A MOVEMENT PERSPECTIVE ON THE 1972 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

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As this is written, American bombs continue to rain death over Indochina while the once imminent prospects of a negotiated peace settlement seem remote. On the domestic front, the news media have come under increased pressure to toe the line, ghetto problems are still treated with "benign neglect," and the hardhat head of a discriminatory building trades union has been appointed Secretary of Labor. In the meanwhile, the opposition licks its wounds and says little. Blacks are in disarray, campus radicals are quiescent, and within the Democratic Party, a symbolic repudiation of the McGovern faction has taken place with the forced resignation of the party's chairperson. All in all, McGovern's lopsided defeat has been a disaster for what the underground press was once proud to call "The Movement."

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2 Revised certified vote totals gave Richard Nixon a total of 47,168,963 popular votes (60.7%) and George McGovern a total of 29,169,615 popular votes (37.6%).

3 The term, "The Movement," is used as a shorthand label in this article. It refers to that amorphous array of "peaceniks," student activists, civil rights and black power advocates, feminists, radical intellectuals, environmentalists, Hippies, Yippies, and many others who, over the past fifteen years, found common cause in their opposition to America's prevailing norms, values, and practices, and in their willingness to work outside established institutional frameworks for social and political change. See, for example, Jerome H. Skolnick, The Politics of Protest (New York: Ballantine, 1969), and Mitchell Goodman, The Movement Toward a New America (Philadelphia: Pilgrim, 1970). Goodman characterizes "The Movement" as "an interaction of scenes, voices, statements, stories, faces, meetings, demonstrations, reflections, visions, comprehensions, confrontations" functioning as an extremely complex "process, a multi-dimensional struggle" (p. vi). Chesebro has argued that "The Movement" can be viewed as five interrelated subgroups made up of at least 25 major national organizations employing a wide range of strategies. See "Rhetorical Strategies of the Radical-Revolutionary," Today's Speech, 20 (Win. 1972), 37-48. Others have highlighted distinctive life-styles and value-orientations commonly associated with "The Movement." See Theodore Roszak, The Making of a Counter Culture (New York: Anchor, 1969), and Charles A. Reich, The Greening of America (New York: Random House, 1970).

Recognizing, then, that the term can only be used loosely (note that we use quotation marks throughout), we have nevertheless found it profitable. Partly because their opposition linked them together, and partly because their membership overlapped, movement types vaguely recognized their common bonds.

4 McGovern identified himself with "The Movement" in May, 1972 (see Associated Press Broadcast Wire, 4 May 1972, 7:50 pm). While popular magazines often recognized the McGovern/Movement association prior to the 1972 Democratic Convention, the association became a defining characteristic following the convention. See "Is It An Era—Or Only an Hour?" Newsweek, 24 July 1972, 16-36; and "St. George Prepares to Face the Dragon," Time, 24 July 1972, 9-28. Televised coverage of the convention persistently underscored McGovern's ideological and popular alignment with "The Movement" as well.
conveyed the distinct impression (whether accurate or not is less important) that they reject "The Movement's" isms and programs, visions and life-styles.5

The defeat of "The Movement" raises significant questions for those who study or lead protest movements, above and beyond those which McGovern or the Democratic Party will have to consider in the years ahead.6 Assuming that the protest leaders of the sixties could have given direction to their followers, would "The Movement" have been better off had it not gone the route of electoral politics? Having decided to move off the streets and into the political primaries and caucuses, would it have fared better had it chosen to align itself with some other candidate—a third party candidate perhaps, or, on the other hand, a centrist figure such as Humphrey or Muskie? Finally, having hitched its star to the McGovern candidacy, would it have been better off had McGovern employed some other strategy?


6 The decision to examine the 1972 campaign from a movement perspective seems pragmatically significant because this campaign functioned as a symbol of the last four years and appears to be a dramatic public event shaping the next four years. As was true of the 1968 election, this period of social transformation and unrest is often associated with "The Movement" and the campaign itself can be perceived as having functioned to reconfirm the power of the system rather than the program of "The Movement." The writings of Murray Edelman (*The Symbolic Uses of Politics* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1967) and *Politics as Symbolic Action: Mass Arousal and Quiescence* (Chicago: Markham, 1971)) provide the broader rationale for viewing a campaign in this fashion. In general, the relationship between campaigns and movements seems to be an important research area not extensively examined in speech-communication at this time.

