

17. Electing the President



Photograph by The New York Times

THE election of the President is probably the most important event, and certainly the most spectacular, in American domestic politics. A quadrennial occurrence, the presidential election appropriately falls in Leap Year (and century years as well, such as 1800 and 1900, which were not Leap Years), a period that legend has already dedicated to a singular type of courtship. As the maiden turns about to court the reluctant lad, so the presidential aspirants and their supporters court the people: "choosing the President" is perhaps more truly said as "the candidate causing himself to be chosen." Formally, the choice of a President requires two stages: nomination and election. In fact, the process is virtually continuous. Parties and potential candidates are unfaltering suitors of the electorate, only awaiting election year to announce their quest.

For more than a century, candidates for the presidency have been nominated by a convention of party members. In appearance the convention is the legislature of the party. Actually the convention is so large, and most of its members so untutored politically, that it is in fact guided by the party executive—the national committee—and the few outstanding politicians among its members. A convention rarely is a unified organization. Rather, it is an aggregation of party factions, each seeking to dominate the whole. At convention time these factions center upon both a geographic region and a governmental policy, but, more than either, upon a potential candidate. The principal aim of the convention is, of course, to name the party presidential candidate; it also has the comparatively secondary aim of drafting a party platform. The choice of the candidate and the contents of the platform depend upon what faction secures control over the convention. Yet the candidate and the platform must be such that the defeated factions can accept them; otherwise these factions may secede to form new parties, such as the Progressive in 1912 and the States' Rights in 1948.

Summoning the convention

A convention is officially summoned by the national committee of the party. About half of the conventions of each major party have met in Chicago; but conventions have been held as far east as New York, as far south as Houston, and as far west as San Francisco. The Democrats have shown a greater willingness than the Republicans to choose different sites for their gatherings, a fact suggesting that Democrats are more evenly distributed about the country than Republicans are. Ordinarily the conventions have assembled in late June or early July, the Democrats traditionally about two weeks after the Republicans. However, the conventions of 1956 were held in August, in order to avoid the heavy costs of a long campaign, which modern methods of communication may have made needless since a candidate may now address the entire nation with a single speech. Usually, in January of each election year, the national committee nominates candidates for the temporary official positions at the convention. The choices made tend to show which potential candidate has the greatest support among the members of the national committee.

The delegates

Apportionment of Delegates: Today the convention of each major party contains more than 1,000 delegates; in 1956 the Republican convention numbered 1323, and the Democratic, 1372.¹ These delegates are apportioned

¹ Throughout this chapter the term "delegate" is used as a synonym for "vote." It occurs rather often, especially at a Democratic convention, that a State will send more delegates than it has votes, so that each delegate has only a fraction of a vote. Sometimes, for instance, two factions of a party in a given State will each send as many delegates as the State has votes; a compromise may be reached whereby both delegations will be seated, each delegate having one-half vote.

Chief Justice Fred M. Vinson Administering the Oath of Office to President Harry S. Truman. Just to right of Truman stands Vice-President Barkley and Associate Justice of the Supreme Court Stanley Reed.

among the States in relation to two factors: (1) the representation of a given State in Congress; and (2) the number of voters that the party may claim in the State. The latter factor today is of great significance, particularly with respect to the Republican party.

It is difficult to decide which party uses the more complicated apportionment system. In the Republican convention of 1956, every State had two delegates-at-large for each Senator and congressman-at-large, and one delegate for each of its congressional districts casting 2,000 or more Republican votes for the presidential candidate in the last election. Furthermore, every State was granted one additional delegate for every congressional district in which 10,000 or more Republican votes were cast. Finally, each State that had cast its electoral votes for the Republican candidate for President in the last presidential election, or that had since elected a Republican Governor, was awarded six additional delegates. Among the territories, Alaska was given four, and Hawaii six; each was granted four more if it had chosen a Republican delegate to Congress at the last election. The District of Columbia was allotted six delegates; Puerto Rico, three; and the Virgin Islands, one.

Delegates to the Democratic convention were assigned principally on the basis of two for each Senator, Representative-at-large, and Representative; fundamentally, then, each State had twice as many delegates as it had electoral votes. As a bonus for concentration of Democratic voters, each State that had voted Democratic in the 1948 presidential election was given four additional delegates. Also, each State voting Democratic in the 1952 presidential election, or electing a Democratic Governor then or later, received four more delegates. Finally, every State was awarded two delegates for each congressional district it had lost as a result of the reapportionment following the 1950 census. The District of Columbia, Alaska, Puerto Rico, and Hawaii were given six delegates each; and the Virgin Islands and the Canal Zone, three apiece.

Selection of the Delegates: At some time between the January meeting of the national committee and the gathering of the convention, the party organization in each State must choose the delegates for the State to the convention. The means of choosing these delegates is in the main at the discretion of each State central committee. In most States, the delegates are chosen by party conventions. In some States, all the delegates are named by the State convention; in others, the delegates-at-large are selected by the State convention, and the district delegates by district conventions. In a few States, the party central committee names the delegates.

