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Organized Labor and Party Reform: A Reassessment*

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The ability of labor leaders to act as power brokers in the nominating process was not destroyed by the Democratic Party reforms of the early 1970s, but by a prior internal fracturing of the labor movement. The AFL-CIO leadership could be power brokers only while there was consensus within the union movement on the main elements of domestic policy, foreign policy, and political strategy. This consensus broke down in the early 1970s, producing a crisis of representation that brought different leaders to the fore and a more complicated pattern of blue collar union political activity as some supported and others opposed party reform. Today interest groups can be effective in the nominating process only if they can mobilize their members behind a particular candidate early in the process. The difficulties of doing this have reinforced the candidate-centered character of presidential primaries.

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A central claim of the massive literature criticizing the party reforms of the early 1970s is that these reforms undermined the role of elite bargainers or “power brokers” in the presidential nominating process.¹ With

*The author thanks the Brookings Institution and Wayne State University Labor Archives for providing financial support for this research.

1. For some prominent examples of this view, see Samuel Kernell, *Going Public: New Strategies of Presidential Leadership* (Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1986), pp. 23-24, 39-41; Nelson Polsby, *Consequences of Party Reform* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 72-75; Byron Shafer, *Quiet Revolution: The Struggle for the Democratic Party and the Shaping of Post-Reform Politics* (New York: Russell

power diffused more widely to voters in caucuses and primaries, and to those candidates, managers, media specialists, and interest group activists who could claim to deliver such voters, the ground was cut out from beneath the old party elites. A nominating system that took into account intensity of preferences, electability, and capacity to govern, through a process of deliberation among key party leaders, was irretrievably lost.

Union leaders, who had sometimes been among the power brokers, were also disempowered by the new nominating system. In the conventional view of the struggle over party reform, a united labor movement which had steadfastly opposed the reforms was eventually defeated by an activist, white-collar "new class" of educated professionals, few of whom had much concern for the needs or interests of unionized workers.² The success of the reforms, in turn, explains the later weakening of union influence in the nominating process. The American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) was defeated by the proto-yuppies of the late 1960s, and was never able to recover from this aggressive blow to its fortunes. Conversely, it is implied that had the reforms never occurred, the AFL-CIO leadership would have continued its role as one of a number of key factions that worked behind the scenes to help determine the Democratic nominee.

While the conventional account correctly identifies the effects of changes in party rules on the distribution of power and the structure of incentives facing candidates and interest groups, it overlooks the degree to which the power-broker role of union leaders was predicated upon a distinct, and historically conditioned, set of power relationships within the labor movement itself. The brokerage power concentrated in the hands of the AFL-CIO leadership and a few other national union leaders rested on a consensus among unionists about the main elements of domestic policy, political strategy, and foreign policy. By the late 1960s, many of the same issues of policy and procedure that divided the party were dividing the labor movement as well, and ruptured the consensus that had legitimated the leadership's elite power-brokerage. Thus, just as

Sage Foundation, 1983), pp. 523-39; and Austin Ranney, "The Political Parties: Reform and Decline," in *The New American Political System*, ed. Anthony King (Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute, 1978), pp. 216-19.

2. This interpretation is presented by Byron Shafer in *Quiet Revolution* and in *Bifurcated Politics: Evolution and Reform in the National Party Convention* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988). It is also a theme advanced by Jeane Kirkpatrick, "Representation in the American National Conventions: The Case of 1972," *British Journal of Political Science* (July 1975): 265-322; and Thomas Edsall, *The New Politics of Inequality* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1984), pp. 49-57.

the party experienced its own turbulent crisis of representation, so too did the labor movement. By the early 1970s, the leaders of a labor movement that was nearly as divided as the party itself were in no position to maintain the centralized power-broker role.

Perhaps of even greater importance, the divisions within the labor movement helped clear the path for party reform. The usual image, of a united union movement resolutely fighting white-collar enemies, captures neither the fractures within the labor movement nor the correspondingly more variegated pattern of alliance formation which resulted. Important unions were quite willing to find political solace in the arms of their putative white-collar rivals, and some liberal unions even came to see party reform as in their own interest. Such unions were no longer willing to allow the labor vote to be brokered by an AFL-CIO leadership they saw as increasingly unrepresentative.

For this reason, the idea sometimes advanced that the old order could have been easily maintained or, alternatively, forthrightly reconstructed through a return to the earlier rules, seems misguided. The consolidation of party reform reflected not just the power of the reformers, but also the interests of a broader array of labor leaders more desirous of direct involvement in the nominating process. The upshot of all this is a significantly different evaluation of party reform—one which views it not simply as the product of emerging white collar activism (although that it surely was), but also as a reflection of the labor movement's own crisis of representation in the early 1970s.

I. Before Reform: Union Leaders as Power Brokers

The role union leaders played in the selection of presidential nominees in the pre-reform Democratic party was deeply affected by the set of rules regulating delegate selection to the national convention. Presidential primaries were quite limited in number and importance, and most state delegations were selected by means of a series of caucuses and conventions that were often dominated by a few key party leaders. Delegates were not selected on the basis of their candidate preferences, as they typically are today, but rather on the basis of their loyalty to state party leaders (often governors, senators, and mayors) and/or the extent of their activity on behalf of the party. Thus, delegates often arrived at the convention uncommitted to any candidate, and waited for cues from state party leaders telling them which candidate to support. In this

system, a few dozen party leaders could determine the choice of the nominee.³

Union leaders could try to affect the selection of the nominee under this system primarily by bargaining with other party leaders. Although unions occasionally mobilized their members to vote for a favored candidate in one of the small number of primaries (as some unions did on behalf of John F. Kennedy in Wisconsin and West Virginia in 1960), it was more common for a labor leader to promote a candidate simply by persuading delegates and party elites prior to and at the convention itself. Unions were recognized by candidates and party leaders alike as an important backer of the party in state and local elections, as a key lobbyist in Washington, and as a source of vital support in the general election.⁴ Most party elites, therefore, agreed that a candidate opposed by labor should not receive the nomination.⁵ The candidates themselves knew that union support would be very helpful, and that clear union opposition could seriously damage their campaigns (as Lyndon Johnson had discovered in his bid for the Democratic nomination in 1960).⁶

Former AFL-CIO President Lane Kirkland described the old system as a “tacit, invisible but real arrangement” in which “the party leaders knew that, in the general election, they needed labor to draw some of the water and hew some of the wood. The leaders of the party wanted to win. They wouldn’t nominate anyone who was too offensive to the trade union movement.”⁷ He also noted that “it was a collective bargaining relationship, in effect: the key people involved in the process would discuss with us the acceptability of various candidates. . . . A relative handful of people exercised a profound influence on the process.”⁸ In Kirkland’s view, union leaders could not necessarily ensure the nomination of

3. Leon Epstein, *Political Parties in the American Mold* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986), p. 374; and William Lunch, *The Nationalization of American Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), p. 43.

