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The Iowa Caucuses in a Front-Loaded System:

a Few Historical Lessons *

By

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In 1988, Iowa selected 52 Democratic delegates and 37 Republican delegates to their respective national party conventions, 1.2 percent of all Democratic delegates and 1.4 percent of all Republican delegates. Iowa's small size notwithstanding, the initial stage of the selection process, the February 8 precinct caucuses, received highly attentive media coverage, very much in keeping with the extraordinary attention these caucuses have received in previous years. In 1984, according to an actual count of news coverage appearing on all three television networks plus in the New York Times, Iowa, with 2.5 percent of the U.S. population, received 12.8 percent of the total news coverage accorded the presidential race from January to June.¹

* I thank Steven Stehr for superb assistance in pulling a great deal of factual material on Iowa out of the wood work.

¹ William C. Adams, "As New Hampshire Goes" in Gary R. Orren and Nelson W. Polsby (eds.) Media and Momentum: The New Hampshire Primary and Nomination Politics (Chatham, New Jersey: Chatham House, 1987) pp. 42-59, esp. p. 43.

Owing to the hospitality of the University of Iowa Political Science Department, in February, 1988 a few political scientists had the pleasure of actually going to Iowa and watching the caucus of the Democratic party of the 4th precinct of Johnson County, 289 or 287 strong, depending on the count you use, all gathered together in the auditorium of the Lincoln School of Iowa City, Iowa. Before the Democrats got their act together on the evening of February 8, it was possible to observe the 4th Precinct Republican meeting - - in the Lincoln School's kindergarten room, as it happens. There they were, about 60 Republicans, sitting decorously on those tiny little kindergarten chairs, chatting quietly and behaving just as though they were waiting for a string quartet concert to begin. The Democrats, true to form, put on a noisier and more cheerfully disorderly show of selecting 9 delegates to the Johnson county caucus of the Democratic party a month hence. The county caucus would send delegates to the congressional district convention a month after that, and they in turn elected delegates to the Iowa state convention who sent delegates to the national convention of the Democratic party in July. These complications alone justified the view that the fortunes of Presidential hopefuls were as flotsam on a roiling sea of process.

At least on the Democratic side, the Iowa precinct caucuses had something directly to do with the actual selection of actual delegates to the national convention. On the Republican side, the numbers breathlessly reported on the networks were the outcome of a straw poll ballot, conducted at the precinct caucuses, and phoned into the networks just like the real delegate divisions on the Democratic side. After the straw poll was

conducted, Republican delegates to the next level up were selected in each precinct, without any necessary connection to the straw poll.

As David Oman, co-chairman of the Iowa Republican party, described the process the week before to the Presidential Campaign Hotline:

Essentially we have one very large straw poll taken in 2500 different locations simultaneously....Those at the caucus will be given small cards and will mark on these cards their choice for president. The cards will be tallied....

Our straw poll is not tied to the process of choosing delegates. After the poll is taken and reported, the caucus will then pick its precinct committeeman and committeewoman, then pick the men and women who will go to the Republican county convention, and then discuss the platform.²

The county conventions met in March and picked delegates to district conventions, which met in June on the eve of the state convention. The district conventions selected three national convention delegates for each district and then the state convention selected the rest. Thus the straw poll might or might not predict the results of the delegate selection process accurately in any given year. In 1988, the preferences of the eventual delegates were 16 for Dole, 12 for Bush, two each for Robertson and Kemp, and five uncommitted.³

² Presidential Campaign Hotline January 4, 1988, pp. 15-16.

³ Congressional Quarterly, August 6, 1988 p. 2161.

