

OBSERVATION POINT By Philip H. Power

Chicago: The Laughter Is Brittle

CHICAGO—This is no ordinary convention city. This is no ordinary convention.

This is a convention under the gun.

Armed, blue-helmeted cops are everywhere on the streets. They flew several thousand national guardsmen into O'Hare Airport over the weekend. The armed wire around the amphitheater looks like something out of the German concentration camp.

The security is ferocious. There are supposed to be 15 security people on duty for every single one of the 5,611 delegates and alternates.

To get your press credentials, you practically have to give your neck balance and blood type.

THE REASONS WHY are a lot more complicated than the official concern about the personal security of the candidates or the delegates.

Sure, no one wants an assassin to strike yet again. No one wants to see the cauldron of Chicago's ghetto erupt into full scale violence. No one wants to see the countless groups and sub-groups here to protest some aspect of America's policy make a sudden rush and trample the delegates.

But these fears seem greater than the massive response of the authorities. There is a tension in the air—in the somewhat too brittle laughter of the delegates, in the mood of frustration and anxiety that has settled over Chicago—that goes well beyond the simple question of how to insure the physical safety of a large number of people.

It is in this odd mood and not over who will be nominated that the real significance of this convention lies.

SO THE 1968 Democratic National Convention may well be the last one ever to be held by the Democratic Party as we presently know it.

The plain fact is that this party, which has dominated American politics since 1932, is starting to come apart at the seams. It began as a coalition of interest groups lashed together by Franklin D. Roosevelt over 30 years ago. The labor unions, the Negroes, Jews, Poles, Catholics and other minority groups. The intellectual. The farmer radicals out of the mid-west.

This was the FDR's coalition. It made the New Deal, and it determined the course of American politics from 1932 'til this time.

But look at what's happening. **THE NEGROES HAVE** more delegates at this convention than ever before, but they're not happy. They don't like the systematic exclusion practiced so ineffectively by the southern white leaders. They don't like the war in Vietnam. They don't see any candidate with soul.

So they sit in bitter black caucuses.

The intellectual and the youth in the party, much attracted by Senator McCarthy and the late Senator Robert Kennedy, feel that the old line establishment has ignored their dissent, and the deck of the convention is rigged, and rammed Hillman down their throats.

"We need some young blood," is the conventional cry of any party leadership, but the young blood in the Democratic Party is gumpy at what it thinks is hypocrisy.

The unions, traditionally a liberal force in the party, are having their own internal problems, and their rank and file are fearful of pressure from Negroes wanting jobs and pushing seniority rules.

The farmers sit back in astonishment at the riots in the streets and yearn for more simple times.

And suddenly these groups

don't seem to feel that the traditional Democratic Party offers them the route to achieve their goal that it used to.

IT ISN'T, HOWEVER, just the conflicts between the coalition groups that is putting such fearful pressure on the party.

It's a growing realization—to be read on the anxious faces of the delegates as they spin in the endless world of a convention—that the body of liberal thought that has worked as the cement for the traditional democratic

coalition is breaking down.

Not breaking down, perhaps, but rather becoming irrelevant.

For example, one of the important propositions of a classical Democratic liberalism was that the federal government had a clear obligation to take direct action in fields such as unemployment and welfare, but many in the Democratic Party are beginning to think that federal action in these areas simply isn't the whole answer.

They argue that the red tape,

the dependency and the ineffectiveness of present welfare systems cannot be accepted, and they conclude that the liberalism that led to these programs is no longer up to solving the problems of 1968.

Coalitions need a cement! Usually, it's called an ideology.

When the cement starts to chip, coalition starts to break and that's why Democrats here are more anxious than it seems they should be.

That's why this convention is under the gun.



THIS IS THE WEEK THAT... by DON HOENSCHELL

CHICAGO — It's going home again and clucking about the dead departed.

The faces are strange and the people you know are older and occupied with other pursuits. You remember the faces sometimes, but the names get scrambled.

The Michigan delegation is laced with younger people and that's good. They have newer dreams and that's the salvation. There's the nostalgia like the A & P store is now a record shop.