4. J. David Greenstone, *Labor in American Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977).

5. See William Form, *Segmented Labor, Fractured Politics: Labor Politics in American Life* (New York: Plenum Press, 1995), pp. 259-91; and Graham Wilson, *Unions in American National Politics* (London: Macmillan, 1979), pp. 38-39.

6. For a description of labor’s opposition to LBJ in 1960, see Robert Dallek, *Lone Star Rising: Lyndon Johnson and His Times: 1908-1960* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), ch. 16; and Joseph C. Goulden, *Meany: The Unchallenged Strong Man of American Labor* (New York: Atheneum, 1972), pp. 290-301.

7. Memo, Lane Kirkland to International Union Presidents, et al., November 12, 1982, “Politics and Labor” file, AFL-CIO Library.

8. Lane Kirkland, “Labor and Politics After 1980,” *AFL-CIO American Federationist*, January, 1981, p. 20.

their first choice, but party leaders would listen to their concerns, anticipate their reactions, and avoid selecting a candidate they actively disliked.

Union leaders' ability to operate as power brokers depended on enjoying considerable autonomy. A strong union president could endorse a candidate without consulting the rank-and-file membership, or even other leaders within the union. An "endorsement" could occur entirely behind the scenes, hidden by a facade of formal neutrality. For example, after Steelworkers President David McDonald decided to support John F. Kennedy for the nomination in 1960, he didn't mobilize his members to vote in the primaries, but instead, as he put it, "began to work immediately, under cover, to develop, in the steelworkers' and other AFL-CIO unions, political action groups behind his campaign for the nomination and the presidency."⁹ Likewise, United Auto Workers (UAW) President Walter Reuther encouraged Senator Hubert Humphrey to withdraw from the 1960 race, even going as far as to offer to pay his considerable campaign debts in return, while all the time proclaiming his and his union's neutrality.¹⁰ It is in examples such as these that we see union leaders acting as power brokers, that is, as brokers for the eventual delivery of the organizational resources of the union in support of the candidate's campaign, and the votes of the membership in the general election.

The autonomy of union leaders from their own membership was facilitated by these leaders' steady adherence to what Michael Rogin has called the "myth of nonpartisanship."¹¹ Rogin argued that AFL leaders used claims of "nonpartisanship" to increase the autonomy of the leadership vis-a-vis internal and external critics and to obscure the real, and often self-serving, ties that union leaders forged with local machine politicians. Likewise, the ritualistic denial by the AFL-CIO leadership of its real activities in the Democratic nominating process served a similar function. Meany proclaimed in the late 1970s, for example, that the AFL-CIO was "the only trade union movement in the world that is truly independent—politically and every other way. . . . We maintain an arm's-length arrangement with the political parties."¹² Similarly: "The

9. Oral history interview with David McDonald, February 15, 1966, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.

10. Kevin Boyle, "Politics and Principle: The United Automobile Workers and American Labor Liberalism, 1948-1968" (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 1980), p. 265.

11. Michael Rogin, "Nonpartisanship and the Group Interest," in *Ronald Reagan, the Movie, and Other Episodes in Political Demonology*, ed. Michael Rogin (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), p. 129.

12. Quoted in Archie Robinson, *George Meany and His Times* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1981), p. 19.

Gompers philosophy basically was that labor should not tie itself to a political party in any way at all. This is still our policy.”¹³ In insisting that they were not actually involved in the presidential nominating process, and, moreover, that they were not even committed to one of the two parties, union leaders obscured the extent of their actual involvement in presidential politics. One result was that they were able to shield their activity from the intrusion of any procedures providing accountability to the rank-and-file. In keeping their own involvement surreptitious, union leaders avoided stimulating any internal or external pressures for the use of polls or other procedures for ascertaining the authentic preferences of the membership.

Clearly, the possibility existed for a serious disjuncture between the preferences of union leaders and union members. This possibility was dormant as long as nominating campaigns remained free of the volcanic passions that produce true political schisms. But by the late 1960s, the conflicts engulfing the country as a result of the Vietnam War and other volatile issues meant that the nominating process was no longer a relatively cordial and low-key affair. It became instead the center of a maelstrom of occasionally violent conflicts over foreign and domestic policy and, more broadly, the future of the Democratic party. As these conflicts deepened, both the party and the labor movement would become more sharply divided, and previously closed and hierarchical power relationships were exploded.

These new pressures would come at the very moment that the AFL-CIO leadership (as distinct from that of the national unions) emerged as the dominant primary power broker for organized labor in the Democratic nominating process.¹⁴ In contrast to earlier nominating contests, in 1968 the AFL-CIO leadership completely abandoned any pretense of neutrality (in practice, if not in rhetoric) in the nominating process. In the months prior to Johnson’s withdrawal from the race, AFL-CIO President George Meany pledged his complete support for the President’s renomination. When Johnson chose not to seek renomination in late March 1968, Meany moved quickly to encourage Vice President Humphrey to announce his candidacy. As Meany later recalled: “Lane [Kirkland] and I went over to see Hubert Humphrey and got him to agree he would run.”¹⁵ Meany also issued an AFL-CIO press release stating: “We . . . strongly urge that Vice-President Hubert Humphrey declare himself now as a candidate for the presidency.”¹⁶ Although the term

13. Quoted in Robinson, *George Meany and His Times*, p. 91.

14. See Goulden, *Meany*, pp. 360-65.

15. Quoted in Robinson, *George Meany and His Times*, p. 276.

16. AFL-CIO Press Release, April 3, 1968, George Meany Labor Archives, AFL-CIO.

“we” implied an official organizational commitment, Meany’s intervention was in no way the product of any formal procedures or deliberation within the federation.¹⁷

