



The Best of WILL ROGERS' Political Wisecracks

Written in the '20s and '30s, they're wise and witty—and timely as today's newspaper. "You take a Democrat and a Republican," wrote the famed humorist, "and you keep them both out of office and I bet they turn out to be good friends and maybe make useful Citizens"

June 4, 1920
I HAVE been asked to cover the Republican Convention, to write something funny. All you have to do to write something funny about a Republican Convention is just tell what happens. The Convention is held in Chicago. Chicago is located just North of the U.S. I am well acquainted with the American Consul there. Chicago holds the record for Murders and robberies and Republican Conventions.

The Convention started off with a setback. A carload of wine billed for Chicago for "Medical Purposes" got held up.

The Democrats are investigating slush funds. If they can find where it comes from they want theirs.

June 7, 1920
 They called in a Professional pray-er as none of the Politicians present knew how. Of course Will Hays (Republican National Chairman) has told him what to pray for. A great many of the leading Republicans were against having the Prayer as

they didn't think it necessary this year but, to add variety to an otherwise monotonous show, they decided to leave it in.

Will Hays seemed quite relieved at the end of the Prayer when he heard no applause, as he said, "You never can tell what a Republican will do."

June 11, 1920
 I phoned Will Hays. "Why don't some of them say something?" He said, "Well, I guess they have told all they know about Wilson."

I said, "Why surely some of all these thousands of Republicans must know of him poisoning a well or dynamiting an orphan asylum or something."

Prohibition has raised the price of votes. Votes that used to cost a dozen 5 cent beers are now selling for a four dollar bottle of hair tonic. And the tough part of it is they are no better votes.

(The Republicans nominated Senator Warren G. Harding of Ohio for their Presidential candidate and Governor Calvin Coolidge of Massachusetts for his running mate.)

June 14, 1920
 Only two detrimental things have come out since Nomination in Harding's whole record. One was his middle name, Gamaliel, and the other he used to play a slide trombone in a country band. Musical circles in Washington are now looking towards a big revival.

Ohio claims they are due a President as they haven't had one since Taft. Look at the United States, they haven't had one since Lincoln.

June 15, 1920
 When I learned that President Wilson was not going to the Democratic WeeGee Convention at San Francisco I decided to go to the White House where the orders would be phoned out. The Pres. and I sat at the phone listening.

After the Chairman had finally given out, I woke President Wilson up and asked him how he liked the speech.

The President said, "It was all right but he left out part of it."



White House hopefuls may come, and White House hopefuls may go, but this much is sure: politics and politicians go on forever. No one knew this better than the late Will Rogers, and over a decade and a half, including four campaign years in which the major parties battled for the Presidential prize, the great American humorist directed his gentle but devastating wit with fine impartiality at the candidates, platforms and conventions of the passing political scene. Will's bipartisan fun-poking is as pointed today, in the election year 1952, as it was back in the twenties and thirties, and Collier's is therefore happy to present these excerpts from a forthcoming book of his comments, *How We Elect Our Presidents*, edited by Donald Day and to be published by Little, Brown & Company in March

I said, "How do you know that?"
 Mr. Wilson said, "If you write anything and then rehearse a man for days just how to say it, you are pretty apt to remember if he leaves anything out."
 I said, "Well, what he left out certainly was not about the Republicans as he seemed to have that part in there. The way Cummings talked it was the Republican Soldiers' fault every time the Americans had to retreat in the war. But every time we advanced it was the Democrats doing it. But, Pres, there were fewer big words in there than in most of your speeches."
 He said, "Will, I had to make it plain. Did you ever see a bunch of deligates?"
 (The Democratic WeeGee Convention nominated Governor James M. Cox of Ohio for its Presidential candidate and Assistant Secretary of the Navy Franklin D. Roosevelt for its Vice-Presidential victim.)



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The Best of Will Rogers' Political Wisecracks

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his speeches on the Phonograph. Well, us public have one consolation—a record when dropped breaks easily.

Can you imagine anything more cheerful than a party of friends gathered, opening home brew, and listening to a record, "Voters, if I am elected, I will enforce the law to the letter."

The Democrats nominated Roosevelt for Vice-President on account of his name, I suppose, figuring that most progressives were so far behind they wouldn't know the difference.

The Democrats cant compete with the Republicans in spending money to get in office but after they get in I dont think there is anybody can compete with them.

