

ASSEMBLY



february 1972

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*Ellen Link, whose work was first published in ASPECT last month, has joined our editorial board. She is also from Somerville.

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I am going to begin by setting forth two criteria for the Democratic presidential nominee. First, he should stand out as clearly different from Nixon. Why? because Nixon, as much as many dislike him, has dazzled Americans with the Moscow and Peking trips, finally put controls of one sort on the economy, and taken us superficially a long way toward "peace" (i.e., lack of American ground forces) in Indochina. The occasional and opportunistic kind of

McGOVERN:

It's About Time We Elected An Honest Man

by Edward J. Hogan

liberalism that Nixon has confounded his opponents with leaves the Democrats one real chance of success against him, as J.K. Galbraith has noted: to choose a Democrat with a program that is distinctly to the left of Nixon's norm, one that has solid (left) liberal roots. It is obvious that you can't beat Nixon by nominating (perish the thought!) a Democrat clearly to the right of Nixon, because anybody to the right of where moderate/conservative Nixon's basically at would have about as much chance of winning as--Sam Yorty. Why should Americans change from tweedledum to tweedledee if tweedledum at least didn't bore them?

Second, he should be electable. To be electable, a potential nominee must have money and delegate strength. The new Democratic party reforms have bolstered a third requirement: a good showing in a large portion of the primaries; and weakened a fourth: support from the bigtime state party pols.

Who fits both criteria?

I think McGovern fills them better than any of the other candidates. Let us consider them.

Humphrey, when he showed some life in 1968, crept up on Nixon and nearly beat him. Now he shows a considerable amount of strength in the national opinion polls (18% in one), and could do well in Wisconsin and other Midwest primaries. There is speculation over

the degree of Humphrey sentiment in the ranks of the "uncommitted" in pre-delegate selection contests in Iowa (about 25%) and Arizona (about 18%). However, according to TIME, that fount of conventional presidential wisdom, Humphrey's purported labor strength--supposedly his big trump card--is "hard to locate" in the East. In any case, Nixon's domestic and international surprises have burdened the old liberal Humphrey--who can't help but agree with Nixon just a little too often--with the inability to distinguish himself enough from Nixon to cause the voters to change from one horse to a similar one.

Henry Jackson faces the same situation, only worse, because he doesn't have Humphrey's "old friends" strength. He is yet more consistently in tune with Nixon on many issues, especially foreign policy, and not different enough on domestic issues. Furthermore, the nomination of Jackson would be almost certain to provoke a crippling split in the party between the left-wing and the center-right.

McCarthy and **Lindsay** obviously contrast sufficiently with Nixon, and they have ranked equally with McGovern in national polls as recently as January; but McCarthy's ideas, in areas other than the war, are as vague as ever, and there is little promise of change here, simply because he is even now ambiguous, in his own impractical way, about whether he is seriously running. One will not be carried to the gates of the White House these days exclusively on grounds of a reputation for opposing the war. There are still memories of 1968, when many feel McCarthy let his supporters down by his absence from the convention floor when it came down to fighting for the peace plank, McGovern pro and Muskie con. Beyond all this is the fact that McCarthy essentially dropped out of regular politics for some time between 1968 and 1972. Much of his old staff and supporters joined McGovern in the months following his announcement of candidacy in January of last year, and most of them are committed in word and mind to McGovern now. Lindsay has a few skeletons in his closet--his nomination of Agnew in 1968, and his horrendous record in dealing with New York City among them--but the overwhelming obstacle that almost no one believes he can overcome is his only recent membership in the Democratic Party, and, perhaps, some doubts of the real depth of the liberalism/populism he now espouses.

Beyond the specific circumstances applying to them, a crucial fact is that McGovern has the support of the active liberal Democratic left. To have this base of support in the segment of the

party that share one's outlook from the start is probably essential. Three large gatherings of liberals in three states strongly endorsed McGovern: 62% at the Massachusetts Citizens Presidential Caucus, 86% of Florida Concerned Democrats, and 68% of the Pennsylvania New Democratic Coalition. McCarthy got 13% in Massachusetts and 2% in Pennsylvania; Lindsay scored under 1% in both votes. Student polls, another gauge of strength among liberals, have all been won by McGovern.