On the Democratic side, the caucuses are more immediately consequential. As Phil Roeder, Communications Director of the Iowa State Democratic Party described it ahead of time to the Hotline:

...at 7:30 PM on caucus night in 2489 precincts people will start to break into candidate preference groups....They will physically divide into different groups for each candidate and in most instances there is an uncommitted group as well.⁴

These groups elect delegates according to the number of delegates each precinct was entitled to by virtue of its population. Preference groups were allocated delegates depending on what proportion of the people who showed up to the caucus were in each group. Groups that were too small to receive delegates had the option of breaking up and their members could migrate to their second choices or to the uncommitted group, or they could seek as a group to combine with one or more other small groups so as to be eligible to receive a delegate. Each of the groups then selected their delegates to the county convention. Democratic delegates selected in this fashion were, unlike the Republican delegates, usually pledged to a Presidential candidate as they moved up through the county and district conventions to the state convention.

Given the complications in ascertaining what the actual outcome of the precinct caucuses is, it is a wonder that there is so much news media

⁴ Presidential Campaign Hotline January 5, 1988, pp. 16-17.

coverage of the Iowa caucuses. Nevertheless, the coverage is there, because the Iowa caucuses are, in effect, the gateway to a long and complex nomination process, and all players and all observers very much want whatever information they can glean from the Iowa precinct caucuses if only to position themselves for the next round. The media need to know to whom to give special attention. Financial supporters of various candidates want to know whether it is worthwhile to continue to give, or to steer, money to their first choices or whether it is time to jump to other alternatives. Voters want to know which candidacies are viable, which futile.⁵

Thus, out of all the possible objects of study in the three ring circus of the American presidential nominating process, the grounds for paying special attention to the Iowa caucuses are that the system as a whole is conspicuously front-loaded, and Iowa is furthest to the front. The purpose of this short essay will be to review our understanding of what it means logically and strategically to have a front-loaded nomination process and to examine historically the effects of the Iowa caucuses on the fortunes of presidential candidates.

The temptation to ignore history is ever-present. Each quadrennial nomination sequence has plenty of elements of uniqueness, and our entire historical experience of Presidential elections yields very few instances at best. So underlying this discussion is what readers may wish to view as a

⁵ Indeed, Henry Brady and Richard Johnston argue that the main educational effect of the entire primary process for voters is to inform them about candidate viability. See "What's the Primary Message: Horse Race or Issue Journalism" in Media and Momentum pp. 127-186.

pedagogic preference for attempting to extract the lessons of history even though we must acknowledge that contemporary actors are not necessarily bound to act in accordance with them.

Even further constraining a historical view is the fact that whatever happened before the drastic changes of the post-1968 reforms should probably be ignored on the grounds that the system overall was fundamentally altered by these reforms. It is the reforms that front-loaded the presidential nominating process.⁶ Consequently, considering evidence from 1968 and before is bound to be drastically misleading as a guide to the structural constraints and strategic opportunities that shape the choices of contemporary actors. So we are left, in effect, with exactly eight historical data points, four Democratic, four Republican, representing the elections of 1972, 1976, 1980 and 1984. And these, owing to the effects of incumbency, can be reduced even further.

1972. In 1972 the Iowa caucuses were for the first time set early in the year, on January 24. This date was arrived at because the Democratic state convention was to be held on May 20 owing to the availability on that date of a suitable hall. Working backward from May 20, adequate time had to be provided to prepare for each of the earlier stages of the process, and the

⁶ See Nelson W. Polsby Consequences of Party Reform (New York: Oxford, 1983) for the full argument to this effect, and, for copious evidence, Byron Shafer Quiet Revolution: The Struggle for the Democratic Party and the Shaping of Post-Reform Politics (New York: Russell Sage, 1983).

entire sequence had to be completed within the same calendar year as the national convention. Thus the January date.⁷

In 1972, the Republican incumbent, Richard Nixon, had only token opposition in Iowa from two Representatives in Congress, Paul (Pete) McCloskey of California on his left and John Ashbrook of Ohio on his right.

