

Don't Mock the Convention

Courtesy of 'Brudnoy's Complaint'
February 17, 1976
by syndicated columnist, David Brudnoy

They've (Mock Convention students) done remarkably well. Wrong in 1912, '36, '40, '48, and '72 — but then, no one else believed Ted Kennedy's renunciation at that point, either, and my own columns in May of '72 were ablazed with scorn for McGovern's chances — but right on target every other time. A convention, then entirely staged by Southern gentlemen, that could mock-nominate Al Smith in 1928, well, you know the lads went about their business seriously.

...They (the students) are everywhere these days, pursuing the latest statistics and running up a fierce 'phone bill'. The pace accelerates each week. They are intent upon upstaging New York City and telling the world the Democrats' choice three months before the Democrats meet to choose. Right now the betting's on Humphrey or Carter; by May they'll have narrowed their focus to a situation closely resembling that in 50 states. If Spring fever overtakes them, I guess they **might** nominate Fred Harris. But I doubt it. They do their homework; the results have been impressive over the long run. Besides, what's one 1912 Judson Harmon (instead of Woodrow Wilson) among friends.

Washington & Lee's Mock Convention is civics-class for real, and worth watching.



Media Coverage

The Mock Convention has become the nation's most noted collegiate political event — primarily because of the continuing emphasis students place on authenticity. Not only does it portray the candidate's strength and strategy; most observers see the W&L event as a touchstone for the political role students will play this summer.

The convention also indirectly attempts to answer many of the questions raised in the press over the campaign. Has the disenchantment surrounding McGovern's defeat and the Watergate era linger into '76? How important is the '76 presidential campaign to young people? Credentials, arrangements and reservations are available through the convention Press Secretary, Philip Hatchett.

For Further Information Write:

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1976 Mock Democratic Convention
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Lexington, Va. 24450

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703-463-7336

Washington and Lee University



MOCK DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION

May 7 and 8 Lexington, Virginia

A RECORD:

- 1908 — RIGHT with William Jennings Bryan
- 1912 — WRONG with Judson Harmon
(Wilson, a U.Va. man, got the nomination.)
- 1916 — RIGHT with Charles Evans Hughes
- 1920 — No Convention
- 1924 — RIGHT with John W. Davis
- 1928 — RIGHT with Al Smith
- 1932 — RIGHT with F.D.R.
- 1936 — WRONG with Arthur Vandenberg
(Landon got the nomination)
- 1940 — WRONG with Charles L. McNary
(Willkie got the nomination, and lost.)
- 1944 — No Convention
- 1948 — WRONG with Arthur Vandenberg
(Dewey got the nomination, he lost, too.)
- 1952 — RIGHT with Dwight Eisenhower
- 1956 — RIGHT with Stevenson
- 1960 — RIGHT with Kennedy
- 1964 — RIGHT with Goldwater
- 1968 — RIGHT with Nixon
- 1972 — WRONG with Kennedy
(McGovern got the nomination)
- 1976 — ? ? ? ? ?

**The Most Accurate
of the Nation's Collegiate
Mock Conventions**

OF ACCURACY and REALISM

On May 7 and 8, students at Washington and Lee University will hold their sixteenth Mock Convention, to nominate a presidential candidate for the party out of power. According to *Virginia Commonwealth Magazine*:

...the theory...is that once inside a gymnasium filled to the rafters with placards, banners, and political rhetoric, students braced by the insights of contemporary leaders and pundits, and perhaps a modicum of beer and bourbon, will more often than not predict the decision that these same political leaders will make when they gather in a similar environment at the actual convention.

The first ballot reflects as far as is humanly possible the way the various real state delegations will vote on the first ballot ten weeks later in New York City. On subsequent ballots it attempts to anticipate shifts in delegation commitments, as the give-and-take of national politics shapes the final outcome.

The Washington and Lee formula achieved its first great triumph in 1924, when students solved a stalemate in the Democratic Party by nominating a W&L alumnus, John W. Davis, on the 24th ballot. That summer in New York, the historic Smith-McAdoo deadlock became

a reality, and Davis was nominated by compromise on the 103rd ballot.

In '52 California Gov. Earl Warren wired the convention and freed his W&L delegates after the third ballot. Following the governor's notification, the Mock Convention gave the nomination to Gen. Eisenhower.

On one of the hottest spring days of 1956, the Mock Convention opened with Sen. Alben W. Barkley's Keynote Address. The former Vice President told the enthusiastic crowd that he had been infected with the spirit he had witnessed that day in Lexington, and the 'old firehorse', as he called himself, had now decided to attend the actual Democratic Convention. As he was finishing his speech, Barkley suddenly collapsed and died before the unbelieving eyes of the 1700 onlookers.

Four years ago, the Mock Convention, for only the second time, chose the wrong candidate from the Democratic Party. The students found themselves caught between giving the nomination to the quixotic George McGovern or the "perpetual loser" Hubert Humphrey. Finally, as the 12-hour nominating session wore on, Kennedy gained momentum. But as the State Chairman of Massachusetts said when casting the swing votes, "Mister Chairman . . . Obviously there is no winner here."

