THE PRIMARY GAME

by Jack Walker

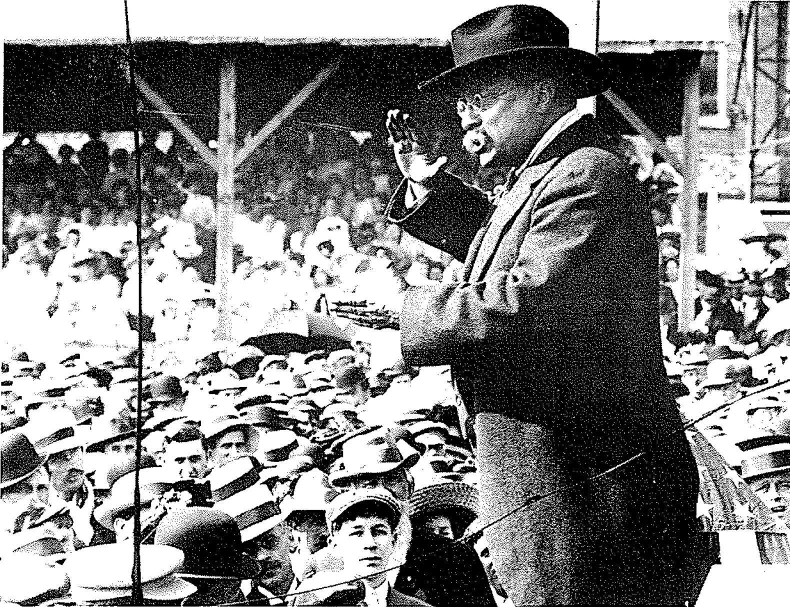
When Senator Gary Hart (D.-Colo.) bested former vice president Walter Mondale in the New Hampshire Democratic primary almost four years ago, his upset victory dazzled some press and television commentators. Declared CBS News correspondent Bob Simon: "Now there are two front-runners."

But the election disturbed many pundits and Democratic politicians; it seemed to demonstrate just how volatile the process of choosing presidential nominees had become. Echoing other complaints, the *New Republic* warned that this "bizarre system," which "makes it possible for a near unknown to get a grip on a major party nomination in the course of three or four weeks of frenzied excitement, could someday produce a genuine monster."

Since then, the system has not become any less unpredictable. Consider this year's campaign for the Democratic and Republican nominations; most of the contenders had begun campaigning by 1986, over two years before the general election. They have expended most of their effort not in canvassing large cities and populous suburbs in New York or California, but in roaming from county fairs to coffee klatches in towns and hamlets in Iowa and New Hampshire. These rural states are the first on the 1988 calendar to hold caucuses and primaries.

Most of the candidates will drop out of the race before the parties hold their national conventions this summer: The Democrats will convene this July in Atlanta; the Republicans will meet in August in New Orleans. Two Democrats who failed to survive intense press scrutiny (former senator Gary Hart and Senator Joseph R. Biden, Jr.) have already quit. The remaining hopefuls know that a poor showing in the Iowa caucuses (February 8) and the New Hampshire primaries (February 16) may force them to bow out too, as donors of campaign funds seek out better prospects. And the chances are good that after "Super Tuesday," March 8, when 12 Southern states will hold their primaries, only two or three candidates from each party will still be in the race—weeks before primary voters in New York (April 19), Pennsylvania (April 26), and California (June 7) make their preferences known.

The system is not only peculiar but also blatantly unfair, according to its many critics. Primary elections, they say, are expensive and time-consuming popularity contests, which discourage many qualified office-holders from entering the race. As the first to vote, Democrats and Republicans in Iowa and New Hampshire will have more influence in selecting the parties' nominees than will their counterparts in Texas and



Running on the Bull Moose ticket in 1912, Teddy Roosevelt inspired many campaign jingles: "I want to be a Bull Moose,/And with the Bull Moose stand/With Antlers on my forehead/And a Big Stick in my hand."

California. And because the more ideologically fervent 19 percent of the eligible voters go to the polls during primaries, the nominating system, the critics argue, fails to produce moderate nominees who can win the general election *and* govern effectively once in the White House.