The Democratic caucuses, on the other hand, were quite important. After the incident at Chappaquiddick Island in the summer of 1969 immobilized Edward Kennedy as a factor in presidential election politics, it was assumed by most observers that the Democratic party's 1968 Vice-Presidential candidate, Senator Edmund S. Muskie, of Maine, would be the nominee. During 1971 Muskie led all Democrats in the public opinion polls and, indeed, beat President Nixon in trial heats.⁸ But operating under obsolete strategic premises, Muskie failed to announce his candidacy until January 4, 1972. The assumption under the old dispensation was that only weak candidates announced early and willingly subjected themselves to the rigors of early campaigning. Presumably, weak candidates had no choice. The task of weak candidates was by their early activity to demonstrate unexpected popularity so as to change the minds of party leaders who otherwise would not support them. Thus an early start was necessary for candidates who had nothing to lose by risking early disappointment. Strong candidates waited, and collected endorsements from the party notables whose good opinion had, in the past, readily

⁷ See R. W. Apple, Jr. "Iowa's Weighty Caucuses: Significance By Accident" New York Times, January 25, 1988. p. 1. In 1976 the Iowa caucuses were held on January 19; in 1980 on January 21; in 1984 on February 20.

⁸ A number of essays on the progress of the Democratic nomination during 1972 are reprinted in Nelson W. Polsby Political Promises: Essays and Commentary on American Politics (New York: Oxford, 1974), pp. 15-51.

translated into solid delegate support at the national convention from state party delegations that these party leaders influenced or controlled.

In April, 1971, Muskie's campaign director Berl Bernhard said:

There's no real necessity to [announce early]....When you do it, you should be ready to do a bit more than just announce. You do it to maximize your position; you don't do it just for the ritual. The announcement is the clarion call to people who want to work for you to get ready. The most important thing Ed Muskie can do right now, rather than announce, is to talk about substantive issues.⁹

As of that month, Richard H. Stewart, Muskie's press secretary, said:

I thought Muskie was in awfully good shape. The money was flowing in fairly well in keeping with Muskie's standing in the polls. I figured that all we had to do was sit and wait, and that it was only a matter of a few months before Muskie would win the nomination...¹⁰

⁹ "Muskie Campaign: Cautious Pace By the Man in Front", Congressional Quarterly, April 16, 1971, p. 857.

¹⁰ Quoted in Ernest R. May and Janet Fraser (eds.) Campaign '72: The Managers Speak (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1973) p. 35.

By the time the Muskie organization woke up to the fact that what was required was state by state campaigning to win the popular support of a loyal Muskie faction of voters, it was much too late. George McGovern, whose initial standing in the public opinion trial heats was negligible, out-organized Muskie in most early states, which is to say he put together an enthusiastic group of die-hard workers mobilized around anti-war sentiment. Neither McGovern nor Muskie invested much effort in Iowa. The next day the newspapers reported unofficially, with incomplete returns, that Muskie beat McGovern in the precinct caucuses in Iowa 35.5% to 22.6%, with 35.8% uncommitted. The unexpected closeness of this margin pushed Muskie into overwork and an unaccustomed public display of emotional behavior in front of the building housing the offices of the Manchester Union Leader in New Hampshire.¹¹ By the time the news media analysts were finished with the New Hampshire results, prior "expectations" that the U.S. Senator from a neighboring state should win an overwhelming victory--over 50%--completely dominated the fact that Muskie had in fact won once again (46% to 37%). Because his win was 4 or 5 points less impressive than "expected", Muskie support--especially financial support--began to dry up, and he withdrew from the race altogether by April 27.

¹¹ As Muskie told Theodore White:

That previous week...I'd been down to Florida, then I flew to Idaho, then I flew to California, then I flew back to Washington to vote in the Senate, and I flew back to California, and then I flew into Manchester and I was hit with this "Canuck" story. I'm tough physically, but no one could do that...

Theodore H. White The Making of the President 1972 (New York: Atheneum, 1973), pp. 81-82.

The Muskie presidency was nibbled to death by ducks before it began. This extraordinary spectacle gave unmistakable evidence of the fact that changing the rules had changed the game. Pre-convention skirmishes were no longer simply important evidence to be taken into account by party leaders in making nominations: they were the contest itself.

