

HANDBOOK

# PRECINCT ACTION COURSE

... A four-session, do-it-yourself program of work and on-the-job training course in how to win elections, for groups of 4 to 12 persons working in their own neighborhood or precinct.

PUBLISHED BY:  
CIVIC AFFAIRS ASSOCIATES, INC.  
2612 P STREET, N. W.  
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20007

## HOW TO WIN ELECTIONS

Many feel they can help best by giving good advice. Others will make a speech . . . if you assemble the audience.

But the professionals with winning records, the public opinion experts, all agree that the most effective way to win an election is to organize volunteers to work in their own neighborhood, personally contacting the voters.

For this reason, many political leaders and public affairs executives requested Civic Affairs Associates to produce a non-partisan, do-it-yourself program that could be used anywhere in the United States to: 1: Convince people that personal contact work in their own neighborhood wins elections. 2. Show what to do and how to to it, and 3. Get them into actually doing the work.

With the help of a training expert, and 15 precinct work veterans experienced in 35 states, the Precinct Action Course was produced. It is a brand new approach, based on new discoveries about how people learn and work together in groups.

It has gotten amazing results!

The P.A.C. has been tested in 42 states. Where it has been used as intended, it has increased the vote of the side using it 5% to 25% in already well organized areas.

In areas not previously organized, it has increased the vote of the party using it by as much as 95%.

If you will follow the instructions and do the work, the P.A.C. will get these results. Others have done it. You can too.

## The Abe Lincoln Four-Step

In January, 1840, Abraham Lincoln, with four others, wrote a campaign memorandum to Whig County Committees (Republican Party was not yet founded) in Illinois:

“. . . divide (your) county into small districts . . . appoint in each a sub-committee, whose duty it shall be to make a perfect list of all the voters in their respective districts, and to ascertain with certainty for whom they will vote . . .

. . . keep a constant watch on the doubtful voters, and from time to time have them talked to by those in whom they shall have the most confidence . . . on election days see that every Whig is brought to the polls.” \*

Boiled down, Lincoln’s four steps are:

1. Make a complete list of every eligible voter in the precinct, or area to be covered. (“Make a perfect list of all the voters.”)
2. Determine the leanings of each eligible voter (“Ascertain with certainty for whom they will vote.”)
3. Persuade the undecided and uninterested people to vote your ticket. (“Keep a constant watch on the doubtful voters and have them talked to by those in whom they have the most confidence.”)
4. See to it that every “Saint” and probable “Saint” is registered and gets to the polls. (“On election days see that every Whig is brought to the polls.”)

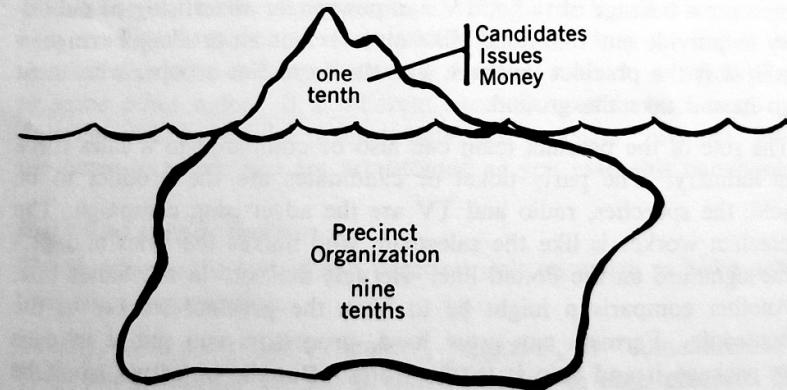
\* Source: *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, Roy P. Basler (editor), Rutgers University Press, 1953, Vol. I, pp. 201, 202, 203.

## Four Factors in Winning Elections

Experts generally agree there are four principal factors in winning elections: Organization, Candidates, Issues, Money. (When politicians talk about “organization,” they mean precinct organization—or specifically, personal contact organization.)

### Organization Is The Most Important Factor

During and after an election most people discuss it and analyze it in terms of candidates, issues, and campaign incidents. They are talking about the one-tenth of the iceberg that shows above the surface of the water—the part that can be seen. Yet, the biggest part of the iceberg—nine-tenths of it—is not noticed.



Nine-tenths of winning an election, like nine-tenths of an iceberg, goes unnoticed, because it is not readily apparent to the casual observer.

The same way with elections. Probably nine out of 10, or more, are won by an organization getting voters of their persuasion registered and to the polls, and persuading undecided or disinterested people to vote and vote their way.

This is not to say that candidates, issues and money are not important. They are. In some cases they may dominate an election. When you have an outstanding candidate and can get him before the public

in a favorable light, like an Eisenhower or a Roosevelt, he will ride in largely on his own strength among the voters. When you have a really strong issue like "Right To Work" was for the Democrats in several states in 1958, it will sweep the board, taking down to defeat such popular vote-getters of established power as Senator John Bricker in Ohio.

Really deep issues such as slavery in the 1860's or the Depression of the 1930's, can cut so deep as to cause basic shifts of a lasting nature in the political sympathies of whole groups of voters.