"There is something wrong with a nominating process that gives one state [Iowa] the loudest voice and then produces candidates who cannot even carry that state [in the general election]," said one candidate, first term U.S. senator Albert Gore, Jr., (D.-Tenn.), last November. "We [Democrats] have lost four of the last five elections . . . Isn't it time for a change?"

Would-be reformers believe it is. Each party, they suggest, should hold several regional primaries, or one national primary, to make the nominating process shorter and more reflective of the wishes of Democrats and Republicans nationwide. Change party rules, others say, to bring the experienced politicians and local party leaders back into the nominating game. Lloyd Cutler, former counsel to President Jimmy Carter, has suggested that each party's 435 candidates for the U.S. House of Representatives, plus its 100 Senate candidates and incumbent senators, should automatically serve as uncommitted delegates to their parties' national conventions. Journalist Robert Shogan has advocated the

nomination of candidates by "a caucus of elected officials, expanded perhaps to include representatives of major constituent groups."

All of these ideas are well intentioned. But when one analyzes why the U.S. presidential nominating system has become an exhausting and expensive process, primary elections, or the composition of convention delegations, are not entirely to blame. The way Americans now choose their presidential candidates has less to do with specific party rules and procedures than with the fact that the two major political parties have lost many of their historic functions.

As historian Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., explained a decade ago: "The decline of immigration deprived the political organization of its classic clientele. The rise of the Civil Service limited its patronage. The New Deal took over its welfare role... The electronic revolution has abolished [the two parties'] mediatorial function. Television presents the politician directly to the voter, who makes his judgment more on what Walter Cronkite [of CBS] and John Chancellor [of NBC] show him than on what the party leaders tell him."

Other trends have weakened the party system too. As Americans have become better educated, they have also become more likely to vote for candidates as individuals, less likely to vote for "the party." And since the 1960s, various "movements," (such as those on behalf of blacks, women, and homosexuals) which have helped to make American politics more democratic and inclusive, have also made the game of politics, and the process of choosing presidential candidates, more susceptible to conflict and disarray.

Would-be reformers should remember that primary elections are not a new phenomenon in American politics.

Teddy Roosevelt's Campaign

Primaries first emerged around the turn of the century as one result of middle-class protests against the selection of candidates by party bosses in "smoke-filled" rooms. Progressive Era politicians, notably Wisconsin's Robert M. La Follette and New Jersey's Woodrow Wilson, favored the referendum, the direct election of U.S. senators, and primary elections as ways of making government more responsive to the citizenry and less beholden to "bosses and the machines." Wilson supported primaries because he believed that the citizenry should choose its leaders and that leaders should form political parties according to their political views. "Eight words," Wilson wrote, "contain the sum of the present degradation of our political parties: No leaders, no principles; no

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principles, no parties."

In 1905, at La Follette's urging, the Wisconsin legislature passed one of the first laws providing for the direct popular election of delegates to the national party convention. Not without considerable debate, Pennsylvania, Oregon, and other states soon followed suit. By the spring of 1912, when Theodore Roosevelt declared that "My hat is in the ring"—that he would challenge incumbent William Howard Taft for the Republican Party's presidential nomination—14 states had passed laws instituting the direct primary election.

Campaigning in states that held primaries, Roosevelt charged that the incumbent had yielded to "the bosses and to the great privileged interests." The former president, a vigorous and colorful candidate, scored spectacular victories in California, Illinois, Maryland, Nebraska, Oregon, Pennsylvania, and Ohio, but failed to win over local party leaders. After Taft won the nomination at the Republican National Convention in Chicago in June, Roosevelt's supporters retreated to Chicago's Orchestra Hall, and agreed to hold their own party convention the following August. The Progressive or Bull Moose* Party, as Roosevelt's supporters called their organization, nominated him for president, and adopted a platform which endorsed, among other things, "nation-wide preferential primaries for candidates for the presidency."

The Fading of Reform

Roosevelt's third-party challenge split the normal G.O.P. vote, and helped throw the election to the Democratic nominee, Woodrow Wilson, then governor of New Jersey. As president, Wilson urged Congress to pass a bill setting up a national presidential primary so that "the several parties may choose the nominees for the Presidency without the intervention of nominating conventions."

