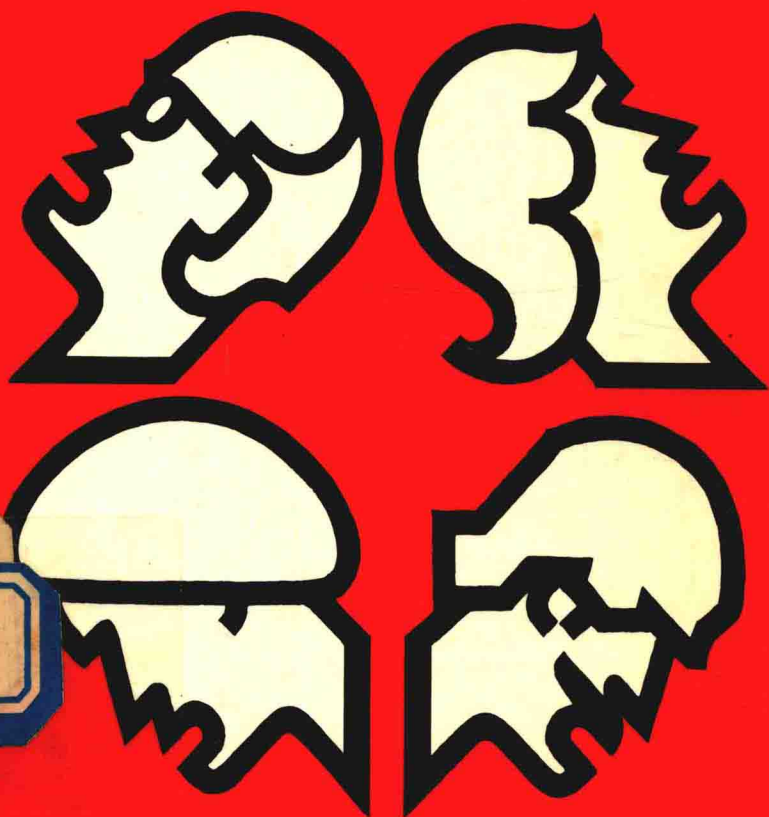


The Politics of Representation

The Democratic Convention 1972

Denis G. Sullivan
Jeffrey L. Pressman
Benjamin I. Page
John J. Lyons



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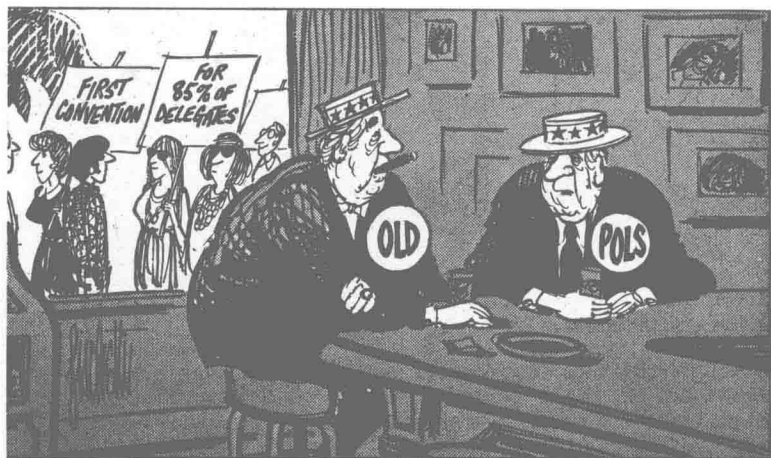
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To Mrs. Selma Rubin and the staff of the Blue Waters Hotel
for their thoughtful attention to our needs



"I understand the new politics now—they're in an' we're out."

Preface

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The idea for this study emerged in the spring of 1972 from a series of conversations stimulated by our joint teaching of the introductory course on American Government at Dartmouth College. We were wrestling intellectually with the problems of political nominating conventions. We perceived that the McGovern-Fraser Commission reforms, coupled with the McGovern candidacy for the nomination, would bring significant changes in delegate selection and other decision procedures at the 1972 Democratic convention; and we supposed that the changes would put to a severe test the traditional wisdom concerning the functions and dynamics of national party nominating conventions in general.

