

number" for nomination is 1,505. With the large number of Democrats seeking their party's nomination (no fewer than 11 were officially in the contest before the first precinct caucus vote was cast), it is entirely possible that the convention delegates will be so broadly committed as to offer no single candidate a chance of quick victory.

It is then that the delegates who have run and been chosen as uncommitted delegates — those under the control of men like New York Governor Carey and those from states that do not require adherence to a candidate beyond the first ballot — become very important indeed. Then the process that is known as "brokering" begins, the managers of the various candidates with a chance "wheeling and dealing" in an effort to win support to their side. It is then, too, that the possibility of a deadlocked convention arises — a convention so rigidly divided between two or more declared candidates that the delegates begin to look elsewhere for a compromise candidate who, for whatever reasons, is sufficiently appealing, or inoffensive, to all sides to bring them together. Hubert Humphrey, the party's nominee in 1968, is counting on this happening in 1976. While he has declined to compete in any primaries (he says they are debilitating), he has let it be known that he will be available for the nomination in case of a deadlock. George McGovern, the party's 1972 nominee, has said much the same.

Once the two party's have their nominees, and the Presidential nominees have chosen their Vice-Presidential running-mates, the procedure for selecting a U.S. President becomes simpler. But it may not, even at this stage, be a straightforward choice between two Presidential and two Vice-Presidential candidates. U.S. law allows individuals who wish to run as independent candidates, or as third-party candidates, to have their names placed on the Presidential ballot provided they can obtain a certain number of signatures on petitions of support in each of the 50 states. This year, Eugene McCarthy, the man who came close to winning the Democratic nomination in 1968, is determined to do just that. And there remains the very real possibility that George Wallace, having been denied the nomination of the Democratic nomination once again this year, will do what he has done once before — create the American Party and run as its Presidential nominee.

But even if the 1976 Presidential election does boil down to a choice between Republican and Democratic candidates, the American public will not quite

have a direct say in who will be the next man to enter the White House. For, at this point, that incredible apparatus known as the electoral college comes into play.

Electoral college

On November 2 this year, when Americans go to the polls, they will not, technically speaking, be voting for a President or a Vice-President but for a slate of Republican or Democratic electors that is numerically equal to their state's representation in Congress. The chosen slates, be they Republican or Democratic, are then brought together to form the electoral college. And, long after the average voter has had his say (on the first Monday after the second Wednesday in December of each leap year, to be exact) these slates, consisting of 538 individuals, decide who the President and Vice-President will be.

In practice, of course, the choice of the electoral college should match the choice of the people on election day (precisely defined as the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November of each leap year). But it need not happen that way. For, while the Democratic slates that are chosen in their state invariably vote for the Democratic Presidential nominees, and the chosen Republican slates invariably vote for the Republican nominees, they are not constitutionally bound to do so. Also, the slates are chosen in each state on a winner-take-all basis. Thus, by winning by a narrow margin in very large states while losing by wide margins in smaller states, it is possible for a Presidential candidate to win the Presidency in the electoral college vote while accumulating a smaller percentage of the country's popular vote than his opponent.

This happened in 1824, when John Quincy Adams won the Presidency. It happened again in 1876, when Rutherford B. Hayes was chosen, and in 1888, when Benjamin Harrison was elected. And it very nearly happened again, as recently as 1960, when John F. Kennedy beat Richard Nixon.

Still, assuming all goes well, Americans should know on the evening of November 2, 1976, who their President and Vice-President will be for the opening years of their third century. Two months later, it should be confirmed — in time for the inaugural address and the attending celebrations.

Then Americans need concern themselves only with what it all cost them. For, under a new campaign-finance law passed in 1974, in the wake of the Watergate scandal, each candidate who is able to

Presidential candidate can be elected with minority of popular vote