

Readings

Unit 12

- Introduction—Political Parties: Mobilizing Agents
- Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*: “Parties in the United States”
- Washington, “Letter to Thomas Jefferson”
- Roosevelt, “Bull Moose Speech”
- Piroth, “Selecting Presidential Nominees: The Evolution of the Current System and Prospects for Reform”

Questions

1. What was it that made Tocqueville consider some parties to be great? What distinguished the minor parties?
2. What did Roosevelt believe was the immediate impetus to his attempted assassination?
3. What did Roosevelt assert were the goals of the progressives?
4. What did Washington believe was useful to plant in a wheat field in the years before wheat was planted? What does his attention to the management of land suggest about the importance of self-government in work as well as politics?
5. What was President Washington’s opinion of parties?

Introduction—Political Parties: Mobilizing Agents

Political parties have provided people with a wide range of services—support, education, employment, and identification, in particular—in addition to their use in maintaining government. While contemporary commentators may not agree with Tocqueville's claim that, "America has had great parties, but has them no longer; and if her happiness is thereby considerably increased, her morality has suffered." Everyone can agree that, regardless of how happy or moral political parties have made Americans, parties have performed an important list of functions.

The Democratic Party and Republican Party are the two most important parties in the United States. There are, however, many other parties, such as the American Independent Party, the Libertarian Party, the Green Party, and the Communist Party. Support and funding of candidates for political office are some of the most important and powerful functions of political parties. The most important aspect of support for candidates that parties provide is their nomination parties. Support also includes money to conduct political campaigns. Even when the money does not come directly from the party, parties are important sources of information and organization that makes funding possible. They also organize funding, distributing it across the nation and across states. Parties also provide workers for the candidate, and monitor the opposition party for any election irregularities, helping their candidate to be confident of a fair election.

In their role as political educators, political parties inform voters of issues about which they may be concerned, they mobilize candidates, and they get out the vote. The party must inform candidates of their possibilities for election. Furthermore, parties provide information for voters concerning the stand of the party and the candidates on issues. Parties also remind voters, their members, that they have to get to the polls and vote. Getting out the vote is a very important and powerful role of parties—if members do not make it to the polls on voting day, then their candidates lose. Parties also educate through classes for members—particularly English-language classes for recent immigrants. Historically, the American Communist Party, for example, also routinely supported classes for people who may not have otherwise been able to receive much education.

American political parties have performed very important employment services. They have provided, obviously, or hoped to provide, employment opportunities for their candidates and, by employing their candidates, they also employed a wide range of political appointees. The number of appointees that the winner in any election gets to appoint or participate in their appointment varies considerably. City council members may only appoint their own staffs directly but even they will participate in filling many of the political positions within city government. The president of the United States has an abundance of positions to fill, though even here there are important limitations—many of the most significant positions are confirmed by Congress. The assassination of President Garfield by a spurned party member who wanted a political appointment, however, led to significant strengthening of the non-partisan professional government bureaucracy. But the employment roles of parties extend beyond these measures. Parties, particularly in the early twentieth century, would often secure jobs for recent immigrants in order to ensure their party loyalty. While this role faded in the last half of the twentieth century, it does reveal some of the elements in familiar allegiance to political parties.

When most politically interested individuals speak of parties, they are also referring to a group of citizens (typically within a nation-state) who are united in vague agreement concerning basic rules and behaviors of social governance. Membership in a party usually speaks to abstract opinions as well as specific concerns—members generally identify with their fellow members even if their fellows are interested in different specific issues, as long as those specific issues are oriented in a generally agreed-upon ideological way. In this manner, parties provide a location for national identification.

"Parties are a necessary evil in free government," explained Tocqueville, "but they have not at all time the same character and the same propensities." Not having the same propensities, it should be said that they are also a probable good—if not exactly a moral good—in free government. Generally an organization of voters, officeholders, and candidates for office who act in general agreement concerning the aims and purposes of government, modern political parties probably date from the growth of popular governments in the eighteenth-century in England, France, and the United States. The American system of winner-take-all has constrained to some degrees the numbers of parties—two consistently dominate—but those parties tend to have quite broad propensities and characteristics.

Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*: “Parties in the United States”

(Volume I, Chapter X)

GREAT DISTINCTION to be made between parties—Parties that are to each other as rival nations—Parties properly so called—Difference between great and small parties—Epochs that produce them—Their characteristics—America has had great parties—They are extinct—Federalists—Republicans—Defeat of the Federalists—Difficulty of creating parties in the United States—What is done with this intention—Aristocratic or democratic character to be met with in all parties—Struggle of General Jackson against the Bank of the United States.

A great distinction must be made between parties. Some countries are so large that the different populations which inhabit them, although united under the same government, have contradictory interests, and they may consequently be in a perpetual state of opposition. In this case the different fractions of the people may more properly be considered as distinct nations than as mere parties; and if a civil war breaks out, the struggle is carried on by rival states rather than by factions in the same state.

But when the citizens entertain different opinions upon subjects which affect the whole country alike, such, for instance, as the principles upon which the government is to be conducted, then distinctions arise that may correctly be styled parties. Parties are a necessary evil in free governments; but they have not at all times the same character and the same propensities.

At certain periods a nation may be oppressed by such insupportable evils as to conceive the design of effecting a total change in its political constitution; at other times, the mischief lies still deeper and the existence of society itself is endangered. Such are the times of great revolutions and of great parties. But between these epochs of misery and confusion there are periods during which human society seems to rest and mankind to take breath. This pause is, indeed, only apparent, for time does not stop its course for nations any more than for men; they are all advancing every day towards a goal with which they are unacquainted. We imagine them to be stationary only when their progress escapes our observation, as men who are walking seem to be standing still to those who run.

But however this may be, there are certain epochs in which the changes that take place in the social and political constitution of nations are so slow and imperceptible that men imagine they have reached a final state; and the human mind, believing itself to be firmly based upon sure foundations, does not extend its researches beyond a certain horizon. These are the times of small parties and of intrigue.

The political parties that I style great are those which cling to principles rather than to their consequences; to general and not to special cases; to ideas and not to men. These parties are usually distinguished by nobler features, more generous passions, more genuine convictions, and a more bold and open conduct than the others. In them private interest, which always plays the chief part in political passions, is more studiously veiled under the pretext of the public good; and it may even be sometimes concealed from the eyes of the very persons whom it excites and impels.

Minor parties, on the other hand, are generally deficient in political good faith. As they are not sustained or dignified by lofty purposes, they ostensibly display the selfishness of their character in their actions. They glow with a factitious zeal; their language is vehement, but their conduct is timid and irresolute. The means which they employ are as wretched as the end at which they aim. Hence it happens that when a calm state succeeds a violent revolution, great men seem suddenly to disappear and the powers of the human mind to lie concealed. Society is convulsed by great parties, it is only agitated by minor ones; it is torn by the former, by the latter it is degraded; and if the first sometimes save it by a salutary perturbation, the last invariably disturb it to no good end.

America has had great parties, but has them no longer; and if her happiness is thereby considerably increased, her morality has suffered. When the War of Independence was terminated and the foundations of the new government were to be laid down, the nation was divided between two opinions—two opinions which are as old as the world and which are perpetually to be met with, under different forms and various names, in all free communities, the one tending to limit, the other to extend indefinitely, the power of the people. The conflict between these two opinions never assumed that degree of violence in America which it has frequently displayed elsewhere. Both parties of the Americans were agreed upon the most essential points; and neither of them had to destroy an old

Parties in the United States, cont'd.

constitution or to overthrow the structure of society in order to triumph. In neither of them, consequently, were a great number of private interests affected by success or defeat: but moral principles of a high order, such as the love of equality and of independence, were concerned in the struggle, and these sufficed to kindle violent passions.

The party that desired to limit the power of the people, endeavored to apply its doctrines more especially to the Constitution of the Union, whence it derived its name of Federal. The other party, which affected to be exclusively attached to the cause of liberty, took that of Republican. America is the land of democracy, and the Federalists, therefore, were always in a minority; but they reckoned on their side almost all the great men whom the War of Independence had produced, and their moral power was very considerable. Their cause, moreover, was favored by circumstances. The ruin of the first Confederation had impressed the people with a dread of anarchy, and the Federalists profited by this transient disposition of the multitude. For ten or twelve years, they were at the head of affairs, and they were able to apply some, though not all, of their principles; for the hostile current was becoming from day to day too violent to be checked. In 1801 the Republicans got possession of the government: Thomas Jefferson was elected President; and he increased the influence of their party by the weight of his great name, the brilliance of his talents, and his immense popularity.

