

HISTORICAL SKETCH WASHINGTON AND LEE QUADRENNIAL MOCK CONVENTION

Another chapter in the history of one of America's most successful mock political conventions will be recorded by Washington and Lee students this spring in a realistic simulation of the national Democratic convention to be held later in the summer. On April 30-May 1, the W & L student body will renew a quadrennial event which has been traditional on the Lexington campus since 1908, and which has compiled one of the Nation's outstanding records of forecasting party nominees.

Six times since its inception as an all-student event, the W & L men have tagged a "nominee" and seen the choice later sustained in the real national conventions. Greatest political coup scored by the mock convention was in 1924 when the dark-horse selection of John W. Davis as Democratic presidential candidate was upheld as a result of the historic Smith-McAdoo deadlock at Madison Square Garden.

It all began when the 1908 conclave chose William Jennings Bryan as Democratic standard bearer, and the "nomination" was confirmed in the national convention several months later. And until 1936 the student conventions saw five out of six of their predictions come true. The youthful politicians missed in 1912 with their selection of Judson Harman as Democratic candidate, but four years later correctly chose Charles Evans Hughes in Republican convention.

No convention was held in 1920 (and in 1944) because of wartime reductions in the number of civilian students. In 1924, however, the W & L convention nominated Mr. Davis, an alumnus of the University, and scored again in 1928 by picking Al Smith in Democratic convention. "Nominee" of the 1932 convention was Franklin D. Roosevelt. Twice the conventions proved inaccurate in selecting Sen. Arthur Vandenburg as the Republican candidate--in 1936 and 1948. In the 1936 affair, however, a last-minute switch by one delegation threw the nomination to Vandenburg when Alf Landon appeared "in." Another near miss was in 1912 when the convention almost picked Woodrow Wilson. The "nominee" in 1940 was Sen. Charles L. McNary, who wound up with the vice presidential nod in the real Republican convention of that year. In 1952, the Mock Convention liked Ike, as did the GOP and the nation.

Campus leaders have been working since last October to make the 1956 convention the biggest and best of them all. To lend a strong element of authenticity, each student delegation is charged with responsibility of determining as nearly as possible the voting policy to be followed by their real-life counterparts in the national convention at Chicago. This was done both by personal contact during the spring holidays and by correspondence. The point is: the mock convention delegates don't vote in accordance with personal preference. They MUST vote according to information received from their respective counterparts in every state and territory where information is available.

As in 1952, a colorful pre-convention parade with bands, floats and all the trimmings, and one of these is Miss America for 1956, is planned. The University gymnasium will be decorated as convention hall. Convention procedure will follow almost to the letter that of the real Democratic conclave, scheduled for this summer in Chicago.