The presidential primary bill made little headway. But thanks to the efforts of Progressives, 23 states had adopted some form of the primary by 1916. Primaries, however, enjoyed more theoretical than practical appeal. These contests produced only about one-third of the delegates that a candidate needed to win the nomination. Both Herbert Hoover (in 1928) and Franklin D. Roosevelt (in 1932) officially entered primaries, but did not campaign in any of them. At the time, candidates won the party's nomination, as historian James MacGregor Burns has noted, not by a "great campaign through the nation but by a series of guerrilla battles, by tortuous, often undercover manipulation [of local party leaders] in each of the states."

The Progressives' reform efforts faded after World War I under pressure from party officials who resisted surrendering control of the nominating process. Between 1920 and 1949, only one state, Alabama,

*The name comes from a remark that Roosevelt made at the G.O.P. convention. Optimistic about his chances of defeating Taft, TR said to a reporter: "I'm feeling like a bull moose."

adopted a presidential primary law. And eight of the 26 states that had passed laws setting up primaries abandoned them by 1935. State governments, after all, had to pay for primaries, which were not inexpensive to hold. "So far as expressing the preference of the voters," stated a 1932 North Dakota report, "... the [primary] election [of 1928] was a farce which cost the taxpayers of the state $135,635."

During the 1940s and 1950s, however, challengers to front-runners began entering primaries—not so much to win delegates as to demonstrate their vote-getting prowess. Sometimes the stratagem backfired. In 1948, Minnesota's 41-year-old former governor, Harold Stassen, staked his chances of winning the Republican nomination on a victory in the Oregon primary. But New York's governor, Thomas E. Dewey, the consensus choice of party leaders, out-campaigned Stassen. Dewey, reported *Time*, "hustled down the rain-swept Willamette Valley, over to the Pacific Coast and back to the central Oregon lumber country—pumping hands, signing autographs, ripping off ten speeches a day." The New Yorker beat Stassen by 10,000 votes and, overcoming other rivals at the G.O.P. convention, became the party's nominee.

Outsiders would later enter primaries with more success. In the 1952 Republican contest, Dwight D. Eisenhower demonstrated his popu-

Sen. Frank Church (D.-Idaho), Gary Hart, and Jesse Jackson at the 1972 Democratic National Convention in Miami. Author Theodore H. White called Hart, then George McGovern's aide, "the archetype of the new breed."

lar appeal by defeating the party leaders' favorite, Senator Robert A. Taft, in the New Hampshire, New Jersey, Massachusetts, and Oregon primaries. In 1960 John F. Kennedy proved by beating Senator Hubert H. Humphrey in West Virginia that an Irish Catholic candidate could appeal to blue-collar Protestants. "Could you imagine me, having entered no primaries," Kennedy later said, "trying to tell the [party] leaders that being a Catholic was no handicap?"

Even in 1960, however, candidates could not win the nomination by racking up primary election victories. In that year, Kennedy collected, in 10 hard-won primaries, only half of the delegates he needed to win the nomination. Indeed, Kennedy, as political scientist Richard Neustadt has pointed out, needed to win over a relatively small number of "party barons [who] actually controlled and could deliver delegates at national conventions." But during the 1950s and 1960s, the United States began to change in ways that would soon make the party organizations and party conventions less important—giving way to the semi-independent efforts of individual candidates and to primary elections.

First, Americans overall became better educated. Only 15 percent of the electorate who voted for Eisenhower or Stevenson in 1952 had ever attended college—compared with 41 percent of the electorate who voted for Ronald Reagan or Walter Mondale in 1984. "More and more [Americans]," as Harvard's James Q. Wilson has observed, "are trained to think in terms of large issues, causes, and principles."

As education has increased so has awareness of public issues and with it, the amount of pressure that members of Congress and other politicians feel from their constituents. Indeed, the percentage of adults reporting that they had written letters to public officials on policy matters rose from 17 percent in 1964 to 28 percent in 1976. Thus, even as the percentage of eligible citizens who actually vote has declined—from 61.6 percent in 1952 to 53.3 percent in 1984—the number of Americans who belong to the electorate's active core has continued to climb.