The idea for a study turned quickly into a proposal for students and faculty from Dartmouth to travel to Miami and interview delegates over the course of the convention. And so on July 7, three days before the opening gavel on Monday night, a student-faculty group boarded a plane in Boston for Miami International Airport.

All of this was made possible by support from a number of different sources. Basic support was provided through a generous grant from the Ford Foundation, and special thanks go to William Grinker of the Foundation who was so helpful at every stage of our proposal. Professor Frank Smallwood and Thomas Davis, through a grant from the Dartmouth Public Affairs Center, provided travel, food, and lodging expenses for the initial student group. Because the project was attractive to so many students at Dartmouth, Dartmouth College President John G. Kemeny provided additional funds so that we could increase the number of students who could travel to Miami.

To our interviewers in Miami—Robert Bachelder, Eric Easterly, William Emmons, Alfred Frawley, David Hoeh, Sandy Hoeh, Michael Hollis, Charles Johnson, Gerald Johnson, Ernie Kessler, Galen Kirkland, John Lamond, John Lyons, Michael Marohn, Peter McKeever, Joost Van Nispen, Geoffrey Parker, Kate Pressman, Charles Schudson, Karen Schudson, Susan Smallwood, Judy Soisson, Thomas Watkin, Andrea Wolfman, and Bruce Westcott—we express thanks for a job well done.

Lucille Flanders of the Dartmouth Public Affairs Center served as our secretary in Hanover, and Charlotte Guarino did the same while we were in Miami. Both proved indispensable. Some of our students doubled as interviewers and observers of particular state delegations: Kate Pressman on Connecticut; Charles Johnson, John Lamond, and Ernie Kessler on Massachusetts; and John Lyons on New Hampshire. Although our study does not deal with specific state delegations, the reports of these students were quite useful in shaping our thoughts about the relationship between state delegations and candidate organizations.

Two students should be singled out because of their special contributions. John Lyons was at the center of our project from its inception to its conclusion. He was responsible for drawing the sample, assisting in the construction of the questionnaire, preparing the data for the computer, and contributing a chapter to our report. Geoffrey Parker performed the onerous but vitally important task of coding the interview data into a computer-readable form with extraordinary skill and persistence. He was assisted by Jeffrey Merritt and Charles Johnson. The reliability of their work was gratifyingly high. The statistical analysis was greatly facilitated through the use of Dartmouth College's Project IMPRESS. Finally, our thanks go to our typists, Lucille E. Flanders and Virginia Ord Church.

The authors are happy to take full responsibility for this book; neither Dartmouth College nor the Ford Foundation shares any of the responsibility for its contents.

Denis G. Sullivan Jeffrey L. Pressman Benjamin I. Page

Dartmouth College Hanover, New Hampshire May 18, 1973

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Four Dilemmas in Representation

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What follows in this book is not just an account of a particular nominating convention; it goes beyond the particulars of the Democratic convention in Miami to examine some of the more enduring dilemmas that found expression in the events of spring and summer 1972.

A central problem in any democratic society involves what Harold Lasswell has termed an "empowering process." That is, the process by which political parties select leaders whom they can support and who are capable of mounting successful electoral campaigns. But political parties, like other organizations, face a number of dilemmas when they attempt to formulate optimal selection procedures. The ways in which these dilemmas were faced in the period of 1968 to 1972, and what the tentative solutions revealed about the nature of the political process, constitute the core of this book.

The first dilemma arises from the issue of deciding who is entitled to participate directly in the nomination process. Even this basic problem involves complex issues. Not all citizens who declare themselves in support of a candidate can be considered members of that candidate's party. Yet, who is to decide where the boundary between member and supporter lies? Party membership in the United States seems to be hard for the asking. Political parties are not private organizations that can easily refuse freely offered services. Moreover, in periods of dissatisfaction with political parties, amateur activists often demand that the scope of participation in the parties be

widened to include them. The issue of participation, then, creates a natural tension between the more professional politician and the amateur activist. The result of the tension that developed in 1968 was a broadening of opportunities for participation in 1972, an experiment in which the mix of amateur activists and professionals would be altered.

