

# VOX POP Newsletter of Political Organizations and Parties

A continuing subfield of the American Political Science Association  
Produced by the Ray C. Bliss Institute of Applied Politics, The University of Akron

## Organizational Development of National Party Committees: Some Generalizations and Supporting Evidence

John H. Kessel, The Ohio State University

I'd like to begin with two examples from the past that illustrate general themes. The first is a fund-raising effort begun by the then RNC executive director, William S. Warner. In the early 1960s, RNC was so short of money that it was in real danger of closing its doors. Warner conceived of a direct mail campaign asking for small contributors. This "sustaining membership" program brought in \$700,000 initially, over \$1 million by 1963 and some \$2 million in 1964. This was the first really successful finance drive aimed at large numbers of small givers in American political history.

The second was a campaign school organized for the Republican Governors' Association in 1964. There was a two-inch article buried deep inside the *New York Times* saying, in effect, that with this campaign school the Republican party moved into the twentieth century. The GOP gained a net of one governor that fall.

The first theme these examples illustrate deals with the timing of party development: *when the party is out of power*. The sustaining fund was organized because RNC was so short of money that closing the National Committee offices was a real possibility. The campaign school took place in 1964, the year of the Goldwater campaign when

Republicans were losing elections for every office from county commissioner to the presidency.

The second theme, which I borrow from John Bibby, is that during the past two decades *the Democrats have stressed rule-making from the federal level while the Republicans have concentrated on organizational development*. The Democrats have been particularly concerned with rules concerning the selection of convention delegates while the Republicans have concentrated on developing campaign sinew. This distinctiveness of the two parties has been missed in many recent books about political parties, and can be seen in their financial and organizational development.

### Financial Developments

Let me begin with the financial developments. The Republicans now have some eight different fund-raising programs ranging from the sustaining membership (in which the average contribution is now \$25) up to the Eagles who give \$10,000 a year. In 1980, RNC raised \$32 million from sustaining and campaigner members and more than 1.2 million contributors. The sustaining membership program

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**Chair:** Frank Sorauf, University of Minnesota

**Program Chair:** James Gibson, University of Houston

**VOX POP Editor:** John Green, The University of Akron

**Executive Council:** Margaret Conway, University of Maryland; Anne Costain, University of Colorado; William Crotty, Northwestern University; Lorn Foster, Pomona College; Kay Lawson, San Francisco State University; Sarah Morehouse, University of Connecticut; Dianne Pinderhughes, University of Illinois; Gerald Pomper, Rutgers University; Joseph Schlesinger, Michigan State University; Jack Walker, University of Michigan

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# FROM HEADQUARTERS

Dear Colleagues:

These are times of change in the Section and in its relations within the APSA. This redesigned newsletter and its new editor are signs of one change. John Green has great plans and high hopes for *Vox Pop*, and I hope you'll do all you can to help him make it an indispensable part of our scholarly and professional lives.

For the first time, too, our program chair, Jim Gibson, is a member of the official program committee for the September meetings. That welcoming of the APSA sections into official responsibility for the annual meetings has not been without its problems, but it solidifies our position as the voice for the scholarly interests we share.

The general future of the section structure within the APSA is much less clear. Sections continue to proliferate, their shape and number governed by enthusiasm rather than by any plan to divide the discipline by some canons of logic or tradition. The result, at least for the short run, is to force us to face our "border" issues—like our relationship with the voting behavior specialists—more or less by ourselves. Those issues will have to be on the agenda for our business meeting in September.

One activity of the section does not change: the presentation of our three annual awards. If you have suggestions, please feel free to write a member of the committee. News on the awards—including the names and addresses of the committee members—is found elsewhere in this issue (page 4).

Frank Sorauf, Chair

Dear Colleagues:

It was a great honor to be asked to edit *Vox Pop*, but also a great responsibility to follow the fine work of the previous editors, Sandy Maisel and Ann Elder. I hope to build on their efforts to make the newsletter a major source of ideas and information for students of political organizations.

It goes (almost) without saying that the content and quality of *Vox Pop* depends on the contributions from its readers. Let me suggest just a few ways in which such contributions can be made:

*Research in Progress:* Reports of research nearing completion, just under way or topics that need to be studied.

*Upcoming and Past Events:* Notices of future conferences, meetings and calls for papers—and reports of such when completed.

*Political Reports:* Reports and commentary on events, trends or problems from the "real world" of politics.

*Disciplinary Disputes:* Commentary and debate concerning controversies in the field.

*Scholarly Matters:* Ideas and commentary inspired by recent work, brief extracts from work nearing completion, bibliographies and related materials.