Iowa did not administer the coup de grace to Muskie: that happened in New Hampshire. At most what happened in Iowa energized the participants in the New Hampshire primary and structured the alternatives for New Hampshire voters.

1976. Once again an incumbent was running on the Republican side. This time, however, Gerald Ford was the incumbent. Ford had never been a Republican presidential nominee and he was not an eloquent defender of his presidency. He was faced by a serious challenge from Ronald Reagan. Iowa came out in a dead heat between the two; both ended up with 18 delegates to the national convention. Ford won the official straw poll the night of the precinct caucuses, but by only a small margin. R.W. Apple of the New York Times characterized the Republican effort in Iowa by both candidates as "all but invisible, with only marginal organizational efforts by the supporters of Mr. Ford and Mr. Reagan."¹²

On the Democratic side, the candidate who focused hardest on Iowa was Jimmy Carter. Hamilton Jordan, Carter's campaign manager, put together a

¹² R. W. Apple, Jr., "Carter Defeats Bayh By 2-1 in Iowa Vote" New York Times January 20, 1976, p. 1.

strategy that was exactly three events deep, requiring strong showings in Iowa and New Hampshire, and a careful positioning as the anti-Wallace southerner in the Florida primary.¹³ The Carter strategy dovetailed nicely with those of his main competitors. Henry Jackson's campaign was designed to start late: a token effort in Iowa (January 19) and New Hampshire (February 24) followed by an unequivocal win in Massachusetts (March 2), only a week later. After all, Massachusetts' 104 delegates greatly exceeded the Iowa-New Hampshire combination of 64. Thus Jackson's decision to play from "strength."¹⁴

Morris Udall's campaign was strategically incoherent. First Udall made an effort in Iowa, then, in an attempt to stretch his resources to cover as many primaries as possible (there were 30 Democratic primaries in 1976) Udall's campaign slackened its Iowa effort. As news coverage focused even more strongly on Iowa, however, Udall at the last minute recommitted resources to the race.¹⁵ He was too late. Although he finished as high as second in seven primaries in 1976, in Iowa Udall came in fifth with 5.9% of

¹³ Elizabeth Drew writes of Carter:

Early successes and surprises were big elements in Carter's plan....The basic idea was to show early that the southerner could do well in the North and could best Wallace in the South....

He visited a hundred and fourteen towns in Iowa, beginning in 1975 (and his family made countless other visits)...

American Journal: The Events of 1976 (New York: Random House, 1977), pp. 143-144, 466-467. See also Jules Witcover, Marathon: The Pursuit of the Presidency 1972-1976 (New York: Viking, 1977), p. 114.

¹⁴ See Drew, American Journal, Witcover, Marathon, passim.

¹⁵ See Witcover, Marathon, pp. 202-205; Drew, American Journal, passim; Martin Schram, Running For President 1976 (New York: Stein and Day, 1977), pp. 13-15.

the vote behind uncommitted with 37% of the caucus vote, Jimmy Carter with 28%, Birch Bayh with 13%, and Fred Harris with 10%.

The next day, R.W. Apple minimized the strong uncommitted sentiment and created the first major instance in which the Iowa caucuses combined importantly with mass media spin to launch a presidential candidacy. His story on the front page of the New York Times read:

Former Governor Jimmy Carter of Georgia scored an impressive victory in yesterday's Iowa Democratic precinct caucuses, demonstrating strength among rural, blue-collar, black, and suburban voters.

