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On Being a Republican in Massachusetts

Notes of a Party Chairman

Andrew Natsios

In the 1970s the Democratic and Republican national and state parties initiated efforts at party renewal in order to reverse their declining institutional power. Between 1980 and 1987 the Massachusetts Republican Party undertook a renewal effort modeled after that of the Republican National Committee under William Brock. This model emphasized the provision to candidates and to the grassroots party organization of campaign services such as literature design, polling, direct mail fund-raising, telephone banks, and campaign schools. The Massachusetts Republican Party concentrated these services to candidates for the state legislature, achieving the largest net gain in seats since 1962. Campaign technology as a party renewal strategy has inherent limits, which may now have been reached; further progress may require changes in the ideology and image of the state party.

Certainly one of the most significant trends in the American political system over the past several decades has been the virtual collapse of American political parties as institutions of governance, which has produced several unanticipated consequences that have weakened the political system. The cost of campaigns has increased dramatically at both the state and national level as the media-intensive direct primary has replaced the party nominating convention as the principal mechanism for choosing candidates for office. When they were functional, parties served both as institutional mechanisms for aggregating interest groups in American society so they could influence public policy and as a screen to protect policymakers from the corrupting influences of interest-group politics. Now interest groups influence government directly, with the attendant problems of influence peddling, the corrupting influence of their campaign contributions going directly to candidates, and incoherent national policy as the interest groups encourage congressional committees and executive branch agencies to make policy decisions even if those policies are contradictory from one agency or law to another.

The parties acted as the primary medium through which candidates and officeholders communicated with the public, a role the mass media have taken for themselves, and for

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which they are suited. A strong case could be made that declining voter participation, greater public cynicism of political figures, and the instability of governing coalitions are a function of the unsuitability of the media as a mechanism for this sort of communication.

Political parties are important institutions in democracies; when they fail, democracy is weakened and the authority of government is diminished. The political parties, or what was left of them when their authority reached its lowest point in the late 1960s and 1970s, began to consider measures to renew themselves. This article examines the efforts at renewal in the Republican Party in Massachusetts between 1980 and 1986, the result of those efforts, and the prospects for the party in the 1990 elections. As Massachusetts Republican Party Chairman from 1980 to 1987, I directed this attempt at party renewal, so I write as a practitioner.

History

Republicans in Massachusetts, who had long relied on the formal party organization to win elections, had the singular misfortune of having their party decline institutionally at the same time they began to lose their hold on political power in the state because of historical changes beyond the party's control. The rise of the Democratic Party in Massachusetts had little to do with its formal party structure, which was weak, ineffective, and at constant war within itself. The Democrats more resembled a mosaic of feudal fiefdoms than an organized party, but they nevertheless began to win elections beginning in the late 1940s, finally, under Michael Dukakis, taking complete control of state government in the mid-1970s. Because the structure of the Republican Party was central to its electoral successes in the era when it was in power, the decline of the party institutionally was more catastrophic to it than any organizational weakness the Democrats may have suffered as both parties declined institutionally.

For nearly eighty years, from the Civil War until 1948, Massachusetts was a bastion of Yankee Republicanism. For most of this time the Republican Party held majorities in both houses of the legislature and elected both U.S. senators and the majority of the congressional delegation. The Democrats succeeded, beginning in the 1930s, to win the governorship with greater frequency and occasionally a U.S. Senate seat when they nominated a lace-curtain Irishman from outside Boston, like David Walsh, to run for that office. These exceptions proved the rule of Republican predominance.

In the nineteenth century the Republicans' control reflected more than anything the simple demographic truth that swamp and Brahmin Yankees were more numerous than the immigrant Irish.¹ By 1920 two thirds of the population of the state was foreign born or the children of immigrants, and the Yankees could no longer count on numerical superiority to win elections.² In 1924 the party reached a turning point when control over the state organization, in a celebrated and bitter struggle, passed from the elder Henry Cabot Lodge to a new generation of Yankee politicians led by Calvin Coolidge.³ Republican Party leaders sought to stem the tide of growing immigrant power reflected in the resurgent Democratic Party through several strategies after their poor showing in 1928–1932. First, they centralized political power in the party in the Republican State Committee and made it into an effective political organization designed to protect the existing arrangement of power in the state. Second, they systematically attempted to assimilate some of the newer immigrant groups (French, Italians, Jews, and Poles) into the party, a task made easier by the refusal of the Irish, who increasingly dominated the Democratic Party, to allow any measure of participation by Catholics from eastern and southern Europe,

blacks, or Jews. Finally, the party espoused moderate social and economic reform to appeal to disadvantaged ethnic groups.⁴

