

EDITORIAL

Democracy In Action

While we watch the spectacle of the conventions of the two principal national political parties, we may want to keep in mind a few facts. The first is purely financial: each party is provided with public funding amounting to approximately six million dollars. The same law which makes that money available to the parties also limits their expenditures to that amount. Keep in mind, during the conventions, that you are paying for them. That is what "public funding" means; it comes out of the taxes you pay.

A second act is another numerical one; it deals with the number of delegates who will attend; at the Democratic Convention, there was 3,931; at the Republican there will be 2,234 delegates.

A third fact deals with how delegates, or their alternates, will vote at the convention. Some delegates may vote according to the results of their state's presidential primary; some must vote as their state's party directs; others are free to vote however they see fit. It all depends upon which state they represent; rules differ, state to state.

From opening day through the week-long process that ends up costing Americans \$12,000,000 to the foregone conclusion of choosing Walter Mondale as the Democratic candidate and Ronald Reagan as the Republican candidate for president, convention delegates will make other choices. To the primary excuse for holding conventions and choosing presidential and vice presidential candidates, we can add the passage of a party platform as a goal. This document is supposed to serve as a list of positions to which every party candidate subscribes. The document generates plenty of political heat at the convention, but seldom sheds any light or political wisdom by which voters are enabled to make intelligent choices or decisions.

Long before election day, the platform has 'gone by the boards,' and been forgotten by practically everyone.

After the money has been spent, the delegates have convened, have discussed, caucussed, argued, recessed, reconvened, voted, and eventually chosen the candidates everyone has known for at least a year would be the men representing the two principal political parties, the conventions will adjourn. We shall be entertained for the ensuing two months by the drama of those two men, potentially the two most powerful and influential men in the world today, using every possible means to make each other appear to be the world's biggest idiot.

Following the mud-slinging session during which every self-respecting American citizen can but conclude that neither candidate for the presidency has the wit to find his way out of a paper bag when the directions are printed inside in large type, the voters are asked to make a choice of the better of the two. Difficult, of course, because neither leaves any avenue unexplored while seeking to expose the other's utter incompetency to fill the position.

Ultimately, the Electoral College decides which man wins the election. Perhaps that is just as well. The man-on-the-street, the voter, finds it hard to arrive at a rational decision. Some day enough of them might get together and elect a relatively-unknown third candidate on a write-in vote, if they really had a choice.

Ah, democracy in action! What would the TV anchormen do for news if it weren't for the presidential campaigns? One does wonder. . .