So this is about the people who aren't here sweating in the International Amphitheater, grabbing for microphones and turning the roll call so as not to miss the buggy when it rolls by.

There isn't much chance of that this year, but...

GIVE US ANOTHER few minutes with the shock of unruly hair and the awry bowtie, the sonorous voice. Former Gov. G. Menen Williams, the patriarch of the latter day Democratic party in Michigan, is in Manila in ambassador's stripes.

He could have been here with a nod at the state convention in Detroit. But Soapy (and few ever called him that in his hearing) felt the greater good was to go to the Philippines, leaving with Democrats a state convention keynote speech and a legend.

Williams posed with a birthday girl at the state convention, shook every hand in sight and appeared willing to carry a torch whenever called upon. They miss Soapy here.

Willis Brewer isn't here, either.

WILLIS, A GEM in Oakland

County Democratic politics, is semi-retired from the field now. He was at the 18th Congressional District convention looking a bit wan and light of weight.

"No, I'm not going to Chicago this year," he said. "Let's let the party grow with the younger people."

Willis once was Director of the Office of Hospital Survey and Construction. He ran into trouble with the Hatch Act and departed with an era that was like a Bob Lo trip.

When the 1957 state highway plan (freeways) came out, Oakland county was almost excluded. The county put Willis on the job. A revised version corrected the oversight and Willis could have paved all of Oakland county.

And Zorro isn't here, either. His square name is Zolton A. Ferency, the kid who came up through the Michigan Liquor Control Commission and was executive secretary of Gov. John B. Swainson before becoming state chairman during an era that was like a Bob Lo trip.

Ferency's office in Lansing started out in front of the executive office, but it was detected that his whippers were shredding the chandeliers in the Senate hall a block away. He moved to the north end of the office where the crystal was tougher.

As state chairman, Ferency followed his own star and ran afoul the others. Zorro backed Michigan Conference of Concerned Democrats. Nothing wrong in that, but Zorro became an issue and he quit.

So none of them is here this year. They've been replaced by able men and women. But the man was right. You can't go home again.

Bargaining Needs New Approach

Public legislation is needed to bail the public, the taxpayers, out of the morass of indefinite procedures and expectations of collective bargaining in the public business.

Some state legislator could help the taxpayers get more for their money by spearheading a drive to create order out of chaos.

An obvious need—and the very least that should be done—is establishment of a time schedule by which such negotiations can be guided.

For instance:

LOCAL AGENTS of the municipality and the employees could be required to either settle their disputes by the beginning of the fiscal year or submit to mediation. Mediation would resolve 15-day time period, after which arbitrator finding could be required. This could be given 30 more days to effect a settlement.

Binding arbitration could be imposed if the dispute is not resolved by that point.

Neither employer nor employee would be unfairly treated by such a time limit, yet the public would be better assured that the money it spends to support both are being effectively used.

Neither the employer nor the employees benefit by a negotiating stalemate—and the public certainly suffers.

Unresolved disputes take up an inordinate amount of attention the elected officials and their agents, for one thing.

Unresolved disputes set up emotional antagonisms among the employees and their agent for another.

BOTH FACTORS CUT DOWN on performance efficiency. The public's money is wasted.

Services the public intended to buy with that money do not match up to expectations, and surely can't show an improvement in dollar value.

Employees deserve the right to bargain collectively. Public officials have the responsibility to administer public funds to best advantage.

When the predominance of facts indicates that these two factors cannot be resolved to mutual advantage of the public, an additional safeguard is needed. That safeguard must come from state or federal laws.

—Dennis L. Paj

VFW Color Guard, Plymouth Tradition, Reaches The End

For years residents of the Plymouth Community have thrilled at the precision marching color guard unit of VFW Mayflower Post as it proudly led all major parades, participated in community events and generally headed the name of Plymouth throughout Wayne County, the state of Michigan and many parts of the nation.

It became almost a tradition for the legendary, smartly-dressed, well-drilled group of men in their colorful blue and white uniforms to be the first to march down Main Street for the Memorial Day, July 4 and other processions of the past nine or 10 years.

