

Statement Filed by  
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with The Commission on Party Structure &  
Delegate Selection of the Democratic  
National Committee  
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Mr. Chairman:

As I am unable to be in Washington today, please permit me to share in the Commission's proceedings in this way. Since the 1950's, working with Governor Battle, right up to the 1968 Convention, when I joined with others in sponsoring this Commission, I have worked and fought for ever broader participation in the decision making processes of the Democratic Party.

I am proud to have borne with others, criticism for the compromises of 1964 which opened the door to major steps we took in 1968. I am anxious to appear before a Commission hearing at an appropriate session in the field.

It is imperative that Commission members -- and others who care for the course of our party -- recognize a fundamental conflict emerging in the American political process: on the one hand, ours is the only major western democratic power which is governed centrally but politticked locally. Restlessness and ambition move upward from local channels. We like our political power moving in that direction especially when public power seems more and more to move the other way.

On the other hand traditional local processes are threatened by growing power at the center. Money and the means of communication have been shifting rapidly into narrower channels. In urban areas, traditionally local issues are distinctively national both in implication and in impact. Political action in one city is network news a continent away. A dollar earned in one region campaigns in another. Local action costs more but local sources -- and that means local power -- can't pay the bill.

Nevertheless, local political organizations must continue to be the main gate of the political arena. This must be a prime goal of your Commission, your Convention and your Party. Our actions should be weighed as to their effect on strengthening local party organization. If the national organization has a justification it is to assist local party structures to absorb the impact of the conflict of power I have described, that they may emerge stronger and ever more responsive to the will of the people.

Party organization throughout the nation should be studied with care. Particular attention should be paid to voter registration systems. Perhaps we should endorse a system which permits registration at the same time the vote is cast -- a system recent Supreme Court decisions on other residence requirements would appear to encourage.

Costs of popular participation should be analyzed, as well as sources of funding. Justification for public funding, tax deduction or other incentives become clearer with every election.

The Commission also should weigh the unique power of the Party's National Convention with regard to local action in national affairs. National party rules and state election laws have always formed an uncertain crossroads. The National Party must carefully exercise its power to demand of state organizations, requirements in obtaining new state laws which broaden the selection process and afford better timing for the choice of National Convention Delegates. I have long suspected that as between the states and the National Party, the tail was wagging the dog. We have correctly begun to chart this course. You will be required to maintain the delicate balance.

The Commission also should find new ways to assure that Party members will credit majority rule in the Party. Loyalty ought to be required of the challenging as well as the challenged. Assured of a democratic process, those who participate in it, in turn ought to agree to abide its outcome.

We are fond of the term "grassroots" in describing our ideal system. Yet each of us, I am sure, recalls party members who have toiled long and hard, year after year, candidate after candidate -- some whom they

idolized, some whom they doubted. To be a "regular" is not necessarily to be wrong. To be "regular" can be "grassroots" too. There must be perennials as well as annuals and quadrennials. But it is the first duty of the regular party stalwart to keep the door open for any Democrat or any American who wishes to move the system.

That is the only way we can be sure our Party will sustain its life blood. Young people, new people must be free to move in, to share the process of decision, the process of selection, their responsibilities and their powers. And they must have a local handle with which to begin.

Such is the work of your Commission; such is the life and the future of our Party. But only in this way will the young and the new, the demanding and the embittered, the anxious and the doubting become not our latest problem, but our most promising solution.

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