Meany’s critics have argued that his involvement was motivated by much more than a disinterested concern to secure the most electable pro-labor party nominee. Meany chose to endorse Humphrey, and to actively oppose the candidacies of Senators Robert Kennedy and Eugene McCarthy, well before the electability of any of these candidates or their appeal among union members had been tested in caucuses or primaries. Meany justified this intervention by reference to Humphrey’s pro-labor legislative record and his support for President Johnson’s Great Society. But Meany’s opponents within the labor movement noted that both Kennedy and McCarthy represented potential threats to the existing pattern of union access and involvement in national politics, one which buttressed Meany and his more conservative allies in the labor movement.¹⁸ It was conceivable, for example, that should Robert Kennedy succeed in his quest for the presidency, he would favor the United Auto Workers, which had withdrawn from the federation in 1968. UAW President Reuther castigated Meany as a conservative and autocratic leader who had failed to support the expansion of the labor movement or the construction of new ties to the movements of women, students, and racial minorities. Any alliances the UAW leader might forge with a new Democratic president were particularly troublesome to the AFL-CIO leadership because Reuther was, by July of 1968, in the midst of forming an alliance with the Teamsters Union—an alliance that threatened to become the prototype for a new federation to compete with the AFL-CIO. Privileged access to a new president in the White House would no doubt helped a rival federation draw affiliates away from the AFL-CIO.¹⁹ For Meany’s critics, his maneuvers were motivated as much by his pursuit of personal power as by any calculations regarding national policy or the electability of the chosen nominee.²⁰

At the very least, it is clear that organizational imperatives and genuine policy commitments overlapped, and in so doing only reinforced the determination of the top AFL-CIO leadership to deliver the Democratic

17. James P. Gannon, “Labor in the 1968 Campaign,” *Issues in Industrial Society*, 1 (1969): p. 32.

18. Goulden, *Meany*, pp. 360-61.

19. Nelson Lichtenstein, *The Most Dangerous Man in Detroit: Walter Reuther and the Fate of American Labor* (New York: Basic Books, 1995), pp. 431-32.

20. Reuther’s criticisms are presented in John Barnard, *Walter Reuther and the Rise of the Autoworkers* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1983), pp. 177-99.

presidential nomination to Humphrey. Former AFL-CIO President Lane Kirkland, who was AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer during this period, described the character of the AFL-CIO's role: "I was involved with others in putting together a committee—a labor committee—for Hubert Humphrey. . . . Labor was instrumental in rounding up the delegate votes to get him nominated. We didn't do that by participating in primary elections. I think Hubert only entered one or two elections. But in the non-primary states, we rounded up most of the votes."²¹ This kind of labor involvement was a prime example of the old power broker role in action: elite networks and traditional party contacts were tapped in order to help pull together a delegate majority in favor of Humphrey. Any preferences for Kennedy or McCarthy that might have existed among the membership had no impact whatsoever on the activities of the AFL-CIO and most national union leaders within the nomination process.²²

An exception to this generalization could be found, as was often the case, in the UAW's activities. The union's longstanding democratic traditions made projection of an image of total unity behind either Johnson or Humphrey impossible. The leadership of the union was deeply split over the Vietnam War and the related question of whom to support for the Democratic nomination.²³ Even before Johnson's withdrawal, important leaders within the UAW had endorsed Robert Kennedy and were actively working on his behalf in several states. In this context, Reuther had little choice but to accept the fact that he could not deliver the union's support to the president—an outcome that greatly disappointed Johnson's campaign advisors. After Johnson withdrew from the race, Reuther maintained a studied neutrality, while the rest of the UAW leadership split between Kennedy and Humphrey, with Paul Schrade, West Coast Regional Director of the UAW, playing a major role in the Kennedy campaign in California. After Kennedy's June 5 assassination (during which Schrade was grazed in the head by a stray

21. Lane Kirkland memo to International Union Presidents, November 12, 1982. The UAW, which did not endorse Humphrey, was no longer a member of the federation, thus allowing Kirkland to proclaim a degree of labor unity that was somewhat misleading. For further description and analysis of the AFL-CIO's role in supporting Humphrey, see Theodore White, *The Making of the President, 1968* (New York: Atheneum, 1969), p. 270; and Lewis Chester, Godfrey Hodgson, and Bruce Page, *An American Melodrama: The Presidential Campaign of 1968* (New York: The Viking Press, 1969), p. 542.

22. Numerous Gallup polls, as well as election results in several primaries, demonstrated considerable rank-and-file support for Senator Kennedy. See "Why Unions Are Running Scared in 1968," *Nation's Business*, June 1968.

23. A good discussion of Reuther's role can be found in Lichtenstein, *The Most Dangerous Man in Detroit*, pp. 422-27.

bullet), most UAW leaders unenthusiastically accepted the need to support Humphrey.²⁴

While the UAW was rendered less effective by its own internal divisions, the AFL-CIO continued to deepen its role in the nominating process. Meany guided the federation, as an organization separate and distinct from the affiliated national unions, into a position as the major representative of organized labor in the battle over the nomination. Unlike earlier conventions, where separate national unions such as the UAW or Steelworkers were more prominent, this time it was the AFL-CIO itself and Meany that adopted the most visible role.²⁵ In May 1968, David Broder observed that “never before has the national labor federation become so openly involved at so early a stage in the fight for the Democratic presidential nomination.”²⁶

The enhanced AFL-CIO role was particularly evident at the Democratic convention itself. *The Wall Street Journal* concluded: “Mr. Humphrey has no more important ally at this convention than labor. With his Southern supporters showing signs of restiveness over Humphrey-backed rule changes, Northern liberals expressing uncertainty over his ‘electability’ because of Vietnam, and political powerhouse Mayor Richard Daley of Chicago still fence-sitting, the unions are the Vice President’s bedrock of support.”²⁷ While the AFL-CIO only had about 200 delegates out of a total of 3,084, these union delegates could serve as “arm-twisters” on the convention floor on behalf (and often at the behest) of the Humphrey campaign. Thus, Humphrey left the convention indebted to the AFL-CIO leadership for its steadfast support. In the general election, the federation further expanded its involvement, hoping to take up the slack left by Humphrey’s poorly run campaign, the deterioration of most of the big-city machines, and the near collapse of the national Democratic party structure.²⁸

Although AFL-CIO leaders were obviously disappointed when Richard Nixon achieved a narrow victory over Humphrey, they viewed their own involvement in presidential politics in 1968 as a considerable success. It was, however, precisely the nature of that success that generated a counterattack from the very forces that had been vanquished at the Democratic convention. Humphrey’s nomination had been attained the

24. Interview by author with Douglas Fraser, Detroit, Michigan, September 10, 1990.

25. James P. Gannon, “Unions Strive Mightily to Win the Nomination for the Vice-President,” *Wall Street Journal*, August 26, 1968.