The means by which the Federalists had maintained their position were artificial, and their resources were temporary; it was by the virtues or the talents of their leaders, as well as by fortunate circumstances, that they had risen to power. When the Republicans attained that station in their turn, their opponents were overwhelmed by utter defeat. An immense majority declared itself against the retiring party, and the Federalists found themselves in so small a minority that they at once despaired of future success. From that moment the Republican or Democratic Party has proceeded from conquest to conquest, until it has acquired absolute supremacy in the country. The Federalists, perceiving that they were vanquished, without resource, and isolated in the midst of the nation, fell into two divisions, of which one joined the victorious Republicans, and the other laid down their banners and changed their name. Many years have elapsed since they wholly ceased to exist as a party.

The accession of the Federalists to power was, in my opinion, one of the most fortunate incidents that accompanied the formation of the great American Union: they resisted the inevitable propensities of their country and their age. But whether their theories were good or bad, they had the fault of being inapplicable, as a whole, to the society which they wished to govern, and that which occurred under the auspices of Jefferson must therefore have taken place sooner or later. But their government at least gave the new republic time to acquire a certain stability, and afterwards to support without inconvenience the rapid growth of the very doctrines which they had combated. A considerable number of their principles, moreover, were embodied at last in the political creed of their opponents; and the Federal Constitution, which subsists at the present day, is a lasting monument of their patriotism and their wisdom.

Great political parties, then, are not to be met with in the United States at the present time. Parties, indeed, may be found which threaten the future of the Union; but there is none which seems to contest the present form of government or the present course of society. The parties by which the Union is menaced do not rest upon principles, but upon material interests. These interests constitute, in the different provinces of so vast an empire, rival nations rather than parties. Thus, upon a recent occasion the North contended for the system of commercial prohibition, and the South took up arms in favor of free trade, simply because the North is a manufacturing and the South an agricultural community; and the restrictive system that was profitable to the one was prejudicial to the other.

In the absence of great parties the United States swarms with lesser controversies, and public opinion is divided into a thousand minute shades of difference upon questions of detail. The pains that are taken to create parties are inconceivable, and at the present day it is no easy task. In the United States there is no religious animosity, because all religion is respected and no sect is predominant; there is no jealousy of rank, because the people are everything and none can contest their authority; lastly, there is no public misery to serve as a means of agitation, because the physical position of the country opens so wide a field to industry that man only needs to be let alone to be able to accomplish prodigies. Nevertheless, ambitious men will succeed in creating parties, since it is difficult to eject a person from authority upon the mere ground that this place is coveted by others. All the skill of the actors in the political world lies in the art of creating parties. A political aspirant in the United States begins by discerning his own interest, and discovering those other interests which may be collected around and amalgamated

Parties in the United States, cont'd.

with it. He then contrives to find out some doctrine or principle that may suit the purposes of this new association, which he adopts in order to bring forward his party and secure its popularity: just as the imprimatur of the king was in former days printed upon the title page of a volume and was thus incorporated with a book to which it in no wise belonged. This being done, the new party is ushered into the political world.

To a stranger all the domestic controversies of the Americans at first appear to be incomprehensible or puerile, and he is at a loss whether to pity a people who take such arrant trifles in good earnest or to envy that happiness which enables a community to discuss them. But when he comes to study the secret propensities that govern the factions of America, he easily perceives that the greater part of them are more or less connected with one or the other of those two great divisions which have always existed in free communities. The deeper we penetrate into the inmost thought of these parties, the more we perceive that the object of the one is to limit and that of the other to extend the authority of the people. I do not assert that the ostensible purpose or even that the secret aim of American parties is to promote the rule of aristocracy or democracy in the country; but I affirm that aristocratic or democratic passions may easily be detected at the bottom of all parties, and that, although they escape a superficial observation, they are the main point and soul of every faction in the United States.

To quote a recent example, when President Jackson attacked the Bank of the United States, the country was excited, and parties were formed; the well-informed classes rallied round the bank, the common people round the President. But it must not be imagined that the people had formed a rational opinion upon a question which offers so many difficulties to the most experienced statesmen. By no means. The bank is a great establishment, which has an independent existence; and the people, accustomed to make and unmake whatsoever they please, are startled to meet with this obstacle to their authority. In the midst of the perpetual fluctuation of society, the community is irritated by so permanent an institution and is led to attack it, in order to see whether it can be shaken, like everything else.

REMAINS OF THE ARISTOCRATIC PARTY IN THE UNITED STATES. Secret opposition of wealthy individuals to democracy—Their retirement—Their taste for exclusive pleasures and for luxury at home—Their simplicity abroad—Their affected condescension towards the people.

IT sometimes happens in a people among whom various opinions prevail that the balance of parties is lost and one of them obtains an irresistible preponderance, overpowers all obstacles, annihilates its opponents, and appropriates all the resources of society to its own use. The vanquished despair of success, hide their heads, and are silent. The nation seems to be governed by a single principle, universal stillness prevails, and the prevailing party assumes the credit of having restored peace and unanimity to the country. But under this apparent unanimity still exist profound differences of opinion, and real opposition.

This is what occurred in America; when the democratic party got the upper hand, it took exclusive possession of the conduct of affairs, and from that time the laws and the customs of society have been adapted to its caprices. At the present day the more affluent classes of society have no influence in political affairs; and wealth, far from conferring a right, is rather a cause of unpopularity than a means of attaining power. The rich abandon the lists, through unwillingness to contend, and frequently to contend in vain, against the poorer classes of their fellow citizens. As they cannot occupy in public a position equivalent to what they hold in private life, they abandon the former and give themselves up to the latter; and they constitute a private society in the state which has its own tastes and pleasures. They submit to this state of things as an irremediable evil, but they are careful not to show that they are galled by its continuance; one often hears them laud the advantages of a republican government and democratic institutions when they are in public. Next to hating their enemies, men are most inclined to flatter them.

Mark, for instance, that opulent citizen, who is as anxious as a Jew of the Middle Ages to conceal his wealth. His dress is plain, his demeanor unassuming; but the interior of his dwelling glitters with luxury, and none but a few chosen guests, whom he haughtily styles his equals, are allowed to penetrate into this sanctuary. No European noble is more exclusive in his pleasures or more jealous of the smallest advantages that a privileged station confers. But the same individual crosses the city to reach a dark counting-house in the center of traffic, where everyone may accost him who pleases. If he meets his cobbler on the way, they stop and converse; the two citizens discuss the affairs of the state and shake hands before they part.

Parties in the United States, cont'd.

But beneath this artificial enthusiasm and these obsequious attentions to the preponderating power, it is easy to perceive that the rich have a hearty dislike of the democratic institutions of their country. The people form a power which they at once fear and despise. If the maladministration of the democracy ever brings about a revolutionary crisis and monarchical institutions ever become practicable in the United States, the truth of what I advance will become obvious.

The two chief weapons that parties use in order to obtain success are the newspapers and public associations.

George Washington, “Letter to Thomas Jefferson”

George Washington, the father of his country, was also a farmer, a soldier, and a politician. This letter to Thomas Jefferson covers all his interests—exploring leaks from his cabinet meetings and anonymous press criticisms, his attempts to keep America out of war, and how best to plant clover, peas, and chicorium. In this letter Washington also expressed his critical thoughts concerning the growth in parties and the level of maliciousness to which political parties would stoop. Furthermore, the attention to farming and husbandry provides a rich context for the interest of American republicans in agrarian labor as a form of work that would insure free citizens who learned to be free and independent workers, not like wage laborers who learned to become obedient through their constant obedience to bosses.

George Washington to Thomas Jefferson, July 6, 1796

Mount Vernon, July 6, 1796.

Dear Sir: When I inform you, that your letter of the 19th. Ult. went to Philadelphia and returned to this place before it was received by me; it will be admitted, I am persuaded, as an apology for my not having acknowledged the receipt of it sooner.

If I had entertained any suspicions before, that the queries, which have been published in Bache’s Paper, proceeded from you, the assurances you have given of the contrary, would have removed them; but the truth is, I harboured none. I am at no loss to *conjecture* from what source they flowed; through what channel they were conveyed; and for what purpose they and similar publications, appear. They were known to be in the hands of Mr. Parker, in the early part of the last Session of

They were shown about by Mr. Giles during the Cession, and they made their public exhibition about the close of it.

Perceiving, and probably, hearing, that no abuse in the Gazettes would induce me to take notice of anonymous publications, against me; those who were disposed to do me *such friendly Offices*, have embraced without restraint every opportunity to weaken the confidence of the People; and, by having the *whole* game in their hands, they have scrupled not to publish things that do not, as well as those which do exist; and to mutilate the latter, so as to make them subserve the purposes which they have in view.