We must confess at the outset that we have no definitive answers to these questions, only speculations about the pros and cons of competing alternatives. Any election is a perfect vehicle for misinterpretation. Like a beguiling temptress, it beckons us to look it over, sends forth a walter of ambiguous signals, and then eludes our grasp just when we think we have unravelled its mysteries. Especially dangerous, we recognize, are speculations on what might have been. Still, we are beguiled by our own questions, all the more so because the professional pundits have generally not dealt with them. In the process of considering these questions, we hope to suggest some plausible hypotheses about relationships between protest movements and Presidential campaigns.

**OPTION I—NONPARTICIPATION**

"The Movement" could have stayed in bed. Or in the streets. Or in occupied buildings. With studied indifference, its leaders could have announced that it would not play the electoral game; that Presidential nominations and elections are rigged by the Establishment; and that neither major party was really interested in radical reform.7 In retrospect, the choice of remaining aloof from the contest has much to be said for it. We shall discuss its pros and cons in some detail. By implication, its advantages and disadvantages constitute, respectively, dis-

7 This option was, in fact, adopted by a small faction of "The Movement." See Miami Convention Coalition, *The Manual for the Republican Convention* (Miami: The Red Buffalo Press, 1972). The Miami Convention Coalition released a series of "scenario and tactical" outlines to all radical groups throughout the country as well. Although the Coalition repeatedly denied any support for McGovern, the GOP National Chairman Robert Dole argued that this faction was under McGovern's control; see "GOP Sees Convention Sabotage: McGovern Asked to Curb His Fans," *The Miami Herald*, 17 July 1972, p. 1.
advantages and advantages of competing alternatives.

As Goldwater discovered in 1964, and as Bryan learned in 1900, it takes more than a movement to win a Presidential election. Whereas an electoral victory requires a plurality of votes, the strength of a movement is rarely measurable by sheer numbers. What a movement loses by having minority status, it can gain by being forceful, articulate, and resolute. To be sure, a movement may utilize an electoral contest as a platform for its views, just as a campaigner may make use of a movement by attracting its supporters. But this does not mean that a movement must propagandize from within. Indeed, the media may give it greater attention when the movement stays outside the framework of conventional politics.

In many ways, in fact, the sources of a movement's strength tend to work against its chances at the polls. Tackled by resistance from without, its members frequently become uncompromising. Geared to using pressure tactics in order to influence persons in politically sensitive positions, it frequently alienates the mass of people who constitute "power-invincibles." Compelled to arouse its own supporters by in-group appeals, its rhetoric is often elitist despite its best intentions; the nonverbal elements of dress, demeanor, etc., conveying the impression of a small We opposing a very large They.

In general, protestors are not very adept at conventional electoral politics. A protest movement is passion and moral conviction in need of organization and discipline, an id and a superego in search of an ego. The supreme politician, by contrast, is a quintessential realist in search of a cause that will win. Master of his own impulses and unencumbered by severe moral scruples, he is free to make common cause with his enemies and to cast off his devoted friends; to solicit contributions where he can find them and promise political influence in return.

Nor are movements especially well suited to the fixed timetables set for primaries, nominating conventions, and elections. Less institutionalized, they are more sensitive to the pushes and pulls of day to day events than the major political parties. At their most effective, they are able to lie in waiting, surface, capitalize on events, and recede into the woodwork. But like sex partners, they are also prone, on the basis of internal dynamics, to sudden bursts of energy and momentum followed by periods of inertia and fatigue. To ask a movement to adapt to electoral timetables is like asking two lovers to copulate on demand.

For similar reasons, movements are not in a good position to provide or purchase such inputs to modern day campaigns as

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8 Of whites agreeing that the Vietnam War was a mistake and favoring an immediate pullout of troops, only 1 out of 8 supported peace demonstrators, a clear majority rate peace demonstrators negatively. 23% reacted against peace demonstrators with extreme hostility, and 70% rejected the suggestion that the police had used too much force in Chicago in 1968.


