

You CAN'T Be Well Informed

A Right That Can't Be Exercised

Someone has a movement going to remind people to be informed before they vote — to investigate the candidates and issues, to vote intelligently and not blindly.

If only those people who are fully informed were allowed to vote, no one would go to the polls in next Tuesday's primary.

But nobody!

The ballot is simply too fantastically long to comprehend.

The list of candidates for many offices is so long that hardly anyone will be able to identify everyone who is running, let alone whether he's any good or not.

THERE ARE candidates for Appeals Court, Circuit Court, Probate Courts, District Courts. There are candidates for auditor, for register of deeds, for clerk and treasurer and prosecutor and sheriff and supervisors at the county level.

Mercifully, there are no races for either U.S. senator or state senator this year, but there are for U.S. representative and state representative.

In our townships, there are races for trustee posts on the township boards and, in some cases, for subordinate bodies such as parks commissions.

At the most elemental level, there are races for precinct delegates. Here, the winner is elected, not just nominated, and your precinct delegate will go to a district convention to decide issues about the party of your choice.

And then there are the propositions. There are always propositions.

Statewide, we'll vote on three constitutional amendments to establish a Judicial Tenure Commission as a watchdog over our judges; to establish a State Compensation Commission which would set rates of pay for state officials; and to give the governor power to make appointments to fill judicial vacancies.

Wayne County will vote on one mill for five years for operations; Oakland will vote on one mill for five years for roads.

EVERY SO OFTEN, someone makes a proposal that we eliminate a lot of these offices from the elected list and make them appointive.

Two specific proposals have been made in recent years.

One is to allow a form of county home rule whereby the voters could approve a charter, if they wished, that would make many administrative offices appointive—sheriff, clerk, treasurer and so on. After all, how do you as an outsider know if the sheriff is any good? or the clerk? or the register of deeds? Naturally, county politicians oppose this.

The other proposal is to make Michigan's entire judiciary appointive. A citizens committee headed by Jason L. Honigman has produced such a proposal, but it's not yet on the ballot. The proposal has faults, as we've pointed out, but it's better than the present system of electing candidates whose true qualifications you don't know and putting up with a weird system of legal "ethics" which prevents candidates from discussing cases.

In a survey of local courts several months ago, we were distressed to find about half of our judges oppose this kind of reform. Their reasoning was incredible: "The people should have the RIGHT to elect their judges."

What good is such a "right" when the ballot is so long that you can't know the candidates? What good is a "right" that no one can fully exercise intelligently? What good is a "right" to elect someone to a post who campaigns on such abstract issues as "integrity" and "ability"?

THERE ARE ALL SORTS of other ways the size of the ballot could be reduced, most notably

reviving the spring election. That, however, would simply spread the offices around the calendar, and it fails to come to grips with the essential problem—we've got too many posts to elect.

We might make our state education boards appointive rather than elective. Stop to think about it: We elect 32 persons to state educational offices—eight each to the State Board of Education and the governing boards of the three big universities.

Can you list the qualifications of the office-holders? Can you even name them? Do you remember whom you voted for? Do you know what policies each board has adopted in the last year? Of course not.

YOU'VE GOT ENOUGH proposals and candidates to worry about in the Aug. 6 primary. Yet we choose to annoy you with some more possibilities, because we want you to be angry with the

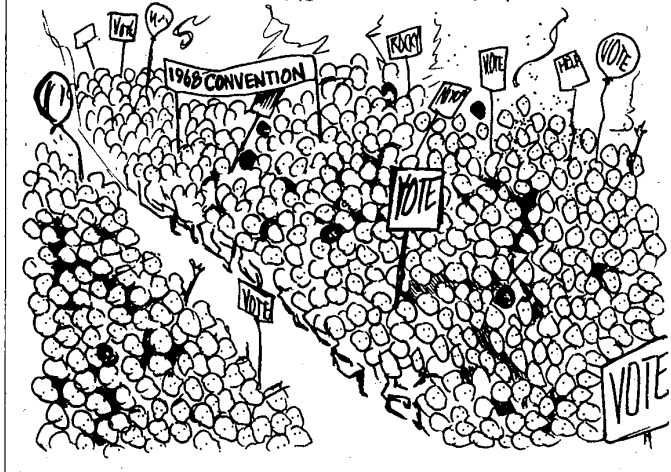
long ballot.

We want the Aug. 6 primary to stick in your mind as a nightmare in the Michigan electoral process.

