

Dewey's Peculiar Position

Thomas E. Dewey got the Republican nomination for president not because either the party machine or the delegates really wanted him but because the spring primaries and the public opinion polls showed that he was far in the lead over any other contender among the Republican rank and file. Why this popularity for Dewey, a man whom the vast majority of the people of the United States have never seen and whom they do not know well in any way?

The reason is not that Dewey is governor of New York. In his first term he has evidently been making a satisfactory job of it but nothing sensational. No, the same reason which won him the presidential nomination is why he is governor of New York—the picture, the image formed and imprinted on the public mind of Dewey the gang-buster, the man who as district attorney in Manhattan jailed the racketeers. Taste for gangster movies is an indication of the amount of public appeal in the subject of criminals and how to deal with them. Dewey was a spectacular and successful prosecutor. It is this which gave him a national reputation.

Nothing in Dewey's political, as contrasted with his legal, experience or in his personality would in itself have elevated him to the post of challenger of Franklin Roosevelt. Personally, Dewey is largely devoid of magnetism. Governor Bricker of Ohio, a rival for the nomination, who was finally chosen for the vice-presidential race, has infinitely more popular appeal, even if it is of an old-fashioned and superficial kind. Dewey tends to be cold and remote. It is his brain rather than his heart which has advanced him thus far in his career.

There is no doubt of Dewey's intellectual capacity. That was revealed in his record as prosecuting attorney and has been confirmed since then. What Dewey lacks most, however, is political experience, except for his brief term as governor. He is devoid of first-hand knowledge of even national public affairs, to say nothing of the international problems which plague the world today. At 42, he has the vitality of youth but, valuable as that quality is, much more is needed to cope with the complexity of a United States engaged in a war all over the globe and facing the prospect of a post-war world, rising out of the conflict, which in every field of life, including the economic, social and political, will cry out for wisdom and experience.

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