St. George and the Dragon

Second, outside the two parties, new causes drew amateurs into full-time politics. First among these was the Civil Rights Movement, which began in 1955 with the Montgomery bus boycott and continued with the protest marches of the 1960s. Backed by an ad hoc coalition of liberal politicians, labor leaders, clergymen, and academics, the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., and other black leaders challenged the moral foundations of the racial status quo in the South.

The Civil Rights Movement changed U.S. political life in two fundamental ways. First, it helped Lyndon Johnson push through Congress the Civil Rights Act (1964), the Voting Rights Act (1965), and other legislation banning various devices that Southern states had used to disenfranchise blacks and the poor. Second, the movement provided a model for a

new wave of "public interest" groups that would press for their causes in the media, in state legislatures, and on Capitol Hill. For every liberal group, it seemed, a conservative one rose in opposition. Planned Parenthood, Inc. was soon confronted by the National Right to Life Committee; the Fellowship of Reconciliation encountered the Committee on the Present Danger; the National Council of Churches was matched by the Moral Majority.

Finally, television, almost overnight, dramatized elections and other political events. In 1950 only 3.9 million American households (or 9 percent of all households) owned TV sets. By 1960 46 million households (87 percent) were so equipped. Thus, in 1960, not only voters in Wisconsin and West Virginia but millions of voters everywhere saw film clips of Kennedy scoring his primary election victories. Television, as political scientist Sidney Wise has observed, "amplified the role of the primaries by surrounding each winner (or loser) with far more drama than headlines would provide. The raised hand, the cheering partisans and the cries of 'on to Miami' or 'on to Chicago' [could] easily obscure the fact that the winner faced only token opposition in a particular primary."

Most Americans over 35 remember the 1968 Democratic convention in Chicago as a chaotic affair, a grim televised melodrama of the Vietnam era, with violent off-stage street battles between antiwar demonstrators and Mayor Richard Daley's angry police force. It was the first major party convention where newly mobilized groups of voters—blacks, feminists, young people—made up a substantial portion of the delegates. Still, as they saw it, they were "underrepresented." Only five percent of the convention delegates were black, only 13 percent were women. "The insurgents had come to Chicago to bring an end to old politics," as journalist Theodore White observed. "They were crusaders playing a new convention game called St. George and the Dragon; and the Dragon was Hubert Humphrey."

Taking Affirmative Steps

Minnesota's Senator Eugene McCarthy (the leading "peace candidate") and his supporters criticized, among other things, the way the party chose its nominees. Indeed, before McCarthy entered the presidential race in December 1967, Democratic leaders in the various states had already chosen one-third of the party's 3,057 convention delegates.

Although Vice President Hubert Humphrey emerged as the nominee, he did so after the party's insurgents and regulars clashed over the rules and the delegates' credentials. These quarrels—as well as dissension over race and the Vietnam War—divided the Democrats and helped put Richard Nixon in the White House. Afterward, Democratic leaders set up a commission to change the way the game was played. "We are in the process of invigorating our party with a massive injection of democracy," wrote Senator George McGovern of South Dakota, the commis-

sion's first chairman. "The day of the bosses is over."

The McGovern Commission (which was later chaired by U.S. Representative Donald Fraser of Minnesota) revolutionized the nominating process. Reflecting the *zeitgeist* of the era, the commission instructed state Democratic parties to "overcome the effects of past discrimination" by taking "affirmative steps" to include young people, women, and minorities "in reasonable relationship to their presence in the population of the state" as delegates to future conventions. As a result, 40 percent of the delegates to the tumultuous 1972 Democratic National Convention in Miami were women, 22 percent were under the age of 30, and 15 percent were black. The Republicans did not follow suit with similar guidelines. But at future G.O.P. conventions, the number of female (if not black) delegates increased rapidly too.

Later, the Democratic Party also barred states from using a "winner-take-all" system in allocating delegates after a primary contest. The Republicans did not require proportional delegate selection, but soon, in many states, both parties apportioned delegates according to the number of votes each party candidate received in each primary.

A New Political Game

The McGovern-Fraser Commission did not intend to increase the number of state primaries. But the new rules were so complicated when applied to caucuses and conventions that many state party leaders adopted the primary system as a lesser evil.