But in most elections, the issues and the candidates are not that important. There are reasons for this.

CANDIDATES are not as important below the level of President because they cannot get through to the voters with enough impact even if they are outstanding personalities. Presidential campaigns are so well covered by radio, TV and the press that public attention becomes concentrated on them in all media, local and national. People cannot avoid becoming aware of the race and the candidate. Everybody is talking about them.

Below that level, candidates have a constant problem of getting known at all to the voters.

*Example: In 1951, 10 days before a municipal election in Mamaroneck, New York, the Young Republican Club conducted a telephone poll to determine what people knew about the election. Few of those called knew what offices were to be filled. When told and asked if they could name any of the ten Candidates, 25% could identify the incumbent Supervisor who had held office for about 12 years and whose picture had appeared in the Daily Times perhaps once a week. Eight per cent could identify one candidate of the remaining eight (4 running for Councilman, 2 for Justice of Peace, and 2 for Town Clerk).*

ISSUES are generally hazy to the voter, not well understood. A study made by the Survey Research Center at the University of Michigan on the 1952 elections revealed that almost two-thirds of the people thought either that the Republicans and Democrats took about the same position on issues, or they didn't know what position either party stood for.

MONEY, of course is vital, and much depends on how it is spent.

Today there are probably few elections where it is crucial. For one thing, if you have good candidates, good issues and a good organization, the money will come in from people who are impressed and have confidence in your ticket—and from people to whom you look like a winner.

But a good organization, contacting the voters personally, is the most important and decisive factor in winning 9 out of 10 (or more) elections.

### **Why Personal Contact Wins Elections**

The personal contact of party workers with voters is more important than any other factor for two reasons:

1. People do not automatically register and vote (See Table Page 13). Voting runs higher in presidential years than in other years. In 1960, which topped all other recent presidential years, only 65% of the eligible voters cast their ballots.

In Congressional election years (even numbered years) and in municipal elections in odd-numbered years, or at other times, participation is much lower than in presidential years. In a typical Congressional election year, about 45 per cent of those who could vote actually cast their ballot.

2. Most people who are undecided or who are not very interested or aware of politics make up their minds to vote, and how to vote on the basis of conversations with friends, associates and people in whose judgement they have confidence, or who they believe have specialized knowledge or access to "inside" information.

*Example: A 26-year old Republican worker in a Rocky Mountain state reported that he had two liberal A.D.A. Democrats, both college faculty members, one a political science professor, the other an economist. A week or ten days before every election, each would call up the Republican and say something like this: "Say John, I know you are a Republican, but you are active in politics and know more about the people who are running than I do. Tell me about so and so . . . what about this guy? . . . who is running for . . .?" And so on. The Republican workers says that he gets them to split their ballot every time for at least two or three Republicans. "I never ask them to vote our straight ticket, that would make them lose*

confidence in my advice. But I pick out some Republicans I can make a case for that will appeal to them. A couple of times I heard about them talking these guys up among their friends as being good men, even though Republicans."

In other cases, personal contact can even sway regular, down-the-line party voters.

*EXAMPLE: On the Saturday before the 1944 Dewey-Roosevelt election, a life-long Democrat was raking leaves in his front yard. He was a college graduate who lived in a New England suburban neighborhood that was about 90 percent Republican.*

*He fell into conversation with his neighbor who was a rock-ribbed Vermont Republican. This man was also a college graduate, member of Phi Beta Kappa, and was well informed on the campaign. He was a strong Dewey man. They talked for three hours, each working on the other to vote for his candidate. On election day, the Democrat voted for Dewey; the Republican voted for Roosevelt.*

Studies and experience prove that it is not campaign literature, speeches, or mass media that move the voter. It is personal influence. Here are the findings:

1. From "The People's Choice", Page 157:

*". . . personal contacts can get a voter to the polls without affecting at all his comprehension of the issues of the election—something the formal media can rarely do. The newspaper or magazine or radio must first be effective in changing attitudes related to the action. There were several clear cases of votes cast not on the issues or even the personalities of the candidates. In fact, they were not really cast for the candidates at all. They were cast, so to speak, for the voters' friends."*

2. Same source, page 157, quoting voter interviews:

*"I was taken to the polls by a worker who insisted that I go."*

*"The lady where I work wanted me to vote. She took me to the polls and they all voted Republican so I did too."*

3. Same source, page 157, a conclusion:

*"In short, personal influence, with all its overtones of personal affection and loyalty can bring to the polls votes that would otherwise not be cast or would be cast for the opposing party just as readily if some other friend had insisted."*

## Case 1—"A Little Goes A Long Way"

A business student interviews the Vice President of a national manufacturing company. He asks what was his first break?

The Vice President answers: "starting to do precinct work for the Republican Party when he was 28."

Student: "Why?"

Vice President: "Well, up to then I was one of 25 clerks in a bullpen. This gave me my first chance to do something on my own where others would see what I could do. Sort of a showcase.