The second dilemma is, in one sense, a consequence of the first. If the convention organization of a party receives an infusion of new delegates whose loyalties may be to interests outside the party, as well as to those within the party, how will these outside interests receive representation? Delegates with primary loyalties to labor, southerners, women, blacks, the elderly, the young will vote and decide issues in company with those whose loyalties focus on the party. The new delegates may think of themselves as directly representing outside interests and may desire their own convention sites to provide symbolic recognition of their group's importance; they may also want candidates to appear before their groups and to respond directly to the interests they represent.

Their presence gives rise to a third dilemma—the relationship between issue goals and the survival of a party as an organization. Parties have to decide where their priorities lie. In their choice of leaders and platforms they may indicate a responsiveness to what has been “tried and true”—to the nurturance of old constituencies—or they might look to new constituencies with new issue orientations. And parties may, in their platform and choice of leaders, contribute to the development of new constituencies in exchange for new support. In this sense, then, a party becomes educative; its platform can show where the party might go, as well as where it has been. The dilemma is, of course, characteristic of all organizations: as their political environments change, or seem to change, parties run the risk of losing the old while attracting the new.

Finally, there is the central dilemma of all politics—the balance between issue purity and organizational power. Parties are organizations that must attract votes to survive. Yet they also exist as instruments to achieve issue goals. Awareness of this dilemma on the part of a party's members creates a profound organizational tension. Periodically, the tension comes to be expressed in the conflict between the professional

politician and the issue purist, the latter willing to sacrifice power for integrity, and the former, integrity for power. Over time, however, the tension seems to be resolved through the imperatives of organizational power driving out or transforming the issue purists. Thus, the survival of issue concern may well depend on fresh infusions of personnel whose incentives for participation are directly related to important new issues.

Each dilemma we have described was heightened by the events between 1968 and 1972. In extreme form, it seemed as if the changes during this period had tilted the balance so that the new would be emphasized at the expense of the old, direct representation at the expense of indirect, innovation at the expense of tradition, and issue purity at the expense of political professionalism. But conventional wisdom extolled the old, indirect representation, responsiveness to traditional constituencies, and issue pragmatism. Each of the following chapters examines how one of the above dilemmas was resolved in the Democratic Presidential Nominating Convention of 1972.

Demands for Change, 1968–1972

In 1968 the Democratic party was in the throes of adjusting to the demands of groups with newly won power positions in American politics. Although the party thought of itself as representing those who demanded change in society, spokesmen for the groups most concerned with change did not agree. From the perspective of many blacks in America, the Democratic party was basically white. For women, the party was predominantly male.¹ And for the young, the party was in the hands of the old.²

Because these charges appeared to be true, and because on a variety of issues in American society blacks differed from whites, males from females, and young from old, the new power groups believed that the middle-aged, white, male regulars who exercised disproportionate control in the party would never understand nor accept their needs and aspirations. For some, then, the party needed reform, and the reform could only move in one direction. Distrust of the regulars by leaders of new power groupings led to a demand for direct representation in the policy-making procedures of the party.

Only by such a move could the party regain its legitimacy among those it professed to represent.