The number of primaries soared. Setting the pace, the Democrats held 15 state primaries in 1968, 22 in 1972, 30 in 1976, and 35 in 1980. Despite their skepticism toward reform, the G.O.P. leaders also increased the number of their state primaries. Most of the delegates elected in these primaries were legally bound to vote for a specified candidate on the first—and sometimes the second and third—ballot. Thus, ironically, just as the representation of women, blacks, and other groups increased, making the assembly appear, to a TV audience, more diverse, the delegates lost their powers of discretion.

The "reformed" nominating system, with all of its primaries, transformed the Democratic and Republican campaigns in many unanticipated ways. First, under the new system, candidates who won or fared well (relative to the press's expectations) in the early primaries also won the notoriety that the newspapers and television networks bestowed on the "front-runner."

In 1976, for example, the media began to focus attention on candidate Jimmy Carter after he won the Iowa caucus and, shortly thereafter, the nine-candidate New Hampshire primary (gaining just 30 percent of the vote). Between February 24 and April 27, *Time* and *Newsweek*, for example, gave 59 percent of their coverage of *all* Democratic candidates to the former governor from Georgia—even though Senator Henry

MAJOR PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES, 1964–1984

Since 1964, the percentage of convention delegates that candidates could win in the primaries has increased dramatically. But the eventual nominee (shown in bold) has often failed to win either a majority or a plurality of all votes cast in the primary elections. (See percentage figures after each candidate's name.)

	Democrats	Republicans
1964	17 primaries/46% of delegates	17 primaries/46% of delegates
	President Lyndon Johnson *17.7*	**Sen. Barry Goldwater (AZ) *38.2*** Gov. Nelson Rockefeller (NY) *22.0* former Sen. Henry Cabot Lodge (MA) *6.5* Gov. William Scranton (PA) *4.1* Sen. Margaret Chase Smith (ME) *3.8* f. Gov. Harold Stassen (MN) *1.9*
1968	15 primaries/40% of delegates	15 primaries/38% of delegates
	Sen. Eugene McCarthy (MN) *38.7* Sen. Robert Kennedy (NY) *30.6** **V.P. Hubert Humphrey (MN) *2.2*** Sen. George McGovern (SD) *0*	Gov. Ronald Reagan (CA) *37.9* **f. V.P. Richard Nixon (CA) *37.5*** Gov. Nelson Rockefeller (NY) *3.7* f. Gov. Harold Stassen (MN) *0.7* Gov. George Romney (MI) *0.1*
1972	22 primaries/65% of delegates	21 primaries/57% of delegates
	Sen. Hubert Humphrey (MN) *25.8* **Sen. George McGovern (SD) *25.3*** Gov. George Wallace (AL) *23.5*** Sen. Edmund Muskie (ME) *11.5* f. Sen. Eugene McCarthy (MN) *3.5* Sen. Henry Jackson (WA) *3.2* Rep. Shirley Chisholm (NY) *2.7* f. Gov. Terry Sanford (NC) *2.1* Mayor John Lindsay (NY) *1.2* Mayor Sam Yorty (CA) *0.5* Rep. Wilbur Mills (AR) *0.2*	**President Richard Nixon *86.9*** Sen. John Ashbrook (OH) *5.0* Rep. Paul McCloskey (CA) *2.1*

Jackson (D.-Wash.) had gone on to win the Massachusetts and New York contests and by the end of April had cumulatively received more primary votes than Carter.

And by winning the media coverage, the front-runner also won an influx of money that was desperately needed to pay for the increasing costs of waging a state-to-state campaign. In 1952 Eisenhower and Taft *together* spent roughly $2.5 million seeking the G.O.P nomination—a far cry, even after considering inflation, from the $18 million that Walter

1976

30 primaries/76% of delegates

f. Gov. Jimmy Carter (GA) *38.8*
Gov. Edmund Brown, Jr. (CA) *15.3*
Gov. George Wallace (AL) *12.4*
Rep. Morris Udall (AZ) *10.0*
Sen. Henry Jackson (WA) *7.1*
Sen. Frank Church (ID) *5.2*
Sargent Shriver (MD) *1.9*
f. Sen. Fred Harris (OK) *1.5*
Ellen McCormack (NY) *1.5*
Sen. Birch Bayh (IN) *0.5*
Gov. Milton Shapp (PA) *0.5*
Sen. Hubert Humphrey (MN) *0.4*