In a minority of the States the delegates are chosen in direct primary elections. In 1956, some or all Democratic delegates were named by primaries in sixteen States, and some or all Republican delegates in fifteen. In some States the delegates are pledged to cast their votes at the convention for a specific potential candidate; in other States the delegates are unpledged. In a handful of States the voters at the primary merely indicate their preference for a presidential candidate; the delegates themselves are named by the State convention.

The so-called "presidential primary" emerged about fifty years ago as one phase of the Progressive movement to bring the government closer to the people. Agitation for this sort of primary was so widespread that many observers predicted a quick end for convention nominations; President Wilson in 1913 called for a constitutional amendment requiring nomination by this means. However, even before 1920 the enthusiasm it had kindled was beginning to wane, and several of the States that had adopted the primary later discarded it. On the other hand, between 1952 and 1956 two more States, Indiana and Montana, adopted it.

These primaries have had a considerable effect upon the national conventions. Surely the choice of many Eisenhower backers in the 1952 primaries aided in Eisenhower's ultimate nomination at Chicago. When Wendell Willkie lost the Wisconsin primary of 1944, he accepted the loss as conclusive proof that he could not win the Republican nomination that year, and withdrew from contention. Yet certain facts about the primaries as they exist today greatly reduce their effectiveness. In the first place, they are not held at the same time; hence one primary almost certainly will affect all those following it. In the second place, any person seeking the presidency may or may not enter a primary, just as he chooses. A potential candidate is apt to avoid States in which a native politician, or "favorite son," is campaigning; also, in States where delegates are elected by districts, an aspirant may avoid unfortunate collisions by remaining out of contests in districts where the favorite son is strong. When Harold Stassen competed in the Ohio primary of 1944 against Senator Robert A. Taft, he was careful to enter only in those districts where his managers had assured him that Taft was weak. Another shortcoming of the primaries is that they are not identical; each of the different types measures a different kind of public sentiment.

In 1956 most of the presidential primaries fell into three broad classes. One class, such as the primary in New York, provided for the direct election of convention delegates whose votes were not pledged to any candidate for the presidency. The second class, typified by the California primary, combined a vote for a presidential candidate with a slate of delegates pledged to that candidate for at least the first roll-call vote at the convention. The third class, exemplified by the Massachusetts primary, contained the direct election of convention delegates who could by one means or another show on the ballot which presidential candidate they intended to support. Finally, the primaries in a few States did not fall into any of these categories.

General Background of the Delegates: The delegates to the national convention are, of course, all persons for whom politics is either a vocation or an avocation. The leading figures at a convention are almost always Governors, State party chairmen, Senators, and Representatives. In 1956, the California delegation to the Republican convention included the Vice President of the United States, the State Governor, and two United States Senators. Many other delegates are former officeholders or important party figures in State politics. Private citizens who are delegates frequently are

lawyers, journalists, and real estate brokers. The 1956 Democratic convention had many delegates from the AFL-CIO.

Organization of the convention

At its outset the convention, like a full-fledged legislative body, must adopt an organization; it must have officers, rules, and committees. However, a national convention meets for only a short period. Ideally it will last no more than four days; some conventions have extended considerably beyond this period, that of the Democrats in 1924 going on for almost two weeks. However, delegates rarely are prepared to finance so long a stay; hence convention leaders are under pressure to terminate business as quickly as possible lest delegates leave, taking with them, of course, their votes. Owing to the short duration of the convention, therefore, the process of organizing the convention and the other activities of the convention occur simultaneously during the first two or three days of the meeting.

The first important event at the convention is the keynote speech, which is delivered by the temporary chairman or another dignitary. In 1952 at the Republican convention the keynote address was delivered by General Douglas MacArthur, who since he had announced his opposition to a military leader as candidate was assumed to be more favorable to Taft than to Eisenhower. The keynote speech is the first of the many devices at the convention to exalt party morale and seek to consolidate the party at the time when factional divisions are certain to be widest. The speech extols the achievements of the party and denounces the work of the opposition.

Early in the convention, four committees are appointed: credentials, permanent organization, rules, and resolutions and platform. After the keynote speech has been delivered, their members are officially elected by the convention. Each State sends one delegate to each of the first three committees, and two delegates, one man and one woman, to that on resolutions and platform. The committee members actually are nominated by the chairmen of the State delegations. The work of these committees is to a large extent directed by the predominant faction of the national committee. Ordinarily these committees report to the convention in the above order.

The function of the committee on credentials is to determine the right of each delegate present to have his seat. Usually there is little question of this right. The chief task of the committee on permanent organization is to name the candidate for the post of permanent chairman of the convention. Each faction of the party strives to name one of its adherents to this post because of the power it may win for the faction. The purpose of the committee on rules is simply to prepare those rules under which the convention will operate. These rules are very similar to those of Congress. Customarily this committee does little other than recommend that the convention adopt the rules used four years before by its predecessor.

