The Politics of Recommendation

TABLE 2.1
The Commission on Party Structure and Delegate Selection

George S. McGovern, chairman, U.S. senator from South Dakota
Harold E. Hughes, vice chairman, U.S. senator from Iowa
I. W. Abel, president, United Steelworkers of America
Birch E. Bayh, Jr., U.S. senator from Indiana
Samuel H. Beer, professor of government, Harvard University
Bert L. Bennett, partner, Quality Oil Company, Winston-Salem, North Carolina
Warren M. Christopher, attorney, O'Melvey and Myers, Los Angeles, California
Leroy Collins, defeated candidate for U.S. senator from Florida
Will D. Davis, attorney, Heath, Davis and McCalla, Austin, Texas
William Dodds, director of community action, United Auto Workers
Frederick G. Dutton, attorney, Dutton, Gwirtzman, Zumas, Wise and Frey, San Francisco, California
John F. English, national committeeman from New York
Donald M. Fraser, congressman from the Fifth District of Minnesota
Peter Garcia, deputy director of community action program, Tulare County, California
Aaron E. Henry, president, N.A.A.C.P. of Mississippi
John J. Hooker, president, Minnie Pearl International, Nashville, Tennessee
Patti J. Knox, vice chairman, Democratic party of Michigan
Louis E. Martin, publisher, Chicago Daily Defender
Oscar H. Mauzy, state senator from Dallas, Texas
George J. Mitchell, national committeeman from Maine
David Mixner, co-director, Vietnam Moratorium Committee
Katherine C. Peck, defeated candidate for U.S. senator from Kentucky
Albert A. Pena, county commissioner from Bexar County, Texas
Calvin L. Rampton, governor of Utah
J. Austin Ranney, professor of political science, University of Wisconsin
Adlai E. Stevenson, III, state treasurer from Illinois
Carmen H. Warschaw, national committeewoman from California

offers and attention. Even then, McGovern did not stop: He hired Alder on a temporary basis to draft both an agenda for the opening meeting of his commission and a tentative schedule for the next six months of calendar 1969.22

By late February, almost the entire first generation of the Hughes Commission was either on the McGovern Commission or irrelevant to a second incarnation. Even if Hughes himself had changed his mind, a new commission could hope, at least immediately, to have only its chairman for physical continuity with its namesake and predecessor. Under those conditions, Alder watched the idea fall of its own weight:

I did call the Carroll Arms to arrange for a meeting room for the time of the first meeting of the commission. Then that was abandoned completely when
AN INSTITUTIONALIZED BIAS FOR REFORM POLITICS

some new structural arrangement. It was Segal, accordingly, who hit upon the idea of using a newly formed Executive Committee to do exactly that.

From the first, Chairman McGovern had considered naming an Executive Committee to serve as a sounding board for early staff proposals, on the theory that a body with twenty-eight members could not meet regularly enough to stay involved with the details of its own work. Segal now urged McGovern not to make this new subcommittee a mere microcosm of the larger commission but to pack it with commissioners who would provide a reform nucleus for subsequent battles. When McGovern agreed, the Executive Committee became, in effect, the concrete means for locking the legislative intent of Wexler’s opening statement into the formal organization of the Party Structure Commission. (See figure 3.1.) Segal was delighted:

The Executive Committee was important. If you took that commission and looked at the Executive Committee, then you could really see the slant toward reform. With two or three exceptions, you had the hard core there. Seven of the ten were hard-line reformers, and two of the others never came.

Segal, Wexler, and Alder hoped that careful preparation would be enough to extract this entire package—both the statement of purpose and the new organizational arrangements—from the full commission at its initial session, since the commissioners would have no good reason for immediate, coordinated resistance. Segal put the general plan into a late memo to McGovern, as a last step before the March 1 inaugural:

Without suggesting that the first meeting of the Special Committee be stage-managed, I have prepared this memorandum with a view toward minimizing the possibility for friction on Saturday. My premise is that under the glare of TV lights, we do not want to repeat the management and confusion of Chicago.

