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their views, based on a knowledge of the position covered. No journalism experience is necessary.

Feature writers and reporters will participate in campus and city beats, investigative reporting and special interest reporting.

Applicants are encouraged to call or drop by The Battalion office, 216 Reed McDonald Bldg., 845-2611.

Positions will be both paid and voluntary. Hours are flexible and will be negotiated.

## Party conventions this year reflected voice of the people

Slouch

by Jim Earle

WASHINGTON — One more glance backward at the extraordinary political passage through which we have come — and then it's on to the fall campaign.

The retrospective thought concerns the changing function and character of the national party conventions. Those conventions showed renewed vitality this year — but like the old gray mare, they ain't what they used to be. They used to be places where presidential nominations were decided by the bargaining strategies of major candidates, favorite sons and party bosses. But that function began to wither with the spread of presidential primaries and the introduction of television into the convention hall.

Not since 1952 has either major party convention gone beyond a single ballot and only once in 12 times since 1952 has a convention done anything but nominate the winner of the key primaries.

That case — Hubert Humphrey's nomination in 1968 — was the exception that proves the rule, a deviation explainable by the intervention of the incumbent President on Humphrey's behalf and the death of a leading opponent, Robert Kennedy, just before the convention.

The rule of modern conventions is that they serve as ratifying devices for the decision already rendered in the primaries. That was certainly the case again this year. Jimmy Carter was the big winner in



David S. Broder

the primaries and he had no effective opposition in the convention. Jerry Ford won a narrow majority of the primaries and had the same kind of convention victory.

(On the latter point, a guess this reporter made on the eve of the first primary in New Hampshire turned out to be truer than I had any way of knowing. I hazarded the prediction that New Hampshire would be the definitive test for the Republican Nomination, and that its winner would be the convention winner. That was correct — but I certainly never imagined that Mr. Ford's 1300-vote squeaker in New Hampshire would indicate how narrow his final margin at the convention would be.)

If the convention has become nothing more than a ratifying device for the coronation of the primary winner, then why all the bother? That question was being asked rather insistently by both politicians and political scientists — especially since rules changes adopted by both parties this year embedded the primary results even more firmly into the structure of the convention roll call.

Well, it turns out that the convention still has an important subsidiary function or two to perform.

One function is the legitimization of the presidential choice. Someone can secure the nomination by plurality victories in the primaries — as both Carter and Mr. Ford did this year — without being accepted by the majority of adherents of his own party. It is the acquiescence of others in their party — demonstrated in convention hall — that tells those voters that the nominees are legitimately the party standard-bearers.

Barry Goldwater in 1964, Hubert Humphrey in 1968 and George McGovern in 1972 failed to win that acquiescence and went down to defeat. The closing night unity

pageants in New York and Kansas City gave Carter and Mr. Ford that legitimacy, and both of them have benefited in the polls.

The second — and emerging — function of the convention is to shape the vice-presidential choice, by providing the environment in which the successful presidential nominee makes his decision.

We know, by the testimony of the two principals, that Jimmy Carter did not have Walter Mondale at the top of his list when he reached New York and that Jerry Ford had not settled on Bob Dole as his choice before Kansas City.

The evidence is strong — if not airtight — that both men were responding to the signals from the convention floor when they made their decision.

In the case of Carter, the fact that the convention was dominated (as the surveys by the Washington Post and others demonstrated) by people more liberal in their political views than Carter himself dictated a choice of a liberal running mate. During the hours of decision, Carter was bombarded with negative signals on the politically bland John Glenn importuned by important delegate blocs to pick Mondale, the most liberal person on his list.

Mr. Ford faced the opposite situation — a convention more conservative than himself — and he responded in similar fashion by giving the delegates what they wanted.

There's an important lesson here for the political community. In a primary-dominated presidential selection system, the reward is exclusively to the winner. Finishing second — as Ronald Reagan and Morris Udall can testify — is finishing way out of the money.

But there is an important consolation prize for the backers of the also-rans. They can influence — and perhaps dictate, through the convention — the choice of the running mate. That is another reason the convention is likely to endure.



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