30 primaries/71% of delegates

President Gerald Ford *53.3*
f. Gov. Ronald Reagan (CA) *45.9*

1980

35 primaries/72% of delegates

President Jimmy Carter *51.2*
Sen. Edward Kennedy (MA) *37.1*
Gov. Edmund Brown, Jr. (CA) *3.1*
Lyndon LaRouche (NY) *1.0*

34 primaries/76% of delegates

f. Gov. Ronald Reagan (CA) *60.8*
f. Rep. George Bush (TX) *23.3*
Rep. John Anderson (IL) *12.4*†
Sen. Howard Baker (TN) *0.9*
Rep. Philip Crane (IL) *0.8*
f. Gov. John Connally (TX) *0.6*
f. Gov. Harold Stassen (MN) *0.2*
Sen. Robert Dole (KS) *0.1*

1984

30 primaries/71% of delegates

President Ronald Reagan *98.6*
f. Gov. Harold Stassen (MN) *0.3*

25 primaries/62% of delegates

f. V.P. Walter Mondale (MN) *37.8*
Sen. Gary Hart (CO) *36.1*
Rev. Jesse Jackson (IL) *18.2*
Sen. John Glenn (OH) *3.4*
f. Sen. George McGovern (SD) *1.9*
Lyndon LaRouche (VA) *0.7*
f. Gov. Reubin Askew (FL) *0.3*
Sen. Alan Cranston (CA) *0.3*
Sen. Ernest Hollings (SC) *0.2*

*Assassinated after winning the California primary. Died June 6, 1968.
**In 1968, Democrat George Wallace ran on the American Independent Party ticket, and won 46 electoral votes; in 1972, he was incapacitated by a would-be assassin in May.
†In 1980, Anderson entered the G.O.P primaries; he later ran on the National Unity Campaign ticket, but won no electoral votes.

Mondale spent to capture the party prize in 1984. After Gary Hart won the 1984 New Hampshire primary, his campaign treasurer started receiving $100,000 a day in private donations.* Thus, the point of winning

*Under the Campaign Finance Act of 1974, candidates also received $1 in federal money for every $1 they collected in individual contributions of $250 or less. To qualify for matching funds, candidates had to raise at least $5,000 in individual contributions from each of 20 states. Under the act, individuals could contribute no more than $1,000 to each candidate; corporate or labor political action committees could give no more than $5,000.

the early primaries, candidates discovered, was not so much to win the delegates, but to attract resources needed to carry the campaign, with its enormous outlays for TV advertising, through the ordeal of the remaining primaries.

Thus, the marathon campaign was born. Candidates began frequenting the states that held the earliest primaries as much as two years before the event, hoping that repeated personal exposure to the voters would make the difference.

This new nominating system has shifted influence from party leaders, who once controlled slates of delegates, to the most ideologically fervent members of each party. Many of these true believers, much like the young peaceniks in "McGovern's Army" of 1972, take the candidate's message from door to door in the primary states; others give generously to direct-mail requests for campaign donations. "I think there are only two mail-donating segments of our society: the right-wing fringe and the left," fund-raiser Morris Dees once said. "The average American does not consider himself part of the political process other than going out to vote."

The new process has also favored the *former* governor or senator over the working politician. "The disproportionate rewards of early success," as political scientist William M. Lunch has noted, "have produced a 'strategic environment' in which it apparently pays *not* to hold public office when running for president."

Consider 48 hours in the life of Bob Dole (R.-Kansas), Senate minority leader and presidential candidate: Last October 28—over three months before the first primary—Dole spent the morning and afternoon in Washington, busy with Senate affairs. Later that day, he flew to Houston for a "Firing Line" TV debate with five other Republican candidates. The senator then flew back to Washington after the debate, arriving in the capital at 3:00 A.M. He worked in the Capitol from 8:30 A.M. until early that afternoon, when he departed for California to attend a campaign fund raiser. Finally, Dole returned to Washington the following day for an early-morning budget conference. The senator's schedule explains, to some degree, why from 1976 to 1984, every major party nominee has been either a former office-holder, such as Jimmy Carter in 1976 and Ronald Reagan in 1980, or a president seeking re-election.