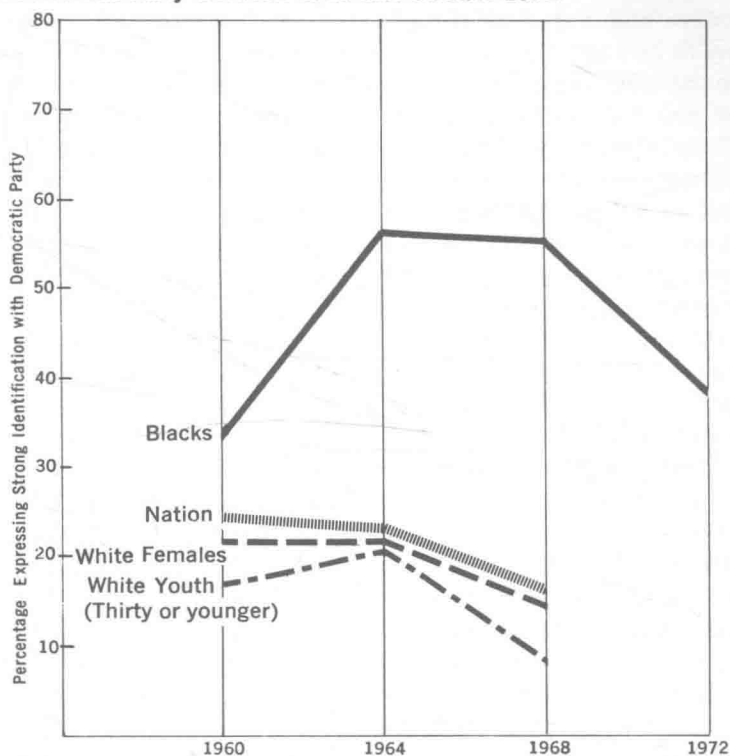
Traditionally, group demands have been filtered through the party apparatus on local, state, and national levels. Representation has been indirect—the responsibility of those who have made politics a lifelong commitment and who view themselves as professionals. The demand for direct representation was thus a challenge to the legitimacy of an old profession. Along with the desire for direct representation there were demands that the traditional style of politics be altered to reflect new issues and thus a “new politics.” For many members of the new groups, issues really did matter, and parties became instruments for their expression. Demands for changes in representation were joined with a new political style; the ideal was an issue-oriented party that would articulate its conceptions of justice.

Before going further, it should be pointed out that grouping together youth, blacks, and women—as if they all bear the same relation to the Democratic party—is somewhat misleading. Their differences may be more instructive than their similarities. By any measure, the success of the Democratic coalition on the national level has been more dependent upon the continuing support of blacks than of women or youth. Black loyalty to the Democratic party, a product of the 1930s depression and the emergence of a class-based politics, was strengthened in the 1960s by the civil-rights movement. Many southern blacks, coming to the polls for the first time in the 1960s, expressed loyalty to the Democrats in both sentiment and behavior. From 1960 to 1968, as Figure 1 shows, black loyalty to the Democratic party surged at a time when Democratic loyalty was declining nationally.

In 1968, then, the Democratic party had established a clear partisan advantage among blacks, and blacks were contributing substantially to the Democratic party's electoral successes. Robert Axelrod has calculated that in terms of a percentage contribution to the party's electoral success in Presidential elections, the contribution of blacks rose from an average of 6 percent in the 1950s to 19 percent in 1968.³ Yet in the 1968 Democratic Nominating Convention only 5 percent of the delegates were black. How significant this discrepancy may

FIGURE 1.

Percentages of Expressions of Strong Party Loyalty Toward the Democratic Party Between 1960 and October 1972



Source: ICPR prior to 1972. See Note 4 for question wording. The 1972 percentage for blacks was provided by Arthur Miller, et al, *Social Conflict and Political Estrangement, 1958-72*, delivered at the 1972 Midwest Political Science Association Meeting. Data are not yet available for the other groups.

prove to be cannot be answered here. Suffice it to say that it could not help the Democrats maintain their partisan advantage among blacks and, in fact, it may hurt them. Figure 1 shows another large shift among blacks in the Democratic party; in this case a 16 percent reduction in the percentage of blacks who identify strongly with the party. The reasons for this are as yet obscure, but it may well be that the increase in black representation at the 1972 Democratic National Convention will dampen the shift.

Although women and youth were also underrepresented in

the 1968 convention, they were not, in the sense the blacks were, real political groups with identifiable interests. Contrary to popular opinion, the young in the 1960s were by no means united in their opposition to the Vietnam war. In fact, youth as a group was slightly less dovish on the war than was the general population. Nor were young people in agreement on economic and social policy. Their views were slightly more liberal than those of their elders, but the differences between the opinions of the age groups were mainly ones of degree. Again, Figure 1 is instructive in this regard; although the decline in the percentage of those under thirty who identified strongly with the Democratic party is substantial, it simply mirrors national trends. It would be an exaggeration to view this drift away from the Democrats on the part of the young as a distinct alienation; rather, there seems to be a secular trend away from strong party identification for all groups except blacks.⁴

The emergence of the political power of women toward the end of the 1960s raises yet another issue. It was only after 1968 that women began to organize effectively for political action and to demand representation in the councils of the party in relation to their numbers in the population. The issues dividing men and women had not been sharply felt within the party system by 1968, and, thus, the changes in strength of party loyalty among women in the 1960s closely parallel the national trend. For women, and to a lesser extent for youth, the Democratic party was only one of many institutions to which they had been denied access.