Mr. Carter defeated his closest rival, Senator Birch Bayh of Indiana, by a margin of more than 2-1, and left his other four challengers far behind. The uncommitted vote, which many Iowa politicians had forecast at more than 50 percent, amounted to only about a third of the total, slightly more than that of Mr. Carter.¹⁶

¹⁶ Apple "Carter Defeats Bayh" This was not the first time in 1976 that Apple had puffed Carter. Elizabeth Drew's diary of January 27, 1976 reported:

"A story by R.W. Apple, Jr. in the Times last October saying that Carter was doing well in Iowa was itself a political event, prompting other newspaper stories that Carter was doing well in Iowa, and then more news magazine and television coverage for Carter than might otherwise have been his share"

American Journal, p. 6.

This article, with its strong and coherent story line, cast a long shadow. It contained many elements that in later years would worry journalists--notably the use of such a word as "impressive" (to whom?) in the lead of what ostensibly was a news story and the belittling of the uncommitted vote because of the disappointed "forecasts" or expectations of anonymous politicians.

Elizabeth Drew's diary for the day after the Iowa caucuses said:

This morning, Carter, who managed to get to New York on time, was interviewed on the CBS Morning News, the Today Show and ABC's Good Morning America also ran segments on Carter. On the CBS Evening News, Walter Cronkite said that the Iowa voters have spoken "and for the Democrats what they said was 'Jimmy Carter'".¹⁷

This coverage set the stage for New Hampshire, where Carter alone ran as a centrist Democrat and received 28.4 percent of the vote. Although he filed a slate of delegates, Jackson sat the primary out, and no fewer than four candidates, Udall (at 22.7 percent), Sargent Shriver (at 8.2 percent), Fred Harris (at 10.8 percent), and Birch Bayh (at 15.2 percent) divided the liberal Democratic vote.

1980. By 1980, it was beginning to be understood that there was no such thing as a successful presidential strategy that ignored early delegate

¹⁷ Drew, American Journal, p. 16.

selection events. President Carter's managers worked hard to structure the order in which states selected delegates so as to maximize favorable publicity impact, seeking to move southern primaries up to the head of the line.¹⁸ Carter, aided by a rally round the flag at the start of the Iranian hostage crisis, beat Edward Kennedy in Iowa 59.1% to 31.2%. Iowa momentum helped Carter amass a majority of delegates far more quickly in 1980 than he had done in 1976.¹⁹

On the Republican side, Iowa nearly did the front-runner, Ronald Reagan, in. Saving his energy, Reagan campaigned only 8 days in the state and passed up the major all-candidate Republican debate. Caucus turnout on the Republican side jumped to 110,000 participants from a mere 22,000 in 1976. Howard Baker, an interested party, remarked that the Iowa caucuses had become "the functional equivalent of a primary". George Bush edged Reagan 31.5% to 29.4% in the straw vote, and as Jack Germond and Jules Witcover observed, the Iowa caucuses served in 1980 to clear "the underbrush of candidates with little future...establishing a definite pecking order among those who remained".²⁰

Only a drastic change of strategy (including the replacement of John Sears, the strategist) and some extraordinarily vigorous propagandizing by

¹⁸ Nelson W. Polsby, "The Democratic Nomination" in Austin Ranney (ed.) The American Elections of 1980 (Washington: AEI, 1981), pp. 47-48.

¹⁹ Polsby, "The Democratic Nomination", p. 49.

²⁰ Jack Germond and Jules Witcover, Blue Smoke and Mirrors (New York: Viking, 1981), p. 96.

the Manchester Union Leader saved Ronald Reagan's bacon by aiding his comeback in New Hampshire. David W. Moore wrote:

In the 1980 primary campaign, the Union Leader provided an immense amount of information about the candidates, especially a great deal of negative information about one candidate [Bush] and positive information about the other [Reagan]. If ever a news source can influence voters' opinions, the Union Leader should have influenced voters during that campaign. And it did....

