Government and Voter

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Government and the Voter

"Americans have rightly felt that there is something gratifying and inspiring in the spectacle of the common people rising to the height of self-government." Ours is a "government of the people, by the people, for the people"—a government which receives its powers from the voters and moves and operates under popular impulses. Because government is ever with us—directing, guiding, shielding, and stimulating our activities, it may be well to note its influence upon our daily lives.

Government is derived from the consent of the governed. In a democracy, elections are essential in making effective the demands of the majority or the plurality, as the case may be. Every citizen of the United States, of the age of twenty-one years, who has been a resident of Iowa for six months, and a resident of a county for sixty days, is entitled to vote.

In Iowa, as elsewhere, elections have become so commonplace that citizens sometimes neglect
the privileges and duties that are theirs on election day. Although Iowans vote in relatively larger numbers than do the citizens of most of the other states, even here many electors do not exercise their voting privileges as they should. In the primary election of 1948, for instance, there were three major party candidates for the office of Governor, and the total vote cast for all candidates was only about 374,000. At the general election in that year, however, each of the two major party candidates received more than 434,000 votes, and the total number of ballots cast was more than 994,000. Thus there were more than twice as many votes cast at the general election as were cast in the primary.

There are elections of many types and for many purposes — national elections, state elections, municipal elections, and school elections. There are elections for the granting of franchises, for the development of community interests, for the issuing of bonds to pay for local improvements, and for many other purposes. But, for the moment, let us consider only those elections in which state officers are elected.

Many of the state officers — the Governor, the Lieutenant Governor, the administrative state officers such as the Treasurer, Auditor, Secretary of State, Secretary of Agriculture, Attorney General, and state and national Representatives, as
well as many county and local officers, are elected for terms of two years. Accordingly, our biennial elections are of state-wide interest and importance.

Primary nominating elections are held throughout Iowa on the first Monday in June in the even-numbered years, and the general elections are held on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November of the same year. Nominations are made by the voters at the primary elections, which, in reality, may be more important than the general elections. If a complete ticket of good and efficient candidates is selected by each party, then good and efficient men will be named at the general election regardless of which party may win. By the same token, if corrupt or inefficient men are selected at the primary election, the general election can be little more than a choice between two evils.

Names of candidates are placed on the primary ballots by means of petition. A candidate for a state office must obtain, and file with the Secretary of State, the signatures of at least one per cent of the voters of his party in at least ten counties of the state. These signatures must equal not less than one-half of one per cent of the total vote of his party in the state as shown by the last general election. In this situation each political party may have on the ballot, in any primary election, one or more candidates for a given office. In the
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**JOHNSON COUNTY BALLOT FOR**
1948 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

**SOCIALIST**
- **FOR PRESIDENT**
  - HENRY A. WALLACE
- **FOR GOVERNOR**
  - WILLIAM J. LEONARD
- **FOR UNITED STATES SENATOR**
  - ROGER E. BURKHURST
- **FOR SECRETARY OF STATE**
  - ALBERT S. NIXON
- **FOR AUDITOR OF STATE**
  - EDWARD J. CURRY
- **FOR TREASURER OF STATE**
  - JOHN A. WALKER
- **FOR ATTORNEY GENERAL**
  - J. P. HARRIS
- **FOR SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE**
  - C. P. MADDEN
- **FOR COMMERCIAL COMMISSIONER**
  - SAMUEL SMITH
- **FOR DISTRICT OFFICERS**
  - ROBERT W. SMITH
- **FOR COUNTY OFFICERS**
  - WILLIAM H. SMITH
- **FOR TOWNSHIP OFFICERS**
  - ROBERT SMITH

**PROGRESSIVE**
- **FOR PRESIDENT**
  - HERBERT H. HOOVER
- **FOR GOVERNOR**
  - HENRY C. BROWN
- **FOR UNITED STATES SENATOR**
  - WILLIAM C. TAYLOR
- **FOR SECRETARY OF STATE**
  - CHARLES W. HOWELL
- **FOR AUDITOR OF STATE**
  - JOHN H. SMITH
- **FOR TREASURER OF STATE**
  - JOHN H. SMITH
- **FOR ATTORNEY GENERAL**
  - J. P. HARRIS
- **FOR SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE**
  - C. P. MADDEN
- **FOR COMMERCIAL COMMISSIONER**
  - SAMUEL SMITH
- **FOR DISTRICT OFFICERS**
  - ROBERT W. SMITH
- **FOR COUNTY OFFICERS**
  - WILLIAM H. SMITH
- **FOR TOWNSHIP OFFICERS**
  - ROBERT SMITH