In short, most anything that you feel will interest your colleagues in POP. Please send your contributions to the Bliss Institute, The University of Akron, Akron, OH 44325-1904; (216) 375-5182; (BITNET: R1JG1@AKRONVM).

My thanks go to all present, and future, contributors to *Vox Pop*.

John Green

## Minutes of Business Meeting

(Washington, D.C.; September 2, 1988)

The chair of the section, Frank Sorauf, opened the meeting at 5:35 p.m.

After reminding the section that Alan Gitelson was leaving as program chair of the section, and praising his contributions to it, the chair asked him to report on the panels and roundtables he had organized. Alan reported a total of seven panels with some thirty-five participants and large and enthusiastic audiences. Topics covered included small parties in Western Europe, PAC influence on Congress, the role of parties in Congress, political consultants, the state of research on interest groups, comparative research on interest groups, and a panel honoring the work of Leon Epstein.

The chair then gave a short report on the section's membership and finances. Membership fluctuates slightly from month to month because of the sequencing of renewals; there were 412 members in March 1988 and 393

in August 1988 (as against 387 in August of 1985). The section had a bank balance of \$2,766.67 and some \$250 in commitments (all stemming from the section awards ceremony). Last year's cash flow was as follows:

Income from dues:	\$2,334.75
minus newsletter costs	1,444.75
Balance	\$ 890.00

In concluding, the chair noted that the balance was possible only because his university and the universities of the program chair and the awards committee had paid section expenses.

The chair next reported that Ann Elder has resigned the editorship of the section's newsletter, *Vox Pop*. He asked for members' suggestions and said he would appoint a small committee, including himself, to select the new editor.

John Green reported on the feasibility of a section journal or yearbook. In view of the library acquisitions

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crisis, the paucity of good manuscripts, the substantial costs, and the general bearishness of publishers, he did not recommend any initiatives. After some discussion, it seemed generally agreed that no action should be taken.

Most of the remaining time of the meeting was given over to a discussion of the controversy over the allocation of panels for the 1989 program in Atlanta. The chair set out the general problem: the allocation of the 450 panels (about the same number as the 1988 convention in DC.) represented a radical redistribution among the concerns and fields of political science a number of reasons.

The new program chair, Jim Gibson, reported pressure from the voting behavior people for some of the section's ten panels. The general consensus was that we should be

accommodating where possible, but remain committed to panels focusing on our historic concerns.

The chair expressed his regrets that we had no opportunity to discuss concerns about the future of the section. He promised he would, after participation by the section's Council and publicity to the members, bring a plan for the development of the section to the next business meeting. Among other concerns it will address the issue of the inclusion of voting behavior and clarify issues of the governing of the section.

There being no other business before the section, the meeting was adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

Frank Sorauf, Secretary pro temp

## SELECTIVE INCENTIVES

### Call For Papers

*Symposium on the Media, Campaigns, and Elections*

**T**he *American Politics Quarterly* announces a symposium issue on "The Media, Campaigns, and Elections." This issue is tentatively scheduled for late 1990, and we invite manuscripts on the topic.

Why a symposium on this topic? The 1988 campaign, especially the presidential one, highlighted the tendency of journalists to present election analyses that attributed the ups-and-downs of the candidates' fortunes almost solely to advertisements, debates, and other media-oriented activities. Journalists stressed the uniqueness of the media domination of the 1988 presidential campaign, and attributed Bush's success to his successful media campaign.

All of this may be true, but many political scientists had the uncomfortable feeling that we really know less about the impact of the media than we think we do. Or, put more positively, political science research should be contributing more than it does to our understanding of media effects on election outcomes.

Obviously, there has been some outstanding work by political scientists linking the media and politics. And equally obviously, that there isn't more such work is partially due to the difficulty of researching media effects. Yet, if the media are to dominate national elections, it is appropriate that we focus more attention on a systematic examination of their effects. To increase our understanding of the effect of the media on elections and election outcomes is the goal of this symposium.

All manuscripts submitted will go through our regular review process. In addition to publishing several articles reporting research results, we also hope to publish an "agenda paper," synthesizing past research on the role of

the media in elections and focusing attention on future research directions. There is a possibility that the set of papers published in the symposium would be republished as a book volume by Sage.

The deadline for papers is January 15, 1990, but we encourage earlier submissions.

### Midwest Themes

**T**he 1989 annual convention of the Midwest Political Science Association will feature a series of special "theme" panels: a single paper will be presented at each panel intended to summarize the state of the discipline in a given area and suggest what direction research will take in the future. All members of the discipline are urged to attend the panels in their area of specialization and participate in these discussions.

