Book Reviews

The Politics of National Party Conventions. Paul T. David, Ralph M. Goldman, and Richard C. Bain. Brookings Institution, Washington, D.C., 1960. 592 pp. $10.

It is not surprising that many people are puzzled regarding what to think of our national party conventions. On the television screen we witness a scene of zany confusion. From the political gossips we learn that behind this confusion powerful bosses make deals in smoke-filled rooms. Perhaps we also remember being taught that these gatherings are the highest representative assemblies of our two great parties, where the voice of the people somehow prevails, choosing the best candidates available for our highest office.

If we are puzzled, one excuse is that little systematic study has been made of the nominating process. That excuse is removed by this massive study. (Incidentally, there is also available a paperback edition, condensed to about half the length of the original work.)

The focus of the book is on the conventions as a means of selecting nominees for President. But the authors are also concerned with the broad historical development of American politics and with how it has affected and been affected by the changing process of nomination. Two trends are given particular attention. One is the "nationalizing" of American politics—or to put it negatively, the decline of sectionalism and localism. The great era of sectional politics ran from the first election of McKinley in 1896 to the Al Smith–Herbert Hoover campaign in 1928. Opposed to the solidly Democratic South was a block of states, which, especially in the Northeast, were almost as solidly Republican: in the election of 1896, for instance, the Republicans carried every *county* in the six New England States. This was the heyday of powerful state bosses—Platt, Quay, Hanna—who provided "the main centers of organization and maneuver within the contesting factions" at the conventions. Beginning in 1928 a massive realignment of the party electorate took place, the Republicans becoming more clearly identified with the white collar, professional, and well-to-do classes, and the Democrats with organized labor, ethnic and religious minorities, and the poor.

This shift in the social bases of the parties has been reflected in the background of convention delegates. Far fewer Catholics and Jews take part in the Republican convention. In 1952 the labor caucus at the Democratic convention included about 100 votes, while the labor vote at the Republican convention was probably not over 10. Outstanding businessmen can still be found among Democratic delegates, but they are about twice as numerous at Republican conventions, which also include a much higher number of the very rich.

This electoral realignment and the rise of new economic and social issues also had consequences for the power structure of the parties and their conventions. The decline of the state boss was hastened, as power moved toward national leaders better able to organize and compete on a nation-wide scale. Moreover, this national leadership has become less dispersed and more closely knit. Unlike most political parties in other countries, American parties have often done without any single continuing "inner circle" of leaders. But today the American party, at least when in power, has developed a fairly tightly organized presidential wing. And even in the out party, the position of titular leader has been strengthened. A shadow, however, is still cast on his position by the fact, except for Cleveland, no man who has been once defeated as his party's candidate has been able to go on from renomination to victory in the ensuing election.

Along with the nationalizing of American politics has gone a second major development, an increasing public participation in the nominating process. This has been brought about, in the first place, through the presidential primary, in which party members directly elect delegates or give them some sort of instruction concerning their presidential preference. In 1956 half the delegates to the conventions were elected or instructed in this way. Yet during the interwar years, presidential aspirants did not attach much importance to the primaries, and the hectic preconvention campaign based on a wide use of pr[illegible]ries is the product of very recent tim[illegible] especially of two men, Harold Sta[illegible] in 1948 and Estes Kefauver in 1956.

Public opinion po[illegible], widely reported in the press and over the air, have also enhanced public influence, identifying the front runners and concentrating attention on them. At the same time, close reporting of the sentiments of political leaders and potential delegates, by suggesting which aspirants [illegible]ve a real chance of nomination, ter[illegible] eliminate the hopeless cases. O[illegible]esult of these changes has been to narrow the field of aspirants to those who have established their positions in the preconvention campaign, which has come to perform much of the selection process before the convention meets. The position of front-runner has become increasingly desirable; conversely, the chance of a "dark horse" coming forward in a stalemated convention has become less likely.

In the states, the direct primary for state-wide office has tended to weaken party leadership. Yet in the national parties, the integration of top leadership does not seem to have been impeded by a limited use of the primary. In both conventions, however, the old conflict between the congressional and the presidential wings of the party still flares up often. Conceivably, the greater prominence of senators and congressmen as presidential aspirants and convention leaders may in time throw some bridges across this gap.

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Chemical Analysis of Air Pollutants. Morris B. Jacobs. Interscience, New York, 1960. 430 pp. Illus. $13.50.

Public awareness of the extent and hazard of air pollution has grown considerably during the past few years, and as a direct result many industrial organizations and government agencies have been faced with the problem of providing adequate analytical service for measuring the degree of pollution