**SOCIALIST WORKERS**
- **FOR PRESIDENT**
  - JOHN L. HARRIS
- **FOR GOVERNOR**
  - HENRY C. BROWN
- **FOR UNITED STATES SENATOR**
  - WILLIAM C. TAYLOR
- **FOR SECRETARY OF STATE**
  - CHARLES W. HOWELL
- **FOR AUDITOR OF STATE**
  - JOHN H. SMITH
- **FOR TREASURER OF STATE**
  - JOHN H. SMITH
- **FOR ATTORNEY GENERAL**
  - J. P. HARRIS
- **FOR SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE**
  - C. P. MADDEN
- **FOR COMMERCIAL COMMISSIONER**
  - SAMUEL SMITH
- **FOR DISTRICT OFFICERS**
  - ROBERT W. SMITH
- **FOR COUNTY OFFICERS**
  - WILLIAM H. SMITH
- **FOR TOWNSHIP OFFICERS**
  - ROBERT SMITH

**INDEPENDENT**
- **FOR PRESIDENT**
  - GEORGE C. CROSBY
- **FOR GOVERNOR**
  - HENRY C. BROWN
- **FOR UNITED STATES SENATOR**
  - WILLIAM C. TAYLOR
- **FOR AUDITOR OF STATE**
  - JOHN H. SMITH
- **FOR TREASURER OF STATE**
  - JOHN H. SMITH
- **FOR ATTORNEY GENERAL**
  - J. P. HARRIS
- **FOR SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE**
  - C. P. MADDEN
- **FOR COMMERCIAL COMMISSIONER**
  - SAMUEL SMITH
- **FOR DISTRICT OFFICERS**
  - ROBERT W. SMITH
- **FOR COUNTY OFFICERS**
  - WILLIAM H. SMITH
- **FOR TOWNSHIP OFFICERS**
  - ROBERT SMITH
primary election of June, 1948, for instance, three men filed petitions as candidates for the office of Governor of Iowa. Robert D. Blue and William S. Beardsley filed in the Republican primary and Carroll O. Switzer in the Democratic. Mr. Switzer had no opposition in the primary election, therefore he was named as the Democratic party candidate for the office of Governor in the general election of 1948. Since there were two candidates for nomination on the Republican ballot, the purpose of the primary election at this point was to allow the Republican voters to choose one as the party candidate. This contest was won by Mr. Beardsley who thereby became the Republican candidate for the office of Governor at the ensuing general election.

Other candidates for the various offices, including state administrative officials, members of Congress, members of the Iowa General Assembly, and county officers, are nominated at the primary elections in the same manner. For the general election the names of all these nominees are placed on a single ballot, in vertical columns under the party name. In Iowa there are two major political parties—Republican and Democratic. Frequently there are also minor party candidates. Since 1948 was a presidential election year, the party column on the general election ballot was headed by the names of the candidates for President, Vice Presi-
dent, and United States Senator, followed by the names of candidates for state officers, beginning with the office of Governor. One could vote a straight party ticket simply by placing an "X" in the circle at the head of the party column, or he could vote for the individual candidates by placing an "X" in the square in front of each name. A straight party ticket vote indicates that the voter believes that party issues are more important than personalities.

Some state officials are elected on a state-wide ballot; others are selected by districts. Thus, while the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, state administrative officers, and the United States Senators are elected by the state at large, for the purpose of electing United States Representatives the state is divided into eight Congressional districts—one Congressman being elected from each district. For the election of State Senators, the state is divided in 50 senatorial districts, and for the election of members of the Iowa House of Representatives there are 99 districts, conforming with county boundaries, although in some districts two Representatives are selected.

Popular elections are held in order that every voter may participate in government, by helping to select the public officials who shall become servants of the people. Separate ballots are printed for each county and for each city ward, so that
Map Showing the Eight Congressional Districts and the State Representatives from Each County

Map of State Senatorial Districts
voters will receive ballots with the proper names on them. A glance at the maps and sample ballot shown herewith will indicate that a voter in Iowa City would receive a ballot with the names of candidates for state officers, Representative of the First Congressional District, the Twenty-fifth State Senatorial District, and the Forty-first State Representative District. The ballot thus prepared makes voting a very simple matter, but it is an extremely important function of government in a democracy such as ours.