soon enough that those who walk the path of social righteousness often tread the 10 short strides of the prison cell. Prison is no blinding revelation to them.

So the signatures consist of Jewish names, as well as those of Puerto Rican and Negro origin. And the Italian residents here, who live under the identical cracked roofs thaw out and respond warmly when they discover that this woman with the Irish name moved heaven and earth to save the lives of the poor fish-peddler and shoemaker named Vanzetti and Sacco. There are the very concrete,

homely, day-to-day issues that you can see and feel, and there is that other thing that eludes the eye and the touch: the threat of universal destruction, the might of Hydrogen radioactivity, the menace of war. It is not apparent to the naked eye like falling plaster nor can your finger touch it as does the large number of green bills you hand over to the landlord. But the people have learned that the lie is often quicker than the eye: and this mysterious power menaces them all.

"You can't make a speech on all this," the middle-aged canvasser says. "But you can kind of outline it in quick, simple words, and then there is the literature you leave with them. Even with those who don't sign, it is a public education."

And there are other arguments. They knocked on the door and the woman opened it that inch or two the chain on the door permits. "We talked to her through an inch of space," the canvasser smiled. "She was silent until we said, 'Don't you want a woman in the Council? A woman who understands many things quicker than the men in the Council do?' The fingers behind the door reached out for the signature slip, for the pen. And returned it a moment later with her name on it.

"You can tell the truth even through an inch," the young Ne-

gro comments.

So many things happen every day. Like the old Wobbly who came up and said, "Good old Elizabeth, still in there pitching. I listened to her 40 years ago." And he handed over a \$5 bill to accent his signature.

And there was the penniless man in his eighties who belonged once to the Workers Alliance, and way back remembered hearing about Gurley Flynn. He went to his ice-box and brought a five-pound cheese to give to the campaign. "It's all I got I can give," he said. And he thrust it on the canvassers, not unlike the penniless juggler in Anatole Frances' story whom the nuns found performing his act one early morning before the altar, for he had not a sou to his name.

Yes, there is much to inspire down here on Second Avenue most of all it is the spirit, that reminds the old-timer of the petition campaigns for signatures to win unemployment insurance, social security, the right to build unions, the right to live your life without wars.

The folks go at collecting a signature like crusaders storming a rampart. But it is an act of peace, not of war. Each name is an endorsement of life, a repudiation of death.

And all who favor life must go down there on Second Avenue and taste it.

Rally will Ask End of House Witchhunt



TRUMBO

"Abolish the House Committee on Un-American Activities."

This will be the theme of this Friday night's rally in Carnegie Hall under the auspices of the Emergency Civil Liberties Committee.

The rally will be the opening shot in a campaign by the civil liberties group, which will include public meetings throughout the county, a "barnstorming" tour by ECLC executive director Clark Foreman, the encouragement of petitions to Congress, etc.

Friday night's rally will also pay honor to the U. S. Supreme Court for its recent decisions in favor of civil liberties and will hit out at attempts to undo the decisions.

Speakers will include Dalton Trumbo, Hollywood writer who served a year in prison for defying the Un-American Committee, Hugh H. Wilson, professor of policies at Princeton University, and Philip Wittenberg, lecturer in law at Columbia University.

and the American Communist Party has certainly not expelled me. I am still editor of the Daily Worker."

SOVIET THEORETICAL ORGAN CRITICIZES JOHN GATES

The magazine *Kommunist*, the theoretical organ of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, criticizes Daily Worker editor John Gates in its latest issue.

According to a dispatch in the N. Y. Times Saturday, *Kommunist* calls Gates a "revisionist" and a "pseudo-Communist" on the basis of a pre-convention discussion article by him in *Political Affairs* of November, 1956.

The Times dispatch says that the *Kommunist* article, which has not been translated here, accuses Gates of wanting an organization including both supporters and opponents of Marxism-Leninism, based on "anarchistic principles of freedom" from discipline and from fulfillment of party decisions.

The magazine says of the Gates article that he believes the American Communist Party was "created in a period of revolutionary situation, a period that is over for the American working class, which needs an organization suited to the new situation—a non-party political action association."