April 1, 1921

Will Hays took me in to meet President Harding.

I said, "Mr. President, I would like to tell you all the latest political jokes."

He said, "You don't have to, Will, I appointed them."

November 11, 1923

If I was running I would be ashamed to let anybody know which one of those Parties I belonged to. Now, take the last three years, it looked like the Democratic Party was the best Party. But the 8 years previous to that it looked like the Republican Party was the best. The only way in the World to make either one look half decent is to keep them out.

Now you take, for instance, a Republican. There is lots of People that wont speak or associate with one. They think they would catch some grafting Disease but I have met several of them and you take one, when he is out of office, and he is as nice a fellow as you would want to meet.

Now, on the other hand, take the Democrats. They are a great deal like France. France wants to so entirely crush Germany that they will never be able to rise up and attack them again. Well, that is the way with the Democrats. Every time they got in office and started to get ahead and accumulated something, why the Republicans would rise up and crush them. They didn't even wait for 40 years like the Germans, but would generally pounce on them about every 4 years.

You take a Democrat and a Republican and you keep them both out of office and I bet you they will turn out to be good friends and maybe make useful Citizens and devote their time to some work instead of 'lectioneering all the time.

(The 1924 Republican Convention, held in Cleveland, was the first that Will ever attended in person.)

June 8, 1924

As I pen these lines I am waiting for my train to carry me to the Coolidge Follies in Cleveland. At first I was going to say the Republican Follies but it's not. They have nothing to do with it. The whole thing is under the personal supervision of Mr. Coolidge.

Coolidge could have been nominated by post card. Those misled deligates will have just as much chance to really nominate him as a bow-legged girl would have at the Follies.

All my life I have been longing to attend a convention and now I draw this one. My disappointment is just like a sick man who has been promised a trip to a circus for years. Then when he is able to go out they take him to Grant's Tomb.

June 10, 1924

After all, this running for President is sort of a hazardous business. Statistics have proved that out of 110 million people there is only one gets to be President. It's what you might call a Long Shot office, and you can't condemn a man for not investing in Campaign Literature.

June 13, 1924

I love Cleveland because I knew them before this catastrophe struck them. She will arise from her badges and some day be greater than ever. But I had to leave. I simply couldn't stand the incessant din, the roar, the popping of corks, and the newness and brightness of the speeches, and the "fairness to other political parties" uttered from the platform.

P.S. Before they forget it, why, they nominated Coolidge.

It has been rumored around town today that I left to prevent my being nominated as Vice-President. I wish to state that that was exactly the case.

Well, so long, readers—both of you. Will meet you at the Democratic Convention again. What it lacks in class, why, they will make up in noise.

Tip to prospective deligates who are coming: Leave your watches and jewelry at home. Bring nothing but your alternates. It's a cinch you can't lose them.

(The Democratic National Convention in New York City in 1924 was not only the longest political convention in history but also one of the most bitterly fought. Finally it nominated John W. Davis as the party's standard-bearer.)

June 25, 1924

Well, the Democratic scandals got started yesterday. The thing was almost an hour late in starting. You could tell the deligates who had been entertained by Tammany men the night before. They looked awful, and must have felt terrible.

The building is literally lined with flags. I could never understand the exact connection between the flag and a bunch of politicians. Why a political speaker's platform should be draped in flags any more than a factory where men work, or an office building, is beyond me.

June 27, 1924

We have heard nothing since 10 o'clock this morning until 6 tonight but "The man I am going to name." There have been guys going to name men all day, and all we ever got named were about six out of a possible 200. Franklin Roosevelt started in early this morning with the "Man I am about to name." He had the opportunity of a lifetime to make a name for himself com-

parable with the Republican end of the Roosevelt family. But no, he must say, "Man I am about to name" for ten pages.

But when he did get to the end and named Al Smith you would have thought somebody had thrown a wildcat in your face. The galleries went wild and about ten State delegations marched and hollered for an hour. Talk about our civilization! Why, if they ever took a sanity test at a political convention 98 per cent would be removed to an asylum.

Talk about Presidential Timber, why, Man, they had whole Lumber Yards of it here. There was so many being Nominated that some of the men making the nominating Speeches had never even met the men they were nominating. I know they had not from the way they talked about them.

June 28, 1924

I saw something yesterday that for stupidity, lack of judgment, nonsensicality, unexcitement, uselessness and childishness, has anything I've ever seen beaten. It was the Democratic Convention.