The Democrats did their part to make the Republican strategy succeed by inept and parochial leadership and brutal factional infighting. The Democrats should have taken over the state just after World War I, as demographic changes moved rapidly in their favor. Instead, not until 1954 did the Republican Party finally lose control of the state House of Representatives, and 1958 of the state Senate. Republican candidates continued to win the governorship frequently until 1974, when Francis Sargent was defeated, and at least one U.S. Senate seat until 1978, when Edward Brooke lost.

The Republican Party organization was an extraordinary edifice to behold in the earlier years. Each town had an elected committee of between twenty and thirty-five members, with ward committees in the cities serving a parallel function. The work of the committee was carefully planned and organized by an extensive state party staff. We found in old Republican State Committee files fund-raising manuals designed for 1936, which would be regarded as state-of-the-art fund-raising by present-day standards.⁵ Each town committee had a quota to raise by knocking on the doors of every Republican in town once a year. The proceeds were sent to the state committee. I can recall this system in practice in the 1960s in my hometown, Holliston, where I, a teenager, was assigned a route to complete. The Republican town committees, until the 1960s, ran the campaigns of Republican candidates from president to state representative. Patronage from Republican governors was distributed through and by the local party organization until John Volpe, realizing that the base of the party was declining, sought to expand his own base by distributing patronage outside the party to Democrats and independents who had supported him for governor. Republican Party platforms prior to the 1960s were serious documents that successful candidates were expected to implement after the election. Party workers aspired to the chairmanship of a town or ward committee, which was a sought-after position.

From 1953 to 1974 the local Republican Party organization played a major role in nominating candidates for statewide office at state nominating conventions. The Republican delegates to these conclaves were chosen by the town and ward committees, and the delegates were almost always members of the local committees. Well into the late 1970s, the party's slate of candidates resembled a domestic UN — the Yankees had gradually agreed to share power with ethnic Republicans and the party's ticket reflected this changed constituency. With few exceptions, those who were nominated at the Republican state conventions were also successful in the statewide primaries in September of each election year. The Democrats were less successful at keeping up party discipline after these conventions, so that many convention choices were defeated in the Democratic primaries. The bitterness and factionalism of the fights contributed to the Democratic losses for statewide office. A Democratic legislature abolished these conventions in 1973. Only recently have they been revived by the Democrats.

In a word, the old Republican organizational structure had critical tasks to perform: candidate selection, campaign organization, fund-raising, patronage distribution, and platform writing.

The increasing mobility of American society made it more difficult to maintain a stable Republican Party structure, since new residents require socialization in a community before they get involved in politics. The dramatic increase in the number of working women meant that one of the major sources of Republican volunteer help, women, would be occupied with their own careers rather than working in political campaigns. The Massachusetts Federation of Republican Women, which once had chapters in almost every

city and large town, is now reduced to fourteen chapters of twelve hundred older women (with the exception of the Boston club and a few suburban clubs that younger women join).

These historic trends coincided, in 1969, with local political events that accelerated the collapse of the old Massachusetts Republican Party apparatus. Early that year Governor John Volpe became secretary of transportation in the Nixon administration. Frank Sargent, a patrician Yankee who had had a distinguished career in state service before being elected lieutenant governor in 1966, ascended to the governor's chair. Sargent and his advisers, in assessing the declining fortunes of the Republican Party in the commonwealth, decided the local party organization was more trouble than it was help and consequently put distance between the governor's office and the party. The distance grew to dislike as Sargent appointed more and more Democrats to his staff, to judgeships, and to the state bureaucracy. After his election in 1970 the governor began a gradual move to the left ideologically, presumably to co-opt any Democratic candidate for governor from attacking from a more liberal platform. In the process not only were the party conservatives, a growing force in the organization, alienated from the Sargent administration, but so were the business community and the moderate wing of the party. By the early 1970s the Republican Party was engaged in a destructive civil war.

