

Pathfinder

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Analyzing Truman, 1947 and 1951

Adding up all the strikes against him, most political observers this week didn't see how Harry Truman could possibly be re-elected President in 1952—if he decides to run again.

But most political observers, as they still remember to their chagrin, were similarly blind at a similar period four years ago. They just didn't see how Harry Truman could possibly be re-elected President in 1948.

In many ways the two situations are comparable. Then, as now, large segments of his own party were against him; organized labor's bosses were bitterly critical; Truman cronies and their occasionally free-and-easy standards of public morality were under fire. Then, as now, bobbles in foreign policy were drawing angry criticism from many Americans.

Four years ago, in February, 1947, the Gallup poll showed that only 48% of the voters approved of the President. (Actually, 49.3% voted for him in the three-way race with Republican Thomas E. Dewey and Progressive Henry A. Wallace.) This February, Gallup reported that only 46% of the voters at present favor a Democratic victory in 1952. Yet in 1948 the President came from behind to win; could he do it again next year?

Last Chance. First Truman would have to decide whether or not he intends to run. He is the only man who can make the decision; because the new 22nd amendment specifically exempts him, he is also the last President of the United States who could exercise his own free choice in the matter after almost eight years in office. Last week Democratic Party chieftains, polled by United Press, chorused dutifully from all over the country that they did not regard the amendment as a "moral" obstacle to his candidacy. (A majority tabbed Illinois' freshman Senator Paul H. Douglas as second choice if Truman doesn't run.) But Harry Truman, who does not himself balk much at moral obstacles, may find other obstacles in the way.

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Truman

One is the increasing burden of the Presidency, a formidable task if it should be undertaken again in January 1953 at the age of 68, to be carried to January 1957 at the age of 72. Another is labor's active antagonism, based on Truman's support of Defense Mobilizer Charles E. Wilson. Still a third is the attitude of his family. Both Mrs. Truman and Margaret are understood to have urged the President to retire.

The Same Stream. On the other side are two factors, one being his stubbornness which usually persuades him to do the exact opposite of what his critics say he should do. The other might be a feeling that he should see the world crisis through to a successful conclusion—that the country once again should be urged not to change horses in the middle of the stream.

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