



The late humorist's words

on how we pick presidents
are surprisingly up-to-date

The Conventions Are On Us

BY WILL ROGERS

From the book, "How We Elect Our Presidents," by Will Rogers, selected and edited by Donald Day, published by Little, Brown & Co.

EDITOR'S NOTE: On April 28, 1932, the beloved Will Rogers wrote: "Conventions are on us now. They are like the locusts. They come every few years. Will meet you all there, at one or the other of 'em. It will be good Conventions this year for both sides are in doubt."

Will Rogers died in 1935, so he couldn't report in person on the recent Republican and current Democratic conventions in Chicago. But—through these excerpts from his astute, witty and timeless observations on politics, exactly as he wrote them including misspellings—The American Weekly is honored to help Will keep his 20-year-old promise to "meet you all there."

They say practice makes perfect at anything. But I tell you, Taint so. No nation that was ever invented under the sun does as much practicing "Talking" as we do, and if you think we are perfect at it, you just listen to the speeches at these Political Conventions. (July 14, 1928)

Lincoln made a wonderful speech one time: "That this nation under God shall have a new

Birth of Freedom, and that Government of the People, by the People, for the People shall not perish from this earth." Now Lincoln meant well but he only succeeded in supplying an applause line for every Political Speaker who was stuck for a finish. (March 16, 1923)

These delegates are like prisoners in a way. They have got to listen to everyone who gets up there and takes up their time. Can you imagine a theatre audience sitting there listening to the same old hokum over and over again? Now I never propose a thing unless I have a solution to it. Make every speaker, as soon as he tells all he knows, sit down. You will be out by lunch time every day. Or not allow one man to repeat what some other man had already said. That would cut it down to just one speech at each convention.

(June 28, 1924)

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 27, 1924)

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 hasn't received any corruption, and its kinder like the fellow that has never drank Sour Kraut Juice, he ain't 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.

(April 22, 1928)

There is a big demand for a return to "normalcy." But there is no two people that can agree just when "normalcy" was. Normalcy with the Republicans was when they were in; normalcy with the Democrats are these glorious days we are going through. (January 1, 1935)

As for the platform, it will be the same one they have read for forty years but have never used. And the speeches the same ones delivered for forty years but never listened to. (April 20, 1932)

Of all the "Trades" and "Deals" and "Under Cover" happenings that go on during one of those conventions! Its just human nature to string with a winner. Thats what they call getting on the Band Wagon. They know they cant get any Post Offices out of the loser, so they quit him so quick there is nothing left but the campaign buttons.

Its the Fourth of July celebration of national politics. Its a clam bake of big politicians. If they cant get on the deligation they come as mere spectators. Then its becoming a great trip for the women. (July 9, 1932)

You see the first idea of giving them (*the women*) the vote was just to use the vote. But they started to take this equality thing serious. They figured "While we may not be as good as a Man, we are at least as good as a Politician." So the Scamps commenced to want to get in on the loot. Women that used to wouldnt think of gossiping anywhere but over a back fence now will say a word about you till the meeting has duly called to order. (March 31, 1929)

But its a show that no American should miss. Its entertainment and its enlightening. As bad as we are, and as funny as we do things, we are better off than the other Countries, so bring on more conventions. The bigger, the noisier, the crazier, the better. No nation likes noise and "Hooey" like we do.

We are all cuckoo, but we are happy. (July 9, 1932)

OUR COVER

There aren't any tables showing in Wendell Kling's cover drawing this week, but they're being turned, just the same. This young fellow is usually on the receiving end of impatient orders to "Give it back," "Put it down," "Don't do that," etc., and you can tell by the way he's imitating Daddy that he's learned his lessons well.

It's the old Army Game, really. The general bawls out the colonel, who tells off the major, and so on down to the corporal who blasts away at the private. The "private" in this case being the poor pup, who hasn't anybody to take it out on. Just the same, he'll make out all right. After all, he's still got the shoe—and they say possession is nine-tenths of the law!



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JULY 20, 1952

THE CONVENTIONS ARE ON US	By Will Rogers	2
FRANKLY SPEAKING	By Frank Sinatra	4
Exclusive! Confessions of "The Voice"		
SEEKING ROMMEL'S SECRET TREASURE	By John Godley	6
The Desert Fox's lost loot is worth millions		
A PLEA FOR PRIVACY	By Alice-Leone Meats	8
A bedroom farce that isn't funny		
THE DEER WHO CAME TO DINNER	By David Camelion	9
—and became one of the family		
MURDER WITHOUT CLUES	By Edward D. Radin	10
It took a scientist to catch the killer		
THAT FIRST HAIRCUT	By F. Roy Kemp	11
A photographer's son takes a trimming		
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