11 Murray Levin has defined the rational political strategist as one who attempts to "discover what programs and policies are preferred by significant blocs of voters and then proceeds to advocate these policies, regardless of his own inner convictions," in The Complete Politician (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1962), p. 137.

market analysts, media experts, experienced advance men for campaign tours, liaisons with special interest groups, and the like. It takes years to accumulate the technical know-how for Presidential campaigns, and movements are not ordinarily in that business. At best, as Goldwater and McGovern proved, the amateurs can do quite well in the primaries but it is another thing to capture the big prize.\textsuperscript{13}

And then there are the ritual elements to contend with. The Presidential election is a ritual celebration of the American Way and an opportunity for varicos identification with government.\textsuperscript{14}

The campaigner is expected to affirm old shibboleths, to sing the anthem, eat hot dogs, and above all, to surround his campaign with glitter and pageantry. The challenger, especially, is expected to differ with the President, but never so much that he appears to be attacking the Presidency or the system. Quite obviously, all this is tough stuff for movements that seek basic changes in government and society.\textsuperscript{15}

But this last point has another side to it which is of even greater importance. By standing outside the conventional po-


\textsuperscript{14} The writings of Edelman are again relevant here (op. cit.). However, it is important to note that a certain level of apparent sincerity should exist when entering this ritual. Stanley J. Morse and Stanton Peelle note that even peace protesters who perceive themselves as part of the system employ symbols of identification which lack salience for the general public. See "A Study of Participants in An Anti-War Demonstration," Journal of Social Issues, 27 (1971), 113-136.

\textsuperscript{15} For an excellent example in which symbolic rituals themselves are an issue, see Ami-

\textsuperscript{16} For an extensive discussion on this point, see Samuel P. Huntington, "Conservatism as an Ideology," American Political Science Review, 51 (June 1957), 454-473; and Roszak, Sources, pp. x-xi.
ning for office, but also after having been elected, the successful politician must continue to stand in the political center. Garry Wills has taken this principle one step further:

One of the self-balancing aspects of our system is that candidates not only try to "out-middle" each other, but also engage in compensatory blandishments toward those who have least reason to trust them. Thus the dovish side will peddle superhawkish wares—as Kennedy did, in his debates with Nixon, deploring the missile gap, the loss of Cuba, the lack of interventionist vigor in the Eisenhower years. By the end of this year's campaign, McGovern could rhetorically out-policeman Nixon at home and out-rabbi him abroad. That's part of the game.

. . . The one group a President has least chance of pleasing is his primary constituency. Lyndon Johnson, trotted out to please the South in 1969, could not even take a soft stand on civil rights. John F. Kennedy took the hardest position against aid to parochial schools of any recent President or candidate. Franklin Roosevelt was withering in his comments on the patrician class he came from. There is, thus, some reason to take the cynical view that a vote for your political enemy is the wisest course—he has no one to sell out to but you. 17

These, then, are some reasons why "The Movement" might well have stayed clear of the election. Summing up, we have observed that "The Movement" went down with the McGovern ship and we have suggested that this may be a predictable consequence of Presidential candidacies that are built on movements. Electoral politics are not the most favorable grounds for movement rhetoric, and by entering electoral contests, movements undermine their own case for a rhetoric of the streets.

Thus far we have presented only one side of the coin and we have defended it largely on theoretical grounds. The three authors of this paper are movement types who, along with many others, were convinced as early as 1968 that if any year would be the year of electoral victory for "The Movement," it would be 1972. What were the bases for our belief, and why, in particular, did the 1972 Democratic nominee seem especially significant?

Recall that at around the time of the 1968 election, "The Movement" was in its hey-day. Eugene McCarthy and his youthful supporters had brought Lyndon Johnson to heel, and Bobby Kennedy's quest for the Presidency was stopped, it seemed, only by an assassin's bullet. Campus protests were at their peak and Black Power was boldly asserting itself. New television programs were also reflecting the spirit of the times, and The Graduate was enjoying a better box office than The Green Berets. This was a period, too, when prophets of "The Movement" were convincingly proclaiming the demise of the old order and the immi-
nence of the new: the death of God and the making of a counterculture; the last gasp of the culture of scarcity and the greening of America.

Never mind, then, that Richard Nixon won the election; it was only by 43% of the vote. Never mind the Wallace backlash, or that "law and order" had been the principal issue in the campaign; hadn't Hubert Humphrey closed fast when he detached himself from Lyndon Johnson's cord? And never mind the Marcuses who said that radicals must stand outside the system as critics. The tide was turning and 1972 appeared to be the big year.