![Diagram showing the institutionalized bias of the Commission:](image)

**FIG. 3.1**

_The Institutionalized Bias of the Commission: Eli Segal’s Perspective_
kan's analysis of the long-run impact of a withdrawal by COPE might prove correct:

The AFL-CIO was very antagonistic toward the whole operation. They had a deep disappointment with the 1968 election, the fact that McCarthy had taken a walk. They felt that this was enshrining the McCarthy wing of the party, after they [labor] had broken their necks for the Democrats in 1968. They thought we were going to impose restrictions on the real, true-blue Democrats.

I felt it was important that labor get involved, and I had worked hard at that. Jimmy O'Brien actually came to the first Commission meeting. At that meeting, they passed a no-proxy resolution. Then he dropped out entirely, and that was that.

The withdrawal of I. W. Abel created an immediate tactical problem for National Chairman Harris and Commission Chairman McGovern. Each, in effect, had to choose between pursuing Abel in a manner likely to justify a return to full participation or letting him go in peace. Their decisions provided the denouement to the politics surrounding the inaugural meeting of the commission.

Harris would have preferred, in the abstract, to offer the renewed overtures which might cause Abel to return. But to do that, he would have had to risk offending the militant reformers. Because Harris had set out to create a reform-oriented body, and because he had nevertheless been assailed by the reformers when its membership was unveiled, the chairman accepted the departure of Abel philosophically, with no attempt to woo him back. The COPE
The Politics of Implementation

FIG. 10.1
The Distribution of Organized and Volunteer Democratic State Parties in 1970

their personal preferences to a common, loosely connected ticket. In some places, however, ethnic, religious, or geographic ties, reified by the experience of working together, can substitute for jobs, contracts, and favors. In 1970, within the national Democratic party, these organized state parties were concentrated in the middle-Atlantic, near midwestern, border, and south-central states, although a few were scattered elsewhere. (See figure 10.1.)

These differences, in the nature of party actors, in the incentives for party activity, and in the pattern of party campaigns, produce different structural characteristics for the political party as a whole. In volunteer parties, partly as cause and partly as effect of the ease of intermittent participation, party offices are hard to fill and are not reliably valued for their own sake. At the extreme, "the party," as an institution, may be difficult to locate. In organized parties, on the other hand, the party is far more likely to possess a progression of occupied offices and a range of formal authority to go with them. At the extreme, a functioning statewide hierarchy may exist.

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(a) State Party Characteristics and Movement Toward Reform

Volunteer Parties

No Reform Activity | Reform Activity
---|---
(8) | (18)

Organized Parties

---|---
(15) | (10)

(b) State Party Characteristics and Levels of Reform Activity

Volunteer Parties

No Reform Commission | Inactive Reform Commission | Active Reform Commission | Actual Rules Reform
---|---|---|---
(3) | (5) | (9) | (9)

Organized Parties

---|---|---|---
(9) | (6) | (7) | (3)

FIG. 10.2

The State Parties and Compliance: March-April 1970
THE MANDATE AT THE STATE LEVEL

categorized, on about a two-to-one basis, by volunteer rather than organized state parties. Conversely, those in which reform was obviously, publicly dormant were characterized by organized rather than volunteer parties, by the same two-to-one margin. Those which fell in the middle, finally, with evidence of reform activity but without enough practical success to guarantee momentum, were split about evenly between the two party types. (See Figure 10.3.)

Implications

By the fall of 1970, the character of reform politics had evidently changed. Until November of 1969, and really through May of 1970, the politics of party reform had possessed a pointed, national focus. After May of 1970, it came to consist instead of a diffuse web of decentralized negotiations—among relevant national figures, among relevant state and local figures, and between relevant actors at the state and national levels. These negotiations still involved a continual jockeying among national reform actors, in an attempt to speak—authoritatively—for the national party. Intermittently, they also involved specifically national decisions reached in obviously national arenas, and these always had a greater impact on the resulting institutions for delegate selection than did the decisions reached in any given state.

Yet the far greater share of total reform conflict had already begun to occur inside the fifty-five state, district, and territorial parties, a situation which would not change until the individual states had selected their delegates to the 1972 Convention and, indeed, until those delegates had assembled in one central site. Until then, the status of party reform would be measured by the number of subnational units at each stage of the compliance process. Until then, the impact of party reform would be judged by the sum of institutional changes occurring in the individual states.

![FIG. 10.3](#)

*Compliance Status of the State Parties: July 1970*
The Politics of Implementation

FIG. 11.1
The General Election of 1970 and the Changing Cast of Governors

gardless of their route into office, would find a need to use the state party in the course of attempting to govern.