Theme panels of particular interest to POP members are:

#### Theme Panel on State and Local Parties

(Thursday, April 13, 11 to 12:45)

Chair: David Everson, Sangamon State University

#### Theme Panel on Political Parties

(Thursday, April 13, 3:30 to 5:15)

Chair: John Bibby, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

#### Theme Panel on Interest Groups

(Friday, April 14, 9:30 to 11:15)

Chair: John Wright, University of Iowa

#### Theme Panel on Elections

(Friday, April 14, 1:30 to 3:15)

Chair: Robert Erikson, University of Houston

# EARLY RETURNS

## Major Emphasis on Minor Parties

The role of small parties in Western Europe was taken up by a panel of scholars at the 1988 annual convention of the APSA. Chaired by Robert Harmel, Texas A&M University, the panel included Ferdinand Muller-Rommel, Politikwissenschaft, West Germany, who presented a cross-national study of the Greens; Mogens Pedersen, Odense University, Denmark, who described the twelve-party Danish system; and Christian Haerper, Institute fur Politikwissenschaft, Austria, who discussed small parties in Austria. Lars Svasand, University of Bergen, Norway, served as the discussant.

Among the topics raised were the place of small parties in national party systems, their relations with large parties and their impact on public policy. A forthcoming book *Small Parties in Western Europe* (Sage), edited by Ferdinand Muller-Rommel and Geoffrey Pridham, will cover these and other topics.

## State Convention Delegates Surveyed Again

Delegates to state party conventions were once again surveyed during the 1988 election, as in 1980 and 1984. The current effort was organized by Robert Steed, Tod Baker and Laurence Moreland of The Citadel, who took over from organizers the original 1980, Ronald Rapoport and John McGlennon of William and Mary, and Alan Abramowitz of SUNY-Stony Brook, in 1984. These efforts have produced longitudinal data for party activists in several states, such as South Carolina and Virginia, spanning the entire Reagan era.

The 1988 study includes surveys conducted in South

Carolina, Virginia, North Dakota, Connecticut, Texas, Michigan and Ohio. New items include questions on religion and the news media as a source of political information.

The initial results will be presented at the 1989 annual convention of the Midwest Political Science Association, "Party Activists and 1988 Presidential Politics," Chair: Lewis Bowman, University of South Florida; Friday, April 14, 3:30 to 5:15 p.m.

## Political Consultants Investigated

Political consultants and their services are increasingly under investigation, and these efforts were discussed during the Roundtable on Political Consultants at the 1988 APSA convention. Participants included Larry Sabato, University of Virginia; Benjamin Ginsberg, Cornell University; Water DeVries, North Carolina Institute of Politics; Edith Klein, Columbia University; and Mark Petracca, University of California-Irvine, who chaired the session.

Varied perspectives were presented during the panel, the results of which will be published in the spring 1989 issue of *PS*.

One conclusion that emerged from the session was the need for more detailed and systematic information on political consultants. A major step in that direction is a national survey of consultants conducted by Mark Petracca and his colleague, Courtney Wiercioh, in the fall of 1987. Among the topics covered by the survey were the composition of consulting firms, client profile, services offered, perceptions of the political process and attitudes towards the American political system.

Mark Petracca has graciously allowed the reprinting of his bibliography on political consultants in this issue of *Vox Pop* (see page 6).

## The 1988 POP Awards

**The Samuel Eldersveld Award:** David B. Truman

**The Leon Epstein Award:** Alexander Heard for *The Cost of Democracy*

**The Annual Award:** Jack L. Walker for "The Origin and Maintenance of Interest Groups in America" (1983 *APSR* 77(2):390-406)

**1989 POP Awards Committee:** The 1989 POP Awards Committee will shortly begin the process of selecting recipients for section annual awards to be presented at the 1989 APSA convention. These include: The Samuel Eldersveld Award for a lifetime of distinguished scholarly and professional contributions to the field; The Leon Epstein Award for a book that has made a distinguished contribution to the field and an annual award for an article or published paper of unusual

significance to the field.

Suggestions for awardees should be forwarded to any member of the committee: Allan Cigler, Department of Political Science, Blake Hall, University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS 66045; Frank Feigert, Department of Political Science, University of North Texas, Denton, TX 76203; Sarah Morehouse, Department of Political Science, University of Connecticut-Stamford, Scofieldtown Road, Stamford, CT 06903

# SCHOLARLY PRECINCTS

## The 1988 Presidential Nominations

Gerald Pomper, Rutgers University

The following is taken from *The Elections of 1988* (Chatham House, forthcoming, 1989.)