"Contacts are part of it, too. Knowing all kinds of people is the smartest thing a man can do. I got friendly with a plumber—a Democrat. After the flood he put me at the top of his list to get our pipes working. An electrical engineer down the street helped me fix some wiring. A nurse I met took care of my wife when she was laid up—you know how hard nurses are to get. Matter of fact, I got my job here through precinct work."

Student: "What do you mean?"

Vice President: "After I turned in a good record our town leader had his eye on me. A friend of his told him how hard it was to find the right man for a job opening the company had. Our town leader thought it sounded like a natural for me and gave his friend my name. I was interviewed, hired, and made good. If I hadn't gone into politics I never would have heard about the opening."

Student: "You say you did a good job which brought you to the town leader's attention. What happened?"

Vice President: "About the third year I worked on the precinct, it came to me that you get results by detail and follow through.

Student: "What do you mean?"

Vice President: "Well, you can either do a job by going through the motions, or by working to get every detail tacked down, finished, complete and right. You don't increase your vote by flipping a switch or by some magic formula. Like anything else, you do this here and that there until it all adds up. It's like a grocer. He makes so much on meat, so much on fruit, so much on bread. That's regular income—pays the bills. That's like getting your regular Republicans to the polls—it's your steady business.

"But on top of that, he has to pick up some extras. So he runs a promotion on strawberries, or he finds a new product where the manufacturer will give him an extra margin to push sales and get the product established. That's where he gets the extras. To get the extra margin of votes, you have to get a few more Republicans to register and vote. Convince a few more undecideds and so on."

Student: "How did you do this?"

Vice President: "In 1940, that's when I started thinking. I said, 'Where is that extra margin?' And it came to me. I found four solid Republicans who hadn't voted since Hoover. They were discouraged. Two more had their votes challenged years before and didn't care to be embarrassed again. I invited 12 new 21-year-olds to my house to explain how to get registered, to mark ballots, and answered their questions. Ten came, 8 voted, and 5 of the 8, I know from follow-up, have been regular Republican voters. I think that first experience made just enough difference and set the pattern for future years.

"I found two Republican salesmen, both of whom had missed voting at least once in the past 4 years. I made them fill out absentee ballots. On election day both were out of town.

"An old lady in frail health lived down the street. She had never thought about voting. I stopped by a couple of times. I guess not many people paid her much attention and one day she just up and said, 'If all Republicans are like you, I'd better vote. I'd like to help you.'

"One friend of mine, a long-time Democrat, I tried an experiment on. I asked him as a personal favor to vote the straight Republican ticket. I said 'I'm trying to make a record as a party worker.' Well, after the election he said he hoped I had made out. He resented the idea at first, but the more he thought about it, the better he liked it. Finally he not only voted Republican but got his wife and two neighbors to vote Republican. 'After all,' he said, 'Roosevelt won't know or care how I vote, but I can do something for a friend. I've never felt so good about anything in my whole life.'

"Three other Republicans kept putting off going to the polls on election day. I knew sometimes they never made it. So I drove over with my wife and said, come on, we're going to vote; Anne will watch the dinner. And off we went.

"I picked out 6 people who just didn't care. I got them registered and

had them to my house to a party Saturday before election, where everyone else was Republican. They got to feeling Republican too. I saw to it they voted. Five of them I'm sure voted right.

"These are the special cases, though, the extra margin. The really important group is your regular Republican voters. They provide the base vote without which the margin is meaningless."

Student: "If they are regular, why worry about them?"

Vice President: "People don't like to be taken for granted. Heard a fellow say he ran for National Committeeman in a small state. Lost by one vote. Asked a friend why he had voted against him. He said, 'Ed, I know you better and like you. You would be better for the job. But, you didn't ask for my vote. He did. I didn't think you cared how I voted. Sorry'."

Student: "Frankly this whole story sounds crazy to me."

Vice President: "Why?"

Student: "All right, what was your precinct's vote that year?"

Vice President: "Our usual vote was about 550 or 600. Usually broke around 400 Democrats to 200 Republicans. That year we polled 653 votes, 378 Democrat to 276 Republican. In surrounding precincts the Republican vote was up an average 3%, but ours was up 8%, from 33% to 41% of the total vote. We stuck out like a sore thumb."

Student: "Here is what I don't understand. In Washington news all the talk is about how much money is spent on campaigns. The papers emphasize the issues and candidates, and experts talk about images. Yet to hear your side, it sounds like elections are won in the precincts. If that's true, why don't we hear and read more about precinct work? And who is right? Don't candidates and issues have a lot to do with winning?"

Vice President: "Both sides are right. I can account for 28 votes in my increase of 76. Some were gotten by other workers, but maybe Willkie got us some too. Maybe he made it easier to get out the regulars because our Republicans around here liked Willkie. The third term issue got some votes, too."

Student: "So that is the story of how you really got started?"

Vice President: "Yes, I think so, and it not only helped me in business, but I enjoyed it and got a tremendous amount of satisfaction out of feeling that I was effective in working for what I think is right. Still do. I am still a Precinct Leader."