Then, too, there were the changes in the Democratic Party to consider. Embarrassed by Mayor Daley's stormtroopers, the party had resolved to open itself up to disenfranchised groups. Until Chappaquiddick, Edward Kennedy seemed a likely candidate, and if not Kennedy, there were other prospects to consider who had strong ideological ties to "The

Movement.” Especially promising was George McGovern. A remarkably honest man, he had shown that he knew the difference between opposing the war on moral grounds and merely acknowledging that the U.S. could not win the war. McGovern had declared early and he had come out swinging in Senate speeches. If not Edward Kennedy, then very possibly McGovern.

By 1970, of course, “The Movement” might well have reevaluated its electoral chances for 1972. Quite simply, it had run out of steam, become tired of fighting for limited gains, run out of new tactics, found itself fragmented from within and harassed from without. Many persons learned that they hadn’t the stomach for sustained radical commitments.\(^\text{18}\)

It also had to be admitted that Richard Nixon was doing surprisingly well in the popularity polls, and that he was especially adept at stealing “The Movement’s” thunder. American troops were being withdrawn, the draft was being abolished, and a welfare proposal smacking of income maintenance was being sent through Congress.

Still, these facts of life could be given other interpretations. One could argue that “The Movement’s” loss of steam provided all the more reason why it should enter the electoral arena. If not through electoral politics, then how? Moreover, his successes aside, Nixon was still quite vulnerable. The Cambodian and Laotian invasions had been fiascos, and the war had not yet been terminated. Taxes and inflation were cutting into fixed incomes and unemployment was high.\(^\text{19}\) The young were subdued but the drug statistics suggested that they were not any happier. And several million of them would be voting for the first time in the 1972 election.\(^\text{20}\) So what, then, if in July 1970, 61% of the populace believed that Nixon was doing a good job? Wasn’t it more important that the percentage of people who thought Nixon was doing a bad job had increased from 5% in January 1969 to 34% in December 1970.\(^\text{21}\) And wasn’t it clear that this percentage could be greatly increased through skillful persuasion? In general, movements tend to exaggerate their own numbers and to overestimate the degree of latent discontent among the populace. The movement assumes, often on questionable grounds, that it knows the public’s real interests, and that the public will come around if only the movement will perform its “educative” function.

In the final analysis, the decision to work within the electoral framework, and specifically with McGovern, was probably based on the conclusion that more can be accomplished from within the system than from without. Commitment to electoral politics constituted a risk, but (it was reasoned) it is better to have tried and lost than never to have tried at all.

OPTION II—BACKING ANOTHER CANDIDATE

Assuming that “The Movement” should have participated actively in the

\(^{16}\) The *Gallup Opinion Index* indicates that only 25% of Americans believed U.S. troops should have been sent to Cambodia, 59% thought they should not have been sent, 16% offered qualified or no opinions. See *Gallup Opinion Index*, June 1970, Report No. 60, p. 5.

\(^{19}\) 78% of the nation expected taxes to continue to increase throughout 1969 and 76% expected inflation to increase throughout 1969. See *Gallup Opinion Index*, Jan. 1969, Report No. 43, pp. 23 and 25.

\(^{20}\) Only 50% of the 18 to 21 year old voters were ultimately to vote in the 1972 election.

electoral contest but that it should not have supported McGovern, was there some other candidate it might have backed? In our judgment, two distinctly different sub-options merit at least some consideration: backing a third party candidate and backing a centrist. We shall consider these alternatives separately.

Sub-Option A—Backinc a Third Party Candidate

Historically, movements which have been unable to dominate one of the two major parties have formed their own political parties. Among the more notable examples in recent history (on the national level) are the Socialist Party and the Communist Party, the States Rights Party and the Progressive Party, the American Independent Party and the Libertarian Party. None of these parties has seriously contended for a plurality of votes in Presidential elections but some of them, at least, have exerted considerable influence. Norman Thomas, for example, lived to see most of the welfare proposals of his Socialist Party enacted into law by successive Democratic administrations.