The work of the committee on resolutions and platform is in a sense more important than that of any other of the committees; it is the only work that is submitted not merely to the convention but also to the whole public, and that has a direct influence upon the voter. Members of this committee—or

at least the principal members—are unofficially selected by the national party committee long before the convention gathers, and these individuals have already begun drafting the platform when the convention meets. This committee always includes some outstanding party figures; chairman of the Republican resolutions and platform committee in 1952 was Senator Eugene Millikin of Colorado, who in the Eighty-third Congress became chairman of the Senate Finance Committee. Prior to completing its work the committee hears representatives for a multitude of interest groups of all sorts. After hearing petitions for support from varied and conflicting interests, the committee writes the party platform. The platform tends to be specific only on matters that are already settled; on controversial issues it is intentionally vague, so as to avoid offending any major faction. Those who criticize platforms for their lack of a definite stand on disputed matters forget that each major party contains factions that directly oppose one another on certain questions, and that alienation of any large faction may mean loss of the election. Only a small group such as the Socialist or Prohibition Party that has no hope of winning an election can ordinarily afford the luxury of an unequivocal platform.

Nominations

The nominations for the presidency and the vice-presidency are the culmination of the convention. The first two or three days are occupied with the organizational work detailed above. This work actually is carried out by approximately one hundred leading personages at the gathering; the bulk of the delegates, who are consequential for little more than their votes, are kept entertained by a large number of speeches from other party leaders. Finally, after all the committees have reported and the convention has voted on their decisions, the delegates turn to the nominations.

To secure nominations for the presidency, the chairman calls the roll of the States in alphabetical order. Presumably any delegate from any of the States, beginning with Alabama, may propose a candidate. However, the floor managers for each of the strong contenders invariably have arranged with the chairman of the delegation from one of the first States to be called that he should yield to another State, where one of the managers may submit a nomination. Nominating speeches have a unique quality; they consist of a long and flowery oration which is terminated and climaxed by what virtually everyone present knew long before—the name of the proposed candidate. At the end of the speech there breaks out a demonstration punctuated by snake-dances, war whoops, and the popping of noisemakers, an almost totally artificial outbreak that has been carefully staged by the nominee's managers. Following the nominating speech come seconding speeches which were numerous in the past but are now limited to a maximum of four. The seconding speeches do have the important function of indicating some of the States that will support the nominee during at least the first ballot. This same procedure is followed for every name proposed, until there remain no more candidacies to offer.

The balloting follows the nominating speeches, each State again being

called upon in alphabetical order. Winning the nomination of either party today demands a simple majority vote at the convention. Precisely how many ballots will be cast by the convention before such a majority is obtained depends largely upon who are the potential candidates and what is the skill of their floor managers. Should no candidate secure a majority on the first ballot, managers will dash about in quest of further votes, negotiating agreements and concessions in return for greater support. One ballot may follow another until finally, when it appears that one person is on the verge of nomination, several States will vie for the honor of giving the margin essential for triumph, as California and Texas did on the fourth ballot at the 1932 Democratic convention. Once an individual has a clear majority, the supporters of the other aspirants may flock to his side, resulting in a huge margin of victory. For example, at the 1952 Republican convention, before Minnesota shifted from Stassen to Eisenhower, the count stood at 595 for Eisenhower, 500 for Taft, and 111 scattered votes; yet the final tally on the same ballot, owing to rapid reversals, was 845 for Eisenhower, 280 for Taft, and 81 scattered.

Types of Support Behind Successful Nominees: Recent studies by Drs. Paul David and Ralph Goldman have classified the kinds of men who win nomination according to the type of support they receive before and during the conventions. Since the first presidential nominating convention of a major party in 1831, there have been 63 major party nominations in convention. Table 12 reveals the source of the push that carried all of these men successfully through the convention of their party. There it will be noted that Presidents are almost always nominated when they want to run for a second term; even slightly more numerous as candidates are the nominees of factions of the party (18) who may be either in revolt against the party leadership or representatives of special interests not uniform in the party. Former nominees, or titular leaders, are few; so are protégés of incumbent Presidents, and surprisingly, the "dark horse" or compromise candidates. In ten cases the inner leadership, or ruling clique, picked the nominee. Thus six different modes of achieving the nomination emerge from the history of the 63 successful convention nominees.

Nominating the Vice President: Having chosen its presidential candidate, the convention turns to the vice presidency. Several considerations influence the choice of the vice presidential candidate. Today perhaps the most important is the will of the presidential candidate. He may virtually dictate the choice, as Roosevelt did in 1940 in the case of Wallace; or he may let several names be contested, as Roosevelt did in 1944; or he may let the convention freely decide, as did Stevenson in 1956.