Jimmy Carter's Triumph

And finally, the reformed nominating system has favored the one-of-a-kind candidate. The primaries, as Berkeley's Austin Ranney has pointed out, express the voters' first preferences, but in a crowded field of candidates, they provide "no way of identifying, let along aggregating, second and third choices so as to discover the candidate with the broadest—as opposed to the most intense—support."

In the 1972 Democratic primaries, for example, George McGovern,

"Super Tuesday" (March 8) has made both *parties' candidates campaign hard in Dixie. But John Buckley, an aide to Jack Kemp, said: "If* [*George*] *Bush is in free fall after New Hampshire, the South won't save him."*

by far the most liberal and the most antiwar candidate, collected some 4.05 million votes—more than any other *single* contender. Two more moderate candidates, senators Hubert Humphrey and Edmund Muskie, however, together collected 5.9 million votes, which were cast, presumably, by the party's more middle-of-the road voters. By virtue of winning the most votes and thus the most delegates in the primaries, McGovern went on to win the nomination, on the first ballot, at the national convention in Miami. But it is arguable that in the 1972 general election campaign against Richard Nixon, either Humphrey or Muskie might have been the stronger Democratic candidate.

In 1976 candidate Jimmy Carter was out of office and, as a progressive Southerner, he was a one-of-a-kind candidate. These attributes, combined with his shrewd use of television, enabled the former governor of Georgia to defeat four well-established Democratic opponents: Birch Bayh, Henry Jackson, Hubert Humphrey, and Morris Udall. In the campaign, Carter presented himself, as newsman Christopher Lydon observed, as the ideal "television character," the "Bible-thumping Annapolis engineer" with a "wrinkled lovable mother [and] a 13-year-old daughter." The process Lydon says, made it possible for Carter to win the White House "without a block constituency, without an organizing

issue, without a friendly network of pols around the country." But as soon as Americans got bored with Carter's television persona, both his popularity and his ability to govern waned. In December 1977, columnist Russell Baker wrote that "if the Carter administration were a television show, it would have been cancelled months ago."

The Georgian's difficulties in the White House explain why the Democratic Party, in 1981, established a commission to reform the McGovern-Fraser reforms in a way that would bring party leaders back into the nominating game. The panel was chaired by North Carolina governor James Hunt.

The commission decided to reward the largest vote-getters by permitting states to deny any delegates at all to candidates who received less than 20 percent of the vote in primaries. And it ruled that at the 1984 convention, at least 14 percent of the seats would be filled by "superdelegates"—party leaders, governors, and members of Congress. "Our goal," said Hunt, was "to nominate a candidate who can win, and after winning, can govern effectively."

Unintended Consequences

The re-reforms, inevitably, did not please everyone. The 20-percent threshold along with the superdelegates, some Democrats argued, combined to make the nominating process markedly less open. Indeed, in 1984, Mondale won only 38 percent of the cumulative primary vote, but a majority of the delegates at the convention in San Francisco. The re-reforms, said candidate Jesse Jackson, were a "move away from primaries and one-man, one-vote," and a revival of "back-room politics."

Such complaints spurred the Democratic Party to form yet another panel—the Fairness Commission, headed by former South Carolina party chairman Donald Fowler—to redesign the nominating procedures for 1988. But, "the general consensus," as one commission adviser remarked, was that "the party has got to stop mucking around with the nominating process."

For 1988 the Democrats made only one big change—and it was not crafted by the Fairness Commission. Legislatures in 11 Southern and border states moved their Democratic and Republican primaries to March 8. By having most of the Old Confederacy choose its delegates on the same day, relatively early in the campaign season, the Southern Democrats hoped the party would be more likely to select a conservative, Sunbelt-oriented nominee. But "Super Tuesday," like other reforms, may produce unintended consequences. Since almost 20 percent of all Southern voters are black, the megaprimary may instead favor the most liberal, one-of-a-kind candidate in the race: Jesse Jackson.