For blacks, however, the case was more powerful. They did not need to rest their argument on the issue of societal justice; they had a concrete political claim to increased representation. The party needed them. But distinctions among the claims of the three groups were submerged in the rhetoric of the McGovern Commission report. Spokesmen for women, blacks, and youth were able to argue quite effectively that the Democratic party could not long remain their representative unless members of each group participated directly in party decision-making processes. The persuasiveness of the argument, and its political utility to the McGovern organization, did have far-

reaching implications for the classic model of convention decision making.

The classic model assumes the existence of competition among candidate organizations for the support of convention delegates who are party activists. The salient roles are *party member* and *convention delegate*. The great importance of party goals to the average delegate has been pointed out by Nelson Polsby and Aaron Wildavsky: "The major goals of most delegates to national conventions may be simply described: to nominate a man who can win the election; to unify the party; to obtain some claim on the nominee; and to strengthen state party organizations."⁵ In the classic model of convention decision making, delegates pursue these goals through state delegations that, operating as cohesive units, bargain with each other and with candidate organizations. The rank-and-file delegates attach themselves to hierarchical leaders who have major roles in national, state, or local party organizations. The average delegate's concern with winning an election drives him to consider supporting candidates who can harness the short-term forces to his party. Thus, in 1952, regular Republicans might have found Eisenhower's political inexperience distasteful, but they could support him because they recognized a winner. But the party activist delegate does not want to sacrifice the long-term base of his party for short-term gains. Thus, he must test each candidate against the standard of party unity: Can the candidate draw together the various constituencies of the party?

The McGovern-Fraser reforms, it was said, would change the *structure of the convention*, the *nature of the delegates*, and *group representation* in ways that would limit the relevance of the classic model. These three changes are, of course, related. For purposes of illustration, let us make a hypothetical examination of the issue of integration, or unity, of state delegations at the 1972 convention. One of the most important changes in convention structure—the abolition of the unit rule—would diminish the importance of hierarchical state delegation leaders as members of the bargaining arena. Controlling a majority of the state delegates no longer assured a state delegation leader of all the votes allocated to the state. Thus

minority forces within the delegation would be sought out by candidate organizations attempting to fashion winning coalitions. The abolition of the unit rule and the reduction of the importance of state party leaders in state delegations would multiply the number of groups to be consulted in forming coalitions and strain an already burdened information system. There would be strong incentives to find ways to assemble the smaller groups into more manageable bargaining units.

The desire, and need, to develop new kinds of bargaining units would find expression in new patterns of group representation at the convention. With the increase in the number of women, youths, and blacks, and nonparty activists of all kinds, state delegations would be subject to even more factionalization than might be predicted by the abolition of the unit rule. Thus, the possibility might arise that interest-group representation at the convention would go beyond the platform-committee fights and labor-union activity.

If such a development did occur, it would threaten the autonomy of the convention as a decision-making system with its own boundaries and procedures. The autonomy of the convention is traditionally symbolized by prohibiting nondelegates from entering the convention floor and, in addition, by a number of devices designed to heighten the salience of the delegate role. Party symbols are paraded before the delegates who learn to perceive their roles in a party-related frame of reference, but these devices may now be far less effective in promoting concern for party-related goals than they have been in the past. The McGovern-Fraser Reform Commission recommendations concerning open caucuses, minority-group representation, and so forth, pose another threat to convention autonomy because they allow for a larger number of nonparty group appeals than had come from delegates at past conventions—a development that would reduce integration within the state delegations and transform the bargaining arena.

It was thought, too, that symbolic aspects of representation might be involved. The increase in nonparty activists and minority-group representation at the convention meant that large numbers of local and state party officials had been displaced from their positions within state delegations. Although they “represented” the party in an organizational sense, they