The magazine also claims that in his article Gates attempted "despite the real situation to show that the danger of a new world war has altogether disappeared inasmuch as all countries have already entered a new era of peaceful co-existence."

The Times queried Gates and

quoted him as calling *Kommunist's* description of him a "distortion." Gates said "It doesn't surprise me that foreign Communists don't understand my views when so many Communists here don't either."

The New York Post also queried Gates and quoted him as saying that when he gets a copy of *Kommunist* and has it translated, he'll reply in full in the Daily Worker.

Asked by the Post if he thought the criticism meant his expulsion from the Party, Gates replied:

"Certainly not. They don't determine who gets expelled. They are merely expressing an opinion." Gates went on to say that his opinions which *Kommunist* purported to describe "are not new. They have been commented on before."

SOVIETS CITE GAINS ON EVE OF 40TH ANNIVERSARY

MOSCOW, Sept. 15.—The Soviet Communist Party's Central Committee published a five-page article today in *Pravda* in connection with the forthcoming 40th anniversary of the Russian Revolution on Nov. 7.

The article predicted eventual doom for capitalism everywhere and its replacement by communism.

The Central Committee portrayed Lenin as the main individual figure in the Revolution. It credited

Stalin with continuing the battle against oppositionists such as Trotsky. However, it reaffirmed the party's determination to do away with the consequences of Stalin's "personality cult" which, it said, did "great harm." It added that a "repetition of Stalin's mistakes" must not take place.

The thesis, summing up achievements since the Russian Revolution on Nov. 7, 1917, was expected to be re-published and discussed at party meetings.

It said that British and American capitalists supported Hitler against the Soviet Union, and later, when they became Allies with the USSR, deliberately delayed the second front, hoping the Germans and Russians would bleed each other by their fighting.

The thesis expressed the belief that capitalism, although once a progressive force, now has become decadent and has reached its "twilight."

Summing up Russia's economic achievements, the paper said the USSR, which was economically backward at the time of the revolution, has become the world's second industrial power.

Stating that the Soviet Union still was second to the U.S. in industrial power, the thesis said the U.S.S.R. is steadily catching up. It said America's per capita production still is about two and one-half times that of the Soviet Union.

30 MILLION VOTE IN WEST GERMANY

BONN, Germany, Sept. 15.—An estimated 30,000,000 West Germans went to the polls to decide whether the 81-year-old chancellor will win a third four-year term.

Adenauer's main opponents were the anti-rearmament Socialists led by Erich Ollenhauer.

Out of a little more than 950,000 votes, counted from widely scattered parts of the country, Adenauer's Christian Democrats and their little German Party Allies had piled up about 497,000 to 343,700 for the opposition Socialists.

The polls closed at 6 p.m. (1 p.m. EDT) with reports from all parts of the country indicating an

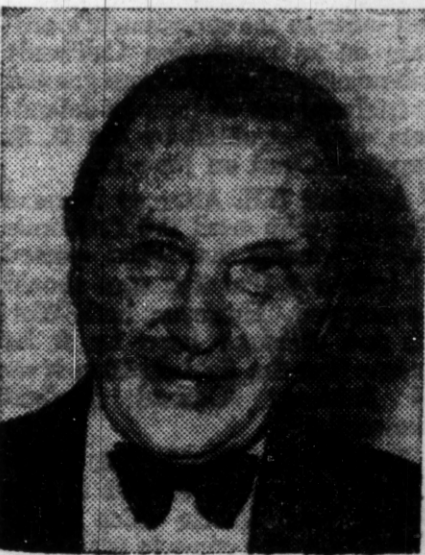
electoral turnout of 80 to 85 percent. Some areas reported more than 90 percent.

The vote in the last general elections, the 1953 "Adenauer landslide," was 86.6 percent.

A spreading influenza epidemic was reported to have kept thousands of voters from the polls in the industrial Ruhr.

Thirteen parties, with a total of 3,000 candidates, were in the race for 494 seats in the Bundestag (lower house of Parliament).

One Army barracks in Hanover reported a 99 percent turnout. A barracks in Hemer ran a relay of ambulances to take soldiers ill with the flu to the polls.



ADENAUER