Shirley Chisholm is a special case, in that she is specifically setting out to gain leadership of the black and minority delegates at the convention, in order to win concessions that blacks and others haven't previously been able to bargain for there. To the extent she meets with success in the primaries, she can hurt McGovern, but she is not going to Miami to stand in his way. Indeed, Chisholm people are coalescing with McGovern and Muskie supporters in parts of some states where she has a measure of strength, in order to give her a few surer delegates instead of perhaps close to none at all if the Chisholm forces ran alone. Nobody thinks she has a chance to be elected, and that is not her purpose.

Everyone knows Wallace is a spoiler, but what kind of spoiler is he? He threatens Humphrey, Jackson, Muskie, and their politics, to the extent that Wallace will stand out and define from his point of view issues that these three might sometimes wish to remain ambiguous about. Lindsay and McCarthy, and certainly McGovern, are not going to be ducking such issues--busing and integration, housing discrimination, and so forth. McGovern has in the past and certainly will again set forth his own point of view on these issues.

I have applied my two criteria to the six above candidates more or less rigidly. Although I have eliminated each of them following the judgmental framework I have set up, I don't claim to be predicting the future. I have instead asserted on the one hand why some of them won't be nominated (lack of current voter strength or party strength) and on the other, why some of them shouldn't be. Among those six, Humphrey might be chosen, but I share the theory with many others that it would cost the Democrats the election, for reasons cited above.

We all know who's left: **Edmund Muskie**. What is his strategy? He has affirmed that he is going to run as a "consensus candidate".

He's going to conduct a campaign dealing with broad, major, "traditional" issues such as the war (it's surely a traditional issue after three elections!) and the economy. He doesn't have unequivocal plans to take us out of the war even now, although he is at last coming out strongly against it. (He only voted for the McGovern-Hatfield Amendment last time after much deliberation.) He is counting on votes for criticizing Nixon's mismanagement of the economy, relying on the traditional preference the electorate has to trust the Democrats better to take care of it, even though Muskie is one of those Senators closely associated with the escalation of the war that shot up inflation and the economy itself.

Muskie leads all the national polls of Democrats and Independents, although his strength is a not-overwhelming 30-35%. In a recent Harris Poll where Muskie had 30%, McGovern scored 7%.

But Muskie has done little that is memorable since his famous election eve broadcast in 1970. His conscious consensus candidate stance puts him in the position of leading the polls but not taking on the role of a leader, which means taking stands and making commitments, things Muskie has been loath to do.

Muskie has been getting a lot of endorsements from well-known Democrats recently because he clearly looks like the one with the best chance of capturing the nomination. Sens. Tunney, Gravel, and Hughes endorsed him for that reason, certainly not because they are enthusiastic about Muskie and his politics.

Those Democrats and Independents of the polls don't seem too enthusiastic either. From my own experience, I have found almost no one who is strongly committed to Muskie. Those who I've talked to who favor him, do so because they think he's going to win, and not seemingly for much other reason. The paucity of commitments to positions the public has from the candidate lend much credence to the belief that the same sentiments prevail elsewhere in the country. Thus the statement, 'Muskie's support is a mile wide and an inch deep.'

Muskie certainly has a very good chance of taking the nomination; a bandwagon of unenthused supporters is nevertheless a bandwagon. But what, barring some ill-timed Nixon blunders, is going to give a "consensus candidate" a chance to beat Nixon, whose crafty and opportunistic, but all the same masterful, management of popular opinion strengthens his edge of incumbency?

To give Muskie the nomination and then lose the election is all too probable a scenario. We need a candidate who poses a clear

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alternative to Nixon. The Democratic Party will not win in November unless it can give the voters a real choice.

The man who can provide that choice is **George McGovern**.