Then when some politician says he's fighting to protect your "right" to elect an auditor or to vote on an obscure legal amendment, you can chop him down by asking him: Who's Zigmund John Niparko? Who's Allan H. Casinelli? Which Brennan is running for what this year?

—The Observer Newspapers

THE GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH



From the Publisher's Desk

OBSERVATION POINT

By Philip H. Power

"There is something about a national convention that makes it as fascinating as a revival or a hanging. . . . One sits through long sessions hearing heartily that all the delegates and alternates were dead and in hell — and then suddenly there comes a show so gaudy and hilarious, so melodramatic and obscene, so unimaginably exhilarating and preposterous that one lives a gorgeous year in an hour."

— H. L. Mencken

"A political convention is after all not a meeting of a corporation's board of directors; it is a fiesta, a carnival, a pig-roasting, horse-snorting, band-playing, voice-screaming medieval get-together of greed, practical lust, compromised idealism, career-advancement, meeting, feud, vendetta, conciliation, of rabble-rousers, fist fights (as it used to be), embraces, drunks (again as it used to be) and collective rivers of animal sweat."

"It is a reminder that no matter how the country might pretend it has grown up and become lady in its manners, bodiless in its legislative language, hygienic in its separation of high politics from private life, that the roots still come grubby from the soil, and that politics in America is still different from politics anywhere else because the politics has arisen out of the immediate needs, ambitions, and cupidity of the people, that our politics still smell of the bedroom and the kitchen, rather than having descended to us from the chill puncturing of aristocratic negotiation."

— Norman Mailer

IN SHORT, conventions are a gas.

Because this newspaper believes that conventions are a gas and because we are convinced that our politics, indeed, come grubby from the soil of our people, we are planning to cover both the Republican and Democratic national conventions with on-the-scene reporters. This may be unusual for a community newspaper, but we think it's worth it.

Tim Richard, our Assistant Managing Editor, will be going to Miami Beach to cast his skeptical eye on the Republican show which begins on August 5. Editor Don Hoenshell and I will amble over to Chicago on August 26 to take an equally jaundiced look at the Democratic doings.

This means that while we'll leave the big stories about who gets nominated to the wire services and the TV, our coverage will be concentrating on the activities, feelings and maneuverings of delegates and politicians from this area. They're the ones who are relevant for people here in Observerland, and they'll be the ones we focus on.

"WHY?" SOME HAVE asked, "do we have conventions at all? What possible relevance to the abilities of our potential presidents are contained in the endless (and boring) speeches, the carefully planned 'spontaneous' demonstrations, the interminable

garbage of the pre-convention appearances and squabbles?"

It's a good question. For, looked at from the outside, our system for nominating the candidates for the most powerful office in the world seems absurd and juvenile.

Absurd and juvenile in some of its practice, perhaps, but not in its intent.

For the qualities of skill and sense, leadership and logic, organization and organic charisma that make a good president are precisely those qualities which are needed to run successfully the gauntlet from primaries to national convention to ultimate success in seizing the nomination.

Seized. That's right. For the nomination is never bestowed or granted on a platter. It has to be fought for, even by apparent front-runners Nixon and Humphrey.

A MAN WHO can't walk into a smoke-filled room and stare down an unacceptable demand from a political boss won't ever be able to cope with the Russians or DeGaulle. A man who can't organize a smooth-running, taut campaign organization will never succeed in untangling the institutionalized chaos that is our federal government.

A man who can't galvanize his troops and, more important, the skeptics watching from the sidelines merely by his presence and his words, won't ever give the peoples of the world the kind of leadership which is expected of our president.

In this sense, the convention and the skills needed to master it are a microcosm of the role that the president will be expected to fulfill. Failure in the convention suggests failure when it's for real. Success suggests the opposite.

So when you're watching for the umpteenth time the seemingly absurd and highly planned spontaneous demonstration for Joe Glop, favorite son from East Podunk, just remember that Joe is trying to cope with the organizational demands that would hit him should he become president. It makes the chaos a little more bearable. And enjoyable.

THIS IS THE WEEK THAT...

by DON HOENSHELL

Republicans are taking every precaution to guarantee that delegates to the national convention in Miami do not get hijacked to Havana, senior.

But since most things arranged by political parties tend to disaster, delegates could spend much time with the Spanish-English dictionary.

Cómo le gustan los huevos, partner?