Conceivably, then, "The Movement" might have thrown all of its support to Benjamin Spock,22 Dick Gregory, Jane Fonda, or some other third party candidate. It might have reasoned that the Democratic Party would never be truly responsive to "The Movement," or at least not until it was seriously threatened by mass defections from among its "radical" ranks.

This argument notwithstanding, we cannot take the third party idea very seriously. As we see it, there are four possible conditions under which third party candidacies may make sense. Needless to say, we do not believe that any of these conditions applied in "The Movement's" case.

1. A third party candidacy is particularly viable if it threatens both major parties. Under these conditions, seen most clearly in the case of George Wallace's movement, the candidate can play the role of honest broker. Quite obviously, this was not a role for "The Movement."

2. A third party candidacy is viable if, as a splinter group from a major party, it can imperil that party's majority without seriously damaging the party in the process. The Dixiecrats posed such a threat in 1948 and would probably have gained an even greater hold on the Democratic Party had Truman lost. But conditions were not the same in 1972. On the Presidential level, the party was weak to begin with and might have been seriously hurt by widespread defections from the Left. Unlike the Southerners, moreover, "The Movement" would have been left with no other major party to turn to.

3. A third party candidacy makes considerable sense for new groups such as the Libertarian Party23 or for highly unpopular fringe groups such as the Communist Party, in order that they may find platforms for their views. Under these conditions, the party is not expected to do well at the polls, and hence, does not suffer greatly if few people vote for it. "The Movement," however, has been a major force in the United States and has already had considerable exposure. Had it organized seriously around a third party candidate, a miniscule vote would have signified that "The Movement" was in its decline.

22 The option certainly existed for a third party. Spock's "People's Party" had contacted all "Movement" groups a year before the campaign began and had framed a platform acceptable to most groups.

4. Finally, a third party candidacy is viable if it has promise of becoming a major party in the years to come. We own no crystal balls, but based on its recent record, “The Movement” does not bid fair to becoming the wave of the future in electoral politics.

Sub-Option B—Backing a Centrist Candidate

If not for his abysmal showing in the primaries, “The Movement” might have settled for Senator Muskie, the man whom everyone liked second best. Even more intriguing from a movement perspective are the advantages for “The Movement” had Hubert Humphrey somehow managed to capture the nomination through convention maneuvering. Surprisingly enough, this alternative makes considerable sense in light of the same arguments that we advanced earlier about the dangers for movements in entering into electoral politics.

Imagine, then, the following scenario. By various forms of subterfuge, the “Stop McGovern” forces manage to win the Illinois and California delegate challenges. Amidst cries of disgust from irate McGovern supporters, the convention is deadlocked on several ballots. After extended caucusing and horse-trading, the party finally names Humphrey as its nominee and McGovern as his running mate. McGovern supporters complain bitterly but submit in the end.

Would this constitute a defeat for “The Movement”? By conventional logic, undoubtedly. But, by political logic, we think not. Here, at least, are some of the advantages:

(1) Since Humphrey was obviously not “The Movement’s” favorite candidate, it would not have borne the onus of his defeat if, in fact, he was defeated;

(2) Conservatives and moderates within the Democratic Party would have been encumbered to “The Movement” if the latter had continued to provide political support;

(3) Humphrey might have won. Indeed, the convention struggle might have cemented his reputation as a man of the center. Once elected, Humphrey would have been obliged to curry favor with “The Movement” as a way of protecting his Left flank;

(4) A McGovern defeat at the Democratic convention—especially an “unfair” McGovern defeat—might have been just the nostrum to revitalize “The Movement” and legitimize its use of confrontational tactics.

In view of the apparent logic of supporting Humphrey, one might suppose that this idea would have been entertained seriously by leaders of “The Movement.” Yet, as best as we can determine, the idea was not considered, at least not publicly. Undoubtedly, many would have considered it immoral, undignified or traitorous. Still others were convinced that if McGovern campaigned skillfully, he stood a good chance of winning. We shall consider that possibility next.