## The Objective Is to Win

The objective of political effort is to win. In Session 1, we saw that the most important factor in winning is personal contact in the precinct.

To win, you try to get every possible "Saint" vote in the ballot box. If you are out-registered and always lose, it is still vital to lose by as little as possible. If you out-register the other side and always win your precinct, it is still vital to win by as large a margin as you can, because the votes are all added up together by state, by county, by city or town, or by judicial, legislative or Congressional districts.

Your performance in losing smaller or winning bigger will balance out a "Sinner" margin somewhere else.

## Priorities in Precinct Work

In most precincts there will be insufficient workers and inadequate time to devote hours of personal contact to every voter. Some system of priorities must be set up.

Battles in wars and efforts in politics both are referred to in terms of a "campaign." Both require careful staff work, assessments of your own strengths and evaluations of your enemy's weaknesses.

In war, a commander who is given an objective immediately seeks all the information possible on the enemy. But his primary concern is with his own troops—their morale, their training, their equipment. Building his own striking force gets top priority.

Similarly, the successful Precinct Leader assigns top priority to "Saints." They are the core, the largest part of his vote, and the easiest and most efficient to get out to the polls.

The second priority, is to woo the independent or undecided vote. They take more time and effort but are needed to do a really good job.

Much fuzzy thinking has surrounded efforts to get out the vote—even by some precinct workers. From a practical politician's standpoint, the injunction "I don't care how you vote—just vote," is unrealistic. If you are a worker in a precinct that has an overwhelming majority of your party you may profit from a big vote. But your best bet is

to make sure that every "Saint" and probable "Saint" gets to the polls. Let the "Sinners" get out their own vote.

## "Saints," "Savables," and "Sinners"

This is a handy way to break down your voters into groups.

**SAINTS:** The "Saints" are the nucleus of your party. They vote your way regularly. That does not mean they can be forgotten. Taking them for granted can lose them.

Your primary duty is to pay attention to the "Saints"—see that they are registered and get to the polls.

**SAVABLES:** The "Savables" are the people who receive second priority. They include the undecided, the new voter, the non-voter, and the weak "Sinners." The classic illustration of help afforded "Savables" in making up their minds is furnished by the Democratic political machines that flourished in New York years ago, and were built on the assistance they furnished to immigrants.

The immigrants, uneasy and uncertain in a strange land, were helped in a variety of ways, but always accompanying the help was the suggestion that to do things in the true American way, one should vote Democratic. Among people whose life goal was to become accepted as Americans, this was (and still may be) an argument of overwhelming strength.

This game can be played by both sides.

*EXAMPLE: Many persons from a large Midwest City have moved in recent years to a suburb. A Republican woman who made the same move herself a few years ago, makes it her business to call on them, to discuss with them the shopping and entertainment facilities, community customs, etc. She may even point out that the majority votes Republican: "Most of us do because they give us good government."*

**SINNERS:** The "Sinners" are a lost cause. It is important to know that a voter is a real "Sinner" and not merely a weak one. But, if he is, forget about him. You will gain more by concentrating on the "Saints" and the "Savables."

People new to politics often have the idea that the biggest feather they can put in their cap is to convert a "Sinner" to vote as a "Saint."

The experienced politician knows that one may have to spend 100, 500, or even 1,000 times as much time and effort to convert one “Sinner” as he does to get one reliable “Saint” to the polls. Obviously, the most efficient thing that can be done is to get sure “Saints” registered and to the polls. In terms of time and effort, the second most efficient thing is to persuade “Savables” to register and vote the “Saint” ticket.

You may spend hours or days to convert a “Sinner” and still not be certain that you have succeeded. In any case he will have only one vote, and you will never be sure that you have changed a habit pattern of long standing. In the same time you may be able to get four to five hundred loyal “Saints” to the polls; or you might persuade ten or twenty “Savables.”

As one old hand at getting out a vote once said, “There may be more joy in heaven over one sinner saved than a thousand righteous, but there is infinitely more joy in Democratic headquarters on Election Night over a thousand Democrats gotten to the polls than over one Republican converted.”

### **Opinion Leaders**

Opinion research companies, propaganda psychologists, political scientists, and others who have studied the effects of mass communications have found that the mass media do not reach the majority of people directly. Rather, it is the “opinion leaders,” the people who are aware of government and political and community affairs who form judgments and then “retail” them to their friends and neighbors.

Most people today, even as in Lincoln’s time, make up their minds on what to buy, what movie to see, whether to vote and how to vote on the basis of face-to-face contacts with friends, their social group. As Lincoln said, “Have them talked to from time to time by those in whom they shall have the most confidence.”

There are probably about 6-10 million Americans who fall in this category of opinion leaders. There are some in your neighborhood. One way to increase the effectiveness of party personal contact work is by activating natural opinion leaders. They are good precinct workers.

If they do not become precinct workers, they can still be sought out

## **READING FOR SESSION 3**

### **“Meeting The Voters”**

Session 3 takes the team out into the precinct to begin the “Voter Census.”