The presidential candidate, his managers, and the other party leaders mull over various points. Sometimes it may be well to select one of the strong contenders so as to form an alliance with his backers during the campaign; this was certainly the case with Garner, and probably told in the choice of John Bricker in 1944. Too, it may be well to name a candidate from a party faction distinctly opposed to that of the presidential candidate, as Senator John Sparkman in 1952. Moreover, the vice presidential can-

TABLE 12. TYPES OF LEADERS NOMINATED AS PRESIDENT BY THE TWO MAJOR PARTY CONVENTIONS, 1831-1956¹

	Leadership Confirmation			Leadership Succession		
	President Renominated (Including former Vice President who has succeeded to Presidency)	Titular Leader (Former Nominee Renominated)	Inheritance by Understudy or Previously Outstanding Leader	Inner Group Selection	Successful Factional Candidate	Factional Leader
DEMOCRATIC PARTY	Jackson, 1832 Van Buren, 1840 Cleveland, 1888 Wilson, 1916 F. D. Roosevelt, 1936, 1940, 1944 Truman, 1948	Cleveland, 1892 Bryan, 1900, 1908 Stevenson, 1956	Van Buren, 1836 Smith, 1928	Cass, 1848 McClellan, 1864 Greeley, 1872 Hancock, 1880 Cleveland, 1884 Parker, 1904	Buchanan, 1856 Douglas, 1860 Tilden, 1876 Bryan, 1896 Wilson, 1912 Cox, 1920 F. D. Roosevelt, 1932 Stevenson, 1952	Polk, 1844 Pierce, 1852 Seymour, 1868 Davis, 1924
NATIONAL REPUBLICAN AND REPUBLICAN PARTIES	Lincoln, 1864 Grant, 1872 B. Harrison, 1892 McKinley, 1900 T. Roosevelt, 1904 Taft, 1912 Coolidge, 1924 Hoover, 1928 Eisenhower, 1956	Dewey, 1948	Clay, 1831, 1844 Taft, 1908 Hoover, 1928	Fremont, 1856 Grant, 1868 Hughes, 1916 Landon, 1936	W. H. Harrison, 1840 Taylor, 1848 Scott, 1852 Lincoln, 1860 Blaine, 1884 B. Harrison, 1888 McKinley, 1896 Willkie, 1940 Dewey, 1944 Eisenhower, 1952	Hayes, 1876 Garfield, 1880 Harding, 1920
Totals: 61	17	5	6	10	18	7

¹ Adapted from Paul T. David and Ralph M. Goldman, *The Politics of National Party Conventions* (Brookings Institution, 1956, publication pending). Items concerning the 1956 nominations have been added by the author.

didate is usually chosen from a different sector of the country; the Truman-Barkley ticket in 1948 was the only one in recent years in which the two candidates were from adjacent States (Missouri and Kentucky), and the Eisenhower-Nixon combination was unusual in that both candidates were born west of the Mississippi (Texas and California).

Concluding Work of the Convention: Once the convention has named the presidential and vice presidential candidates, it has little to do other than to elect the national party committee that will serve until the next national convention. (In more general terms, the legislature chooses its executive and gives it legislative powers.) The election of the national committee is little more than a formality; the convention merely accepts the man and the woman from each State that the State party organization has presented as candidates.

In 1952 the Republican convention made a significant change in the composition of the national committee: it added to the man and woman from each State the chairman of the party organization of every State that cast a Republican majority in the election for the President, the Governor, or Congress. The principal opposition to this move came from the women of the party, who declared that since the State chairmen were all men, the undertaking would deprive women of their equal status on the national committee. In fact, a much graver consequence appears to be that it will lessen the proportionate representation of the South, with its small Republican vote, on the committee. Having completed its work, the convention now disbands.

THE DESIRABLE CANDIDATE: "AVAILABILITY"

The desirability of any individual as a presidential candidate is measured by an intangible quality termed "availability," a compound of several personal and political traits. The task of computing availability is greatly simplified for the party in control of the White House. As noted above, a President who has served only one term is the most "available" candidate. When the President is about to retire, the nominee with his support usually is the most available. For instance, Theodore Roosevelt in 1908 almost forced the choice of William Howard Taft upon the convention.

Certain other factors may be very influential; however, their effectiveness in at least some cases is questionable. It is generally believed that a candidate should come from a so-called "pivotal" State, that is, one that does not almost invariably cast its vote for one major party. It is also felt desirable that the candidate come from a populous State, with a large electoral vote. Two States that fit both these criteria are New York and Ohio; of the forty-four major party candidates since the end of the Civil War, counting all the candidacies of each person, New York has provided seventeen candidates and Ohio, eight. Yet many a presidential candidate has not carried his own State (even excluding those elections such as 1904 and 1920 in which both candidates came from the same State); moreover, a shift in the electoral

vote of New York from one side to the other would have changed the outcome of no election since that of 1884.