Efforts to reform and re-reform the nominating process have not ended. Some Democrats and Republicans will certainly call for more changes after the 1988 election. If the candidates who win the early

primaries also win the nominations, party officials in Ohio, New Jersey, and California—who have held their primaries late in the season—may decide to move their primaries to March. This shift could create *several* large regional primaries which take place early in the election year.

Would a change in "the system" actually produce a better, or even a different nominee? Probably not.

Seven years ago I wrote an article for this magazine on the nominating process. The essay prompted a reply from George McGovern, the ill-starred 1972 Democratic nominee. "My own personal bias for many years," McGovern wrote, "has been that political and economic forces plus personal factors—candidate skills, positioning on the issues, organization, political 'timing' and strategy—and the vagaries of the media have more to do with winning a presidential nomination than do the party procedures or reforms prevailing at any given time."

In any case, party leaders who hope to revive the boss-dominated nominating process are not likely to succeed. The old patronage system crumbled long ago. The nominating system will retain its unruly character due to: the rapid growth in the number of well-educated, politically active citizens; the widespread reliance on television, which, for all its grave flaws, helps Americans to form their *own* opinions about each party's politicians; and the presence of so many organized groups with antagonistic views.

Thus, one of the great challenges facing our nation today is to devise a system that both addresses the demands of competing special interests and furthers the national interest. That task will not be easy. The public insists that candidates be nominated for the presidency in a democratic fashion. But a more open system necessarily reduces the influence of professional politicians—even though the winning candidate will need their support when it comes time to govern.

The two major parties remain essential to the entire democratic process. They alone can reconcile the needs of democracy and those of leadership. "The party system of Government," as Franklin D. Roosevelt once observed, "is one of the greatest methods of unification and of teaching people to think in common terms."

THE ROAD TO THE WHITE HOUSE, 1988

This year's presidential candidates are competing, variously, for 4,160 Democratic or 2,277 G.O.P. convention delegates. The far-right column shows the total numbers of delegates at stake on each caucus/primary election day. The Democratic figures exclude some "superdelegates" (governors, congressmen). Several low-profile G.O.P. state conventions and Democratic caucuses do not appear.

Date	Event	Delegates
February 8	Democratic & Republican caucuses in **Iowa**	58D/37R
February 16	D. & R. primaries in **N.H.**	22D/23R
February 23	R. caucus in **Minn.**, R. primary in **S.D.**	49R
February 28	D. caucus in **Maine**	27D
March 5	D. caucus in **Wyo.**, R. primary in **S.C.**	18D/37R
March 8	Super Tuesday: D. & R. primaries in **Ala., Ark., Fla., Ga., Ky., La., Md., Mass., Miss., Mo., N.C., Okla., R.I., Tenn., Texas**; D. caucuses in **Hawaii, Idaho, Nev., Wash.**; D. primary in **Va.**	1449D/712R
March 10	D. caucus in **Alaska**	17D
March 12	D. caucuses in **S.C., S.D.**	67D
March 13	D. caucus in **N.D.**	20D
March 15	D. & R. primaries in **Ill.**	188D/92R
March 19	D. caucus in **Kansas**	43D
March 22	D. primary for Democrats Abroad	9D
March 26	D. caucus in **Mich.**	151D
March 29	D. & R. primaries in **Conn.**	59D/35R
April 4	D. & R. caucuses in **Colo.**	51D/36R
April 5	D. & R. primaries in **Wis.**	88D/47R
April 16	D. caucus in **Ariz.**	40D
April 18	D. caucus in **Del.**	19D
April 19	D. & R. primaries in **N.Y.**, D. caucus in **Vt.**	294D/136R
April 25	D. caucus in **Utah**	27D
April 26	D. & R. primaries in **Pa.**	193D/96R
May 3	D. & R. primaries in **D.C., Ind., Ohio**	282D/153R
May 10	D. & R. primaries in **Nebr., W. Va.**	72D/53R
May 17	D. & R. primaries in **Oregon**	51D/32R
May 24	R. primary in **Idaho**	22R
June 7	D. & R. primaries in **Calif., Mont., N.J., N.M.**	507D/285R
June 14	R. primary in **N.D.**	16R
July 18-21	Democratic National Convention in Atlanta	
August 15-18	Republican National Convention in New Orleans	
November 8	**Election Day**	