First, the team meets as usual and spends about 30 minutes preparing for the census:

- Assignments are handed out—probably 10 to 20 houses or apartments to each person or pair, depending on time available, distance between dwelling units, etc.
- Calls may be made in teams of two. If so, the group is paired off accordingly.
- Team reviews what information they are to get on each call and how to get this information down.
- Team reviews what to say and how to act on calls, what kinds of situations may arise and how to handle them.
- Agrees on a time to report back.

The team then goes out to make their calls and reports back to the meeting place in time to:

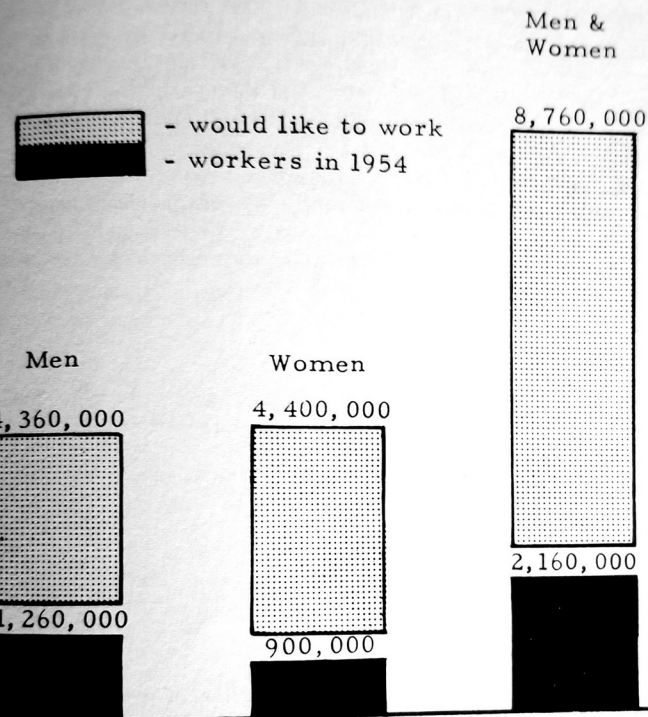
- Transfer information they obtained to Voter Information Cards.
- Discuss their experiences with each other.

Background reading for Session 3 includes:

1. Participating in a Voter Census.
2. Guide: Voter Census Sheet.
3. Guide: How to Identify “Saints,” “Savables” and “Sinners.”
4. Guide: Voting and Election Information Sheet.

Now, on to the reading for Session 3. . .

About One Out Of Every Twenty Adults  
Is A Possible Volunteer Worker For Your Party



A survey shows that 8,760,000 people showed willingness to work for their party, 2,160,000 actually did, in the 1954 Congressional elections. Figures for the other party are about the same. Source: American Institute of Public Opinion (Gallup Poll) Princeton, N. J., March 13, 1955. Some of these people live in your precinct, waiting to be asked to help.

## Guide: Saints, Savables And Sinners

As Lincoln said, the second step in effective precinct work is, "ascertain with certainty for whom they will vote."

This is easier said than done. In some areas Party workers would rather restrict their efforts to getting out the vote of known "Saints" rather than venture into the cold and uncertain waters of testing out voters whose sympathies are unknown and run the risk of offending someone.

People generally are not really that sensitive. Those who have done much calling on voters practically always report that they were well received and nobody was offended, although some declined to answer. There are three methods for ascertaining the leanings of the voters in your precinct. They are:

1. **ASK THEM.** When you call on them, introduce yourself as a worker for your party or candidate. Often, the reaction to this statement, in itself, will tell you more about their leanings than anything you could say. If they close the interview immediately they have still cooperated completely by giving you evidence that they are a "Sinner" or just won't talk.

(Much more devious and uncooperative is the genial soul who invites you in, pours you a cup of coffee and engages you in conversation for an hour, thus preventing your making further calls. He or she is probably a convinced "Sinner" who knows that the longer you are detained the less time you will have for other calls.)

Should your prospect not rise to this bait, then later ask directly, "Do you happen to be a Republican or a Democrat?" Or, "how do you feel about (your candidate's name)?" Most people will answer this question simply and truthfully. There is no need to fear asking it.

If you do not bring the interview to a head in this manner, the person you have just called on may lose respect for you because he knows that is what you are there to find out, and you have failed to bring the crucial issue out into the open.

It is wise to remember two things:

First, there are a few people who are truly reluctant to tell where their political sympathies lie. A government worker for instance, or

an employee of a company who differs with his boss or fellow employees may feel that if his sympathies become known, it may injure his good relations with the people with whom he works.

This fear may be genuine and well founded. It should be respected. Second, no matter how awkward you may feel the first time you ask a person where his sympathies lie, as you practice, you will find that you gain skill rapidly not only in asking the question, but also in gauging the response.

Acquiring this skill may even become a source of quiet pleasure and pride to you. Experiment with different ways of asking the question, the way you hold yourself, the tone of your voice, etc. You will develop a real knack of establishing friendly contact with the people you interview and impress them enough with your good faith and good intentions that they will respond warmly and cooperatively even when refusing to answer this question.