26. David Broder, “COPE Director Al Barkan Flexing Labor’s Big Muscle,” *Washington Post*, May 7, 1968.

27. James P. Gannon, “Unions Strive Mightily.”

28. Penn Kemble, “The Democrats After 1968,” *Commentary*, February 1969.

old-fashioned way—through the traditional methods of political brokerage. He had not entered a single primary, while his opponents had won many. From the perspective of many of Humphrey's opponents, his nomination was basically illegitimate and unrepresentative of the true preferences of Democratic voters. The perception of unfairness was only reinforced by an unsavory record of procedural irregularities in the process of delegate selection in several states.²⁹ Thus, party reform, which had long been an issue in Democratic politics, came to the fore once again. Those groups that felt excluded, including some unions, now banded together to demand a serious consideration of the reform agenda. In this context, dissident elements were finally able to secure agreement to establish a reform commission to evaluate party rules and require the appropriate changes.

II. Party Reform and the Growth of Labor Disunity

As an immense literature has shown, the Commission on Party Structure and Delegate Selection, later known as the McGovern-Fraser Commission, approved a series of reforms in the delegate selection process that transformed the dynamics of political bargaining in the presidential nominating process. First, the Commission voted to require affirmative action in delegate selection for blacks, women, and young people—groups that had been underrepresented among the delegates at previous conventions. Second, and ultimately more important, the Commission specified that starting in 1972, delegates would have to be selected either through primary elections—which had been used in only sixteen states in 1968—or through a system of public meetings or caucuses, at which anyone who was a member of the party could attend. In response to the Commission's new guidelines, most states chose to move toward primaries, rather than participatory caucuses, as the main means to select delegates. The Commission thus succeeded to a greater degree than most had foreseen in forcing a major change in the nominating system.

The main result of the new procedures was that delegates would now be pledged to candidates much earlier in the process and chosen by large bodies of Democratic voters. The power broker role was now unsustainable. If labor leaders wanted to exercise influence within the reformed system, they would have to ensure that their members actually participated in the crucial primaries or caucuses. While the deployment of union financial and organizational resources could still be helpful, can-

29. See Crotty, *Decision for the Democrats*, pp. 43-55.

didates' most fundamental need in the new system was the support of groups that could bring out their members to vote in a predictable fashion. Union leaders needed to mobilize the membership, not just call in political debts among party elites. If the membership was significantly divided, or even opposed the leadership's choice, this fact would now have political consequences: the members could vote for a different candidate in primaries or caucuses. Moreover, candidates could, if they so chose, make appeals directly to union members in their capacity as primary voters, thus bypassing those union leaders who would otherwise have presented themselves as brokers for the union's electoral and organizational resources.

These features of the new system indicate why the AFL-CIO quickly became so opposed to the reform process. The AFL-CIO's (or, more precisely, President George Meany's) tremendous satisfaction with the federation's brokerage function in 1968 meant it had little incentive to endorse a process that would abolish that role. As far as Meany and his allies were concerned, the old system had done a fine job of selecting electable and competent presidential nominees; there was no need to change it.³⁰

In an attempt to obstruct the reform process, Meany and Al Barkan, Director of the AFL-CIO Committee on Political Education (COPE), made a fateful decision. I. W. Abel, President of the Steelworkers, had been an original appointee to the McGovern-Fraser Commission, and Commission leaders hoped that he would provide a union perspective on proposals for reform.³¹ But rather than use his presence on the Commission as a means for expressing the AFL-CIO's views, Meany and Barkan encouraged Abel to boycott the Commission's meetings.³² They argued that the Commission was far too biased in favor of reform to give Abel's views much credence, and that his presence would only further legitimate the Commission's proposals. The AFL-CIO leadership believed that the reforms could be stopped at a later stage, either in the Democratic National Committee or at the state level. This strategy backfired, however, when the Commission's proposals were quickly approved by the national party and in the states. Thus, in this early encounter with the forces of the so-called "New Politics," Meany and Barkan had displayed

30. See Crotty, *Decision for the Democrats*, pp. 109-11.

31. See Crotty, *Decision for the Democrats*, p. 110; and Shafer, *Quiet Revolution*, pp. 86-100.

32. Letter from James C. O'Brien, United Steelworkers Political Director, to Verrick French, Assistant to the Chairman, Democratic National Committee, April 17, 1969, Wayne State University Labor Archives.

an ineptitude that would mark much of their involvement in the Democratic party during the 1970s.

Yet AFL-CIO participation might have made little difference because many labor unions actually supported the reform efforts. William Dodds, the UAW's Political Director, served on the McGovern-Fraser Commission, and local UAW members testified in favor of reform at Commission hearings around the country. The UAW also provided important funding for the Commission at a time when a considerable budgetary shortfall was imminent.³³ Several unions still affiliated with the AFL-CIO also supported the reform effort. The Communications Workers of America (CWA), the International Association of Machinists (IAM), and the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), all played independent and active roles in promoting reform. As Stephen Schlesinger noted, these unions "sent their officials to testify in favor of the guidelines at the McGovern Commission hearings; they proselytized for the changes at union meetings; they alerted their local chapters to the delegate elections; and they applied heavy pressure on state parties to comply with the commission's recommendations."³⁴

These unions' support for party reform does not fit interpretations that view the campaign for party reform as little more than an effort by "white collar elites" to take power away from unions and other working class constituencies.³⁵ The real character of the conflict over party reform is revealed by understanding the emerging political strategy of the UAW and other liberal unions, and how it differed from that of Meany and his conservative allies.³⁶

The UAW and other liberal unions supported party reform in the hopes of forging a lasting alliance with the liberal activists who had surged into the party in the late 1960s.³⁷ Their rejection of the AFL-CIO "stonewalling" approach reflected differences rooted in the historical development of the labor movement, the personalities of union leaders, and the divergent material interests of different unions. Reuther and

33. Shafer, *Quiet Revolution*, p. 231.

34. Stephen Schlesinger, *The New Reformers: Forces for Change in American Politics* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975), p. 84.