While the party had been in genteel decay for two decades as a result of inexorable changes in the state, it was the Sargent administration that rendered the final blow to the creaking organization. Sargent maintained control of the state committee through his hand-picked state chairmen, each of whom served brief but destructive terms between 1969 and 1972 and left the party in shambles. The collapse of the fund-raising capacity of the state committee took income from \$495,000 in 1968 to \$50,000 in 1972 with a \$90,000 debt. The once powerful staff was reduced to one secretary, Peg Kelly, a career party worker who had been with the state committee for twenty-five years; everyone else was laid off. The number of Republican town and ward committee members declined from fourteen thousand in 1968 to seven thousand in 1972. The statistics only confirmed what was happening to the party at the state level.⁶

One of Sargent's party chairmen told me that he was given orders by the governor to shut down the fund-raising operation of the state party because it was competing with his own fund-raising. As a Sargent loyalist, the chairman obediently carried out the instruction. One of Sargent's senior staff advisers told me the crux of the governor's motivation for rendering the final blow to the party: he feared it would become an organizing center for conservative opposition to his administration and more particularly to his reelection campaign. His fear was shortly confirmed.

The conservative wing assessed the damage to the party and began an effort to wrest control of the state committee from Sargent in the spring of 1972. The anti-Sargent slate won across the state. The new state committee elected as its chairman Otto Wahlrab, a local party organizer, who with the help of Ann Witherbee, a moderate Republican and the party's new finance chairman, spent his time restoring morale among what remained of the party workers and paying off the party debt.

The conservative insurgency in the party led to a formal challenge to Sargent in the 1974 gubernatorial election by Carroll Sheehan, a strong conservative and former member of the Sargent administration who had become disgusted by Sargent's liberalism. While the challenge was unsuccessful (36 percent for Sheehan, 64 percent for Sargent), it did focus opposition to the administration. In the general election, Sargent was defeated by Michael Dukakis, a Democrat who ran on a conservative no-new-taxes platform. Exit

polls indicated that Sargent received only 55 percent of the Republican vote in the general election, with Dukakis receiving 45 percent. Sargent took 44 percent and Dukakis 56 percent of the total two-party vote for governor.

While the declining fortunes of the Republican Party in Massachusetts were confirmed by Sargent's defeat in 1974, the victory of Michael Dukakis was more ominous for the GOP than any party leader then realized. Dukakis's election marked a critical turning point for the Democratic as well as the Republican Party. In one election he engineered three critical changes in the image of his party: he had wrested control from the Irish, who had controlled its fortunes since the 1920s; he had increased the base of the party by capturing the loyalty of the white-collar, professional, and technocratic managerial class, which though independent had frequently voted Republican for governor; and he made the Democratic Party the primary conduit for the reform instinct in the Massachusetts electorate. Before 1974 the Republican Party was the only party that "respectable" people interested in good government could in conscience vote for; the Democratic Party's image as an urban party of followers of James Michael Curley had made it an inhospitable place for those interested in government reform.

Immediately following the election, an emergency meeting of the State Republican Committee was held to censure and remove the chairman, Bill Barnstead, Wahlrab's conservative successor. Barnstead had announced publicly in the middle of the gubernatorial campaign that he could not vote for Sargent, an act of disloyalty that could not be tolerated by even the conservatives on the committee, who joined the ouster move. A special search committee, under the direction of the one remaining Republican holding statewide office, Senator Edward Brooke, chose John Winthrop Sears, a patrician's patrician. A direct lineal descendant of the first governor of the state, Sears had held office as a state representative from Beacon Hill in Boston, Suffolk County sheriff, and commissioner, under Sargent, of the Metropolitan District Commission. (Sears later became the first Republican in decades to be elected to the Boston City Council.) Sears, a Harvard graduate and Rhodes Scholar, was to hold office for only a year because a new effort to control the state committee was being undertaken by Gordon Nelson. Nelson had founded a group called REGRO, Republicans for a Grassroots Organization, which was simply a cover for Nelson's ambitions to be state committee chairman. Sears realized what was happening too late, and Nelson's slate of candidates for state committee won a bare plurality that, with one of the other factions on the committee, was sufficient to elect him chairman in the spring of 1976. (The man he defeated by one vote, Andrew Card, now serves as deputy chief of staff to President Bush.)