It is also important that the candidate has had some political experience, preferably in an elective office. At one time many candidates were selected from Congress; today, however, the tendency is to choose a State Governor, for he has not had to take a position on national issues, and is acquainted with administrative procedure. Since 1900 both Roosevelts, Woodrow Wilson, Charles Evans Hughes, James M. Cox, Calvin Coolidge, Alfred E. Smith, Alfred M. Landon, Dewey, and Stevenson all had been Governors. Over the same period, Eisenhower and Wendell Willkie were the only candidates who had never held a political office; yet each, and especially Eisenhower, had been in a position in which he had had to deal with men. Particularly after the Civil War, military experience was an advantage; every Republican President from Grant through McKinley had been a Union officer. It is thought well for a candidate not to be a businessman—Willkie is again the exception. Finally, a candidate will fare better if he has an unsmirched personal background. James Blaine's financial dealings blocked him from the nomination in 1876, and they caused many Republicans to default to the Democrats in 1884 after he was nominated; yet when it was discovered, after Cleveland was nominated in 1884, that he had fathered an illegitimate child, he admitted it publicly. It would be well to add to this list that great catalyst of eminence: luck, or the good fortune to be standing where one is when the lightning strikes.

THE CAMPAIGN

The presidential campaign in most qualitative respects is similar to other political campaigns. It is bigger and louder; and it is probably longer, for although it does not officially start until September it is in fact a struggle that may have been going on since the last presidential election.

The campaign forces

The commander-in-chief of the campaign forces is the national chairman of the party, who is chosen by the presidential candidate. Certain campaign managers, notably James A. Farley, have become important political figures in their own right. In late years, however, especially in the case of F. D. Roosevelt and Truman, the candidate himself has been the highest officer in the campaign. It is difficult to say whether this represents a trend associated with the emergence of the President as the chief of his party, or whether it is to be associated with the unusual fondness each of these two men had for political combat.

Below the candidate and the campaign manager are the rather disorganized echelons of supporters, both in and out of the formal party structure. It would be inaccurate to say that there is a large national organization behind the candidate since even at election time a strong national party organization scarcely exists in the United States. However, each State

party organization—a body that may have great coherence and direction—is ordinarily at the service of the candidate. Beneath, and supposedly obedient to, this State organization is a hierarchy of local political bodies at the district, county, city, ward, and precinct levels. However, there may be all varieties of disputes among party units, for reasons both of personalities and of policies. It is the task of the campaign manager to compromise differences and to bridge lines of separation so that the party will be unified at least during its greatest effort—the drive toward conquest of the White House.

Aside from the party there may be many other groups working for the candidate. One of the most active in recent years has been the Political Action Committee of the CIO (CIO-PAC), a group that in some areas has been more effective than the party organizations themselves in getting out the vote. A parallel subsidiary of the AFL, Labor's League for Political Education (LLPE), although perhaps not so effective as the CIO-PAC, has nevertheless seemed to have considerable influence in some localities. Both organizations were joined into a single political action group, the Committee on Political Education (COPE), in 1955. Another nation-wide group is the Americans for Democratic Action (ADA), which, although structurally not affiliated with any labor organization, seeks the election of candidates and the adoption of policies favorable to labor unions as well as the general policies of the New Deal and the Fair Deal. Leading figures in the ADA have included Walter Reuther, President of the CIO, and Senator Hubert Humphrey of Minnesota.

Probably the nearest approach to such organizations on the Republican side was the ill-starred Liberty League that backed Landon in 1936. In 1952 there did appear one group which, although it did not work for the election of the entire Republican ticket, did seek the election of the Republican presidential candidate: the National Citizen's Committee for Eisenhower. Yet a third Republican group is For America, which usually has supported candidates who have pursued the policies of the late Senator Taff of Ohio and General Douglas MacArthur.

Speeches: Since time immemorial, speeches have been the principal means for communication during a political campaign. Candidates make widely differing uses of speeches. For example, a candidate who is already President may during the campaign speak only a few times, remaining in Washington so as to give the impression of being preoccupied by the cares of office. This definitely was the program of Roosevelt in 1940, when he made only one brief tour shortly before election day. His opponent, Willkie, meantime was following the reverse policy, that of speaking as often and at as many places as possible. The achievement of William Jennings Bryan of speaking sixteen times in one day led one Republican politician to ask, "When does he think?"

The candidate may devote his speeches to particular issues, as Truman did in 1948; or he may confine himself to generalities, as Dewey did in the same campaign. Every candidate prior to his campaign vows to forego injurious personal remarks; yet abuse and misinformation are still rife today.

Supposedly the low in campaign vilification occurred during the 1884 campaign when the Republicans, after discovering that Cleveland although a bachelor was a father, chanted in their parades:

"Ma! Ma! Where's my pa?"

"Gone to the White House!"

"Ha! Ha! Ha!"