NEXT MONTH:

A look at McGovern's record and an answer to the question, "Can he win?"

In younger days

I was a tree climber.

Sometimes robin's nests

lured me up the limbs;

sometimes I just climbed.

Oak and maple were my domain.

From rough ridged bark

to stairstep limbs,

I'd arch my back

against a crooked branch

or hold the topmost part

and sway with every wind.

I was a lump of fleshy fruit

dangled from a limb,

which, waxing past greenness,

fell to ground below.

In wiser days

I was a tree climber.

Larry Neal Bowers

Colleen E. Rutherford

CHOICE?

I tangled his mind in my hair
Imprisoned his soul between my thighs
And let his flesh go free--
It came to me.

Tom Montag

ON BEING A PUBLISHER

delicate dreams
& breezes

these

strewn across dark

sunflowers'

petals

pages

curled with heat
this steaming room
this printer's dream
wearing my arm
to blood & bone

EVERYMAN'S PRICE

An american

Is a man

Who sells everything

Anything:

Old ladies wrinkles

Young men's sneers

Cold wet limp handshakes

Hand knit hand crafted flag pole

Paint flaked church pews

Chorus girlie books

Seal of approvals

Sanforized textbooks de

Pressed values

Silver rings

Gold from teeth

Skin

Flowers

Garden plots

Fresh dug lilies

A man's soul

A man's ideals

Love

Everything in America having its price.

--Wilson Stapleton

Cotton Mather's Prayer:

lay me on an anvil
oh, god,
and beat shit out of me

turn me into a hook
to jerk the guts
out of
errant angels

shape me into
a spear
to spit
high dreams

make me a hammer, lordy,
to smash fools' fingers
as they cling
to the edges of hope

place me on your
steel thigh, stern lover,
and crush me back
to you--I can
not stand
to be alone

--horace coleman



CRAZY LOPEZ

Lopez is in isolation
A small room with a door and
Unbreakable windows
Lopez' blood is on the window
Lopez' blood is on the door
Lopez' blood is
On his fists and
White hospital frock
Lopez
Cannot smoke because Lopez
Will burn his sheets and mattress
2 husky men wrestle Lopez to
The shower and
Wash away his feces and urine and
Blood
Lopez is terrified
Lopez is terror
Lopez is danger and misery
Lopez is curled in a corner sucking
On his thumb
We
Shall take away his thumb if
He sucks on it much longer
For
We love Lopez
Lopez
Is one of us
!

--Fritz Hamilton

Richard Latta

his face upright
drops lined his face
dripped down red cheeks
as his eyes memorized
the rain.

could this be,
a rain of eyes,
the pupils fixed
in their school desks
trying to read
puddles.

so quiet
you almost
hear the grass
blades slicing into
the sunset.

The Cabbage

You would come home to an empty house at the end of winter. Perhaps a hand of snow still pushing on the garden stones. There is clean wood in the study, old bricks and leather books. Cabbages rise high on the kitchen table, green globes stacked on the yellow wood. Upstairs the odor of cooking follows the back of your head: you can imagine green fringes turning liquid in the pot. There is much to read, the books taken down, the wind rising across the field, pear trees bending: you are eating cabbage, watching. I would always eat cabbage and have the house so. The fields. The swallows diving into the dark evening. I would always eat this. I would never die.

Daniel L. Guillory

SCENES OF TODAY

Caught up in mindless marching history
Returning dusty salute of forefather
Tenscore legions triumphantly transgress
Desecrate the foreign soil.

Emboldened by unreflective right
Fostered by lifesucking greed
Powerful youths die for yesterday
Today mourned tomorrow alone.

Our nation proceeds as fury untamed
Offering ritual sacrifice to Thrasy-machus
Honor, pride, guts, unused dreams
Preciously purchased, senselessly strewn.

Effortlessly the circus slaughter survives
Muted dissent shouted to windless night
Rusty hearts and abandoned conscience
Chant the mass of the Star Spangled Banner.

--Judy Shepps

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