Gordon Nelson, the man I removed as chairman four years later, was a unique character in the party organization who had begun as a campaign worker for Barry Goldwater in 1964. A Harvard graduate and a commodities broker by profession, Nelson was the first Jew to be elected chairman of the Republican Party in Massachusetts. He possessed an extraordinary amount of raw energy, a bright but exceedingly rigid mind, and a powerful personality that some found overbearing and abrasive. Nelson styled himself a movement conservative, a member of a national network of zealous conservative ideologues devoted to the establishment of a conservative party in the United States within the structure of the Republican Party — or outside, if necessary.

When Nelson began his term as chairman, he believed he could fashion the state Republican Party into an exclusively conservative party that would go on to win elections by virtue of its ideology. The strategy for this conversion was to be an alliance with conservative, ethnic Democrats, who, he thought, would feel more at home in a conservative Re-

publican Party than a liberal Democratic one. Nelson set about rebuilding the party with what he called Project Precinct, a door-to-door effort by the existing party structure in each city and town to recruit new workers to the local committees. The idea was neither novel nor unreasonable. Other states with strong party organizations regularly conducted much the same sort of drive. Decades earlier, the Republican Party in Massachusetts had accomplished a similar end in its door-to-door fund-raising efforts. The project was an unmitigated disaster in that virtually no one participated. It contained one major conceptual flaw: the Republican organization across the state had become so weak that it was incapable in most areas, and unwilling in the rest, of knocking on any doors. One cannot rebuild something from nothing with nonexistent workers. When the Republican generals called their troops to battle, no one reported for duty. Time, along with the continuing ideological war in the party and the neglect of Republican officeholders who should have known better, had done its work on the grassroots organization.

After some effort Nelson gave up trying to reconstruct the Massachusetts party and concentrated on presidential politics from a decidedly conservative perspective. Massachusetts, which had a large bloc of delegates to the national conventions every four years, could be important in nominating a conservative presidential candidate. Thus, he became involved in Ronald Reagan's campaign for president in 1976 and Philip Crane's presidential campaign in 1980. (Nelson reportedly had made a deal with Crane that he would become chairman of the Republican National Committee if Crane were elected president.) He became one of William Brock's (RNC chairman 1977–1980) most tenacious adversaries with his band of movement conservatives on the RNC from other areas of the country. Where Brock emphasized technological innovation for the national party, Nelson called for an ideological crusade.

While these events unfolded in Massachusetts, a quiet revolution was under way at the Republican National Committee in which Bill Brock, the party chairman, began an extraordinary effort at party renewal. He reasoned that American political parties were in transition, not in decline, as many scholars had been arguing. A new party system taking shape would add a critical new role in the political system for parties.

Political parties had become largely irrelevant to modern American politics, their primary functions being shifted to other institutions. Brock's innovations at the national Republican Party were consistent with the changing technology of politics. He transformed the Republican National Committee into a candidate and state party service organization. Modern campaigns employed all the newest technologies of the modern era in the pursuit of victory: computerized voting lists, radio and television advertising, sophisticated polling, telephone banks and campaign consultants and direct mail. Bill Brock gathered all these technologies and services under the umbrella of the Republican National Committee, so that when a Republican candidate needed help, an array of resources was available.

During the Brock era the RNC donor base increased from 500,000 to 1.5 million contributors, and RNC gross income grew from \$10 million to \$40 million, money that Brock used to provide a broad set of campaign and political services.⁷ The national committee was transformed from a federation of fifty very independent state party organizations into a major corporation with fifty state subsidiaries. The RNC displays most of the characteristics of a large corporation, chief of which is a trained cadre of technicians and managers producing services for their customers, in this case candidates and state parties. The salesmen in this political corporation, the field staff, serviced the state parties, candidates, and Republican campaign operatives. The 150 members of the RNC itself, three

from each state, had become more a corporate board of directors than the collection of political leaders from each state it had once been. Under Brock's reforms the state party chairmen became automatic voting members of the RNC.