On average, readers of the Union Leader were more likely than nonreaders to support Ronald Reagan by a margin of 35 to 40 points, a pattern that held true whatever a voter's ideological predisposition (from strong conservative to liberal). Indeed, a simultaneous comparison of numerous factors demonstrates that the Union Leader was overwhelmingly the most important influence on the choice Republicans made in the primary election.²¹

Whatever the overall influence of the Union Leader, New Hampshire's major news outlet, that influence is at its maximum in addressing Republican primary voters. Reagan campaigned energetically, and ambushed Bush at a key New Hampshire debate by "spontaneously" agreeing to let also-rans onto the platform. It also helped Reagan enormously that the gap between Iowa and New Hampshire was a full month (January 21 to February 26), thus permitting Union

²¹ David W. Moore, "The Manchester Union Leader in the New Hampshire Primary" in Media and Momentum, pp. 104-126, esp. pp. 116, 123.

Leader publicity to counteract Iowa momentum. In 1976, that gap had helped Carter, a "winner" in Iowa; in 1980, it helped Reagan, a "loser".

By the 1980 election the strong interdependence between early delegate selection and media publicity could easily be observed. The "pecking order" of which Germond and Witcover wrote was, after all, a fabrication chiefly valuable in the construction of coherent news stories. The success of Jimmy Carter in 1976, and even more striking, the failure of Henry Jackson, suggested that it would be hard, perhaps impossible, to ascertain the preferences of primary electorates unmediated by the news--and news media evaluations--of how the various candidates were doing. And these characterizations could easily take on the coloration of self-fulfilling prophecies.

1984. Nothing doing on the Republican side; Reagan's incumbency meant no contest in Iowa. Democratic rules were rewritten ostensibly to counteract media influence: states were required to select delegates within a 3-month "window" so that many states would act on any given Tuesday, thus (it was hoped) confounding media attempts to start a single unified bandwagon. The effort was a failure, in part because both Iowa and New Hampshire received exemptions from the window, and continued to act first. On the Democratic side, Walter Mondale overwhelmed everybody, collecting 44.5% of the vote in a large field of contenders. Gary Hart came in second with a dismal 14.8% of the vote.

This was enough to identify Hart, rather than John Glenn, who finished in 6th place with 5.3 percent of the vote, as the strongest non-Mondale candidate. The news media constructed a horse race out of the unpromising material of the Hart candidacy, gave him extraordinary news coverage for the ensuing week, and boosted him into a win in the New Hampshire primary.²²

It seems clear enough why the news media need a horse race, given their extraordinary investment in delegate selection coverage and the logic of their competition for business. Iowa caucuses help the news media sort out the story: it was the Iowa caucuses in 1984 that decreed that Gary Hart and not John Glenn should be the "unexpected" horse to make the race against Mondale, and it was the media that made the horse race.

In 1988, with only one week separating Iowa and New Hampshire, the two events might have been expected to interact strongly. Governor Michael Dukakis entered Iowa as the Democratic candidate with the most money and the best organization in the most states -- but not in Iowa -- and with extremely high and favorable name recognition in New Hampshire, whose Democratic votes are mostly located on the fringes of the Boston metropolitan area. This meant that the only chance the other candidates had to neutralize the

²² Nelson W. Polsby "The Democratic Nomination and the Evolution of the Party System" in Austin Ranney (ed.) The American Elections of 1984 (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1985) pp. 36-65. In the eight day gap between Iowa and New Hampshire Gary Hart went from 10 per cent in the public opinion polls to a 41 per cent vote in the New Hampshire primary itself. See Peter Hart's comments in the Presidential Campaign Hotline, January 25, 1988, p. 19.

favorable impact that the New Hampshire primary was bound to have on the fortunes of the Governor of Massachusetts was in Iowa.²³

In the event, the Iowa Democratic result did not help the winner there in New Hampshire, mainly because what happened on the Republican side in Iowa had such a strong impact on the Democratic race. As we all know, the big story of Iowa 1988 -- and there always has to be one big story -- was that Pat Robertson came in second and George Bush came in third in the Republican straw poll. And that is how the story played in the news media for the week between Iowa and New Hampshire. Obviously, that was bound to have some impact on the Republican race -- but not as much as on the race on the Democratic side. Because the Robertson blip absorbed so much attention it spoiled the chances of the Democratic winner, Richard Gephardt to capitalize on his Iowa win to become the focal alternative to Michael Dukakis in New Hampshire.