The nominating process in 1988 raised questions about the role of political parties. Theories of parties have seen them in essentially two different ways: as promoters of policy programs developed by the membership, and as groups of politicians seeking public office. The first theory emphasizes party democracy and ideological unity. The second theory sees political parties as "rational-efficient" organizations primarily interested in winning office.

Through most of U.S. history, the parties have acted more in accord with the second theory, changing their policies as electorally necessary. This flexibility (or, as some might call it, lack of principles) was possible because parties were led by relatively small groups of politicians devoted to the pursuit of office. Recent reform movements, however, have changed the character of the parties, with important practical consequences for presidential nominations. The United States has changed from a system in which nominations were made mainly by leaders of "rational-efficient" parties to a system in which nominations are determined largely through persuasion of party members by candidate organizations and the media.

Different candidates result from different processes. When the choice of a party leader is made by politicians seeking office, they are more likely to place emphasis on qualities of electoral appeal, even if the result is the nomination of a bland but inoffensive candidate. If left to party members, the choice is more likely to be a person tested on the basis of adherence to the ideology of the most fervent members of the mass party. The party may nominate a true believer, but may damage severely its chances of victory.

This potential conflict particularly affected the Democrats for a number of elections. Candidates such as George McGovern or Walter Mondale met the ideological tests of party voters, but were unacceptable to the general electorate. In 1988, Jesse Jackson was the purer ideological candidate. If he were not black, or if the nomination had been decided only in caucuses of devoted party members, he might have been nominated, and then decisively defeated in the general election. Indeed, that result momentarily seemed possible after Jackson's surprise victory in the limited Michigan primary.

In the end, the Democrats did choose a candidate with a possible appeal to moderate voters, but the nomination process did not ensure the party this happy result. Instead, the process required Dukakis to prove his liberal credentials. As he would soon discover, an ideology that raised cheers among thousands of party activists in Iowa and New Hampshire could also arouse fear among millions of uncommitted voters throughout the nation.

The Republicans, in 1988, also showed the conflict between ideology and pragmatism within the party. Robertson won initial support because of his forthright conservatism, before revealing the personal liabilities that ended his campaign. Yet George Bush, too, had to give hostages to ideology, by his repeated efforts to demonstrate conservatism. The vice-president eventually won his party's nomination easily, not on the basis of his electability, but after proving his ideological purity. Even at the convention he dominated, Bush continued to stress conciliation with the right wing of his party rather than a broader appeal.

These dynamics of the nominating process carry serious implications for the workings of American democracy. Effective popular control of government requires that voters have a significant choice before them in elections. But effective democratic government requires that there be considerable basic agreement between the parties and from one administration to another. By emphasizing the ideological acceptability of candidates to their mass memberships, the contemporary nominating process may both give the voters a choice and give them a choice they would rather refuse.

Despite its reasonable results in 1988, the present nominating system retains significant flaws. The system does not allow the reluctant but able candidate to be drafted, as the experience with Cuomo shows. Providing a large number of super delegates will not provide an opening for leadership by party elites, who were terrified of the possibility of a bargained nomination in 1988. Voters themselves give little weight to the problem of choosing an electable candidate, emphasizing instead personal qualifications and issue positions. No solution is apparent, but the problem is real and continuing.

Choosing its leadership is the most important task of a democracy. Writing the American Constitution over two hundred years ago, the framers found it particularly difficult to develop a means to select the President, and settled on an ambiguous solution. That process remains as difficult to perfect today as it was to create in 1787. Now that the Presidency affects the life of the entire planet, we must think anew.

# AT THE GRASSROOTS

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is worth emphasizing because it is by far the largest source of RNC funds; in 1986, RNC raised \$38.6 million from this source alone.

Despite some success with direct mail during the McGovern years, the DNC did not have a strong program until 1981, and since then they have been gaining on the GOP. The Democrats are now raising serious money, but by the mid-80s they had not reached the point the Republicans had in the late 70s.

The relative status of the two parties' finances can be seen in FEC figures. These are for the money raised by all party committees and are given for two-year election cycles.

	<u>77-78</u>	<u>79-80</u>	<u>81-82</u>	<u>83-84</u>	<u>85-86</u>
Reps	84.5	169.5	215.0	297.9	252.4
Dems	26.9	37.2	39.3	98.5	61.8

(Figures are in millions of dollars)

A final point that should be made about party finance comes from Cornelius Cotter and John Bibby. This is an unanticipated effect of federal financing of presidential campaigns. Now that the national parties are prohibited from major presidential campaign expenditures, they are in a position to spend money on party development in the states, sometimes by cash grants, more often through programs and services.