The United States for most of its history has not had two national political parties but two in each state — separate, independent, and autonomous from their national counterparts in Washington. This rather feudal organization was reflected in the dependent status of national party on the state parties for financial support. During the 1930s and earlier, the Republican National Committee was dependent for a portion of its income from the fifty state parties' fund-raising apparatus.⁸ Power and money are inextricably interwoven in politics, and a national party financially dependent on the states was weak indeed.

That relationship has exactly reversed itself on the Republican side since the new party system reached its full force during the 1980s. Now the Republican National Committee makes grants to the state parties to fund their operations, with inevitable strings being attached on how the money is to be spent. These strings, just as in federal grant-in-aid programs, have had a centralizing and standardizing influence on the state parties. One illustration of the power of these grants: in 1984 one of the major programmatic undertakings of the RNC was the computerization of the voting lists of the fifty states, for which it and the Republican senatorial committee made sizable grants to state parties to accomplish. The very existence of these computerized lists at the state level caused the nature of campaigns to change, with greater emphasis on direct mail, telephone banks, and computer systems, all tied to the computerized voting lists. The RNC grants drove many of the state parties to develop this political technology.

While the renewal of the Republican National Party took a technological and campaign-oriented direction, the Democratic National Committee undertook what is now known as the McGovern reforms, which profoundly altered the structure of their party. Nelson Polsby, in *Consequences of Party Reform*,⁹ argues that the Democratic effort at party renewal may have accelerated the decline of the party as a force in presidential politics, but it is equally clear that the reforms were centralizing in their effect as the rules for the selection of delegates to the Democratic National Committee forced changes in the way state Democratic committees ran their business. Both these courses of party renewal at the national level became models for reforming the two political parties in Massachusetts.

The Brock revolution renewed the prospects for political parties in America. Under Brock's new party system, the RNC added a critically important dimension to its role in politics, becoming a provider of the resources Republican candidates needed to run their individual campaigns. Instead of a volunteer-based staff and national party structure, the new system substituted full-time paid professional campaign operatives to organize the work that had to be done to win elections. The new system was much more centralized and complex. The RNC was now more powerful politically than ever before, albeit under a new mandate and different ground rules. The RNC has since served as a role model for the Democrats, who thus far have been unsuccessful in accomplishing the same transformation in their party. I found the Brock model so compelling a direction in party development that we adopted it for the Massachusetts Republican Party. The direction for us was thus established — remake the Massachusetts State Committee into a candidate service organization providing a set of carefully defined services to Republican candidates for office in Massachusetts. We would do polling, write campaign literature, design newspaper advertisements, draft campaign plans, set up phone banks, consult on campaign management, train managers in our campaign schools, and raise and distribute money to candidates.

The Republican State Strategy

Our strategy for reconstructing the Republican State Party concentrated on services to candidates for the Massachusetts legislature. We chose that body as the subject of our attention because it offered some wonderful opportunities for party building at the local level. More than any other elected officials, Republican legislators had a vested interest in a party to work on their reelection campaigns. Legislators' reelection frequently became the reason for existence of local party committees. They nurtured each other: legislators needed to get reelected and party committees needed work of significance to perform. The legislator was the visible evidence of their success in politics. Campaign workers from successful and unsuccessful legislative races might be recruited for local committees after the election; the campaigns became mechanisms for enlisting new party, as opposed to exclusively candidate, workers. More than congressional or statewide races, which emphasized professional staff to the detriment of volunteers, legislative races tended to be the exclusive preserve of the volunteer.

The campaign organizations of Republican legislators became, over time, the local party organizations, even if the workers never formally associated themselves with the local committees. Incumbent legislators would use their own workers to support candidates of their choice for higher office. While all the workers were not automatically transferable to other candidates, because of differences in personal preferences between legislators and their workers, the natural inclination of anyone, including legislators, is to support those candidates for higher office with whom they agree on the issues, who share values and lifestyles. So workers supporting a conservative Democrat for the legislature could make the conversion to a conservative Democratic candidate for governor with minimal difficulty. Legislative races are one of the least studied yet most significant methods of political socialization for activists in our political system.

If the Republican Party was to be built locally, it would be through the local leadership of Republican legislators and candidates for the legislature. If we were ever going to win statewide and national races, we would have to win local offices, such as legislative seats, first. Every candidate tends to bring into his or her campaign relatives, friends, and neighbors as workers, and the campaign becomes a magnet for drawing uninvolved people into politics. The most efficient way we could rebuild the party organization at the grassroots level was to run more and better campaigns for every office. Campaigns are a graduate school in political leadership and an employment agency for skilled operatives. They direct the best and brightest to party-building after the election.