As you have mentioned the subject yourself, it would not be frank, candid, or friendly to conceal, that your conduct has been represented as derogatory from that opinion I had conceived you entertained of me. That to your particular friends and connections you have described, and they have denounced me, as a person under a dangerous influence; and that, if I would listen *more* to some *other* opinions, all would be well. My answer invariably has been, that I had never discovered any thing in the conduct of Mr. Jefferson to raise suspicions, in my mind, of his insincerity; that if he would retrace my public conduct while he was in the Administration, abundant proofs would occur to him, that truth and right decisions, were the *sole* objects of my pursuit; that there were as many instances within his *own* knowledge of my having decided *against*, as in *favor* of the opinions of the person [Alexander Hamilton] evidently alluded to; and moreover, that I was no believer in the infallibility of the politics, or measures of *any man living*. In short, that I was no party man myself, and the first wish of my heart was, if parties did exist, to reconcile them.

To this I may add, and very truly, that, until within the last year or two ago, I had no conception that Parties would, or even could go, the length I have been witness to; nor did I believe until lately, that it was within the bonds of probability; hardly within those of possibility, that, while I was using my utmost exertions to establish a national character of our own, independent, as far as our obligations, and justice would permit, of every nation of the earth; and wished, by steering a steady course, to preserve this Country from the horrors of a desolating war, that I should be accused of being the enemy of one Nation, and subject to the influence of another; and to prove it, that every act of my administration would be tortured, and the grossest, and most insidious mis-representations of them be made (by giving one side *only* of a subject, and that too in such exaggerated and indecent terms as could scarcely be applied to a Nero; a notorious defaulter; or even to a common pick-pocket). But enough of this; I have already gone farther in the expression of my feelings, than I intended.

Letter to Thomas Jefferson, cont'd.

The particulars of the case you mention (relative to the Little Sarah) is a good deal out of my recollection at present, and I have no public papers here to resort to. When I get back to Philadelphia (which, unless I am called there by something new, will not be 'till towards the last of August) I will examine my files.

It must be pleasing to a Cultivator, to possess Land which will yield Clover kindly; for it is certainly a great Desiderata in Husbandry. My Soil, without very good dressings, does not produce it well: owing, I believe, to its stiffness; hardness at bottom; and retention of Water. A farmer, in my opinion, need never despair of raising Wheat to advantage, upon a Clover lay; with a single ploughing, agreeably to the Norfolk and Suffolk practice. By a misconception of my Manager last year, a field at one of my Farms which I intended shd. have been fallowed for Wheat, went untouched. Unwilling to have my crop of Wheat at that place so much reduced, as would have been occasioned by this omission, I directed, as soon as I returned from Philadelphia (about the middle of September) another field, not in the usual rotation, which had lain out two years, and well covered with mixed grasses, principally white clover, to be turned over with a good Bar-share; and the Wheat to be sown, and harrowed in at the tail of the Plough. It was done so accordingly, and was, by odds, the best Wheat I made this year. It exhibits an unequivocal proof to my mind, of the great advantage of Clover lay, for Wheat. Our Crops of this article, hereabouts, are more or less injured by what some call the Rot; others the Scab; occasioned, I believe, by high winds and beating rain when the grain is in blossom, and before the Farina has performed its duties.

Desirous of trying the field Peas of England, and the Winter Vetch, I sent last fall to Mr. Marray of Liverpool for 8 bushels of each sort. Of the Peas he sent me two kinds (a white and dark, but not having the letter by me, I am unable to give the names). They did not arrive until the latter end of April; when they ought to have been in the ground the beginning of March. They were sown however, but will yield no Seed; of course the experiment I intended to make, is lost. The Vetch is yet on hand for Autumn Seeding. That the Albany Peas will grow well with us, I know from my own experience: but they are subject to the same bug which perforates, and injures the Garden Peas, and will do the same, I fear, to the imported Peas, of any sort from England, in this climate, from the heat of it.

I do not know what is meant by, or to what uses the Caroline drill is applied. How does your Chicorium prosper? Four years since I exterminated all the Plants raised from Seed sent me by Mr. Young, and to get into it again, the seed I purchased in Philadelphia last Winter, and what has been sent me by Mr. Murray this Spring, has cost me upwards of twelve pounds Sterling. This, it may be observed, is a left handed way to make money; but the first was occasioned by the manager I then had, who pretended to know it well in England and pronounced it a noxious weed; the restoration of it, is indebted to Mr. Strickland and others (besides Mr. Young) who speak of it in exalted terms. I sowed mine broad-cast; some with and some without grain. It has come up well; but there seems to be a serious struggle between *it* and the grass and weeds; the issue of which (as I can afford no relief to the former) is doubtful at present, and may be useful to know.

If you can bring a moveable threshing Machine, constructed upon simple principles to perfection, it will be among the most valuable institutions in this Country; for nothing is more wanting, and to be wished for on our farms. Mrs. Washington begs you to accept her best wishes, and with very great esteem etc.

The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745-1799. John C. Fitzpatrick, Editor.

Theodore Roosevelt, “Bull Moose Speech”

In spite of having just been shot, Theodore Roosevelt’s speech of October 14, 1912 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, covered a wide range of topics but generally offers a nice picture of the party politics from an insider who had just decided to become something of an outsider. On his way into the auditorium to give a prepared speech, Roosevelt was shot by a mentally disturbed man, John Schrank. This is a copy of the stenographic report that Roosevelt proceeded to give.

Bull Moose Speech

Friends, I shall ask you to be as quiet as possible. I don’t know whether you fully understand that I have just been shot; but it takes more than that to kill a Bull Moose. But fortunately I had my manuscript, so you see I was going to make a long speech, and there is a bullet—there is where the bullet went through—and it probably saved me from it going into my heart. The bullet is in me now, so that I cannot make a very long speech, but I will try my best.

And now, friends, I want to take advantage of this incident to say a word of solemn warning to my fellow countrymen. First of all, I want to say this about myself: I have altogether too important things to think of to feel any concern over my own death; and now I cannot speak to you insincerely within five minutes of being shot. I am telling you the literal truth when I say that my concern is for many other things. It is not in the least for my own life. I want you to understand that I am ahead of the game, anyway. No man has had a happier life than I have led; a happier life in every way. I have been able to do certain things that I greatly wished to do, and I am interested in doing other things. I can tell you with absolute truthfulness that I am very much uninterested in whether I am shot or not. It was just as when I was colonel of my regiment. I always felt that a private was to be excused for feeling at times some pangs of anxiety about his personal safety, but I cannot understand a man fit to be a colonel who can pay any heed to his personal safety when he is occupied as he ought to be with the absorbing desire to do his duty.

I am in this cause with my whole heart and soul. I believe that the Progressive movement is making life a little easier for all our people; a movement to try to take the burdens off the men and especially the women and children of this country. I am absorbed in the success of that movement.

Friends, I ask you now this evening to accept what I am saying as absolutely true, when I tell you I am not thinking of my own success. I am not thinking of my life or of anything connected with me personally. I am thinking of the movement. I say this by way of introduction, because I want to say something very serious to our people and especially to the newspapers. I don’t know anything about who the man was who shot me to-night. He was seized at once by one of the stenographers in my party, Mr. Martin, and I suppose is now in the hands of the police. He shot to kill. He shot—the shot, the bullet went in here—I will show you.

I am going to ask you to be as quiet as possible for I am not able to give to challenge of the bull moose quite as loudly. Now, I do not know who he was or what he represented. He was a coward. He stood in the darkness in the crowd around the automobile and when they cheered me, and I got up to bow, he stepped forward and shot me in the darkness.

Now, friends, of course, I do not know, as I say, anything about him; but it is a very natural thing that weak and vicious minds should be inflamed to acts of violence by the kind of awful mendacity and abuse that have been heaped upon me for the last three months by the papers in the interest of not only Mr. Debs but of Mr. Wilson and Mr. Taft.

Friends, I will disown and repudiate any man of my party who attacks with such foul slander and abuse any opponent of any other party; and now I wish to say seriously to all the daily newspapers, to the Republicans, the Democrat, and Socialist parties, that they cannot, month in month out and year in and year out, make the kind of untruthful, of bitter assault that they have made and not expect that brutal, violent natures, or brutal and violent characters, especially when the brutality is accompanied by a not very strong mind; they cannot expect that such natures will be unaffected by it.

Now, friends, I am not speaking for myself at all, I give you my word, I do not care a rap about being shot; not a rap.