Can you imagine a theatre audience sitting there listening to the same old hokum over and over again? Why, they would get the hook in you so fast these deligates would be back home in three days.

There is a society in this town that stops us when we abuse or unnecessarily annoy a bucking horse or wild steer right in this same Madison Square Garden. Now why in the world don't they get busy and protect a deligate?

July 4, 1924

This thing has got to come to an end. New York invited you people here as guests, not to live.

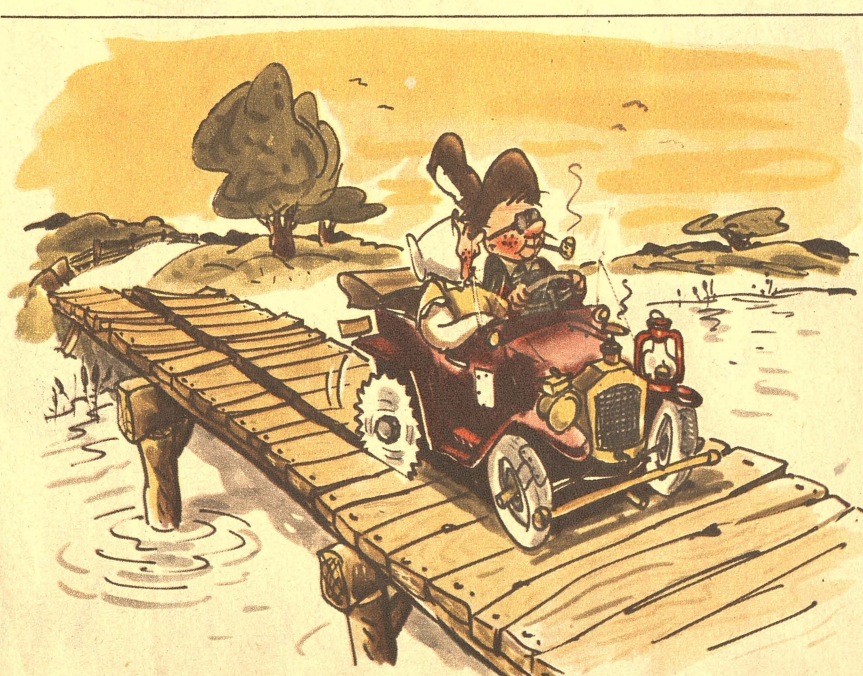
One deligation told me yesterday that they either had to move to more modest quarters or to a more liberal candidate.

Another reason I know it can't last much longer is that the women who sit in front, on the speakers' platform, are about to run out of different hats to wear. They would rather lose the election than wear the same hat twice.

October 19, 1924

I have been trying to read the papers and see just what it is in this election that one

KENNESAW



"Did you have any trouble puttin' the rear wheel back on the car after you got through with the woodcuttin', Kennesaw?"

COLLIER'S

REAMER KELLER

Party wants that the other one don't. To save my soul I can't find any difference. The only thing that I can see where they differ is that the Democrats want the Republicans to get out and let them in, and the Republicans don't want to get out.

They are so hard up for an issue that Mr. Coolidge has finally just announced his policy will be Common Sense. Well, don't you know the Democrats will claim that too? Do you think they will call their campaign "Darn Foolishness?"

The only thing I see now that the two old line parties are divided on is the question, "Who will have the Post Offices?"

October 26, 1924

The Literary Digest should change its name to the Literary Poll Test because it is impossible for the Weather Department to announce rain on a certain day without the Digest taking a Straw Vote on the matter.

They got one Poll running now on, "Who do you guess will be President?"

It's the only publication that don't already know who will be.

Coolidge is away ahead and all the Republican Papers are saying that it is absolutely the fairest way to get the real sentiment of the entire Country.

The Democratic Papers claim that the whole thing is a tool of the interests.

Personally, I don't think this Straw Vote demonstrates but one thing: that is that there are more Republicans that can write than there are Democrats.

More men have been elected by Straw Votes to office, and fewer received Salary, than any other industry in America.

November 16, 1924

Let us sum up on why the Democrats lost.

You can't beat an Administration by attacking it. You have to show some plan on improving it.

Now you got 4 years to think of something original. Mr. Coolidge thought of the idea of keeping still. Too bad you all didn't think of that.