This swelling of the ranks of Democratic governors, however, was more than a neutral shift, or even a neutral expansion, in the cast of available reform actors. For new Democratic governors almost automatically made their states more sympathetic to national party reform than these states had previously been. This was true even where new incumbents were merely replacing another Democrat; it was much more impressive in the larger group of states where they replaced a Republican.

In part, this drift was the result of formal positional logic. The introduction of a Democratic governor in a previously Republican state effectively increased the number of major pressure points for state party reform. Where once there was mainly the state party chairman, now there was a Democratic governor, too. The number of significant targets for national party actors had accordingly grown; the number of state figures who might reasonably attempt to manipulate the state party from above had precisely doubled.

Yet far more was at issue even than this simple, mathematical contribution to reform. For the tendency of this bumper crop of new Democratic governors to move their states toward compliance was also a result of the practical logic of continuing state politics. At bottom, governors were likely to be responsive to a different, and more proreform, set of indigenous pressures than were sitting party chairmen. Beyond that, governors often had specifically national concerns, productive of a more sympathetic response to national party reform, which state chairmen were quite unlikely to share.

These institutionalized considerations were, in fact, the more important factors driving incoming governors toward a more sympathetic stance on state party reform. State party chairmen, in institutional practice, needed to be concerned primarily with the maintenance of the political party as an organization, with the political needs of state and local party officials, and with the fate of party candidates at the polls. If they worried about social groups, they
FIG. 11.2
Compliance Prospects Among States with
New Democratic Governors

(a) Change by December 1971 in States Holding Elections

New Democratic Governor

Out of Compliance  In Full Compliance
6 10

All Other Results

10 7

(b) Change by December 1971 According to Type of State Party

Volunteer State Parties

Out of Compliance  In Full Compliance

New Democratic Governor

2 6

All Other Results

3 7

Organized State Parties

Out of Compliance  In Full Compliance

New Democratic Governor

4 4

All Other Results

7 0

NOTE: The numbers exclude the three states which were in full, certified compliance by the time of the general election of 1970.
THE BATTLE FOR OFFICIAL STATUS

![Diagram of compliance status for Volunteer and Organized Parties]

FIG. 13.1
Compliance Status of the State Parties: January 7, 1971

Carolina—had been certified in full compliance by January of 1971. Another small group—Hawaii, Kansas, and Rhode Island—had refused even to appoint a state reform commission. Of the forty-three states strung out in between, eleven were rated by the commission staff as in nearly full compliance; twenty-two were said to be better than halfway there; ten were considered to meet less than 50 percent of commission guidelines. (See figure 13.1.)* Geri Joseph, vice chairman of the National Committee, noted the situation at the time:

All the states were attempting to come into compliance with some of the guidelines. You have to remember what the reforms said that they were trying to do. They had all the good words. They had all the things we say we believe in, and a lot of people in the party really do believe in.

The overall compliance mosaic could predict little about the response of the National Committee to specific suggestions for reform. A majority of states, after all, could be in compliance with one guideline and out of compliance with the next. Beyond that, the transfer between the compliance status of a state and the vote of its committee members was inevitably inexact. Yet this compliance mosaic did compress the range within which the committee was likely to act.

If a healthy majority of states could already satisfy over half the guidelines, there was little likelihood that the National Committee would rise up and strike them down in their entirety. Such an action would bootlessly invite open warfare within the national party; it would deliberately court a bad press from those predisposed toward reform in the abstract. On the other hand, if an overwhelming majority of states were not yet in compliance, and if solid majorities were out of compliance with a number of individual guidelines, there remained a great potential for amendment. The search for these amendments, then, was likely to be the heart of committee politics on the Preliminary Call.
THE DEBATE OVER IMPLEMENTATION

were split about equally between the two party types. (See figure 15.1.)

These preparations for additional pressure on compliance actually raised the greatest anxieties, not among those party leaders who refused to provide a timetable, but among those in the office of the national chairman. Larry O'Brien feared that a reconvened commission might follow its more militant members and establish a compliance body of its own. At that point, his own centrality in the negotiations over state compliance, along with his efforts to maintain the appearance of party unity while reaping the abstract advantages of reform, would be endangered; at that point, the long-awaited clash between the commission and the chairman might actually come to pass. Bill Welsh watched O'Brien work to contain this possibility, first with a direct approach to Fraser and Nelson:

A lot of effort went into dealing with these points of resistance on a one-to-one basis. The DNC staff was a buffer between the Commission and the state chairmen, but we were basically going for the reforms, too. The DNC was trying to keep the Commission from setting up its own compliance review group, by saying that this was a Credentials matter. We didn't need that kind of help from them.

