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May 16, 1960

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WHAT'S WRONG WITH PRIMARIES

The Democratic Party has campaigned in the past decade on the principle, "Let's talk sense to the American people."

It's time we Democrats talked a little sense to each other about primaries.

First of all, let's not fool ourselves about the year 1960. It will require the vigorous, united efforts of Democrats in all 50 of our states to win in November. Our Party must be strong and united.

The number one goal and the center of attention of the Democratic Party should be victory in November; not a few primaries in the Spring.

Nomination and election, under our system, are separate processes and should be viewed as such. The ability to win votes in a few carefully selected state primaries should not be confused with the ability to lead a national ticket to victory in the Fall election.

As Adlai Stevenson said in 1958, "I think that it's a very, very questionable method of selecting Presidential candidates and actually it never does. All it does is destroy some candidates."

History and experience, as well as the realities of 1960, demonstrate six basic facts about primaries:

Fact No. 1 - A minority of delegates are chosen by the primary system. Therefore, reliance on existing primaries as the means of choosing the party's nominee would be acceptance of choice by minority.

In 1960, of the 50 States:

35 have no Presidential primaries;

15 have Presidential primary machinery, but of these

11 have single entries or none
(including 4 favorite sons)

and only 4 are contested.

In addition, there is a contested primary in the District of Columbia.

The five primaries where there are contests involve only 106 out of 1,521 convention votes, less than 7% of the convention total; and these 5 primaries do not represent a geographical cross-section of the United States.

The East and Middle West have a total of thirteen primaries. The rest of the country has only three (California, Oregon, and Florida). Vast areas of the country have none.

If a candidate entered every primary and won them all, he might have first claim to 25% of the convention delegates on the first ballot at the convention.

However, in four primary states - Illinois, Nebraska, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia - the candidates themselves, even if entered in 1960, do not thereby win a single delegate vote.

Therefore, it is clear these primaries represent a minority opinion of the country and the Democratic Party. Delegates from all 50 States should have an opportunity to select our Party's nominee.

Fact No. 2 - Primaries do not reflect an accurate picture of Democratic Party opinion.

A so-called "key" primary of 1960 was Wisconsin. But this was an "open" primary (Republicans can have as much voice in determining the Democratic nominee as Democrats). In this contest, the Republican vote could well have been the determining factor. Democrats may never know whether the winner was the free choice of the Democrats or dictated by Republicans.

A similar situation occurred in Minnesota in 1956, the only open primary in which there was a contest that year. In this primary, Adlai Stevenson won 55% of the Democratic votes - a clear majority. However, an estimated 125,000 Republicans crossed over to vote for his opponent, thus defeating Stevenson in the total vote in the Democratic primary. (Source: "Politics of National Party Conventions", Brookings, 1960.)

Majority Democratic Party opinion in Minnesota was not represented at the Democratic Convention in 1956. Since that experience, the Minnesota Legislature abolished the Minnesota Presidential primary.

Fact No. 3 - Active participation and success in State primaries requires large quantities of money and drains off funds needed for the general election campaign.

It has been estimated that primary campaigns cost Democratic candidates more than \$2,500,000 in 1956. (Source: "Politics of National Party Conventions", Brookings, 1960.)

This was \$600,000 more than the money spent by the Democratic National Committee for radio, television, newspaper, and other advertising in behalf of the Stevenson-Kefauver campaign in the 1956 general election.

Fact No. 4 - Entrance in primaries is always on the basis of selective participation. A fundamental rule of primary politics is to run only where you have a good chance of winning.

Acting on the basis of expensive polls and surveys, and the extent of his financial resources, a candidate may pick and choose his field of battle.

The results of such strategy (i.e., the victories or defeats) are hardly indicative of national voter appeal.

Appeals to voters, moreover, may be made on the basis of issues and factors which have great local importance but little relation to the issues and factors which determine voter response to the November ticket.

Fact No. 5 - Primaries, especially contested ones, lead to bitterness, factionalism and disunity in party ranks.

The examples of 1952 in California and 1956 in Florida and Minnesota are too fresh in the minds of Democrats to require detailed accounting. All three States went Republican the following November.

The party did not benefit from these fights. Local, State and National organizations seldom if ever benefit from contested Presidential primaries; the scars of such fights are frequently borne into November, when the goal of the Democratic Party should be the defeat of the Republicans.

