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Let 'George' Do It?

MEN of the technical professions are generally clear thinkers and are willing to tackle difficult problems in design, research, construction, or production; but when political problems arise, they are more likely to say "Let George do it." This is not an intelligent attitude for men who have been taught through schooling and experience to attack a problem logically by securing the pertinent data, evaluating those data, and obtaining an answer. Technical men may answer by saying that politics are outside their field of knowledge and training and should therefore be left to the politicians. This reply is only a poor rationalization, and a reflection of an attitude of indifference and loose thinking or no thinking at all. Every citizen of the United States of America is a partner in democracy: if he leaves matters of government to "George", he may find himself with fewer liberties, with a less efficient government controlled by men whose thinking is distorted, and whose approach to important problems is illogical. "George" leads the people into a state of confusion, possibly to his own advantage. Perhaps the present situation of governmental turbulence may be at least partially the result of this indifferent attitude on the part of not only technical men but others also.

Whenever small groups gather, severe criticism is aimed at the way our government is operated. One man says it is harder to secure materials and equipment now than during the war; another is having difficulty in securing personnel; another cannot produce a certain consumer product because the cost of production is too high for the price he is permitted to quote. The housewife cannot obtain meat, the contractor cannot secure lumber, the printer cannot get paper, and the veteran cannot buy a new white shirt. These things are discussed frankly. This is good, but what is done about it? Government operation is considered too big a problem; technical men as individuals cannot reach a solution and so they return to their respective technical jobs.

The technical man may have divorced himself from any participation in politics except the placing of an unpremeditated mark on a ballot, because most politicians do not think in the same manner as he does. The operation of a government does not lend itself to analysis in the light of fundamental physical laws—at least not yet—as does a design problem, even though certain assumptions must be made. In gov-

ernment, one is dealing with human beings whose reactions have not been reduced to simple natural laws, and hence seem to present an insurmountable problem to technical men. But isn't there something the technical man can do to contribute to problems in government? Yes: As a minimum contribution he can not only discuss problems and criticize actions, but also take his electoral power seriously by carefully analyzing the ability of men running for office who will represent him.

Making this choice requires information. Scientific training stresses the accumulation and evaluation of facts. Surely the stake any man has in the United States Government warrants his gathering enough basic information to understand it, and in the case of men schooled in the scientific method, this gathering and evaluating should be second nature.

Involving more than an active interest is actual participation in governmental matters. Men of science held high government posts during the recent war, and were responsible for the successful execution of difficult legislative and administrative problems. However, the legal profession has always had a strong grasp on politics. It is probably logical for this condition to exist, for the men of this profession have been educated to deal with laws; they have studied law. Hence it may be right that they should be best suited to make laws. However, technical men should not only make sure that they select the best men of the legal profession to represent and to govern them. It would be highly advantageous for a few technical men to try out their scientific approach on some of these problems by themselves standing for political office.

A more practical step, which can be more easily taken by the technical man to retain his democratic privileges, is participation in local government and civic affairs. Some engineers and scientists do engage in such activities, but they are relatively few. The rest are, in their own minds, too busy with their technical problems to protect their rights as citizens. Those few who have actively participated in civic work are not to be congratulated, but should be humbly thanked for doing their duty. Any man who crusades in an intelligent manner for a higher quality of public education or for better government should not be honored, but given help.

What will you do about this situation? Let "George" do it?