I have had a good many experiences in my time and this is one of them. What I care for is my country. I wish I were able to impress upon my people—our people, the duty to feel strongly but to speak the truth of their opponents. I say now, I have never said one word one the stump against any opponent that I cannot defend. I have said nothing that I could not substantiate and nothing that I ought not to have said—nothing that I—nothing that, looking back at, I would not say again.

Bull Moose Speech, cont'd.

Now, friends, it ought not to be too much to ask that our opponents—[speaking to someone on the stage]—I am not sick at all. I am all right. I cannot tell you of what infinitesimal importance I regard this incident as compared with the great issues at stake in this campaign, and I ask it not for my sake, not the least in the world, but for the sake of common country, that they make up their minds to speak only the truth, and not use that kind of slander and mendacity which if taken seriously must incite weak and violent natures to crimes of violence. Don't you make any mistake. Don't you pity me. I am all right. I am all right and you cannot escape listening to the speech either.

And now, friends, this incident that has just occurred—this effort to assassinate me—emphasizes to a peculiar degree the need of the Progressive movement. Friends, every good citizen ought to do everything in his or her power to prevent the coming of the day when we shall see in this country two recognized creeds fighting one another, when we shall see the creed of the "Havenots" arraigned against the creed of the "Haves." When that day comes then such incidents as this to-night will be commonplace in our history. When you make poor men—when you permit the conditions to grow such that the poor man as such will be swayed by his sense of injury against the men who try to hold what they improperly have won, when that day comes, the most awful passions will be let loose and it will be an ill day for our country.

Now, friends, what we who are in this movement are endeavoring to do is forestall any such movement for justice now—a movement in which we ask all just men of generous hearts to join with the men who feel in their souls that lift upward which bids them refuse to be satisfied themselves while their countrymen and countrywomen suffer from avoidable misery. Now, friends, what we Progressives are trying to do is to enroll rich or poor, whatever their social or industrial position, to stand together for the most elementary rights of good citizenship, those elementary rights which are the foundation of good citizenship in this great Republic of ours. *(At this point a renewed effort was made to persuade Mr. Roosevelt to conclude his speech.)*

My friends are a little more nervous than I am. Don't you waste any sympathy on me. I have had an A-1 time in life and I am having it now.

I never in my life was in any movement in which I was able to serve with such whole-hearted devotion as in this; in which I was able to feel as I do in this that common weal. I have fought for the good of our common country.

And now, friends, I shall have to cut short much of that speech that I meant to give you, but I want to touch on just two or three points.

In the first place, speaking to you here in Milwaukee, I wish to say that the Progressive party is making its appeals to all our fellow citizens without any regard to their creed or to their birthplace. We do not regard as essential the way in which a man worships his God or as being affected by where he was born. We regard it as a matter of spirit and purpose. In New York, while I was police commissioner, the two men from whom I got the most assistance were Jacob Riis, who was born in Denmark, and Arthur von Briesen, who was born in Germany—both of them as fine examples of the best and highest American citizenship as you could find in any part of this country.

I have just been introduced by one of your own men here—Henry Cochems. His grandfather, his father, and that father's seven brothers, all served in the United States army, and they entered it four years after they had come to this country from Germany. Two of them left their lives, spent their lives, on the field of battle. I am all right—I am a little sore. Anybody has a right to be sore with a bullet in him. You would find that if I was in battle now I would be leading my men just the same. Just the same way I am going to make this speech.

At one time I promoted five men for gallantry on the field of battle. Afterward in making some inquiries about them I found that two of them were Protestants, two Catholic, and one a Jew. One Protestant came from Germany and one was born in Ireland. I did not promote them because of their religion. It just happened that way. If all five of them had been Jews I would have promoted them, or if all five of them had been Protestants I would have promoted them; or if they had been Catholics. In that regiment I had a man born in Italy who distinguished himself by gallantry; there was another young fellow, a son of Polish parents, and another who came here when he was a child from Bohemia, who likewise distinguished themselves; and friends, I assure you, that I was incapable of considering any question whatever, but the worth of each individual as a fighting man. If he was a good fighting man, then I saw that Uncle Sam got the benefit of it. That is all.

I make the same appeal to our citizenship. I ask in our civic life that we in the same way pay heed only to the man's quality of citizenship, to repudiate as the worst enemy that we can have whoever tries to get us to discriminate for or against any man because of his creed or birthplace.

Bull Moose Speech, cont'd.

Now, friends, in the same way I want out people to stand by one another without regard to differences or class or occupation. I have always stood by labor-unions. I am going to make one omission to-night. I have prepared my speech because Mr. Wilson had seen fit to attack me by showing up his record in comparison with mine. But I am not going to do that to-night. I am going to simply speak of what I myself have done and what I think ought to be done in this country of ours.

It is essential that here should be organizations of labor. This is an era of organization. Capital organizes and therefore labor must organize. My appeal for organized labor is two-fold; to the outsider and the capitalist I make my appeal to treat the laborer fairly, to recognize the fact that he must organize that there must be such organization, that the laboring man must organize for his own protection, and that it is the duty of the rest of us to help him and not hinder him in organizing. That is one-half appeal that I make.

Now, the other half is to the labor man himself. My appeal to him is to remember that as he wants justice, so he must do justice. I want every labor man, every labor leader, every organized union man, to take the lead in denouncing disorder and in denouncing the inciting of riot; that in this country we shall proceed under the protection of our laws and with all respect to the laws, I want the labor men to feel in their turn that exactly as justice must be done them so they must do justice. They must bear their duty as citizens, their duty to this great country of ours, and that they must not rest content unless they do that duty to the fullest degree.

I know these doctors, when they get hold of me, will never let me go back, and there are just a few more things that I want to say to you.

And here I have got to make one comparison between Mr. Wilson and myself, simply because he has invited it and I cannot shrink from it. Mr. Wilson has seen fit to attack me, to say that I did not do much against the trusts when I was President. I have got two answers to make to that. In the first place what I did, and then I want to compare what I did when I was President with what Mr. Wilson did not do when he was governor.

When I took the office the antitrust law was practically a dead letter and the interstate commerce law in as poor a condition. I had to revive both laws. I did. I enforced both. It will be easy enough to do now what I did then, but the reason that it is easy now is because I did it when it was hard.

Nobody was doing anything. I found speedily that the interstate commerce law by being made perfect could be made a most useful instrument for helping solve some of our industrial problems. So with the antitrust law. I speedily found out that almost the only positive good achieved by such a successful lawsuit as the Northern Securities suit, for instance, was in establishing the principle that the government was supreme over the big corporation, but by itself that the law did not accomplish any of the things that we ought to have accomplished; and so I began to fight for the amendment of the law along the lines of the interstate commerce law, and now we propose, we Progressives, to establish an interstate commission having the same power over industrial concerns that the Interstate Commerce Commission has over railroads, so that whenever there is in the future a decision rendered in such important matters as the recent suits against the Standard Oil, the Sugar—no, not that—Tobacco—Tobacco Trust—we will have a commission which will see that the decree of the court is really made effective; that it is not made a merely nominal decree.

Our opponents have said that we intend to legalize monopoly. Nonsense. They have legalized monopoly. At this moment the Standard Oil and Tobacco Trust monopolies are legalized; they are being carried on under the decree of the Supreme Court. Our proposal is really to break up monopoly. Our proposal is to lay down certain requirements, and then to require the commerce commission—the industrial commission—to see that the trusts live up to those requirements. Our opponents have spoken as if we were going to let the commission declare what those requirements should be. Not at all. We are going to put the requirements in the law and then see that the commission requires them to obey that law.

And now, friends, as Mr. Wilson has invited the comparison, I only want to say this: Mr. Wilson has said that the States are the proper authorities to deal with the trusts. Well, about eighty percent of the trusts are organized in New Jersey. The Standard Oil, the Tobacco, the Sugar, the Beef, all those trusts are organized in the state of New Jersey and the laws of New Jersey say that their charters can at any time be amended or repealed if they misbehave themselves and give the government ample power to act about those laws, and Mr. Wilson has been governor a year and nine months and he has not opened his lips. The chapter describing what Mr. Wilson has done about trusts in New Jersey would read precisely like a chapter describing snakes in Ireland, which ran: "There are no snakes in Ireland." Mr. Wilson has done precisely and exactly nothing about the trusts.

Bull Moose Speech, cont'd.

I tell you, and I told you at the beginning, I do not say anything on the stump that I do not believe. I do not say anything I do not know. Let any of Mr. Wilson's friends on Tuesday point out one thing or let Mr. Wilson point out one thing that he has done about the trusts as governor of New Jersey.