Option III—Backing an Improved McGovern Candidacy

Despite his lopsided loss at the polls, George McGovern’s nomination victory must go down as one of the great feats of political history. Like Eugene McCarthy and Robert Kennedy before him, McGovern sought to transform “The Movement” into an effective force in electoral politics. But whereas McCarthy

had a limited constituency, McGovern, like Kennedy, attempted to extend the reach of "The Movement" to include other problems and other groups—an all encompassing populist crusade rather than a kiddie parade. And whereas Robert Kennedy had money, name recognition, and friends among the pros, all McGovern had was his record as

an outspoken Senate dove. For starters, McGovern helped to alter the rules and machinery of the Democratic Party. He then bypassed its traditional sources of financial support by soliciting thousands of ideologically motivated donations. Once into the primaries, McGovern campaigned tirelessly, organized skillfully, and minced no words in his call for radical change. Only toward the end of the nomination campaign did he begin to retract some of those words, and move toward the political center, a pattern that was to continue in the Presidential campaign.

Assuming that "The Movement" stood to gain if McGovern won and to lose if McGovern lost, could it reasonably anticipate that McGovern had a chance or should it have known that McGovern was doomed from the start? Would McGovern have succeeded by sticking to the far out positions he had articulated in the primaries? Was his "new populism" a good strategy that simply failed of its execution? Or was history unalterably on the side of Nixon?

There is, in fact, a school of journalists which regards every Presidential election as an open contest between relative equals. Perhaps because the approach helps them sell newspapers, they act on the assumption that campaign rhetoric determines election outcomes. Thus, according to this view, McGovern lost—and lost badly—because of his inept handling of the Eagleton affair. And because he was blatantly inconsistent on issues he himself had raised in the primaries. And because he could not live down the "radical" label that had been affixed to him by Hubert Humphrey and other leading Democrats. And because he had alienated labor leaders and big city politicians. And because he lacked charisma. And because he had practiced verbal overkill in his attacks on the President. And because he could not excite the American people sufficiently over the issues of Republican corruption. And, on the other hand, because Richard Nixon had run a smooth, low-keyed campaign in fitting Presidential style. And had ordered his running mate to run a more subdued campaign. And had stolen McGovern's thunder over the Vietnam issue by conveying the impression that a peace settlement was at hand. And had made good use of computerized "personal" letters, radio speeches, and television commercials.

No doubt, the journalist's analyses go part way toward explaining the McGovern debacle. They suggest that he did little during the formal campaign period to improve his position and did some things that probably hurt his candidacy. There is, moreover, some pre-convention evidence that McGovern had an outside

25 An overview of such a populist platform and set of strategies is provided in Jack Newfield and Jeff Greenfield's A Populist Manifesto: The Making Of A New Majority (New York: Warner, 1972).

chance of winning. The image of Saint George, the prairie populist, was begin-
ning to excite people by the Spring of 1972, and even to suggest that he had his
own brand of charisma. A majority of Americans saw him then as clear, con-
sistent, candid, and incorruptible, and they did not yet regard him as an ex-
tremist. On the need to readjust the do-
mestic spending priorities, McGovern
was speaking their language. And in his
strong antiwar stance, he was enjoying
surprising support from ethnic groups
and blue collar workers.27

Still, we are not convinced that a dif-
ferent campaign strategy or more effec-
tive implementation of the chosen strate-
gy would have made a great deal of dif-
ference. In retrospect, admittedly, we
view the McGovern candidacy as ill-fated
from the start. A more effective cam-
paign would undoubtedly have narrowed
the margin of defeat, but, in Eric Seva-
reid's words, McGovern "leads a move-
ment, not a party—a movement within
this country's majority party. A move-
ment with its dedicated true believers
can do wonders in a state primary or a
convention, but a primary is not the
national election. If this movement is to
take over the Democratic party, one's off-
27 The Nixon image in the earlier 1970s was
sufficient to inspire the most reluctant hopes
of the Democratic challenges. In 1971, 67% of
a national sample said they did not believe the
Nixon administration was telling the public
all it should know about the Vietnam War
(Gallup Public Opinion Index, June 1971, No.
72, p. 4). While perceived as slightly more ex-
treme than Humphrey or Muskie, McGovern
was considered an extremist by only 13% of
the Gallup sample. Wallace was perceived as
an extremist by 48% of the sample (Gallup
Opinion Index, June 1972, pp. 19-23). In the
latter part of April and early May 1972, Mc-
Govern was perceived—especially among ethnic
groups—as a candidate with a fresher approach
to problems, modern in his style, a colorful,
interesting personality, clear, consistent, rela-
tively moderate, honest, and very likely to put
the country's interest ahead of politics (Gallup
Opinion Index, June 1972, pp. 19-23).