35. See Edsall, *The New Politics of Inequality*; Thomas Edsall and Mary Edsall, *Chain Reaction: The Impact of Race, Rights, and Taxes on American Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1991); and Shafer, *Quiet Revolution*.

36. See Andrew Battista, "Political Divisions in Organized Labor, 1968-1988," *Polity*, 24 (Winter 1991): 173-97.

37. Mike Davis, *Prisoners of the American Dream* (London: Verso, 1986), p. 264; and Boyle, "Politics and Principle."

Meany, as standard bearers of the CIO and AFL, respectively, had been in conflict with one another ever since the merger of the two organizations in 1955. Their longstanding rivalry was exacerbated in the late 1960s by the emergence of new conflicts in the political environment, especially over foreign policy and the depth of domestic reform. These new conflicts forced Reuther and Meany to choose sides, finally leading to the withdrawal of the UAW from the federation in 1968. The UAW's exit from the federation, as well as the departure of the Democrats from the White House, allowed Reuther greater flexibility in pursuing alliances to his left within the Democratic party.

Reuther also gained support from other union leaders who had grown dissatisfied with Meany's stewardship of the federation and his management of labor's role in the Democratic party. These officials, all representing unions composed of either industrial workers (CWA, IAM) or the growing ranks of service and public sector employees (AFSCME), had a strong commitment to the advancement of policies at the national level, ranging from the protection of union organizing rights to the expansion of the welfare state. The fulfillment of these national policies was likely to be enhanced by the more liberal Democratic party that reform might bring about. The liberal unions were also led by individuals who possessed a broader, sometimes even social democratic, conception of the purposes of the labor movement. These ideological commitments meant that these leaders wanted to develop a more programmatic, policy-oriented party system—a goal that the other liberal reformers also claimed as their own. On this basis, the leaders of these unions concluded that an opening to the reform forces held the best promise of maintaining party unity and ensuring the Democrats' long-term electoral success.

This strategy was different from that pursued by Meany and his allies in the AFL-CIO hierarchy and the building trades. The conservative bloc of craft unions sought to form an alliance with the remaining city machines, traditional party leaders, and even Southern conservatives, in order to uphold the procedural status quo and maintain the existing distribution of power within the national party. The building trades unions at the core of Meany's base of support were usually more concerned with local politics than with national policy outcomes. Local zoning laws, the distribution of city contracts, licensing and apprenticeship statutes, police behavior during strikes, and increases in local construction were the key issues for them. The impulse among building trades unions, therefore, was to ally with machine politicians in the big cities who could fulfill union demands at the local level. This alliance reinforced the opposition of the craft unions to a party reform effort that seemed most likely to strengthen the liberal unions and their New Politics allies.

This split, and what it reveals about the character of the labor movement is ignored in the conventional treatments of party reform. Byron Shafer, for example, presents the AFL-CIO's Committee on Political Education as the unproblematic and fully representative voice of the nation's labor unions:

The AFL-CIO was the numerically preponderant unit within organized labor. COPE was the official spokesman for the 16 million members of the AFL-CIO. The largest independent union for which it could not speak, the Teamsters, had been written out of reform politics from the beginning. As a result, when COPE broke with the Party Structure Commission, it created a break between organized labor and the new reform enterprise.³⁸

This description overlooks three important facts: (1) the UAW (not just the Teamsters) was no longer in the AFL-CIO; (2) several other national unions with large memberships clearly supported reform; and (3) COPE is not the "official" spokesman for 16 million union members, but only the spokesman for a *federation* of union organizations. Not a single AFL-CIO official (as opposed to national union officers) had been elected to office by rank-and-file union members, and the degree to which COPE really represented the views of ordinary union members is certainly questionable. Thus, Shafer's argument, that the AFL-CIO leaders represented the views of ordinary workers in the nominating process, lacks solid grounding.

The larger point is that AFL-CIO opposition was not simply a case of the "blue-collars" vs. the "white-collars" as Shafer and others would have it. Rather, maintenance of the old system would have empowered one segment of the labor movement (the AFL-CIO leadership and the craft unions) to the detriment of another (liberal industrial unions). When the AFL-CIO opposed party reform, then, it was not acting simply or purely out of a regard for the effects of reform on the power of the labor movement as a whole (although, to be fair, this may have been one concern), but also out of an urgent desire to forestall the alternative strategy of the UAW and the more liberal unions.

III. Why Not McGovern?

The conflict between the two loose blocs of liberal and conservative unions reached its high-point during the 1972 nominating process and the

38. Shafer, *Quiet Revolution*, p. 97.

ensuing debate over whether the federation should endorse a presidential candidate in the general election. When Meany succeeded in convincing the AFL-CIO Executive Council to endorse (by a vote 27 to 3) an official policy of federation neutrality in the race between Richard Nixon and George McGovern, he precipitated independent political action by those national unions that still favored the Democratic nominee. The resulting divisions within organized labor engendered a major fragmentation in the labor movement's bargaining capacity in national politics. Given its momentous consequences, Meany's motivation for insisting upon AFL-CIO neutrality in 1972 has caused some puzzlement, especially in the context of Richard Nixon's longstanding anti-union record (indeed, in 1968 Meany had asserted that "the election of Nixon would be a disaster for the ordinary people of this country").³⁹

Meany pointed to substantive aspects of McGovern's record as sufficient reason to squelch an endorsement. He noted McGovern's "wrong" vote during the effort to repeal section 14(b) of the Taft-Hartley Act in 1965, his support for wheat sales to the Soviet Union, and his opposition to the Vietnam War. Meany also castigated McGovern because he had "repeatedly denounced 'big labor,' 'labor bosses,' and 'union power brokers.'" ⁴⁰ For Meany's critics, these justifications were far from convincing, because Nixon's labor record was clearly much worse, and because as late as February 1969 Meany had publicly stated that "McGovern's record as a Senator, with very, very few exceptions, has been very favorable to the things that we are interested in."⁴¹

Some authors relate AFL-CIO opposition to the cultural aspects of the liberal-conservative divide, drawing attention to Meany's and Barkan's lurid pronouncements about homosexuals and hippies taking over the Democratic Party. Meany issued some notorious invective. In the aftermath of the 1972 convention, he declared:

We listened for three days to the speakers who were approved to speak by the powers-that-be at that convention. We listened to the gay-lib people—you know, the people who want to legalize marriage between boys and boys and legalize marriage between girls and girls. . . . We heard from the abortionists, and we heard from

39. Transcript of AFL-CIO President George Meany's Press Conference, September 18, 1968, New York City, George Meany Labor Archives, AFL-CIO.