One frequent consideration is the amount of attention that should be given to the other candidates. Many experienced politicians argue that the less notice paid to the adversary, the better. During the 1940 campaign, for example, Roosevelt scrupulously avoided naming Willkie. One observer of the 1916 campaign noted that the real failure of the Republicans lay in the fact that in their speeches "Hughes talked about Wilson. Taft came out and talked about Wilson. Roosevelt came forth and talked about Wilson and Wilsonism. And now and then in calm pauses Wilson would come out onto the porch of Shadow Lawn and talk about Taft and Roosevelt—and Wilson. Nobody talked about Hughes."

Today the delivery and effectiveness of speech are closely related to three mass media: the press, radio, and television. Of the three, newspapers by their very nature must be the most carefully cultivated by the campaign manager; for newspaper reporting of a speech is in a sense "free" whereas radio and television time must be paid for. Radio and television have emphasized one element that is absent from the press, and appears only to the actual audience—the speaking ability and mannerisms of the candidate. One of Al Smith's greatest handicaps in 1928 was the fact that he was obviously a born and bred New Yorker. On the other hand, F. D. Roosevelt's already great speaking talent was enhanced by the nation-wide transmission of his speeches over radio. Network radio and television broadcasting also influences campaigning by making it more hazardous for a candidate to express contradictory remarks in different parts of the country. Television, although a new medium, has become extremely important. During the campaign, too, all candidates devote vast sums to the dissemination of literature and other forms of publicity, such as brief radio announcements and billboards. Literally millions of pieces of literature are produced for distribution among the electorate.

The effects of campaigns

The effects of presidential campaigns when viewed in one way seem rather inconsequential, and when viewed in another appear of the greatest moment. In *The Western Public*, this author said of the 1952 election:

The big lesson of political tactics, one which can never be well enough explained to political amateurs, and, indeed, to a great many professionals, is that the contest for power is perhaps three-quarters settled before the encounter of an election comes about. The traditional affiliations, economic conditions, general issues, the average of personalities on both sides—such assured general features account for most of the strength of both sides. Sometimes these basic conditions may differ from one election to another, but they tend toward constancy.

But beyond the durable resources of the parties and the short term condi-

tions of economic life and ponderous international events comes the multitude of minor, often trivial, events that create the margin of victory. . . . If it is discovered in a poll, as it was discovered in 1952, that the issue of Nixon's sources of financial support caused a bare flicker of the needle of public emotion, then this was a big issue of the campaign. So weighty and immobile are the general conditions under which the campaign is fought that a few hundred changed votes constitute a major change in the determination of the campaign's results.

American presidential elections are close contests; the great margins that appear in the Electoral College are huge exaggerations of the popular vote. The highest percentage of the popular vote taken by any candidate since 1820 was that of Harding: 61%. In the Democratic landslide of 1936, Roosevelt won only 60.7%. In 1956, Eisenhower won 57.8%. If it be assumed that three-quarters of the vote is settled before the campaign, and that the three-quarters were equally divided, the remaining quarter still allows a swing of from 37.5% to 62.5%, the latter figure being larger than Harding's winning percentage. Table 13, which is based on two national sample surveys of the Survey Research Center, by showing when people made up their minds about how they would vote, is helpful in deciding what is the effect of a campaign:

TABLE 13. WHEN THE VOTERS MADE UP THEIR MINDS, 1948 AND 1952

Time of Decision	1948			1952		
	Dewey	Truman	All	Eisen- hower	Steven- son	All
Before conventions	42%	36%	37%	27%	35%	31%
At time of conventions	34	22	28	40	27	34
During campaign	13	14	14	18	24	20
Within two weeks of election	3	14	9	10	7	9
Election Day	2	3	3	1	4	2
Other	6	11	9	4	3	4
Number of cases	178	212	421	687	494	1195

It may be concluded, then, that campaigns have two major effects. In the first place, they help to consolidate the party organizations and to elevate the morale of the consistent party followers, so that a large proportion of those certain to vote for a specific party will come to the polls. In the second place, campaigns serve to convince the so-called "independents"—that is, persons without strong party attachments—that they should vote for a specific candidate or party. It is in either or both of these two effects that a campaign may give birth to the narrow margin that will yield victory.

THE ELECTION PROCESS

The President of the United States is not elected directly by the people; rather, he is elected by a group of persons from each State known individually as Electors and collectively as the Electoral College, who today are chosen by the people. Yet in certain respects the election of the President

in its current form differs widely from popular election, for it is the Electoral College that in fact names the President.

Procedure of the election

Apportionment of Electors: Electors are apportioned among the States according to their respective representation in the two houses of Congress. Each State has one Elector for each Senator and each Representative. Thus Delaware, with one Representative, has three Electors or electoral votes; and California, with thirty Representatives, has thirty-two Electors or electoral votes. Hence each State gains or loses electoral votes every time it gains or loses Representatives in the reapportionment following the decennial census. Today there are 531 members in the Electoral College. The map in Figure 31 in the preceding chapter shows how the electoral vote has changed along with seats in the House.