28 CBS Evening News With Walter Cronkite,
1 Nov. 1972, 6:30-7:00 p.m., EDT. Also, see on
this point: James Reston, "Two Kinds of Strate-
gies: Will McGovern Change?" Minneapolis
Tribune, 7 May 1972, p. 20A: "The Next Three
5-6.

29 Richard Reeves, "The New Populism: A
1972, p. 47.
to make maximal use of it. Here let us recall the same arguments that were offered at the outset of this paper: in essence, that movements and movement types are not well suited for electoral politics. What we are suggesting is that mistakes like the Eagleton fiasco are not mere accidents; they are predictable consequences of electoral campaigns managed by semi-amateurs and influenced by deep-seated passions and moral concerns.

Let us add, finally, two long-term factors that would have presented great difficulties for any liberal Democrat, but especially for McGovern. The first of these is the erosion of the once solid Democratic coalition. Where once a Democratic nominee of almost any persuasion could count on a sizable "loyalty" vote, now even lifelong Democrats have become independents or Republicans at the Presidential level. As former Chairman Lawrence O'Brien himself acknowledged, "In a real sense, the most striking results of 1972—e.g., solid Republican South and a majority of the blue-collar vote going to a non-Democrat—are a culmination of electoral trends that have been underway for two decades." Even Edward Kennedy, whom we assume would have minimized such fiascos given the family's traditionally professional approach in politics, would not have done well against Nixon. In a national survey, 52% indicated they would have voted for Nixon and 43% for Kennedy (Gallup Opinion Index, Nov. 1972, p. 7).

The second factor, related to the first, is one we hinted at earlier: a significant shift to the Right among the electorate that had been taking place since the last election and that was in part a reaction to the very protesters on whose shoulders the McGovern candidacy was built. As James Reston noted, increases in real income had made many people less concerned about the poor—especially poor blacks—and less inclined to bite the Big Business hand that was feeding them. A large segment of the populace was sick and tired of paying taxes to support those on welfare. They were fed up with busing, fed up with anti-poverty programs, fed up with blacks in general, and fed up, especially, with the life styles that they associated with the Left: the long-haired males, the braless females, the stereotype of pot-smoking commune dwellers revelling in sex while their parents looked on permissively. According to pollster Daniel Yankelovitch, this factor, more than the economic factors, contributed to the conservative shift. As for Vietnam, although a large minority was unalterably opposed to the war on moral grounds, most people preferred "peace with honor" and respected a President who would stand up to the Communists at the same time that he would take America out of the war.

All in all, then, McGovern's chances were slim indeed. He could neither win by abandoning "The Movement" on which his candidacy was built nor succeed by standing firm on "The Movement's" controversial positions. What he could do was provide America with a choice, and this he did, especially in the primaries. But it was a choice that America was bound to reject. As a consequence, "The Movement," not just McGovern, received a staggering blow. History has once again demonstrated the hazards for protest movements of playing the electoral numbers game.

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SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

We began this paper with the observation that McGovern's lopsided defeat also constituted a repudiation by the American people of "The Movement" upon which his candidacy was built. Looking back on the election from "The Movement's" perspective, we asked whether, in retrospect, "The Movement" should have remained aloof from the electoral contest, backed some other candidate, or attributed its own loss to McGovern's inept campaigning.

Along with many other observers, we have come to the not so startling conclusion that McGovern's defeat was more a function of irreversible historical trends than of the way he campaigned. By implication, "The Movement" might well have avoided making the election an informal referendum on its own views.

More significant, from a theoretical standpoint, is the light cast by the recent election on the relationships between protest movements and Presidential campaigns. We have no firm conclusions to offer here, only conjectures. Among them are the following: (1) For a number of reasons, movements that enter the electoral fray are not well suited to the task of winning the plurality required of the Presidential aspirant; (2) Participation in electoral politics undermines a protest movement's rationale for using confrontational tactics; (3) Even if a protest movement's candidate is elected, he is unlikely to implement its program for change once he is in office; and (4) A movement is likely to sever the relationship between its strategies and ideology—means and end—when seriously competing in a Presidential campaign.