40. George Meany, "Meany Spells out Reasons for Policy on 1972 Election," *AFL-CIO News*, August 12, 1972.

41. Transcript of interview with George Meany on CBS's *Sixty Minutes*, February 13, 1972.

the people who look like Jacks, acted like Jills, and had the odor of johns about them.⁴²

Thus, J. David Greenstone concluded that the AFL-CIO's non-endorsement was primarily due to cultural conflicts. The AFL-CIO, he wrote, "refused to endorse the Democrat because . . . its cultural ideology ascribed such great importance to differences on foreign policy, and to such cultural issues as permissiveness, the work ethic, and social and sexual deviance."⁴³

To be sure, McGovern was an unattractive candidate to Meany on such grounds, and many other labor leaders questioned McGovern's ideological predilections and personal reliability. But these factors are not fully adequate to explain the extent of Meany's opposition. The fact remained that McGovern's labor record was vastly superior to that of Nixon, who had been an enemy of the labor movement for decades. Furthermore, many national unions within the federation were relatively comfortable with McGovern and quite dissatisfied with Meany's hostility toward the Democratic nominee. As William Form has recently noted, "in terms of rational choice theory, the stand of the AFL-CIO's top leaders seems inexplicable unless one assumes that they thought foreign policy more important than union goals and party influence."⁴⁴

There is, however, a simpler explanation: *the behavior of AFL-CIO leaders largely, if not exclusively, grew out of their desire to maintain the power-broker role to which they had grown accustomed, and which buttressed their organizational status.* The cause of reform, now embodied in McGovern's insurgent candidacy, threatened this traditional role, and it is not surprising that both McGovern and the reform process were equally opposed. On this basis, the principal "irrationality" on the part of Barkan and Meany lies in their failure to appreciate the degree to which the conditions for power-broker politics had decayed.

The inadequacy of Barkan and Meany's response is clear if we trace the logic behind the AFL-CIO's strategy during the 1972 nominating process. Barkan's original plan was to field slates of uncommitted delegates, composed of local union officials, in each state's primaries or caucuses. Supposedly, voters and caucus attendees would elect these uncommitted union delegates, who would then be under the influence of the AFL-CIO at the convention. In effect, the AFL-CIO would then be

42. Quoted in Robinson, *George Meany and His Times*, pp. 322-23.

43. Greenstone, *Labor in American Politics*, p. xxv.

44. Form, *Segmented Labor, Fractured Politics*, p. 275.

able to maintain and perhaps even enhance its own role as a power broker at the convention. The fundamental problem with the Barkan strategy, however, lay in the fact that Democratic voters saw little reason to endorse an uncommitted slate when they could vote directly for a slate of delegates committed to their favored candidate. The AFL-CIO strategy would have worked only if candidates had not run their own slates of delegates and chosen instead to defer to the AFL-CIO's uncommitted slate. Unsurprisingly, candidates did not regard such deference as in their own interest and ran their own committed slates. The AFL-CIO strategy ended as a complete flop. Barkan's guiding logic was that of an organization trying to maintain its old role of elite broker, rather than to adjust to the incentives of the new system.

It was in this context that the federation leadership met in August 1972 to consider whether to endorse George McGovern. President Meany was adamant that the 35-member Executive Council should unanimously refuse an endorsement. The pressure he applied on wavering union presidents was so intense that several of them voted to support federation neutrality even though they subsequently approved their own unions' separate endorsement of McGovern's candidacy.⁴⁵ The final vote in the council was 27 to 3 in support of neutrality, with 5 abstentions. The three union leaders who voted for a McGovern endorsement were Jerry Wurf of AFSCME, Paul Jennings of the International Union of Electricians (IUE), and Al Grosspiron of the Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers (OCAW).

The intensity of Meany's opposition to Senator McGovern was closely related to the unique nature of McGovern's route to the nomination. Wurf argued in 1972 that,

The Executive Council vote had more to do with how McGovern won the nomination than with his record before or during the campaign. . . . The 14(b) vote, the wheat business, the McGovern stand against the war—all of these were secondary in the AFL-CIO leadership's mounting opposition to McGovern. The real concern was participation and access, the AFL-CIO's vested interests which ignored the rich opportunities for workers and their unions in the more open, "new" party.⁴⁶

45. Wilson, *Unions in American National Politics*, p. 44.

46. Jerry Wurf, "What Labor has Against McGovern," *The New Republic*, August 5 and 12, 1972.

Likewise, a McGovern operative stated: “The one thing the AFL-CIO can’t forgive McGovern for is the one thing he can’t do anything about: if he’s nominated, he won’t owe them anything.”⁴⁷ Not only would McGovern not owe the AFL-CIO anything, a President McGovern (like a President Robert Kennedy) was likely to align with the new forces of insurgency within the unions and with those liberal unions critical of Meany.

If the decision to remain neutral was meant to teach the Democratic party a lesson for not having properly consulted the labor leadership, it failed. Deciding on neutrality in order to teach party elites a lesson could not work under the new system because there were no reliable elites left to receive the lesson and act on its implications. Party regulars simply did not have the power to roll back the reforms in order to placate the labor movement. Likewise, the regulars had effectively lost control over the nominating process. Instead, bargaining would have to take place directly with aspiring candidates, not indirectly via other party leaders. Meany’s inability to fully recognize these implications of the party reforms weakened his capacity to formulate an effective strategy to maintain his power within the Democratic party.

