# A VOTE FOR ELECTRONIICS
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For a while last month when viewing and listening to the California primary election returns, we could not decide whether the main contest was between Governor Rockefeller and Senator Goldwater, or between the electronic computers of CBS, NBC and ABC. In the last five years, the election day contests between networks have become much more important to the nation than the actual political races being covered. The networks have progressively beefed up their efforts on those occasions to the point of an all-out massive assault. In an atmosphere of frenzied officiousness each channel tries to outdo the other by crowding as many tabulators, computers, sorters and other data-devouring mechanical monsters as it can into the viewing arena. Larger and larger auditoriums are packed with greater and greater numbers of busy underlings arranged in banks of tiers around a central amphitheater filled with all-knowing pundits, commentators, analysts, pollsters, political experts, prognosticators and clicking boxes.

The incidental political contestants and their headquarters are for the most part ignored completely as the more important business of profound consultation and interpretation is carried on between the authoritarians on the central stage. Occasionally, to give an exhausted, dull-witted analyst an opportunity to reorganize his brilliance, a reluctant switch to campaign headquarters is made. Such flash appearances are brief and the junior network-pundit there is usually interrupted in mid-flight by an urgent report on a new poll interpretation.

Credits toward victory in the battle between networks are given for chief commentators who can pontificate most convincingly while registering utmost concern and optimism simultaneously. Commentators with loosened collars, tousled graying hair, deeply-lined faces, and bags under hollow eyes are worth their weight in rating indices. Once the battle is joined, it is "devil take the hindmost." Experts and analysts unable to reverse their fields in mid-sentence seldom last more than one election. Pollsters who cannot turn a contradiction into a confirmation in less than sixteen words are not tolerated on the network team. Any electronic computer that fails to predict an outcome two hours before poll-closing time and with 99.623% of the ballot boxes still uncounted is a rotten egg and had better go back to have its circuits checked. The nice thing about network election contests is that no competitor ever loses. No matter what kind of performance the electronic computer turns in, its own army of experts and interpreters can manufacture victory out of mutual congratulations and self-hypnosis.

We are thoroughly in favor of the new electronic computing marvels; they are hard-working, honest and incorruptible. We would like to see any one of them become the next President. And with those network experts tagging along as political advisors and cabinet members, no administration could ever be wrong.