For nearly a century the farm team system was the method the Republican Party used to govern Massachusetts. If you wanted to be governor or U.S. senator, you first had to run for town or city office, then the state legislature, serve a few terms to learn the business of politics and government, and then consider higher office. When the Democrats took control of the state political system, they adopted, perhaps unconsciously, the same system of recruitment. As of the 1984 election, every congressman in Massachusetts (ten Democrats and one Republican), save one (Gerry Studds), had served in the state legislature or city office before running for Congress. Two thirds of Congress in 1978 were former state legislators, and half of the Massachusetts legislature former town or city officials. There is good reason for this characteristic of the system: when you run for lower office you learn how to give a speech, how to deal with the press, how to raise money and organize a campaign, what the issues are, and what politics in general is all about. When Republicans run for a high office in Massachusetts, never having held a lower office, they

spend the first half of their campaign learning what they are supposed to be doing, while the Democrats are racing ahead. The novice in politics, as in any profession, makes more mistakes of greater seriousness and consequence than the skilled and experienced officeholder. To win higher offices we had to elect more Republican legislators who would provide the pool of successful candidates for higher office as they matured into seasoned politicians.

We chose to concentrate on the legislative races for practical political reasons. Given the limited resources of the state committee, we could more effectively influence a small race for the legislature than a large race for statewide office. We could not hope to elect through our efforts a governor or U.S. senator given the scope, cost, and complexity of those campaigns, but we could be the decisive force in a legislative race. The modern technology of politics had only sporadically been applied by Democrats to legislative races. If we could apply those technologies consistently to a carefully chosen set of targeted races, we might prevail. We defined success simply and clearly: electing more Republicans to the legislature.

Legislative races permitted us to focus voter attention on state rather than the national issues on which we might be vulnerable in the state. Since the Democrats ran Massachusetts from top to bottom, they had to accept complete responsibility for public outrage over high taxes — the chief state issue according to opinion polls — and any scandals and incompetence in state government.

In these local races the issues were of somewhat limited value in winning elections in any case; the character of the candidate and quality of the campaign were of primary importance. The legislative races, more than any other type, allowed us a measure of control over who the candidates were (we could match the demographics of a district with a candidate of the right background) and how they campaigned (most knew little about politics).

While this strategy may seem the self-evident choice, it encountered opposition from another school of thought in the Republican Party. Many believed that we ought to ignore the lower offices and recruit for governor a charismatic leader who would lead us to victory on Election Day. The theory proposed that we needed an attractive figure who could draw new workers and voters into the party by stature, powerful style, and magnetic personality. The problem was not only where to find this prophetic leader but to find one who would be more interested in building the party than his or her own personal following. Would this loyal following be permanently transferable to the party's structure, especially since the figure's presumed attractiveness to the workers was based more on cult of personality than on philosophic conviction? Charismatic figures tend not to have the staying power or permanence needed to construct a stable and permanent institution like a political party. The central problem of the Democratic Party in 1990 is the impending departure of the man around whom the new party in Massachusetts has been organized, Michael Dukakis; while not charismatic, he had been enormously powerful in building and controlling his party. But this power has dissipated significantly since his poll ratings collapsed and he announced that he would not seek reelection.

The argument could certainly be made that the average voter, who is somewhat oblivious to the subtleties of party politics, could more easily focus attention on a strong personality than a set of ideas a political party stood for or the institution of the party itself. I resisted this view of party rebuilding for the duration of my chairmanship, but the theory became reality without formal adoption by the party organization. No political leader in Massachusetts could have galvanized the state electorate to break ranks with their normal, independent, and Democratic status to ally themselves with the Republican Party the way

Ronald Reagan did. He became our charismatic leader without any conscious strategy on our part. His role as the head of the national party was the linchpin we needed to draw voters to the party, as happened in 1984, when Reagan took eighteen of the thirty-nine cities in Massachusetts.