Choosing the Electors: The Constitution provides that "Each State shall appoint, in such manner as the legislature thereof may direct, a number of Electors. . . ." (Art. II, sec. 1, cl. 2.) At first in most States the Electors were named by the State legislatures; it is for this reason that there are no reliable figures for the popular vote in any presidential election before that of 1824. However, since the end of the Civil War all Electors have been chosen at large on a general ticket. Each State party organization today names as many candidates for the Electoral College as there shall be Electors from the State concerned. In a minority of States the name of each candidate for the Electoral College appears on the presidential ballot under the names of the candidates for the presidency and the vice presidency. By 1956 thirty States had adopted the so-called "short presidential ballot" on which only the candidates for the presidency and the vice presidency are printed. However, in casting these ballots the voters actually are choosing Electors.

Functioning of the Electoral College: On the second Wednesday of December following a presidential election the Electors of the party that received the largest number of votes in the election in their State gather at the State capital and cast all their votes for the candidate of their party. In other words, the presidential candidate who wins a plurality of the State popular vote secures all the electoral votes of the State. Today it rarely occurs that an Elector does not vote according to the directions of his electorate; the Tennessee Elector who in 1948 cast his vote for Strom Thurmond, States' Rights candidate, instead of for President Truman, who had carried the State, was committing a very unusual action. There is nothing in the Constitution nor in federal law to prevent the Electors from disregarding completely the instructions of the voters and making whomever they please President. However, an Elector is an officer of his State government; hence California and Oregon have acted within their authority in passing laws that require the Electors to heed the decision of the voters. More important, a turncoat Elector would invite great social disapproval.

The Official Count: The ballots of the Electoral College are officially counted, and the victorious candidate proclaimed, at a joint session of Congress that meets on January 6, after the election. When the Electors in the

several States have cast their votes, they transmit the results to the General Services Administration in Washington. This office then sends the results to the presiding officer of the Senate—the Vice President of the United States or the President pro tem of the Senate, whichever the case may be. The House and the Senate convene in the House chamber on January 6. Each house appoints two tellers, one from either major party. The result of the electoral vote from each State is now tabulated by the four tellers. The totals yield the official outcome of the election, an outcome that has in fact been known to the public for two months: the candidate receiving a majority of the electoral vote—266, today—is declared to be President.

Procedure in the Event of Dispute: In the case of a very close election, the circumstances under which the electoral vote is counted make it possible, although not probable, that a dispute may arise. It should be noted that on January 6, the Congress that has been elected in November is now in session; however, the presiding officer, if the Vice President, was elected four years ago and in the immediately preceding November election may have been defeated. The Constitution does not make it clear precisely *who* is to “count” the vote: does the presiding officer, do the tellers, or do the congressmen “count” the vote? Since the presiding officer may be of one party and the congressional majority of another, in the event that a State sent two sets of electoral votes to the General Services Administration it would be difficult to reach a decision as to which set would be honored.

Once in American history, after the election of 1876, such a dispute did arise. On that occasion a commission of five Senators, five Representatives, and five Supreme Court justices was appointed to settle the conflict. The commission, which included eight Republicans and seven Democrats, achieved a decision on a purely partisan basis, awarding all the contested votes to the Republican candidate, Rutherford B. Hayes. Since that time there has been no other disputed electoral vote.

In 1887 Congress enacted legislation providing for a method of resolving any future disputes of this type. The law operates on the generally accepted theory that Electors are State, not national, officers; hence the burden of ultimate decision lies upon the State. When the electoral vote of a State is disputed, the question is first turned over to any authority that the State may have established by law or constitutional provision, for resolving such an issue. If the State agency cannot reach a decision, the matter is then submitted to Congress, where each house deliberates it separately. In the event the two houses of Congress cannot agree—a likely outcome if they are dominated by different parties—the contest reverts to the State: any set of returns certified by the Governor will be accepted as official. If the Governor cannot or will not act, the State loses its electoral vote. Such a conclusion is, of course, very improbable; for, confronted by the possibility that their State might lose its voice in naming the President, the leaders of the two parties in the State almost certainly would compromise their differences.

Procedure in the Absence of an Electoral College Majority: In case no candidate receives a majority of the votes in the Electoral College—an event

that has not occurred since 1824—the election of the President falls to the House of Representatives, which chooses the President from among the three candidates receiving the largest number of electoral votes. Each State delegation has one vote; the majority of the delegation determines the vote of the State. Should the delegation be unable to reach a decision, the State loses its vote. A majority of the votes elects the President. In the event no candidate receives a majority of the votes in the House, the Vice President-elect acts as President until a President has been named. If the Electoral College does not cast a majority of its votes for any vice presidential candidate, the Senate, with each Senator voting individually, by a majority vote chooses the Vice President from between the two candidates receiving the largest number of electoral votes.