AFL-CIO intransigence increased conflict within the labor movement itself. Meany’s insistence on AFL-CIO neutrality in the 1972 general election led to an unprecedented outcome: separate campaigns on McGovern’s behalf by over forty national unions, representing over half the union members in the federation (see Table I).⁴⁸ Despite the lopsided vote in the AFL-CIO Executive Council in favor of neutrality, these unions had little hesitation about working on McGovern’s behalf. The leaders’ anger at Meany’s mishandling of the reform process and his maladroitness in the 1972 nominating campaign helped to justify their move towards a more independent role. AFSCME’s Jerry Wurf complained:

COPE took positions in the nineteen seventy-two primaries for Humphrey and Jackson or uncommitted slates without consulting us, despite the fact that they were using our funds. Then at Miami, I was distressed that COPE was croaking McGovern unilaterally after he had fairly won the Democratic nomination. I thought we should let all the AFL-CIO unions decide for themselves on the presidential endorsement.⁴⁹

47. Quoted in Norman Miller, “As Convention Opening Nears, All-Out Warfare Threatens to Rip Party,” *Wall Street Journal*, July 5, 1972.

48. Wilson, *Unions in American National Politics*, pp. 43-45.

49. Quoted in Schlesinger, *The New Reformers*, p. 95.

The coalition which eventually formed in support of McGovern included such important unions as AFSCME; the Communication Workers; the Machinists; the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers; the International Union of Electricians; the Retail Clerks; and the Graphic Arts International Union. They had been among the most politically active in the federation, traditionally providing large amounts of money and volunteers to campaigns. They were joined in their pro-McGovern efforts by two large unions outside the federation: the UAW and the National Education Association.

Several of them, including the Communication Workers, Machinists, and AFSCME, even cut off their financial support to the AFL-CIO Committee on Political Education in protest of the neutrality decision. Joseph Beirne, president of the CWA and previously considered a Meany and Barkan loyalist, justified his decision in the following terms:

I withdrew from COPE because it was out of touch with what was happening in the political process—with the reforms which I think were a natural evolution in the Democratic Party, and with McGovern who was the candidate who had done the most for the working man. COPE must be changed. We who contribute to it have no control over it or participation in its policy decisions. The COPE leaders live in the dreams of the past, where they wheeled and dealt in politics. The Executive Council of the AFL-CIO should be reformed, too. All we do there is endorse candidates and nothing else. Our union now feels we can make our own political decisions and spend our money more fruitfully by going it alone.⁵⁰

The 1972 election thus proved to be a turning point for many unions. No longer would they be willing to let the AFL-CIO bureaucracy serve as their principal vehicle for influencing presidential politics.

Meany's campaign to restore the old politics of brokerage also served to stimulate new organizational activity among African-Americans and women within the labor movement. The Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU), an organization of black union leaders and rank-and-file members, was formed in 1972, in the words of one of its organizers, "out of the frustration that came from the Executive Council of the AFL-CIO assuming a neutrality position on the question of McGovern vs. Nixon, which was absolutely in opposition to the desires of black workers and the black community."⁵¹ Much to the chagrin of Meany and

50. Quoted in Schlesinger, *The New Reformers*, p. 95.

51. Quoted in Schlesinger, *The New Reformers*, p. 93.

Table I. Labor Unions Endorsing George McGovern in 1972

UNION	MEMBERSHIP
Transport Workers Unions of America*	98,000
Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workmen*	494,000
United Automobile Workers	1,486,000
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Workers*	445,000
International Chemical Workers Union*	103,000
United Shoe Workers of America*	45,000
Graphic Arts International Union*	123,000
American Federation of Technical Engineers*	19,000
United Farm Workers*	30,000
American Newspaper Guild*	31,000
National Council of Distributive Workers*	50,000
Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers*	175,000
International Printing Pressmen and Assistants Union*	128,000
Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America*	386,000
International Woodworkers of America*	95,000
Retail Clerks International Association*	605,000
International Union of Electrical Workers*	300,000
Textile Workers Union of America*	183,000
Communication Workers of America*	546,000
United Glass and Ceramic Workers of North America*	45,000
Allied Industrial Workers of America*	88,000
Brotherhood of Pottery and Allied Workers*	17,000
International Ladies Garment Workers Union*	450,000
American Postal Workers Union*	300,000
United Furniture Workers of America*	31,000
Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union*	175,000
American Federation of Teachers*	275,000
National Alliance of Postal and Federal Employees*	45,000
International Molders and Allied Workers Union*	72,000
International Association of Machinists*	866,000
United Electrical Radio, and Machine Workers	165,000
Upholsterers' International Union*	60,000
International Jewelry Workers Union*	10,000
Coopers' International Union*	2,000
United Rubber, Cork, Linoleum and Plastic Workers Union*	205,000
Brewery, Flour, Cereal, Soft Drink and Distillery Workers*	50,000
Bakery and Confectionery Workers*	150,000
Cigar Makers International Union	3,000
United Hatters, Cap and Millinery Workers International Union*	18,000
Service Employees International Union*	435,000
International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union	60,000
Total:	8,864,000
Total AFL-CIO Membership:	13,407,000

*Membership in the AFL-CIO.

Source: *National Journal*, October 7, 1972, and AFL-CIO.

his allies, the CBTU supported affirmative action, both in the workplace and in the delegate selection process of the Democratic Party. Similarly, the formation of the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW) in March 1974 was prompted in part by a thoroughgoing dissatisfaction with the AFL-CIO's shenanigans in presidential politics and by the broader desire to strengthen the voice of women within the labor movement. Both of these developments within the labor movement were clearly related to the broader crisis of representation that now engulfed both the party and the labor movement itself. These developments also belied any notion that the AFL-CIO hierarchy provided an unbiased expression of the preferences of its members in presidential politics.

The trends toward fragmentation were evident once again in Kansas City in December 1974, when the Democratic Party held a mid-term "mini" convention, as mandated under the McGovern-Fraser reforms.⁵² The AFL-CIO contingent of delegates, under the command of Al Barkan, again made a clumsy attempt to roll back virtually the entirety of the McGovern-Fraser reforms, with special emphasis on the rules that required de facto racial quotas in each state delegation. In response to the concerns of the AFL-CIO and others, the convention did approve, with the strong support of the reform-oriented unions (including such huge unions as AFSCME, CWA, UAW, and the IAM), a compromise proposal that explicitly prohibited racial quotas. Despite this, Barkan and other AFL-CIO leaders argued that the compromise was still inadequate because it contained "implied quotas." The AFL-CIO's efforts to secure further changes foundered when the reform unions decided to ally with regular party elements and with the New Politics insurgents in order to support the compromise measures. At the end of the convention, *The New York Times* concluded: "Alexander E. Barkan, a presence in Democratic politics since the Depression, had all but officially been dethroned as the broker of labor power inside the Democratic Party."⁵³

The final result of Meany's effort to maintain a system of hierarchical brokerage was a backlash within the labor movement and a dispersal of bargaining capacity among a larger number of union leaders. This outcome constituted the de facto solution to the crisis of representation that had emerged full blown during the 1972 general election. As one observer

52. The convention is well-described in Crotty, *Decision for the Democrats*, pp. 244-59; and in Jeffrey L. Pressman, Denis G. Sullivan, and F. Christopher Arterton, "Cleavages, Decisions, and Legitimation: The Democrats' Mid-Term Conference, 1974," *Political Science Quarterly*, 91 (Spring 1976).