2. **INDIRECT INQUIRY.** The second method of "ascertaining with certainty for whom each will vote" is the "third person information" method.

This method entails discreet inquiry among friends who have known a voter over a period of years.

This method is not very trustworthy because so much relies on the quality of judgment of the third person or persons asked. They may be poor judges. They may for reasons of their own, perfectly innocent ones, mislead you. Or, they may simply wish to reassure you, fearing that it would upset you if you knew that so-and-so was a "Sinner."

In using this method, it is well to make several cross readings among different friends of the voter.

3. **THE BLIND TELEPHONE SURVEY.** This is used by workers of both parties, but many are critical of it because it involves misrepresentation. For this reason, it is not recommended, but mentioned only because it has gained wide acceptance.

In this method, the doubtful voter is called on the telephone and the interviewer says something like this:

"I am calling for an independent public opinion research company. We are conducting a survey of voter opinion. Your telephone number has been chosen at random from the telephone book."

"My first question is, did you vote in the last election?"

"Do you intend to vote in the next election?"

"Do you regularly vote for one Party or the other, or do you generally split your ballot?"

"Do you generally vote Republican or Democrat?"

"Do you consider yourself a Republican, Democrat or Independent?"

"Thank you very much, good-by."

**SUMMARY:** The method recommended by most experts in precinct work is the first method. It is straightforward, reliable, and the most efficient in terms of time.

However, the choice of methods to be used is up to the Precinct Leader and his Precinct Team.

**NOTE:** On the Voter Information Card there is space for both the Party affiliation of the voter and his leanings.

In certain areas that are solidly Republican, many people feel it wise to proclaim themselves as Republicans, but vote Democrat. In many solidly Democrat areas the same thing happens in reverse.

Where a voter proclaims himself as an independent, he often says this because he thinks it is intelligent, sophisticated and "the thing to do." Many "independents" vote consistently for one party rather than the other.

In these cases, leanings are more significant than party affiliation, and it is wise to "ascertain with certainty for whom they will vote" rather than rely on announced party affiliation.

## READING FOR SESSION 4

### “Planning To Complete The Job”

Session 4 is the “wrap-up” session.

By this time, your precinct team, following the program, has:

- Worked out some ideas on why systematic personal contact wins elections.
- Systematically broken down the area with the Voter Locator List.
- Made substantial progress in developing a Voter Information Card File.
- Developed some appreciation of where votes are found and how they are gotten—how people make up their minds.
- Gone out and met some voters face-to-face.

The team is now ready to take a careful look at what they have accomplished, what is left to be done and to make plans to complete the job through Election Day.

The four reading assignments for Session 4 provide a basis for working out this plan:

1. The “Abe Lincoln Four-Step” (See reading for Session 1)
2. “Steps in Organizing a Precinct”
3. The “Four Periods in Organizing a Precinct”
4. Guide: “Political Calendar”

With these four short reading assignments your team can, in Session 4, list what has to be done, plan when to do it, divide up the work among the group and schedule additional sessions, as necessary, to plan and carry out specific phases of the Program.

THE PRECINCT ACTION COURSE includes agendas to conduct additional meetings which can be scheduled at appropriate times. They are:

**REVIEW AND PLANNING MEETINGS:** These can be conducted at any time and as often as desired.

**VOTER CENSUS MEETINGS:** Organized meetings to go out as a group and complete Voter Census house calls.

**PLANNING THE REGISTRATION DRIVE:** This session might be held 10 days to a month before precinct registration days.

**POST-REGISTRATION MEETING:** This session is to plan what can be done after close of registration to prepare for Election Day.

**PREPARING FOR ELECTION DAY:** This session reviews the jobs that should be done to guarantee that every registered “Saint” and probable “Saint” gets to the polls on Election Day, casts his vote without error, and has his ballot protected from honest error, vote fraud, and miscounting.

**AFTER ELECTION DAY:** This is one you will be tempted to skip, but it is probably the most important in the course because it:

- Provides an opportunity to review what was done effectively and spot weak points in your operation—while your memory of what happened is still fresh.
- Will show that personal contact work in your precinct will increase your vote 5 to 25% or more . . . you will have the figures to prove it.
- Gives your precinct team a chance to think ahead a little and make a few plans so that there will not be near as much to do next time and results will be even better.
- Offers an occasion to celebrate your accomplishment.

Now, on to the reading for Session 4 . . .

## Steps In Organizing A Precinct

1. Obtain or make a Precinct Map.
2. Obtain access to Sources of Information on your precinct.
3. Estimate number of dwelling units and voters in your precinct.  
If precinct contains more than 500 dwelling units or 1,000 voters . . .
4. Lay out work areas of 200 to 500 dwelling units (400 to 1,000 eligible voters).
5. Recruit Work Area Leaders.  
If there are less than 1,000 eligible voters in your precinct, or if your precinct is already divided into work areas, skip steps 4 and 5.
6. Obtain or make up a political calendar.
7. Call on your party leader or chairman.
8. Obtain materials to conduct a Precinct Action Course.
9. Recruit 4 to 12 people to help.
10. Anticipate expenses, prepare budget, arrange financing.
11. Make Geographical List of dwelling units, fill in occupants.
12. Make Alphabetical Card File of eligible voters.
13. Make a voter census call on each dwelling unit.
14. Correct Card File and Geographical List with voter census information.
15. Conduct Drive to Register all "Saints" and probable "Saints."
16. Plan period between end of Registration and Election Day.
17. Plan and carry out Election Day assignments.
18. After Election Day meeting, "graduation" and critique.