Proposed reforms of electoral procedure

Criticisms of the Electoral College: The Electoral College has been criticized on a number of grounds: (1) It long ago ceased to operate as its designers intended; and it clashes with the spirit of American government today. (2) It gives undue weight to the smaller States. If the votes in the Electoral College were distributed according to the delegations of the States in the House of Representatives alone, the apportionment of electoral votes would be fairly consistent with the populations of the States. However, since Senators are also computed in the distribution, and since every State has two Senators, the apportionment in the Electoral College is distorted in favor of the smaller States. In the 1956 election, each Elector from Nevada represented only about 55,000 people; each Elector from New York, nearly 350,000. (3) The system whereby the candidate winning the largest number of votes in the State secures all the electoral votes of the State denies their vote to all who voted for the other candidates. In the event candidate A received 300,000 popular votes, candidate B 250,000, and candidate C 200,000, candidate A even though he had received only forty per cent, or a minority, of the total popular vote would be given all the electoral votes of the State. (4) The Electoral College may send to the White House a candidate who has not even received a plurality of the popular vote. There have been several cases in which the victorious candidate has received the largest popular vote, although it has been a minority of the total: Polk in 1844; Taylor in 1848; Buchanan in 1856; Lincoln in 1860; Garfield in 1880; Cleveland in 1884 and 1892; Wilson in 1912 and 1916; and Truman in 1948. However, twice the President has received fewer votes than his opponent: Hayes in 1876, and Harrison in 1888. It is noteworthy that in each case the loser was a Democrat. Because a candidate receives all of the electoral votes from a State in which he has a bare plurality, and because the proportion of Democrats is very high in the southern States, the Democratic vote from that section is in a sense "wasted." One might say that through "natural" processes the United States is slightly "gerrymandered" in favor of the Republicans.

Suggested Changes: Many types of changes have been suggested to alleviate these shortcomings in the Electoral College. Any of them would

require a constitutional amendment. Of these suggestions, three have won serious consideration:

1. The suggestion that would create perhaps the slightest change has been that the Electoral College as a group of persons be eliminated. Following this suggestion, each State would retain its electoral vote, and the votes would be awarded as at present. This proposition does little more than assure that no Elector could override the will of his constituents; for this reason it might be opposed by those southern States that may be attached to the Democratic Party but not to its candidates.

2. One of the most extreme recommendations has been that the Electoral College be abolished entirely, and that the President be chosen by a simple majority of a nation-wide popular vote. This suggestion would encounter several barriers. First, it would be opposed by the small States since, as noted above, they have a disproportionately large representation in the Electoral College. Second, it would be opposed by many States regardless of size, because it would expunge a number of powers, especially that of fixing the means for choosing Electors, which the States would not readily surrender. Finally, it would be opposed by southern Democrats, since it would make the Republican vote in the South effective in the national totals, and thereupon encourage greater Republican organization and turnout of voters.

3. Standing between these two suggestions are various plans for distributing the electoral vote of each State among the candidates according to their popular vote. The most recent of these proposals, called after those who introduced it to Congress the Lodge-Gossett Plan, would make the proportion of the electoral vote of a State that a candidate receives equal to the percentage of the popular vote that he receives in that State. It further would provide that a candidate who receives the largest number of electoral votes, whenever that number amounts to forty per cent or more of the total electoral votes, will be President. The Lodge-Gossett Plan does not deprive the smaller States of their exceptional weight in presidential elections, and it furnishes a method for respecting the minority popular vote.

When first offered to Congress as a joint resolution for amending the Constitution, the Plan was warmly greeted and was adopted by the Senate. Later, however, sufficient opposition arose to effect its rejection by the House. The opposition was based on the fact, as shown in a group of calculations, that the Plan would take away from the Republican Party the advantage it has (noted above) in the Electoral College; that is, it would impose, because of the distribution of Republican voters, such a severe handicap on the Republican Party that it might never elect a President. Another group charged that the Plan would encourage the rise of splinter parties, inasmuch as a small party, with only a small fraction of the total vote in a State, would still receive some electoral votes. Still others asserted that it would weaken the Democratic Party in the North and turn control of the Party over to its southern elements, because a medium-sized State in the Solid South might cast as many

Democratic electoral votes as a pivotal State in the North; thus, a southern presidential candidate might be more eligible than one from a great industrial State. Hence no change in the method for electing the President is likely in the near future.

QUESTIONS AND PROBLEMS

1. Contrast the methods of apportioning seats in the Republican and the Democratic Party presidential nominating conventions.

2. What are the various means during the nominating process by which one candidate can receive preference over another, and thus increase the chances of his being nominated?

3. Describe one major proposal that would alter the presidential nominating system and another that would alter the election system. Why have these proposals not been adopted?

4. Describe the internal organization of the nominating convention.

5. Suppose your three closest friends were an impressive orator, a skilled organizer, and a financial wizard, and that you were an aspirant for the presidential nomination and election. Where would you place your friends from the very beginning of the campaign through the various stages of the process, so as to help your cause the most?

6. List three Republicans and three Democrats who are potential presidential candidates at the next election. Discuss the "availability" of each.

7. According to Table 13 on page 276, would you have preferred to be Truman or Stevenson two weeks before the election? Why?