TOMORROW: VOTING BY RADIO?
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SOME day a President of the United States may be elected "electronically." A system has been devised and is now under development to gather quickly and accurately the opinions of representative groups of Americans on all sorts of questions of interest in our national life. If this can be done, and it seems that it can, it can be used to poll the nation to elect a President.

This is not as fantastic as it seems. It has been learned that a Radio Technical Planning Board panel has recommended the allocation of a twenty-megacycle radio band to experiment with the electronic-polling idea in the micro-waves between 2,500 and 5,000 megacycles. If the plan is carried out as now projected it will consist of one or more special central radio stations to communicate with a group of "respondent receiver-transmitter" outfits distributed among the groups to be polled.

How It's Done

Each group—perhaps only a few hundred—would be selected in a given polling district, say a county, which might easily be covered by one central radio station. Additional stations would be located centrally in adjacent areas and have different groups to be polled. All questions to be asked would be worded so the answers might be "yes" or "no" or "very good," "fair," "no opinion," "poor," "very bad," etc. To vote, each person in the key groups would press one of a series of buttons on one of the respondent receiver-transmitters furnished by a committee in charge.

The voting machine actually would be a miniature transmitting station equipped to send out micro-waves more than powerful enough to span the distance to the central receiver station, where the votes are registered. Inside the box, perhaps, will be a series of cams—the "no-voting" button setting one cam in motion, the "yes-voting" button another cam. Each cam in turn would set in motion a series of contactors designed to send out a series of high and low pitch buzzes or impulses, which, upon arrival at the central receiving station, would vote "yes" or "no" just as accurately as if the voter himself went to an election district voting booth in the regular way.

Privacy, Too

Questions to be voted upon would reach each voter over an ordinary radio set in accordance with a prearranged broadcast schedule, or be transmitted by facsimile from district headquarters over the special micro-wave channel directly to the voting machine. On the micro-wave channels the electronic voting machine might be set in operation when a vote is to be taken through a system known as an "alert" receiver, which would turn on the whole mechanism when a certain type of electric impulse is transmitted from the central station. A buzzer or loudspeaker would then warn that a vote-taking was imminent. Failure to vote, if too frequent, might be regarded as cause for removal of the apparatus to the home of an alternate voting member in the polling district group.

Each voter would be supplied with a key to open the instrument and prevent unauthorized persons from tampering with it. Red and green lights would flash on and off—the red to indicate the machine at ready, green indicating the vote is ready to be cast, and finally another red light indicating the balloting has ended. The key to the instrument would then be withdrawn until another balloting time is announced.

The inventor of the system is Dr. Alfred N. Goldsmith, New York consulting engineer and prolific inventor, who has called it "centercasting." Dr. Goldsmith foresees the possible use of a single micro-wavelength to conduct a poll—say in a city or county—with additional micro-wave chan-