### Current Programs

Now let us turn to some of the programs parties are conducting. The most significant GOP program, started under Brock, supplied organizational directors to each state party for a two-year period. A staff of 15 regional political directors provided liaison between the national party and the state parties and another staff of 15 worked in local elections, especially for state legislatures.

Programs conducted by RNC in the mid-80s include:

*Candidate support.* \$2.5 million was spent in behalf of some 350 candidates across the country in 1986.

*County programs.* \$400 thousand was spent on the county level in each of the last three years. The number of counties varied from 650 in 1984 to 110 in 1986.

*List development.* The GOP mailing list program now contains 60 million voter files from 34 states.

*Phone banks.* In 1986, there were more than 12 million calls made to voters in 29 states.

*Campaign management college.* Between 140 and 200 campaign organizers per year have attended 13-week training sessions since the late 1970s.

*The 1991 plan.* This is a 10-year effort aimed at affecting

redistricting after the next census. Activities vary from state to state.

As in fund-raising, the Democrats are now conducting programs that, if smaller in scale, are reminiscent of the Republican programs. Paul Kirk reorganized DNC to place greater emphasis on liaison with state parties. The most important program was the Democratic party election force. Two staff members each were sent into 16 targeted states where there were 1986 Senate races.

*Candidate support.* DNC spend \$20,500 during the 1985-86 election cycle, but when contributions from the Capitol Hill committees are added in, the total is \$1.1 million.

*Research.* The DNC under Kirk commissioned its first poll since 1981. Polling has a precarious position in the DNC compared to its routine place at the RNC.

*Democratic National Training Institute.* A number of campaign schools have been held under the aegis of this Kirk program; some have lasted as long as a week.

*Project 500.* This is the Democratic counterpart of the Republican 1991 plan. The goal is to win and hold an estimated 500 state legislative seats.

### Some Conclusions

Now, what generalizations can we draw about party development? The first concerns professionalization. Party organizations need people with specific skills: fund-raising, polling, computer data base management, information retrieval, and media use. But notice also where parties have not changed. Parties continue to rely on volunteers, and professionals find out very quickly that no passionate liberal or conservative (depending on the party) will accept their "expert" judgment about the policies or candidates the parties ought to endorse.

Second, one version of the party decline thesis is that parties have lost their central role to candidate committees, citizen committees, consultants, and so forth. But who are the people who are working in these "rival" organizations? Many prominent activists, such as Joe Napolitan and Eddie Mahe, have worked at different points for the national parties, candidates and as campaign consultants. We have networks of activists, most of whom are known to each other, who move from one role to another as opportunities arise. We need a definition of "party" that is inclusive enough to recognize this.

Finally, notice the similarity between the recent changes in political parties and changes in other organizations. What modern American enterprise does not have a finance department, a market research department or a public affairs department? Party developments reflect, at least roughly, the changes from mom-and-pop stores to present forms of commercial organization, echoing changes that have taken place in many other areas of American life.

# SPECIAL INTERESTS

## Absence of Linkage

Richard A. Bernstein, Texas A&M University, has just come out with a provocative new book, *Elections, Representation and Congressional Voting Behavior: The Myth of Constituency Control* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1989). While a critical review of this book must be left to other forums, his thesis suggests questions for future research on political organizations.

Bernstein's thesis is straightforward: "Elections do not serve as a 'mechanism through which citizens control their government'" (pg. 98). He concludes, in fact, that members of Congress act by and large as free agents, often voting against the clear preferences of their constituents. These claims are based on an extensive review of the relevant literature, which he argues, shows only modest evidence of constituency influence, but no support for constituency control. And if Bernstein's definition of "constituency control" seems overstated, it is the one used widely in the literature, as he aptly demonstrates.

While such findings may not surprise everyone, they are clearly at odds with the conventional wisdom from Capitol Hill. Thus, this book may ignite a debate between scholars and practitioners as well as among political scientists. And part of any such debate should be the role of political organizations in linking (or failing to link) elected officials to voters. After all, an important theme in the party and interest group literature is that political organization makes such linkages possible.

Bernstein's findings suggest a number of questions for future research on political organizations. For instance, do contemporary parties perform these kinds of functions? What about interest groups? Do the organizations of individual candidates and office holders enhance or undermine constituency influence? To what extent do party renewal and reform reestablish such linkages? Or are political organizations primarily mechanisms for activist influence on elected representatives? Perhaps some of the excellent recent work on political organizations can be extended to the troubling issues Bernstein raises.

—The Editor

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