April 25, 1927

Can you imagine? This town of Cleveland wants the Republican and Democratic conventions both, in 1928.

A town that don't know any more than that is liable to ask for a sesquicentennial. The Republican Convention will be held further West, for that's the way they are going to relieve the farmers—to let 'em see a Convention. And as for the Democratic one, a sanity test will follow any town purposely asking for it.

January 12, 1928

As usual, the Democrats fooled everybody, including themselves, and Houston got the Convention. I certainly did what I was sent here to do; I kept it out of Oklahoma.

April 22, 1928

Corruption has supplanted the Tariff, as a National issue. But its awful hard to get people interested in corruption unless they can get some of it. You take a fellow that hasent received any corruption, and its kinder like the fellow that has never drank Sour Kraut Juice, he aint much interested in whether its good or bad. People just figure "Well there couldnt be so much corruption, or some of it would have come my way." And the fellow that has received any of it naturally he is in favor of a continuation of the policy.

Kansas City, June 10, 1928

Flew in here yesterday morning from Chicago and made a forced landing on the backs of 21 Candidates, who were laying out in the grass on their stomach trying to figure out some way to stop Hoover.

The Propeller struck one in the head and that gave him an original idea.

He says, "Boys let's be honest with ourselves." Well, that was a laugh right there. "Let's don't kid ourselves. There just don't

Collier's for January 26, 1952

seem to be any prominent demand for any of us to be President, so what can we do?"

Well, just then the iron tail piece on the plane skidded off another so-called "Favorite Son's" head, and set him to thinking seriously. "Well, if nobody wants us, what do you say we all get together and stop the fellow that the majority want."

"That's a great idea," says all the rest in what sounded like unison. "What will we call our party?"

"Let's call it the 'Dog in the Manger Party.'"

"That's great. Now Members, can we trust each other?"

"We can till this Candidate is stopped, and then it's every fellow for himself."

"Now that's understood. We all sign an agreement that we won't start killing each other off till after we have killed the first fellow off. We are Gentlemen till our main mission is performed and then we revert to type."

Of all the Tips you get around here! Everybody has a different one. The Bell Boys where the deligates are staying are the only ones that haven't got a tip since the thing started.

June 12, 1928

Nobody in the history of Conventions ever saw a Convention start and end so quick.

The Convention opened with a Prayer.

It was a Keynote Prayer. If the Lord can see His way clear to bless the Republican Party the way it's been carrying on, then the rest of us ought to even get it without asking for it.

Then they brought on Simeon D. Fess. He delivered what is called the Keynote Speech.

A Keynote Speech is Press notices of the Republican Party written by its own members.

Here are just a few of the things that I bet you didn't know the Republicans were responsible for: Radio, Telephone, Baths, Automobiles, Savings Accounts, Law Enforcement, Workmen living in houses, and a living wage for Senators.

The Democrats had brought on War, pestilence, debts, Disease, Bo weevil, Gold Teeth, need of Farm relief, suspenders, floods, and famine.

He talked of so much money that we had saved that I think if he had talked another hour he would have paid us a dividend. It was an impromptu address that he had been working on for only six months.

June 15, 1928

Wow! She is all over, Hoover and Curtis. The Republican Party owed Curtis something, but I didn't think they would be so low down as to pay him that way.

Houston, June 23, 1928

There is always excitement at a Democratic Anything. Of course it don't look like there is any way to keep from nominating Al, but that don't make any difference, there is always something that will stir up an argument even if they all agree.

June 26, 1928

The whole talk down here is Dry. The deligates just can't hardly wait till the next bottle is opened to discuss it. Prohibition is running about a quart to the argument here now. The South say they are Dry, and by golly, if the Bootleggers don't rush on some more mighty quick, they will be.

Everybody has on a linen, or palm beach suit, not white, but it was once. If perspiration was a marketable commodity, the party could pay off the National deficit. Have perspired for Jefferson, sweated for Jackson, fainted for Tilden and am dying slowly for Smith. I don't know that we are helping Democracy, but we are certainly perspiring for it.

June 28, 1928

Franklin Roosevelt, a fine and wonderful man who has devoted his life to nominating Al Smith, did his act from memory. Franklin Roosevelt could have gotten



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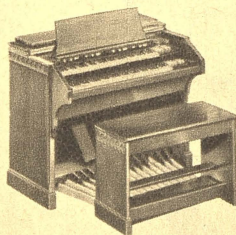
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