## 4 Periods In Precinct Work

### Period 1

*WHEN:* From day after Election Day to ten days before Precinct Registration begins for the next election (or ten days before payment of poll tax). This is the most important period in winning elections.

*WHAT SHOULD BE DONE:* This is the period when a small amount of occasional work will keep up to date your "perfect list of all the voters."

It is the best time to build voter confidence and respect by careful handling of incidental, or planned, personal contacts, so that when the time comes you will be one of those "in whom they have the most confidence."

It is the time in which to get a group of people together to organize and conduct a PRECINCT ACTION COURSE.

### Period 2

*WHEN:* From ten days before Precinct Registration Days begin until the last day of Registration. In states where necessary, Period 2 begins ten days before poll tax is due.

*WHAT SHOULD BE DONE:* It is during this period that you have best chance to swell the rolls with "Saints" and probable "Saints."

- Check your list to be sure it is perfect.
- Check again to ascertain how people will vote.
- Get your "Saints" registered (poll tax paid).
- Get your probable "Saints" registered (poll tax paid).
- Get your first voters who are possible "Saints" registered (poll tax paid).

### Period 3

*WHEN:* From end of registration (or poll tax) to Election Day.

*WHAT SHOULD BE DONE:* Be sure "Saints" do not feel overlooked. Purge the Official List of registered voters.

Have all doubtful voters ("Savables") talked to by those in whom they have confidence.

Put every "Saint" to work as an opinion leader talking to friends and neighbors.

Follow campaign developments closely and counter "Sinners" arguments by starting "the talk" going on your side's strong points.

Prepare Election Day assignments.

#### ***Period 4***

***WHEN:*** Week before Election Day through Election Day.

***WHAT SHOULD BE DONE:*** Make final "perfect list" of all registered "Saints" and probable "Saints."

Finish plans for Election Day work and carry them out.

On Election Day, see that every "Saint" and probable "Saint" is brought to the polls and his ballot protected.

## **VOTER CENSUS MEETINGS**

(ADDITIONAL MEETINGS TO COMPLETE VOTER CENSUS)

Following Session 4, most precinct teams will not have completed their Voter Census. As many additional Voter Census Meetings should be held as necessary to complete the census.

The Leader will be tempted simply to assign areas to team members and ask them to be responsible for calling on the dwelling units in that area. People tend to put off doing it, do not finish, or lose interest when this is done. However, when a meeting is planned this creates an occasion, a definite time and a definite activity. Under these circumstances people come, do the job, and enjoy it.

#### ● ***PREPARATION***

Team members should review the reading for Session 3 on conducting a Voter Census.

#### ● ***PROCEDURE***

Since team members have already participated in a Voter Census (Session 3), the briefing time is much shorter, limited to handing out assignments and answering questions, if any. In Session 3, it was recommended that calls be made in pairs. Now that group has "broken in" on making calls, team members may split up and make calls individually, allowing more calls in the allotted time. This is up to team members, however. Some may prefer to go in pairs depending on their confidence, the time of day, their familiarity with the neighborhood.

A definite time is set to return, transfer notes to Voter Information Cards, have refreshments and discuss experiences.

#### ● ***ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURE***

Voter Census Meetings may be combined with other types of work sessions. If, for instance, more work is to be done with cards, Locator List, or other projects, one group that prefers to do this may stay at meeting place while the rest of the group makes house calls.

## **Guide: Mailings To Voters**

Many Precinct Leaders use mailings. Few think them through carefully. Most try to make them do more than they can. Here are suggestions on what can be done through the mail.

### **Personal Letters**

Personal letters are the most effective mailings:

- Thanking workers for a big job well done.
- Reminding "Saints" of an election coming up.
- Saying how nice it was to meet you, or just passing on some news.
- Enclosing a newspaper clipping about the addressee or a member of his family.
- Sending greetings when on a trip—a post card will do.

### **Post Cards and Printed Circulars**

Circulars take many forms, have many different uses. Circulars can be used to remind "Saints" and probable "Saints" when to register or vote. Sample ballots are great.

Campaign literature is hard to use effectively unless you personalize it with a note, drawing attention to some particular point or relating it to a previous conversation.

One good device is to pass out post cards or literature at a party or meeting—particularly one for a candidate—ask everyone to address 5 cards to personal friends and put a note on them. The Precinct Leader takes care of mailing them when turned in.

### **Endorsements**

One very effective and simple kind of mailing to all kinds of people is a simple statement that "we support and urge you to support \_\_\_\_\_ (or your party ticket) because:

1. (Three
2. Short
3. Reasons)."