53. Christopher Lydon, "Labor's Power Broker Frustrated by Democrats," *The New York Times*, December 6, 1974.

noted: “shutting out McGovern’s New Politics opened the way for New Politics in the federation.”⁵⁴ *New York Times* labor reporter A. H. Raskin was thus surely prescient when he wrote in the fall of 1972:

For the first time since Meany scored a monumental personal triumph in 1955 by ending two decades of warfare between the AFL and CIO, unions are running their own political action drives, free from the Meany yoke. That heady experience almost surely will wind up in a resolve to go it alone in future campaigns and thus deprive the parent federation of its main reason for being. The great unifier may wind up in labor history as the great dis-integrator.⁵⁵

This fracturing, and the ensuing weakness of Meany and his allies, meant that the future involvement of labor unions in national politics would be far more diverse and decentralized than had been the case previously. It also meant that Meany’s efforts to reconstruct the power-broker role could go nowhere.

What is more important, party reforms meant that the capacity of individual national union leaders to serve as power-brokers in their own right was also undermined, except insofar as they could convince their own members to support a particular candidate. Obviously, this was a considerably more arduous and time-consuming task than meeting behind closed doors for a few days at a party convention. It is not surprising, therefore, that union leaders found it more difficult to maximize their bargaining leverage in the post-reform environment. As both George McGovern and Jimmy Carter were to demonstrate, candidates could now bypass the union leaders and seek the direct support of voters—whether union members or not—in the caucuses or primaries. No longer would union leaders be needed to “chivvy and bully and plead and trade and threaten and maneuver” on the convention floor, as Steelworkers President David McDonald had done in 1960.⁵⁶

IV. Conclusion

The successful implementation of a version of party reform opposed by the AFL-CIO leadership was indicative of labor’s own internal divisions

54. “Meany’s Neutrality Fails to Catch On,” *Business Week*, July 29, 1972.

55. A. H. Raskin, “Mr. Labor: ‘Ideology is Baloney,’” *The New York Times*, October 23, 1972.

56. David McDonald, *Union Man* (New York: E.P. Hutton and Co., 1969), p. 285.

and weakened position within the Democratic party in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The AFL-CIO's troubled situation stemmed from the emergence of new political forces un beholden to the labor movement and new issues that tore asunder formerly cordial alliances. Yet, the abject failure of the AFL-CIO to develop a coherent strategy in response to these changes and its corresponding inability to maintain the active and unified support of its own affiliates worsened labor's situation. At the time of the reforms, unions had yet to be buffeted by the full force of the economic dislocations that were to sweep through the American economy in the 1970s and 1980s. The unions' problems in this period were not yet rooted in a collapse of membership, economic crisis, or a revival of conservative ideology, but rather in a failure of the labor leadership to adapt creatively to changes on its political left. A more flexible AFL-CIO leadership might have helped avoid bitter conflicts within the Democratic party and thus directed the process of party reform down more congenial paths.

Party reform created a powerful set of incentives that continue to channel union political action in distinct ways. Although it is impossible to fully assess these consequences here, a few central effects can be identified.⁵⁷ First, it is clear that in the current system, union leaders as union leaders can no longer exercise a *de facto* veto over the nomination of candidates they find highly objectionable. This makes it possible for a candidate who is openly hostile to the unions to have a shot at the Democratic nomination—as Gary Hart did in 1984. On the other hand, if the unions band together and mobilize their membership, they can intervene in primaries as effectively as any other group, as their decisive role in securing Walter Mondale's nomination in 1984 suggests. However, as the 1984 nominating campaign also showed, this strategy is considerably more costly in terms of organizational resources and internal consensus-building than the old power-broker role, as well as being more public, and thus more risky.

An alternative prognosis for the future is that the political practice of unions will reflect the candidate-centered politics that have become the norm in America in recent decades. In 1976, 1980, 1988, and 1992, most national unions either remained neutral, fragmented among several attractive candidates, or allowed their locals to make endorsements of their own choice at the local level. Such behavior is hardly a recipe for decisive union power, for it guarantees that whatever bargaining that takes place between candidates and union leaders will be fragmented

57. See also, Taylor E. Dark, "Organized Labor and the Presidential Nominating Process: Reconsidering the 1980s," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* (in press).

and/or localized. The danger for the labor movement as a whole is that its broader class and organizational demands will be deemphasized as each national union cuts its own more particularized deal with individual candidates. This was, of course, a possibility even in the old system, but the increased involvement of more unions in the current process and the breakdown of centralized brokerage makes such separate deals all the more tempting. Given such dangers, the largely successful efforts by the AFL-CIO leadership in 1988 and 1992 to discourage national unions from endorsing candidates in the nominating process at all seems both sensible and likely to recur in the future.

Finally, the story told here also reveals some surprising effects of the reformed nominating process on interest group involvement. The current system requires that interest groups actually mobilize their members to be most effective. This necessarily limits the ability of leaders to act if they lack authentic membership support. A divided membership may mean a paralyzed leadership. Just as organized labor has found it difficult to intervene early and effectively behind candidates for the nomination, so also have other interest groups. Neither the National Organization for Women nor the NAACP finds it feasible to endorse candidates in the Democratic primaries; the Christian Coalition and Business groups have usually avoided endorsing candidates in the Republican primaries.

Party reform has thus reduced interest group leaders' autonomy and ability to maneuver. Interest groups most often remain bystanders as they let the candidates fight it out. The greater permeability and openness of the reformed nominating system has brought with it an element of leadership accountability that actually discourages interest group involvement. In the meantime, the candidates are left free to develop their own personalized and direct relationships with the electorate, unmediated and unconstrained by either interest group or party leaders.

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