That's for when you're ordering eggs, a safe item since not even under Castro can anyone do much to ruin an egg. Late reports say they've got omelettes shot from guns.

Some of the airlines are giving pilots landing instructions for Havana and telling them not to argue with a gun or a bottle of after shave lotion wrapped in a towel, a recent weapon.

So with any luck at all we'll have delegates booked into what used to be the Havana Hilton and reading La Paz with their morning demitasse and huevos.

WE'RE SENDING Tim Richard to Miami for The Observer Newspapers and the editors are meeting in marathon session to determine whether the copy from the convention will be better reading than the dispatches from the white sands of Havana harbor.

Tim is an excellent writer and very analytical. If anyone can bring Castro down with a type-writer, he's our tiger. We know the GOP will nominate a presidential candidate and we know Nixon can grow a beard, but can he speak Spanish?

But back to the precautions. Republicans figure most of their leadership will be going

to Miami in private or chartered planes. In theory this will give them control of the passenger list.

There is a special convention landing field in Miami, very carefully arranged and guarded. That's for VIPs.

Delegates riding scheduled airlines take their chances. And good luck to all you seniors y señoras.

Gov. Romney, we assume, will get to Miami on a private plane but the 48 delegate votes (now dwindling, according to reports) are less certain. Nobody has been hurt in the hijackings so far, or we wouldn't tell about it.

Democrats were thinking of Miami, too, before the telephone strike ended at least for the convention period in Chicago. We wish the Democrats well, too, but figure them in Miami—or Havana.

And figure Jerry Sixby and Bob Dwyer touching down in Havana. Or Livonia's Jerry Raymond.

SIXBY INSTANTLY would have those airport guards organized into a Teamster local and delivering newspapers, each of them of course licensed by Dwyer.

Raymond could negotiate and arbitrate Castro right back into the hills. Ah, the possibilities. We'd have it all in terribly good reading from Tim.

Huntley-Brinkley? "This is Chet Huntley saying good night for NBC News. Good night, David."

And this is David Brinkley in Havana. "Buenos noches, Chet."

Why Other Guy Got The Job

Editor's Note: This is re-print of an editorial that appeared in "Grass Roots," a publication of the University of Missouri School of Journalism. We feel has an important message not only for youth out seeking employment but some older job seekers also.

DEAR KID:

Today you came to me for a job. From the looks of your shoulders as you walked out, I suspect you've been turned down before, and maybe you believe by now that kids out of high school can't find work.

But I hired a teenager today. You saw him. He was the one with the polished shoes and a necktie. What was so special about him? Not experience, neither of you had any. It was his attitude that put him on the payroll instead of you.

Attitude, son, A-T-T-I-T-U-D-E.

He wanted the job badly enough to shake the leather jacket, get a haircut and look in the phone book to find out what this company makes. He did his best to impress me. That's where he edged you out.

You see, Kid, people who hire people aren't "with" a lot of things. We know more about Bing than Ringo, and we have a lot of stone-age ideas about who owes whom a living. Maybe that

makes us prehistoric, but there's nothing wrong with the checks we sign.

EVER HEAR OF "empathy"? It's the trick of seeing the other fellow's side of things.

I couldn't have cared less that you're behind in your car payments. That's your problem and President Johnson's. What I needed was someone who'd go out in the plant, keep his eyes open, and work for me like he'd open for himself.

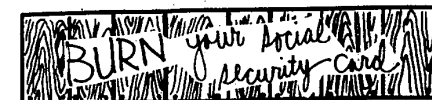
If you have even the vaguest idea of what I'm trying to say, let it show the next time you ask for a job. You'll be head and shoulders above the rest.

You know, men get a job like you get a girl: Case the situation, wear a clean shirt and try to appear reasonably willing. Maybe jobs aren't plentiful right now, but a lot of us can remember when master craftsmen walked the streets. By comparison, you don't know the meaning of "scarce."

You may not believe it, but all around you, employers are looking for young men and women smart enough to go after a job in the old-fashioned way. When they find one they can't wait to unload some of their worries on them.

For both our sakes, get eager, will you?

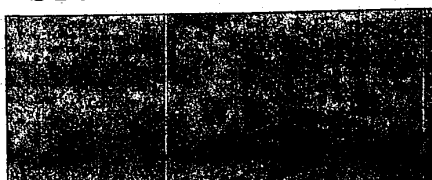
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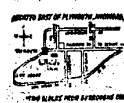
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