In 1984 Gary Hart was able to parley a 15 percent second place showing into a media spin that made him the winner in New Hampshire, as figures on late-deciding Democrats showed.²⁴ In 1976, Jimmy Carter was able to pull out in front of the pack with 29 percent of the vote in the Iowa caucuses. In

²³ Mickey Kaus, et al., "Yes We Have a Front-Runner," Newsweek, July 20, 1987; Richard Berke, "Iowa Eclipsing New Hampshire Among Hopefuls," New York Times, September 6, 1987; Thomas B. Edsall and David S. Broder, "Dukakis' New Hampshire Campaign Not Unraveled by Biden Videotape," Washington Post, October 3, 1987; Mickey Kaus, et al., "Now, a Dukakis Fiasco," Newsweek, October 12, 1987; Maralee Schwartz, "Dukakis Still a Top Fund-Raiser," Washington Post, November 11, 1987; Gwen Ifill, "Bush and Dukakis Far Ahead in Poll," Washington Post, November 20, 1987.

²⁴ See Nelson W. Polsby, "The Democratic Nomination and the Evolution of the Party System."

1988, a 31 percent win was not enough for Gephardt to turn the same trick. Indeed, the Wall Street Journal reported that in the week between the Iowa caucuses and the New Hampshire primary the coverage Gephardt got on the network evening news programs actually diminished from the week before -- from 6:05 minutes to 4:55 minutes.²⁵ Thus it is not far-fetched to argue that although the winner in Iowa did not win the nomination of either party, Iowa did in fact play an influential role in determining the 1988 outcome.

What do these historical vignettes teach?

(1) Candidates ignore Iowa at their peril. This does not mean that doing badly in Iowa is sufficient to lose everything, or that doing well is sufficient to win everything. It does mean that Iowa can be a tremendous help or a tremendous hindrance to each and every candidacy.

(2) This is so not because of Iowa's size but because of its temporal primacy: Iowa results, plus media spin, structure the alternatives for the New Hampshire primary. These two events together plus media spin structure alternatives for everything that follows.

Doing well in Iowa takes organization as well as good publicity, because organizations get people to caucuses and sustain their loyalty as the public shufflings and reshufflings take place especially at the Democratic caucuses

²⁵ Monica Langley, "In Pre-New Hampshire Flurry, Images Prevail, and TV Coverage May be Pivotal to Candidates," Wall Street Journal February 16, 1988, p.64.

themselves. Doing well as the result of Iowa, however, chiefly requires good publicity; spin control so as to minimize adverse expectations at a minimum, but also, if possible, the good luck to be the story that the national news media converge upon coming out of Iowa and as the first primary approaches. The closer the next event in time, the narrower the temporal gap between Iowa and New Hampshire, the greater the potential that both events can be interpreted together, and thus the more influential the news media response to Iowa overall in the election year.

The translation of these conclusions into grist for the mills of formal theorists of the political process seems straightforward enough. The sequence of Iowa-New Hampshire and so on can be interpreted as reflecting agenda control, goal displacement, or path dependency depending on the theorist's taste in metaphorical language. All these theories recognize the significance of early decisions in determining the options available when it is time to make later ones.

Sequential moves in an organized system may imply adaptation to anticipated choice in the sense of progression toward a specified goal, e.g. the nomination of a presidential candidate. These moves also may imply path dependency or goal displacement or adaptation to experience or historical influence in that alternatives that are possible later in the sequence are constrained by choices that have been made earlier.²⁶ It is the palpable

²⁶ See James G. March, Decisions and Organizations, (Oxford, England: Basil Blackwell, 1988) p. 2-3, 8-12.

importance of the latter sorts of influence in the presidential nominating process that prompts interest in the Iowa caucuses.

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