And now, friends, there is one thing I want to say especially to you people here in Wisconsin. All that I have said so far is what I would say in any part of the Union. I have a peculiar right to ask that in this great contest you men and women of Wisconsin shall stand with us. You have taken the lead in progressive movements here in Wisconsin. You have taught the rest of us to look to you for inspiration and leadership. Now, friends, you have made that movement here locally. You will be doing a dreadful injustice to yourselves; you will be doing a dreadful injustice to the rest of us throughout the Union, if you fail to stand with us now that we are making this national movement. What I am about to say now I want you to understand. If I speak of Mr. Wilson I speak with no mind of bitterness. I merely want to discuss the difference of policy between the Progressive and the Democratic party and to ask you to think for yourselves which party you will follow. I will say that, friends, because the Republican party is beaten. Nobody needs to have any idea that anything can be done with the Republican party.

When the Republican party—not the Republican party—when the bosses in control of the Republican party, the Barneses and Penroses, last June stole the nomination and wrecked the Republican party for good and all—I want to point out to you that nominally they stole that nomination from me, but it was really from you. They did not like me, and the longer they live the less cause they will have to like me. But while they don't like me, they dread you. You are the people that they dread. They dread the people themselves, and those bosses and the big special interests behind them made up their mind that they would rather see the Republican party wrecked than see it come under the control of the people themselves. So I am not dealing with the Republican party. There are only two ways you can vote this year. You can be progressive or reactionary. Whether you vote Republican or Democratic it does not make a difference, you are voting reactionary.

Now, the Democratic party in its platform and through the utterances of Mr. Wilson has distinctly committed itself to the old flintlock, muzzle-loaded doctrine of States' rights, and I have said distinctly we are for people's rights. We are for the rights of the people. If they can be obtained best through National Government, then we are for national rights. We are for people's rights however it is necessary to secure them.

Mr. Wilson has made a long essay against Senator Beveridge's bill to abolish child labor. It is the same kind of argument that would be made against our bill to prohibit women from working more than eight hours a day in industry. It is the same kind of argument that would have to be made; if it is true, it would apply equally against our proposal to insist that in continuous industries there shall be by law one day's rest in seven and three-shift eight-hour day. You have labor laws here in Wisconsin, and chamber of commerce will tell you that because of that fact there are industries that will not come to Wisconsin. They prefer to stay outside where they can work children of tender years, where they can work women fourteen and sixteen hours a day, where if it is a continuous industry, they can work men twelve hours a day and seven days a week.

Now, friends, I know that you of Wisconsin would never repeal those laws even if they are at your commercial hurt, just as I am trying to get New York to adopt such laws even though it will be to the New York's commercial hurt. But if possible I want to arrange it so that we can have justice without commercial hurt, and you can only get that if you have justice enforced nationally. You won't be burdened in Wisconsin with industries not coming to the State if the same good laws are extended all over the other States. Do you see what I mean? The States all compete in a common market; and it is not justice to the employers of a State that has enforced just and proper laws to have them exposed to the competition of another State where no such laws are enforced. Now, the Democratic platform, and their speakers declare we shall not have such laws. Mr. Wilson has distinctly declared that we shall not have a national law to prohibit the labor of children, to prohibit child labor. He has distinctly declared that we shall not have a law to establish a minimum wage for women.

I ask you to look at our declaration and hear and read our platform about social and industrial justice and then, friends, vote for the Progressive ticket without regard to me, without regard to my personality, for only by voting for that platform can you be true to the cause of progress throughout this Union.

Scott Piroth, “Selecting Presidential Nominees: The Evolution of the Current System and Prospects for Reform”

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We choose our presidents “by their telegenic smile and their willingness to utter platitudes in southwest nowheresville two years before the election.”

— Arthur T. Hadley (1)

These words of a contemporary political analyst reflect the outright contempt some have for the process by which American political parties choose their presidential candidates. In fact, the present system used by the Democratic and Republican parties to select their nominees has few wholehearted defenders. Critics argue that the process lasts too long, costs too much, encourages intraparty factionalism, discriminates against voters in states with late primaries or caucuses, and ultimately makes it more difficult for the presidents we elect to govern. This article examines how the current process has evolved and considers prospects for future reform. Although I share the general feeling that the current system has major defects, this article makes it clear that there are important obstacles to reform, and that it is unlikely that any future reform will satisfy every group with a stake in the nomination process.

How Political Parties Select a Candidate

A political party is not a fixed entity; rather, it is an ever-changing mix of individuals and groups who use the institution of a party to advance their own goals. Figure 1 models a political party in terms of three concentric circles consisting of leaders, activists, and supporters. Leaders include prominent officeholders and party officials; activists are those who work on behalf of the party or specific candidates, generally as volunteers; and supporters are those who habitually vote for the party in general elections. As the model indicates, activists are also supporters, and leaders are both activists and supporters of the party.

Different groups within political parties may have different goals in the presidential nomination process. All party members are interested in winning elections, but depending on whether one is a leader, an activist, or merely a supporter, this goal may conflict with other purposes.

Leaders want to nominate a candidate who will win the general election, but they also want to nominate a candidate who will not threaten the organizational stability of the party itself or their positions within it. A leader may prefer a nominee who will lose to a nominee who will win, but who may undermine his or her power. For example, in the 2000 primaries, the overwhelming opposition to Senator McCain among Republican elected officials may have reflected concern that his campaign finance reform agenda would threaten their ability to win re-election.

Activists tend to be motivated by policy goals, and they often have views that are out of the political mainstream. Activists tend to be wealthier, more highly educated, and more likely to hold ideologically extreme views than are held by the electorate at large. (2) This group may prefer to lose an election with a candidate who zestfully champions their causes, like George McGovern or Barry Goldwater, than to win with a candidate who compromises on their principles.

Finally, party supporters are more like the electorate at large. They tend to vote for the party's candidates, but their allegiance is conditional, and their support can be lost if the party fails to nominate candidates who reflect their views or if the candidate elected, once elected, fails to deliver good government. Moreover, the growth of primaries has correspondingly increased the public's belief that participation in the nominating process should be open to all party supporters and not restricted to activists and leaders.

The public has an interest in how parties select their presidential nominees, as it has been 147 years since anyone other than a Democrat or a Republican has occupied the White House. What is the public's interest in nomination contests? Good government is clearly one goal. For most Americans, which party is in power appears to be less important than having a government that responds to the needs of its citizens. Participation is another goal. The public has an interest in a lively debate about ideas both within and between parties. Even an unsuccessful can-

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didate can have a long-term impact on public policies if he or she can use the forum of a nomination campaign to bring new ideas into the political debate. Table 1 lists several goals that different groups may have in the nomination process, and which groups are most likely to value each goal.

Table 1: The Goals of Various Groups in Presidential Nominations

Goal	Group(s) most likely to value goal
Win Elections	Leaders, Activists, Supporters
Maintain Party Organization	Leaders
Ideology or Policy Goals	Activists
Good Government	Supporters, Public
Debate Ideas	Activists, Public

The goals of different groups are often in conflict, and no method of candidate selection is likely to satisfy everyone. Furthermore, there is a fourth group that has tremendous impact on the nomination process—those who contribute money to political campaigns. Contributors are hard to place in the conventional party model shown in Figure 1. Some campaign contributors are simply activists who wish to promote a particular candidate or cause; however, other contributors may lie outside of the circle, if they are concerned not with the broad interests of the party or the general public, but with seeking material benefits by gaining access to the winning candidate. Still other contributors may be party leaders using the influence of money to determine the outcome of the nomination, much in the way political bosses of the past used their power within the party—including the ability to deliver votes—to decide the nominee.

The next section of this article briefly discusses the history of presidential nominations in the United States and examines how the present system evolved. Throughout most of American history, party leaders determined presidential nominees. For a brief period, it seemed as if activists had seized control of the nomination process, but the power to select nominees quickly passed to party supporters, and increasingly, to those who contribute to candidates.

The Domination of the Leaders: National Party Conventions, 1832-1968

Prior to the rise of party conventions, the presidential candidates of national parties were chosen by members of Congress. The first national party convention was held by the small party of Anti-Masons in 1831. Democrats and Whigs quickly followed suit. Conventions have provided some of the most high-stakes political drama in American politics because of the frequent struggle by party members to decide on a nominee.