O'Brien followed this with a letter to every commissioner, underlining his own commitment to reform and its progress to date, and congratulating them on that progress.34

The commission itself assembled at about 9:30 A.M. on Friday, July 16, in Room 2712 of the Rayburn House Office Building. The group which gathered there, thirteen commissioners in all, was a substantially scaled-down version of the body which had last met twenty months before, in the two-day session of November 19–20, 1969. Chairman Fraser opened by addressing Commissioners Beer, Dodds, English, Graves, Hughes, Knox, Mauzy, Mixner, Pena, Ranney, and Warschaw; staffers Nelson and Casey; and ex-staffers Bode and Segal.35

![Diagram]

FIG. 15.1
The State Parties and Compliance: July 16, 1971
THE NATIONAL PARTY REVISITED

were, by their certified conformity, increasing the pressure on the hold-out states.

By the time the National Committee prepared to assemble and address the Final Call to the 1972 Convention, twelve states were in absolute, certified compliance. Another twenty-one had received national endorsement of their proposed rules. Even among the eighteen which lacked national approval, six had made substantial alterations but were being stymied on a key guideline by a Republican legislature, while another six were led by allies of the national reform coalition and could not possibly be written off at this point. (See figure 16.1.)

The usual difference between states with volunteer versus organized political parties was still evident in October of 1971. But now, the critical fact was that majorities of both categories were in possession of officially certified reform rules. If 73 percent of volunteer state parties, and only 55 percent of organized state parties, were over this procedural hump, the difference could not obscure the fact that thirty-three states had developed local reform packages in compliance with the most sweeping national reforms in American party history—and that these thirty-three were surely the minimum, not the maximum, in the chain of compliance.

Determined doubters could still find grounds for anxiety. Only twelve states, after all, had gone through every stage of the reform process. Yet the extent to which nearly everyone in the attentive public had accepted the inevitability of widespread compliance was revealed, strikingly, by the way in which the central question in the debate over reform progress had shifted. For a long time, from late 1969 through the summer of 1971, the major issue in this debate had been the status of formal implementation, that is, “Will the state parties comply?” By the fall of 1971, however, the issue had shifted to the real behavior of state officials under reformed party rules, that is, “Will the state parties actually follow their newly adopted regulations?”

A second, indirect, but telling indicator of an emerging consensus on the formal triumph of party reform lay in the preparations of relevant participants

![Diagram of party compliance](image)

FIG. 16.1

*The Status of State Party Compliance: October 13, 1971*

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FIG. 16.2
State Party Characteristics, Compliance Progress, and the Vote on Harris-Hughes
his hopes lay solidly with the regular party and organized labor, concluded that there was little to be gained from any public stand at this stage in his long-shot campaign.

Harold Hughes, of course, was one of the two principals in the conflict. But while Hughes did possess some influence with his home-state members, that influence was, in fact, redundant: The Iowa members would have gone for the reform candidate, whoever that might be. Where Hughes was able
through a credentials challenge. Before he was even inaugurated, Edwards moved to bring his state into line.\textsuperscript{2}

By the day after the New Hampshire primary, the traditional opening of the presidential season, there were thirty-eight states in full compliance, with more to follow. (See figure 18.1.b.) Even at this advanced stage, the fundamental difference between volunteer and organized political parties remained, a testimony to the influence of basic party structure. But by this time, clear majorities of both categories were in full compliance, and that was the consequential fact.

Three more states ultimately joined these thirty-eight, bringing the certified total to forty-one. Of the remaining ten, most were characterized by a single, trivial violation. Only New York, Montana, and West Virginia, out of fifty-one original candidates for resistance, were in serious non compliance, one which might realistically affect delegate outcomes. The summary figures for total guideline acceptance told the same tale, even more powerfully. By the time the last delegates had been selected, the fifty states and the District of Columbia were in conformity with 905 of the 918 commission guidelines, a