The men, all veterans of wars in foreign soil, took pride in their performances. Regardless of how well they marched, every single man wanted to do better the next time out.

Then the years began to take toll. There was a time when the color guard led an equally smart, precision marching drill team. He later fell by the wayside a few years ago when the members gradually dropped out and it was no longer feasible for such a unit.

But the color guard continued. The group drilled every Sunday or three or four hours, always seeking perfection with the idea sometime capturing a national championship.

Three times it won the state championship. A year ago, it made a gallant bid for the U.S. crown but was just a few points short in the final judging.

Then came this year and the members thought they had the smartest unit ever. They won the state title and again had ambitions of the long-coveted but never attained national crown.

Just two weeks before the nationals, which were held in conjunction with the convention in downtown Detroit, one of the color bearers suffered a heart attack.

The others quickly filled the post and resumed their drill. Came the nationals and again Plymouth had to be content with a second place.

Naturally, all were disappointed but realized that it was a better team that had won. They were even more disappointed when most realized that the time had come to retire—the long hours of practice and the encroachment of Old Man Time were just too much.

So, a Plymouth tradition has passed on. The VFW color guard unit will be seen no more and it's sad that such a fine unit finally reached the end of the trail.

All members deserve a big pat on the back for their work over the years. They will be sorely missed come Memorial Day in 1969.

Urbanization Comes To Vacation Isle

Frequently in these suburbs, you hear someone who ought to know better babbling about the "semi-rural" atmosphere of one town or another.

While it's true there is some farmland left out here, the land that is developed is no longer "rural" or "semi-rural" or even "rustic," although some trees may have been preserved. It's urban, and ought to be governed accordingly.

The point is driven home by the Town Crier, a little weekly serving the jewel of Lake Huron, Mackinac Island. The Town Crier speaks for the small town's exaggerated sense of social prominence, which many islanders retain, by running social notes on who's visiting whom, but the turn of its coverage is to show the folks that they're becoming more normal and more urban, whether they care to admit it or not.

Take the current issue, for instance.

MACKINAC ISLAND is famous for having no autos or trucks—only horse-drawn transportation. It has been that way for years, and people find it charming. But the truth is that the system is working badly.

The carriage company can't find qualified horse drivers in winter, and so a councilman is suggesting a motorized car service from November to April.

A leading light in the Michigan Society of Architects criticizes the "honky-tony" atmosphere of the downtown section of Mackinac Island, and the folks are now seriously reexamining their building code in an effort to preserve their atmosphere.

The Town Crier immediately follows that item with this gem: "Another communication to the Council, from Loring F. Oeming, executive secretary of the Michigan Resources Commission, said the council must state its willingness in the immediate future to build waste-water treatment facilities on Mackinac Island by 1972."

THERE'S AN INTERVIEW with the new school superintendent, whose big job during the two years of his contract will be to get grades 11 and 12 operating.

The island's year-around population is increasing, you know...

The administrative assistant to the president of Mackinac College says there is a need for "efficient taxi service in the winter, when college activity is at its peak. The college is also interested, he adds, in preserving Mackinac's traditions, the paper says. Ah, yes, even a college must pay lip service to the island syndrome.

So if even Mackinac Island must struggle with the problems of urbanization, where does that leave these suburbs? Not with a "semi-rural" atmosphere, by a long shot!

—Tim Richard

Youth Wants To Govern Itself

This indeed is the year of the young. The young people dropped in on the primaries, and President Johnson dropped out. Politics joined fashions and music as captives of the young.

So it isn't too surprising that one Barry Becker, a 22-year-old student at Wayne State University, is running for the WSU Board of Governors, whose average age is 61.

Barry is working on his candidacy and his bachelor's degree at the same time, and maybe he'll get the former as well as the latter. For he's going after the Democratic nomination on the platform of representing the students and teachers. It's a matter of self-determination, which also happens to be a tradition of the Democrats.

The point has long been made that those most affected by and involved in the processes of a university, the students and the teachers, are those with the least voice in its governance. What more logical solution than to elect a student to the Board of Governors?

But it to 'em, Barry!

—Robert Selwa

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