The 1860 Democratic Convention opened in Charleston, S.C., but adjourned after 57 votes failed to produce a winner, and the delegates of nine southern states walked out over the issue of slavery. When the convention reconvened in Baltimore six weeks later, it nominated Stephen Douglass, who had led throughout but been unable to win a two-thirds majority. The 1912 Republican Convention nominated incumbent President William Howard Taft over ex-President Theodore Roosevelt. Roosevelt had won in the primaries, but Taft had secured more delegates, many of whom Roosevelt contested unsuccessfully. He then left the Republican Party to run a third party, "Bull Moose," candidacy.

The longest convention in American history was the 1924 Democratic convention, when delegates took seventeen days and 103 ballots to nominate John W. Davis. Convention roles often contributed to such deadlock. Until 1936, Democrats required a two-thirds majority to nominate a candidate, and resultantly, held seven conventions requiring more than ten ballots between 1832 and 1932. The last multi-ballot conventions were the 1948 Republican convention and the 1952 Democratic convention. (3)

Conventions have also served the function of building enthusiasm for the party's candidates, and even before the advent of television, sometimes this enthusiasm was not entirely spontaneous. At the Democratic convention in Chicago in 1940, a message from President Franklin Roosevelt was read indicating that the president had no desire to be nominated for an unprecedented third term. The delegates were stunned, but soon a "We want Roosevelt" chant began that lasted for forty-five minutes, leaving Roosevelt no choice but to accept the

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nomination. This demonstration did not begin on its own. Chicago's superintendent of sewers had rigged a microphone into the arena's public address system and started the chant immediately after Roosevelt's statement was read. This went down in history as the "voice from the sewer."

In the early part of the twentieth century, supporters of the Progressive movement championed primaries as a means to expand popular participation in the nominating process. This first push for primaries can be viewed as a largely unsuccessful effort by activists to wrest control over the nominating process from party leaders. The first presidential primaries were held in 1912, and their use continued in succeeding elections; but, by the 1930s, many states had repealed primary laws because costs were high, participation was low, and leading candidates often ignored them altogether. Some states continued to hold primaries, and occasionally, primaries did have an impact on the nomination. (4) However, primaries were never the sole determinant of the nominee, and some candidates—for example, Adlai Stevenson in 1952—won nomination without running in any primaries at all. Entering primaries was often interpreted as a sign of candidate weakness, and even those candidates who did enter primaries still had to court party leaders to have any chance at winning the nomination. (5) All of this changed after the 1968 convention of Democrats in Chicago.

The Revolt of the Activists: The McGovern-Fraser Reforms

The 1968 Democratic convention was among the most contentious party meetings in history, and dissatisfaction with its results provided motivation for the reforms that changed the nomination system and led to the rise of the current primary-dominated system. In 1968, as was customary, most Democratic convention delegates were selected in caucuses of party functionaries. Such caucuses were generally not well publicized, and were sometimes held more than a year before the convention.

In 1968, the majority of delegates selected in Democratic caucuses supported Vice President Humphrey who, by virtue of his position within the Johnson Administration, was perceived as a candidate who would continue American involvement in the Vietnam War. Meanwhile, two anti-war candidates, Senators Eugene McCarthy and Robert F. Kennedy, together won over two-thirds of the votes cast in Democratic primaries. Humphrey, who contested no primaries, nevertheless won the nomination. The system had produced a candidate who did not reflect the views of activists, particularly on the issue of the Vietnam War, and the convention was acrimonious.

Pressure from party activists at the convention resulted in the creation of the McGovern-Fraser Commission, which proceeded to rewrite the party's rules between 1969 and 1970. The Commission mandated that all national convention delegates had to be chosen in forums that were open to all party members and conducted within the calendar year of the election. States holding primaries had to place the names of qualified candidates on the ballot, and the distribution of convention delegates would be proportional, in order to reflect the results of such primaries. Prior to the reforms, many states held delegate primaries in which the names of delegates, but not of candidates, appeared on the ballot. In many other states, primaries were advisory only—so-called "beauty contests" that had no bearing on the distribution of convention delegates. In addition, the Commission gave the party the means to enforce the new rules by centralizing control over the certification of delegates within the national party organization. (6)

The most obvious consequence of the McGovern-Fraser Commission has been an increase in the number of states holding primaries. The number of states with Democratic primaries grew from 17 in 1968, to 23 in 1972, to 40 in the year 2000. The number of states holding Republican primaries increased from 16 in 1968, to 22 in 1972, to 43 in 2000. Not surprisingly, reforms have led to increased popular participation in the nominating process. In 1968, only 13 million Americans participated in the nominating process, while in 2000, over 30 million Americans voted in primaries or took part in caucuses. (7)

At this point, one may wonder why changes in Democratic Party rules should have led to changes in how the Republicans select their presidential nominees. In fact, state Republican parties remain free to choose delegates using methods that are banned by the Democratic Party—including advisory primaries and delegate primaries—and many Republican states continue to use winner-take-all rather than proportional representation in delegate selection contests. (8) Nevertheless, Republicans in most states did not resist the Democratic reforms. Where Democrats controlled state legislatures and changed state laws to replace caucuses with primaries, Republicans generally adopted a primary as well, not wanting to give Democrats the chance to register new voters for primaries and gain the media attention that comes with a primary election without opposition.

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The Rise of the Supporters: Primaries Overtake the Conventions

There is considerable evidence that the reformers on the McGovern-Fraser Commission did not intend to create a process dominated by primaries. Rather, they envisioned a system in which caucuses continued to dominate, but such caucuses would have new rules to prevent their manipulation by party leaders. In the first post-reform nomination contest in 1972, Democratic activists succeeded in choosing one of their own, Senator George McGovern—not coincidentally, the same George McGovern who was co-chair of the commission that wrote the new rules. McGovern was able to win the nomination on the strength of his success in caucus states, despite winning only about one-quarter of the vote in Democratic primaries. (9)

One reason why the Democrats' reforms ultimately led most states to adopt primaries is that party leaders had quick proof that, under the new rules, a well-organized candidate who lacked broad popular support could nevertheless win in low-turnout caucuses, and they rightly feared that such candidates would not fare well in general elections. Caucuses discourage participation because they are more complicated and time consuming than are primary elections. Moreover, many party members are uncomfortable with casting their votes publicly in caucuses rather than privately in a voting booth. Ideological candidates with a committed base of activists—like McGovern, Jesse Jackson, and Pat Robertson—have been particularly successful in caucuses. On the other hand, primaries, with their higher turnouts, favor candidates with the support of rank-and-file supporters who are essential to the party's general election success. Although primaries attract fewer voters than do general elections, turnout in primaries has been estimated at ten to eighteen times higher than turnout in caucuses, and the primary electorate tends to be more representative of a general election electorate than is a caucus electorate. (10)

The growth of primaries has profoundly changed the nature of national party conventions. Party leaders no longer negotiate who will be the nominee in smoke-filled rooms. Conventions are now dominated by candidate enthusiasts, and delegates simply confirm the results of the primary elections. In the post-reform era, there has never been a national convention that was not decided on the first ballot. (11) Likewise, the tasks of choosing a vice-presidential candidate and writing a party platform have been largely assumed by the winning candidate's organization. Although occasionally blocks of delegates will challenge the committees writing the party's platform on specific issues, for the most part, little internal democracy is practiced in modern-day conventions.

The only remaining function of a national convention is to build enthusiasm for the party's candidates in the fall election by putting on a good television show. Since the first televised national party conventions in 1952, parties have increasingly choreographed conventions for the television audience. Parties take care to make sure that the roll call of the states and the speeches of the presidential and vice-presidential nominees take place in prime time, while any intra-party debates expected to be contentious occur when few viewers are likely to be watching. Crotty and Jackson write, "the single big party event, the national convention, is an essentially meaningless sham, orchestrated for television." (12) Ironically, by turning conventions into television spectacles, the conventions have become so predictable that the networks are increasingly cutting back on their coverage.

The Current Drift: Front Loading the Primaries

The increasing number of primaries seems to have shifted power to party supporters regarding the decision of who should be the party's nominee. This power, however, has been distributed unevenly, so that voters in states holding primaries and caucuses early in the nominating season have a disproportionate impact over the choice of who will be the nominee. Seeking to influence the process, more and more states have scheduled their primaries earlier and earlier in the year. Both the Democratic and Republican nominations this year were effectively determined on March 7, when eleven states—including California and New York—held their primaries. This "front loading" of the primaries has been the source of new calls for reform of the nominating process.

Although some party officials like front loading because it brings a quick end to the nomination campaign and allows time for party wounds to heal, the process is clearly unfair to voters in states that hold their primaries or caucuses after the nomination has been decided. Furthermore, front loading adds yet another obstacle to candidates who are unable to raise huge sums of money before the campaign season begins. This year, front loading stacked the odds in favor of the most well-known and well-funded candidates, Vice President Al Gore and Texas Governor George W. Bush. Only one serious candidate stepped forward to challenge Gore, and although Bush initially faced a large field of challengers, six of the twelve original candidates withdrew before any delegates were chosen. Three more dropped out in the three weeks after the Iowa caucus.

