

POLITICS & GOVERNMENT

vote evolve from virtual quiescence in 1962 (no G.O.P. candidate), through a strong challenge in 1970, to victory in 1974 (due in no small part to the disqualification of the original Democratic nominee).

Republican activism has been marked by a steady growth in the percentage of contested Republican primary elections—with intra-party struggles increasing as the level of G.O.P. general-election competition rose. Even so, it has been difficult to persuade Southern Republican voters to participate in party primaries. Contested Republican and Democratic primaries for governor were held simultaneously on 21 occasions in the South between 1960 and 1975, and seven Democratic votes were cast for every Republican vote. Two things are apparently required to produce high levels of grassroots Republican participation: a good showing in a recent statewide battle with the Democrats and a vigorous party primary struggle.

"Given time and resourceful leadership," the authors conclude, "the Republican primary in some [Southern] states may come to rival the Democratic primary as an arena of electoral choice."

*How About an
Election 'Jury'?*

"A Modest Proposal for Election Reform" by Burton A. Abrams and Russell F. Settle, in *Public Choice* (Winter 1976), Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, Va. 24061.

Tongue mostly in cheek, Abrams and Settle, University of Delaware economists, suggest cutting the cost of presidential elections by disenfranchising "excess" numbers of citizens now trooping to the polls every four years.

Their thesis: Now that presidential elections are financed with public moneys, the real virtue in voter participation is not more people casting ballots but a refining of the process. On the average, their data show, each voter puts in about one hour preparing to vote and voting. He spends additional time registering to vote; this "social cost" of voter registration works out to about \$270 million.

In the 1972 election, a few million voters, more or less, would not have made any difference either to Nixon or McGovern. Abrams and Settle therefore suggest a national "jury" to pick Presidents (without taking into account the closer 1976 Ford-Carter contest). Its members should be chosen from among the various groupings—men, women, blacks, whites, rich, poor—that make up the U.S. population, much as a pollster constructs his modest "model" or cross section to determine how millions of Americans will react.

About 18 million voters (rather than the 86 million who voted in 1976) should be enough to render a just verdict, say the authors. Aside from its efficiency, this system would instill an enhanced sense of political responsibility in those people selected for the "jury."