

the leading contender for the Democratic nomination, actually started his campaign in 1974, relentlessly touring the country after completing his term as Governor.

Even if one discounts early campaigning and fund-raising as part of the true electoral process, it cannot be said that New Hampshire is the beginning. For long before that the caucuses begin that lead to the choice of party convention delegates in non-primary states. This year, Iowa was the first, on January 19 — more than a month before the New Hampshire primary.

The caucuses are not easy to explain. However, they are perhaps best described as grass-roots "in-party" votes within grass-roots "in-party" votes, which, over periods of weeks or months, lead to the selection of delegates to both the Republican and Democratic national conventions.

Iowa example

For instance: Iowa held what are called "precinct caucuses" on January 19, at which registered voters within the state's various precincts voted for delegates to the state's county conventions, some of the delegates having put their names forward as being committed to a particular Presidential candidate and some having put their names forward as uncommitted. At the county conventions, the chosen delegates then vote on who should be delegates to the state convention. The state delegates then decide which delegates will go to the national convention.

To illustrate how long this procedure can take we shall take a look at the Republicans in Iowa. Their precinct caucuses, as previously stated, were on January 19, their county conventions on February 28, and their state convention on June 18 and 19. But, while the caucus procedure might strike one as odd and unnecessarily involved and, while it is certainly given much less attention as a rule than the primary method of sorting out Presidential nominees, its importance should not be

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underestimated. It was his victory in the January 19 Iowa Democratic precinct caucuses over better-known Democrats such as Indiana Senator Birch Bayh and Arizona Representative Morris Udall that gave Jimmy Harris his early push to prominence. And that prominence has since been reinforced with other precinct caucus wins.

But the heart of the U.S. Presidential election process is the primaries. Exciting headline-making contests, they have always held the power to make or break a candidate for the Presidency of the United States, and this year, with 29 of the states, plus the District of Columbia choosing to go the primary route (compared to 23 in 1972 and 17 in 1968), they are more important than ever. In 1974 approximately 75 per cent of the delegates who arrive at the national conventions — the Democrats will stage theirs in July in New York, the Republicans in Kansas City in August — will have been selected as a result of primary votes.

Differences

Not all primaries are the same, however. There are states that choose their delegates on a winner-take-all basis. There are states that use a proportional representation system to determine how many delegates are allotted various candidates. There are states that use a mixture of both, states that hold "loophole" primaries (so-called because they get round national party rules and get away with doing so) and states that hold "beauty contests" primaries (so-called because, beyond psychological impact, they do not mean very much). And there are states that allow "cross-over" voting. The rules vary endlessly, from state to state, from party to party.

To illustrate the differences, a number of state primaries are worth while examining. New Hampshire, customarily the first of the primaries, is divided, in the case of both the Republicans and the Democrats, into two ballots. The first of these is a Presidential preference vote, in which registered voters cast their ballot for an actual Presidential candidate — Ford, Reagan, and Carter or Udall or Bayh, and so on. The second ballot offers a choice of delegates to the national convention, which may run as "pledged to" or "favored to" a particular candidate, or as "unpledged" delegates.

The first ballot — the one in which the voter chooses his Presidential candidate directly — is, technically speaking, meaningless. It does not count in the allocation of delegates to the convention. It is