Selecting Presidential Nominees, cont'd.

Given the importance of money in a front loaded primary season, perhaps it is the contributors who really decide who the nominees will be. Hadley argued in 1975 that the presidential nominations were being decided—before anyone entered a voting booth or appeared at a party caucus—during the pre-primary period of fundraising that he famously termed the “invisible primary.” (13) In fact, with the exception of President Gerald Ford, who raised less money than Ronald Reagan in 1976, the candidate raising the most funds prior to the first primary has won every party nomination since 1976. (14)

This pattern held true in 2000. On the Democratic side, Vice President Gore had only a slight fundraising edge over Senator Bradley (\$33 million versus \$29 million as of April 30, 2000). Among Republicans, on the other hand, Bush raised an incredible \$78 million dollars, far outdistancing the \$28 million raised by his closest rival, John McCain. (15) The dynamics of the invisible primary remain mysterious. Although Governor Bush had the advantage of family ties, he was no better qualified to be president than were any number of other potential Republican candidates who sought financial support in the invisible primary; yet Bush was clearly the choice of contributors.

Who are the contributors? The 1974 Amendments to the Federal Election Campaign Act limit individual contributions to presidential nomination campaigns in order to prevent wealthy contributors from “buying” political candidates although there are no limits whatsoever on the ability of a rich candidate to attempt to “buy” the nomination for him/herself). (16) It is reasonable to suspect that many who contribute to political campaigns are not acting out of a disinterested concern for the public good. For example, a survey of contributors to presidential primary campaigns in 1988 showed that roughly half of all contributors donated money to more than one candidate. (17)

Although individuals must limit their contributions to a primary or general election, contributors often increase their influence by soliciting additional donations from friends and associates. Lawyer-lobbyists raise money for candidates in order to gain access to officeholders for themselves and for their clients. Furthermore, contributors are mostly white males with high incomes, and are far less representative of the populace at large than are primary voters. (18) Even if contributions ultimately do not buy any favors from candidates, Witcover argues that the fundraising process demeans candidates by turning them into “groveling beggars.” (19)

Evaluating the Nomination Process

Whether party leaders, activists, supporters, or even contributors, dominate the nomination process may be, for most Americans, less important than whether the nomination process results in the election of capable leaders and contributes to good government. Many have argued that the post-reform system has led to the election of presidents who are unprepared to govern and contributed to policy deadlock in Washington. The system tends to reward campaigning skills rather than experience in national affairs. Moreover, presidents who have no prior ties to other key party members in Congress are likely to have difficulty in accomplishing legislative goals. President Carter is frequently cited as an example of a president who gained the nomination without the help of other party leaders, and was unprepared to work with fellow Democrats in Congress to govern. (20)

At first glance, however, there is not much evidence that the presidential candidates nominated in the post-reform era are less qualified for the office than were candidates nominated in the past. The nominees of the two major parties since 1972 have been governors, senators, and sitting or former vice presidents. The post-reform system has never led to the nomination of a candidate with no state executive or national legislative experience. Although it is often said that the process discourages candidates with differing backgrounds—for example, Colin Powell—from running for president, there is no reason to believe that such individuals are any more qualified than are the candidates who did decide to run.

One thing is certain: post-reform candidates are people with a strong ambition to be president. Many have noted that running for president is so time consuming that it should be considered a full-time job. Lamar Alexander, for example, had only one job between 1994 and 2000—running for president. (21) Only those candidates who are willing to commit themselves to the grueling work of campaigning ever rise to the level of a national party presidential candidate. George W. Bush and Al Gore are candidates whose desire to be president is unquestionably strong. Gore first offered himself as a candidate for president when he was a 39-year-old senator from Tennessee with no great legislative accomplishments to his name. Bush began testing the presidential waters barely two years into his first term as governor of Texas, the first office to which he had ever been elected. (22)

Selecting Presidential Nominees, cont'd.

None of this would be a problem if political campaigns enabled voters to distinguish the truly qualified candidates from the ambitious pretenders, but modern campaigns fall well short of democratic ideals. The logic of primary campaigns compels candidates to try to distinguish themselves from their competitors within the party, but often such candidates do not disagree on policies and resort to an emphasis on image to distinguish themselves. Some political scientists emphasize that primaries “compel candidates to criticize and malign one another before a statewide and national audience and encourage party members to divide themselves into opposing camps,” undermining the party’s chances in the general election. (23) Candidates who are truly standard bearers for some identifiable constituency are increasingly rare. Instead, candidates emerge who are largely unknown, and primary voters in early primaries must take what little information they have and try to decide who would make the best president. Ehrenhalt writes, “To expect a Democratic voter in Iowa to know whether Paul Simon or Michael Dukakis would make a better president is to expect a miracle.” (24)

Prospects for Reform

The current process has no shortage of critics, and political analysts frequently suggest reforms to the nominating system. This article will conclude with a discussion of one reform proposal that gained a measure of support within the Republican Party—the Delaware Plan. (25) The main goal of the Delaware Plan is to reverse the trend toward the front loading of primaries. Under this plan, states would be grouped into four groups by population. The smallest states would hold the first primaries and caucuses beginning in the first week of March. A month later, the group of second smallest states could begin to hold nomination contests, followed by the next largest group of states in May. Finally, in June, the largest states would hold their primaries and caucuses. (See Table 2.) Because 47% of delegates would be selected in the last month, the likely result of the plan would be nomination contests that did not produce a victor until June.

Table 2: The Delaware Plan

First Group (votes first Tuesday in March or later)	Wyoming, Vermont, Alaska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Delaware, Montana, Rhode Island, New Hampshire(*), Hawaii, Idaho, Maine, Puerto Rico, District of Columbia, Guam, Virgin Islands, American Samoa
Second Group (votes first Tuesday in April or later)	Nebraska, New Mexico, Nevada, West Virginia, Utah, Arkansas, Kansas, Mississippi, Iowa(*), Connecticut, Oregon, Oklahoma, South Carolina
Third Group (votes first Tuesday in May or later)	Kentucky, Colorado, Alabama, Louisiana, Arizona, Minnesota, Maryland, Wisconsin, Tennessee, Missouri, Washington, Indiana, Massachusetts
Last Group (votes first Tuesday in June or later)	Virginia, North Carolina, Georgia, New Jersey, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Florida, New York, Texas, California

(*) The Brock Commission has suggested that the plan could be modified to allow Iowa and New Hampshire to continue holding the first contests.

Source: Advisory Commission on the Presidential Nominating Process: A Report Commissioned on behalf of the Republican National Committee. May 2000. Nominating Future

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Presidents: A Review of the Republican Process. Chairman William E. Brock.

One of the goals of the Brock Commission (the Republican Party commission that recommended adoption of this reform) was to increase voter participation; if adopted, the Delaware Plan seems likely to accomplish that goal. In addition, the Delaware Plan offers a glimmer of hope for those candidates unable to raise a fortune in the invisible primary. Small states are less expensive to contest, and perhaps an underfunded candidate could perform well enough in early contests to attract the funding needed for the later contests in larger states.

The Delaware Plan will not be in place in 2004. The plan was approved by the Republican National Committee and was on track to be debated on the floor of the Republican National Convention. Just prior to the convention, however, officials from the Bush campaign signaled that Governor Bush did not want to have a debate on the proposal—fearing that such a debate would be divisive—and the convention's rules committee killed the proposal. In addition, the rules committee voted against a proposal that would have empowered the Republican National Committee to change the rules regarding the nominating process without the approval of the full convention. (26)

The main opposition to the Delaware Plan within the Republican Party comes from leaders in large states who fear that they would lose influence if their states had to hold their primaries last. The Democratic Party, which would almost certainly have to adopt the Delaware Plan for it to take effect, has objected that the small population states that would hold early primaries lack racial and ethnic diversity and do not represent the country as a whole. In addition, there is no groundswell of public support for the Delaware Plan, or for the notion that the primary season ended too quickly. (27)

Another potential problem is that the Delaware Plan increases the possibility that no clear winner will emerge from the primaries. If proportional representation (rather than winner-take-all) is adopted for all Republican primaries, as the Brock Commission also recommends, the possibility that no candidate will win a majority of delegates will further increase. Although a contested convention could be very entertaining, there are serious questions about whether a modern candidate-dominated convention is capable of negotiating an outcome that would be acceptable to all the factions in the party.

