

The Guys in the Next Bloc

Midwest

By DAVID MURRAY

CHICAGO—It used to be an article of faith that the Middle West was a conservative bastion, inhabited by a people whose emotional outlet was hissing President Roosevelt in the newsreels. This idea has persisted, at least outside the region, and it is high time it was corrected.

For one thing, it is certainly not now reflected at the ballot box. Aside from the fact that Wisconsin reared "Fighting Bob" LaFollette and Progressivism, there is the current list of United States Senators from the Middle West. Minnesota has Mondale and Humphrey (and Eugene McCarthy just went out of office two years ago). Wisconsin has Nelson and Proxmire, two liberal Democrats. Illinois has Stevenson and Percy (the latter is a Republican, although one can get some argument about that in the White House and in Illinois). Indiana has Bayh and Hartke, and Michigan has Hart—all three liberal Democrats.

So if Col. Robert Rutherford McCormick is safely, if not comfortably, in his grave, what can be said about the political mood of the Middle West this autumn? It is certain that alienation and frustration have replaced smugness. In Wisconsin, farmers hit by soaring property assessments have put school taxes in escrow in protest, and have given up trying to exert any influence on a distant unresponsive Federal Government. In Illinois, and particularly in Cook County, the March primary revealed vast voter dissatisfaction with the party establishment, particularly over the issue of trust in government. In Ohio, workers—and especially young workers—demonstrated in interviews this spring little patience with the old institutions: the union is an extension of management, government is not to be believed, police are corrupt.

This could all change, of course, but for the moment there is a deep, sub-surface anger which could upset many hitherto confident political predictions.

David Murray is national correspondent of *The Chicago Sun-Times*.

Southwest

By RONNIE DUGGER

AUSTIN, Tex.—There is something wild about the way people of the Southwest are voting. Ideologically opposed people find common cause in astonishing alternations. Wallace people and McGovern people have a converging resentment of taxes, and government has become a "they": It's us against them. The emerging new Southwest blocs of voters—women, peace people, pot smokers and homosexuals—are just as intense in their causes as the older blocs ever were.

There are trends of social breakdown in personal life; there's a sensing that the billion-dollar corporations are using or killing small business and family farming; there's a feeling the people have lost control of the governing of the country. There are so many causes for discontent, there is so much sensitivity against political deceit from any quarter, left or right; every incumbent has one strike against him, and many have two. Anything can happen, and any politician is foolish who thinks it's as before.

What is going on is not as simplifiable as the old politics, the new politics, revolt, reaction, liberation or Scammon's Middle; it is all of these, it is the unpredictable politics of anger. There is a newness among many Southwest voters, especially the young but not only them, that defies treatment

in the clichés of coalitioning that consider each person as a member of the bloc. This newness, this wildness, is already partly and may more fully become a desire for a general renewal of the country in its defiantly idealistic origins. Our disgrace in the Vietnam war is one large cause of this desire; perhaps the coming bicentennial is another. Candidates like McGovern who can embody and lead not only the anger but also this desire can win on new political foundations that only then will again be subject to description by the conventional terms of coalition.

Ronnie Dugger is publisher of *The Texas Observer*.

East

By RICHARD AURELIO

A few years ago some of Barry Goldwater's strategists dreamed of disconnecting the East from the United States and floating it out to sea. Today, they're not so sure.

In a nation becoming more homogenized, the East is losing its distinction as an uncommonly liberal section of the country. No longer as distinguishable in political thought as it once was, it seems likely in 1972 voting patterns to be a mirror image of other sections of the country outside the South.

It is still more metropolitan, more ethnic oriented, more media-saturated and more exposed to different points of view than other parts of the country. But all that merely makes the Easterner feel more sophisticated and more liberal while he thinks and is voting more conservatively.

There is no doubt that the current political climate in the East benefits President Nixon. Senator McGovern's hope of achieving a balanced share of the Eastern vote depends on how successful he is in the next few weeks in convincing voters that the racial fears and economic and personal insecurities which have driven them to the right can better be solved by drastic and daring changes in the way our system works.

One trait still remaining in the Easterner's mystique is his ability to change his values and life style overnight. The high mobility rate in the East suggests this willingness to embark on bold new adventures, if sufficiently aroused. To date, however, there has been very little arousing.

Richard Aurelio, former deputy mayor of New York City and campaign manager for Mayor Lindsay, now heads a "corporate communication" company.

South

By REG MURPHY

ATLANTA—The ancient racial demagoguery of our forefathers' time is not enough to win Southern political campaigns now. The days of packing the one-gallus farmers into the courthouse squares for down-home segregationist harangues are gone as the only method of winning elections.

The reason is that the Southern electorate has changed dramatically. Education levels are higher than they were in the one-room tarpaper schoolhouses on the dusty clay roads. The immigration of middle-class Americans from the rest of the country has had its impact.

And the blacks have registered in the little courthouses where the Confederate soldiers stand graven in stone. How they have registered is told by statistics from the Voter Education Project: From 1.4 million in the year

when John Kennedy won the Presidential election, the number has increased to 3.5 million. In Mississippi, for one dramatic example, the black voter registration has increased from 22,000 in 1960 to more than 300,000 today.

Better educated young voters, migrants from the rest of the country, higher black registration—all these have changed the electorate.

So has the status of women. Southern belles were supposed to be shallow as birdbaths. They have come down off their pedestals and begun to organize for their own cause.

The racial antagonisms remain strong, but probably not stronger than in the rest of the country. The Southern voters simply have begun to behave more like most other American voters.

The best Southern strategy would be to tell the rest of the nation that the civil rights laws applied in Dixie are going to be endorsed in all fifty states.

Reg Murphy is editor of *The Atlanta Constitution*.

West

By MICHAEL HARRIS

SAN FRANCISCO — On the West Coast, even Orange County is no longer reliable. After John G. Schmitz was elected to the state legislature eight years ago, he was asked why he had told the voters he was a member of the John Birch Society. "I had to do something to win the liberal vote in Orange County," he replied cheerfully.

If there is no certainty in Orange County, there can be no certainty anywhere on the ticket-splitting West Coast. If there is a swing in any direction, it is toward the center, with Republicans confident of picking up new strength for the Presidential ticket in liberal areas and Democrats believing that even a Nixon landslide could not keep them from winning at least four of California's five new Congressional seats.

Mr. Schmitz is now the American party candidate for President after being defeated for re-election to Congress in last June's Presidential primary.

The Southern California county with a population of 1.4 million started changing its rigid politics in 1970 when thousands of fiercely conservative aerospace engineers and technicians found themselves drawing unemployment insurance or even welfare. It showed at the polls.

Michael Harris is a political writer for The San Francisco Chronicle.