Followed by names of 50 or more people. (Have complete agreement and written permission to use each name or it may boomerang.)

### **Addressing**

Always include Mr., Mrs. or Miss on address. A letter addressed to Jane Brown is obviously impersonally addressed, where a letter addressed to Mrs. Jane Brown gives the impression the sender at least

knows who she is. A letter to Mr. and Mrs. John Brown is far better than two letters, one to John Brown and another to Jane Brown. If Voter Information Cards have been well-kept, this is no problem, you will know who your people are. Volunteer crews should be warned particularly about using Mr., Mrs. and Miss in addressing envelopes.

*NOTE:* Mailings are hard to do well unless you have a professional publicity person or writer in your group with political experience. With the exception of personal notes and simple reminders to Saints to register and vote, mailings have little impact unless cleverly conceived and carefully done to achieve a specific purpose with a certain audience. They are no substitute for personal contact.

## **Guide: Use Of Telephone**

In recent years a great deal has been said about the telephone as a political tool. This has been the result of successful phone campaigns by the A.F.L.-C.I.O. Committees on Political Education (C.O.P.E.) as illustrated in the movie "Wisconsin Story" and by "bucket shop" operations.

The impression has grown up that the telephone is the magic key to successful precinct work. It isn't.

It has a very important place in precinct work, but its uses are specific. It is not a substitute for "making a perfect list" nor for personal calls, meetings, poll watching or other vital phases of personal contact work and precinct organization.

### ***The Telephone Has These Uses:***

1. "Crash" programs to turn out people to register and vote by shotgun approach in areas that are 3 to 2 "Saints" or better.
2. Reminder calls to get people out to register or vote, to get them to a meeting or party.
3. Polls to determine what issues are on people's minds.

### ***It Has These Limitations:***

1. It is less effective than face to face meetings in building friendly personal relationships with voters.
2. The caller has much less opportunity to observe and gain impressions of a voter because he can't see the expressions on a person's face, what kind of house he lives in, family or pictures, evidence of hobbies and interests.
3. A personal call gives you an opportunity to see the voter personally so you can recognize him at church, at the bus stop, in the supermarket, at a lodge meeting or Chamber of Commerce get-together . . . take advantage of chance meetings later to build your contact.
4. A personal call impresses a voter that you are personally interested in him—you took the time to "drop by."
5. You will never find new construction, houses with no phone, or an unlisted number by telephone.
6. A voter is better able to place you on subsequent visits or phone calls if he has met and seen you personally: "You remember I called on you one evening last April (you have record from Voter Informa-

tion Card) in our Voter Census. How have you been? Did the roses turn out well?" It is easier to talk to someone on the phone if you can visualize his face.

### ***Summary***

Just as a telephone is helpful to a salesman in contacting customers, it is no substitute for a personal call with an order blank and pen. Just as the telephone is a convenience in your relations with friends, it is no substitute for a get-together and depends for much of its value on personal relationships built previously in person.

The telephone is a short cut, a time saver, a convenience. It is an aid to, not a substitute for, knowing your voters personally.

## **Performance Data . . .**

### **Precinct Action Course . . .**

- Has been used in 42 states.
- In areas already well organized, users reported increases in their party vote ranging from 5% to 25%.
- In areas previously unorganized, users reported gains in party vote up to 95%.
- These increases occurred where the P.A.C. was used as intended, the four sessions conducted by the Precinct Leader with volunteers from his precinct.

#### **HERE IS WHAT THEY SAY . . .**

- Ethan Campbell, candidate for Congress, 6th District of Missouri, 1960 and 1962—(Mostly rural and small town area.) “We used the P.A.C. in 11 precincts in Buchanan County in 1962. In every one of the 11, my share of the vote increased over 1960, while district-wide it decreased 2.3%.”
- Edward O. Sullivan, Jr., 8th Ward, Yonkers, New York (mixed big city and suburban area, about 6,000 voters)—“We used P.A.C. in all 13 election districts (precincts) of the 8th Ward in 1963 municipal elections. Councilman Picone’s margin increased from 246 in 1961 to over 700 this year. We cut our stay-at-homes from 11% to 5%. We can account for everyone who didn’t vote, and why. Experienced committeemen said P.A.C. cleared up questions they had had for years. It works! It’s terrific!”
- Earl Carroll, Town Chairman, Clarksville, Indiana—Ran 4 groups of 4 persons per group. Made 800 house calls, found 150 non-voting “Saints,” 35 first voters, recruited 15 more workers. “We registered 350 new ‘Saints’ to the other side’s 75 or 100.”
- Herbert B. Cherrie, II, Committeeman, R.D. #1 Fleetwood, Pa. Ran two groups totaling 27 people. Made 800 house calls, found 104 non-voting “Saints,” 85 first voters, picked up four more volunteers. “Now for the first time in history we outregister the opposition 640 to 590. All my workers were complete novices.”
- Mrs. Robert Ague, Chairman, Belleview Precinct, Alexandria, Va. “We increased our vote by 95% in 1962. We owe it all to the P.A.C.”