The delegates at modern conventions are there primarily because of their loyalties to particular candidates, and not because they are themselves representatives of the party or its members. If a contested convention did occur, perhaps the candidates would attempt to make a deal among themselves to decide the nominee. If the candidates lost control of delegates, the result could be chaos or deadlock. The 2000 Democratic convention had more than 4,300 delegates (and the Republicans more than 2,000), a far cry from the 265 delegates who met at the Democratic convention in 1835. The exercise of deliberative democracy in a body this large may not be possible.

Lurking in the background of the debate over reform proposals is a more fundamental disagreement about the nature of the political system. On one side of this divide stand those, such as Polsby, who believe that rules and institutions shape individual behaviors and political outcomes, and who emphasize the importance of the McGovern-Fraser Commission rules in reshaping not only the nomination process but also how Americans are governed. (28) On the other side are those, such as Reiter, who argue that rules simply reflect broader social changes and public attitudes regarding political legitimacy. He writes, "Even if the McGovern-Fraser Commission and its successors had never held a meeting, we would have ended up with roughly the system we have now." (29)

In Reiter's view, rule changes were the consequences of the decline of partisan identification, the decay of party organizations, and the rise of polling and the mass media. He argues that party leaders lost their grip over the nomination process even before the McGovern-Fraser Commission. Reforms that attempt to reverse this trend are doomed to failure. (30) This debate is important because if Polsby is correct, parties can act to change their rules, and rule changes are a means to resolve inequities within the present system. If Reiter is correct, however, would-be reformers underestimate the obstacles ahead of them and, even if they are able to effect reforms in the nomination process, such reforms are unlikely to alter how politics works in the United States.

Notes

- (1.) Arthur T. Hadley, *The Inviolate Primary* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1976), 280.
- (2.) Nelson Polsby, *Consequences of Party Reform* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 159-160.
- (3.) Coleen McGuinness, ed., *National Party Conventions: 1831-1988* (Washington: Congressional Quarterly, Inc., 1991). This reference work contains details about every national party convention held by a major party in the United States through 1988.
- (4.) General Eisenhower's success in the 1952 Republican primaries may have convinced party leaders that he was more electable than his chief competitor, Senator Robert Taft. John Kennedy's victory in the 1960 Democratic primary in West Virginia was viewed as a

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demonstration that a Catholic candidate could win in a Protestant state. See Rhodes Cook *Race for the Presidency: Winning the 2000 Nomination* (Washington: Congressional Quarterly, Inc., 2000), 5.

(5.) For a history of primaries, see Carolyn Goldinger, ed., *Presidential Elections Since 1789*, 5th Edition (Washington: Congressional Quarterly, Inc., 1991). For a discussion of candidate strategies, see Polsby, 230.

(6.) Polsby, 34-54.

(7.) William Crotty and John S. Jackson, *Presidential Primaries and Nominations* (Washington: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1985), 83. For information regarding the 2000 presidential selection process, I have relied on an excellent nonpartisan Web site that provides thorough explanations of party rules and detailed results of all primary and caucus elections, *The Green Papers* [www.thegreenpapers.com].

(8.) The Democrats currently require that any candidate receiving more than 15% of the primary or caucus votes in a state's Democratic nominating contest must receive convention delegates in proportion to the vote. For a guide to current party delegate selection rules, see *The Green Papers*.

(9.) McGovern actually received fewer primary votes in 1972 than did rival Hubert Humphrey, and three candidates (McGovern, Humphrey, and George Wallace) each received between 23% to 26% of the total votes cast in Democratic primaries in 1972. See Goldinger, 49.

(10.) Since 1972, turnout in primaries has ranged from 25% to 40% of turnout in a typical general election. It is not always possible to determine caucus turnout with certainty. Due to its position as the first delegate selection contest in the nation, turnout in the Iowa caucus tends to be considerably higher than turnout in other caucuses, but still lower than the turnout in a typical primary. See William G. Mayer, "Caucuses: How They Work What Difference They Make," in William Mayer, ed., *In Pursuit of the White House: How We Choose Our Presidential Nominees* (Chatham, NJ: Chatham House Publishers, 1996), 126-127.

(11.) There have been close nomination contests. In the 1976 Republican convention, Ford defeated Reagan by only 117 votes out of 2,257 cast for the two candidates. In both the 1980 and 1984 Democratic conventions, there were unsuccessful attempts to change convention procedures to deny the frontrunner, Carter in 1980 and Mondale in 1984, a first ballot victory. See McGuinness.

(12.) Crotty and Jackson, 277.

(13.) Hadley.

(14.) Emmett H. Buell, Jr., "The Invisible Primary," in William Mayer, ed., *In Pursuit of the White House: How We Choose Our Presidential Nominees* (Chatham, NJ: Chatham House Publishers, 1996), 14.

(15.) Data on receipts and expenditures in the 2000 nomination campaign reflect activity through April 30, 2000, and are available at the FEC Web site [www.fec.gov]. Money does not necessarily buy success. Steve Forbes spent \$49 million in 2000, including over \$40 million of his own money to win a total of two delegates.

(16.) Prior to contribution limits, candidates could raise large amounts in a short period. McGovern raised \$500,000 from five contributors. A candidate could enter the race late and still have funds. Kennedy did not become a candidate in 1968 until mid-March, but still managed to raise sufficient funds to contest later primaries. See Anthony Corrado, "The Changing Environment of Presidential Campaign Finance," in William Mayer, ed., *In Pursuit of the White House: How We Choose Our Presidential Nominees* (Chatham, NJ: Chatham House Publishers, 1996), 225. Superwealthy candidates, like Steve Forbes, can avoid this problem by spending their own money, which is not restricted.

(17.) Clifford W. Brown, Lynda W. Powell, and Clyde Wilcox, *Serious Money: Fundraising and Contributing in Presidential Nomination Campaigns* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 136-145.

(18.) *Ibid.*

(19.) Jules Witcover, *No Way to Pick a President* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999), 281.

(20.) Polsby, 104-128:

(21.) Witcover, 18.

(22.) A *New York Times* article from January 1997 stated, "It is no secret to anybody in Texas's massive pink-granite Capitol that Gov. George W. Bush is already thinking about running for President in 2000." See Sam Howe Verhovek, "Bush Tax Plan for Texas and 2000," *The New York Times* January 30, 1997): A12.

(23.) James I. Lingle, Diana Owen, and Molly W. Sonner, "Divisive Nominating Mechanisms and Democratic Electoral Prospects," *The Journal of Politics* 57, no. 2 (May 1995): 372.

(24.) Alan Ehrenhalt, *The United States of Ambition: Politicians, Power, and the Pursuit of Office* (New York: Times Books, 1992), 266-267.

(25.) The plan is known as the Delaware Plan because it originated within the Delaware Republican Party, and Delaware would be among the states in the first set of primaries and caucuses if this plan were to be adopted. The Brock Commission considered several reform plans. See "Nominating Future Presidents: A Review of the Republican Process," Advisory Commission on the Presidential Nominating Process: A Report Commissioned on behalf of the Republican National Committee (May 2000). The full text of the Brock Commission's report is available online at www.rnc.org/newsroom/new_releases/nominatingfuturepresidents_050200.html. For a small taste of some other suggested reforms, see John Haskell, *Fundamentally Flawed: Understanding and Reforming Presidential Primaries* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1996), 143-149; and Witcover, 173-175.

(26.) David Broder, "GOP Scraps Plan to Alter Primary Schedule," *The Washington Post* (July 29, 2000), A6.

(27.) For a discussion of reaction to the Delaware Plan, see Gregory L. Giroux, "Big States Resist Republicans' Primary Plan," *Congressional Quarterly* (May 18, 2000). In a recent survey, when respondents were asked whether they believed that the Delaware Plan would be better than the current system, only 38% agreed. In the same survey, only 6% agreed that the primary season ended too quickly. See "CBS Poll: Primary Colors" (June 1, 2000) available online at cbsnews.cbs.com/now/story/10,1597,96544-412,00.shtml.

(28.) Polsby.

(29.) Howard Reiter, *Selecting the President: The Nominating Process in Transition* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 142.

(30.) For example, the 1982 Hunt Commission created superdelegates for the Democratic National Conventions. Superdelegates consist of Democratic members of Congress and high-ranking party officials, and they are roughly 15% of party delegates. In theory, superdelegates do not have to commit themselves to supporting any particular candidate. In practice, however, superdelegates rarely remain uncommitted and often announce their support for a particular candidate before the primaries have begun. See Haskell, 25-26.

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