Fact No. 6 - From 1912 through 1956, the open convention has proved to be the most democratic way of choosing the party's Presidential nominee. The open convention has resulted in the nomination of such Democratic leaders as Woodrow Wilson, Alfred E. Smith, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Harry Truman and Adlai Stevenson.

CONCLUSION

In view of these basic facts, to claim that primaries in two States - Wisconsin and West Virginia - should be considered "decisive" is to ignore more than half a century of experience in the nomination and election of Presidential candidates.

Delegates from all States have participated in choice by majority in open convention. The 1960 candidate must likewise be the choice of the majority.

A man who has proved - over a period of years - that he is unswervingly loyal to the reactionary principles of rock-ribbed Republicanism - the able, agile gentleman from Whittier, California - Sir Richard the Nimble.

Now, at last, we are offered a real honest-to-goodness Republican with a record - a voting record, in the Congress, in print.

And who wouldn't relish the chance to lay Sir Richard's record before the people and ask them frankly, "Is this what you want for America?"

As example: You and I believe in a nation where those who have reached the evening of life can live out their retirement years, honorably and independently.

But Sir Richard doesn't want that kind of America. On February 27, 1948, when he had to fish or cut bait on social security, he voted to remove 625,000 people from social security coverage.

And on October 5, 1949, he voted against improving social security benefits.

And here's another example: You and I believe in an America where there is no endless chain of poverty from generation to generation, where we draw a line below which we will not allow factory workers and farmers to live and labor.

But Sir Richard doesn't want that kind of America.

When he had to stand up and be counted, on August 10, 1949, he voted to remove one million workers from minimum wage protection.

He also voted against slum clearance for our cities.

He voted to cut R.E.A. funds.

He voted against fair prices for farmers.

And he voted to cut flood control and reclamation appropriations, sometimes as much as 66%.

Let hucksters hail the words of the new Sir Richard.

These are the deeds of the true Sir Richard.

And there are more where these came from.

In my book, the measure of a man is not what he says, but what he does.

This year - let's show the people the kind of America Sir Richard and the knights of his roundtable want.

And let's show them the kind of America we want, and believe in.

Then let's count the votes.

I know - and you know - what will be the result.

Fair minded Americans of both political parties want a first-rate, first-class, first-place America --

First for a peace where there's peace of mind;

First for the people, instead of the privileged;

First on earth;

First in space;

And - above all else - first in the hearts of all mankind.

REMARKS BY SENATOR STUART SYMINGTON -- 1960 PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN KICK-OFF DINNER,
SHERATON-PARK HOTEL, WASHINGTON, D. C., JANUARY 23, 1960

Mr. President, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Speaker, distinguished guests, my fellow Democrats - and all Rockefeller fans who saw our light in the window.

I thank you, most sincerely, for including me in your "Parade of Prospects". I do appreciate the honor; and believe I know what is expected on this occasion tonight.

The prospect should demonstrate:

The brain of a Thomas Jefferson.

The common sense of an Andrew Jackson.

The humanity of a Franklin Roosevelt.

And the courage of a Harry Truman.

In seven minutes!

And somewhere in the course of his remarks, he really should spell out a bold new foreign policy, a method for balancing the budget, and an adequate farm program

It is not exactly the easiest assignment in the world.

But - you notice nobody backed off from it.

Everybody wants to run for President this year.

And I know why.

1960 is another 1948, if there ever was one.

Note the similarity:

The pulse-feelers and trend-watchers say we don't stand a chance.

The poll-takers are committing us to the undertakers.

And I'm sure that certain newspapers already have our funeral notice set up in type.

But don't you believe it. In the words of that great Missourian, Mark Twain: "The rumors of our death are grossly exaggerated."

And as a still greater Missourian once put it: "We're going to lick these Republicans and make 'em like it."

Now, it won't be easy. We know that. It's never easy for the People's Party.

But I look forward to this campaign.

This time - for the first time in eight long years - we will have the chance to run against an honest-to-goodness Republican.

Whoever he is, the man we nominate will be a real Democrat.

And the Republican nominee?

He's already named.

The Grand Old Guard wasn't taking any chances this time. They held their convention by proxy.

And they got exactly what they wanted --