Few of the causes of the Republican Party's present condition in Massachusetts could be dramatically changed by the effort of the state party save one: the campaigns Republican candidates run for office. Except for those few cases in which we won or came close, Republican campaigns in Massachusetts resembled coming-out parties for debutantes. They were polite affairs at which everyone worried about organizational charts, no one took winning too seriously, and no one perspired too much. Republican campaigns were rooted in the past, in an era when politics was a citizen's duty and candidates stood rather than ran for public office. Excessive ambition was regarded as dangerous and unseemly in a candidate, so campaigns were appropriately restrained in time, expense, and size. Politics changed in Massachusetts, but the Republican view of campaigns and public office never did.

Our candidates for the legislature were generally better qualified than their Democratic opponents, but they lost nevertheless. Republicans regularly raised and spent less money, knocked on fewer, if any, doors, recruited fewer volunteers, lacked trained and experienced campaign managers and staff, wrote long, complex, and intellectual tracts of campaign literature no one read, did virtually no direct mail, and never conceived of using computers in a campaign. So they lost, badly and regularly.

The personality, character, and motivation of Republican candidates in Massachusetts differed sharply from those of the Democrats. Republicans were more reserved, more shy and aloof than their opponents; they marched in parades reluctantly, if at all, seldom waded into a crowd to shake hands, and avoided glad-handing and backslapping. They were hesitant candidates, motivated by duty rather than any strong ambition or the need for a relatively well-paying job in the public sector. Idealism and public spirit were noble sentiments for public officials to possess, but they count for little, unfortunately, in getting people elected to office. Someone in Massachusetts politics once suggested that Republicans were excellent at governing, but terrible at politics, while the Democrats were just the opposite. So while Massachusetts Republicans governed well, they seldom, more recently at least, had the opportunity to use their skills.

The Candidate Service Bureau

Providing candidate services on the RNC model remained the central work of the Massachusetts Republican State Committee for the time I served as chairman. All other tasks performed by the party were either incidental or supplemental to our effort to elect more Republicans to the Massachusetts legislature. Attempts to improve the voters' image of the party, develop a new program to govern Massachusetts, programs to rebuild the grass-roots party structure and raise a great deal more money for party coffers, all contributed to but one end — the election of Republicans to legislative office.

The first judgment we made in the operation of the service bureau was which services and resources would be generally available to all candidates and which specifically reserved for those campaigns in which we had the best chance of victory. We concentrated the bulk of our resources in these more winnable campaigns.

All Republican candidates for office would have access to party services we could provide in unlimited volume without increasing staff time or cost. These included campaign

schools, access to the voter name files (computer lists of registered voters), research on incumbents' voting records, issue seminars and briefing papers, manuals on campaign management, sample campaign literature, simple field staff advice on technical questions (e.g., where and when to file campaign finance disclosure forms), and issue and campaign newsletters. Information was inexpensive and therefore available to every Republican candidate who requested it. Reserved for targeted races were direct financial contributions, literature production, campaign plans, survey and polling data, intensive field staff help, get-out-the-vote telephone bank assistance, and direct mail packages. These were obviously the more labor-intensive and expensive services most likely to make the difference between victory and defeat.

The most difficult task was not deciding the services to be provided to targeted and untargeted races, but which races fell into which category. We developed four general criteria to judge which races were winnable: vacant legislative seats, favorable demographics and past voting behavior of the district, a candidate of quality, and a strong campaign. Vacant seats, all other factors being equal, are much easier to win than occupied seats unless the incumbent is under indictment or accused of child abuse. Unless a district was hopelessly Democratic in demographic and voting patterns, all vacant seat with decent candidates were targeted as a first priority. We deemed unwinnable those districts in which no Republican candidate for any office had won in the past ten years, or those in which the demographic characteristics were not favorable to a Republican candidate. Conversely, middle-class districts in which serious Republican candidates for whatever office regularly won were placed at the top of the targeted list. The popular vote on referendum questions on November ballots that indicated an economically conservative ideology (for example, establishment of a graduated income tax and Proposition 2 1/2, a property tax limitation measure) were also used as statistical measures for targeting. After all these factors were mathematically built into a computer model, with weights assigned to each characteristic, each district was rated from the most to the least winnable. We hired a pollster to produce this model with analysis of each district in the state in 1981.

Once the districts were analyzed, we looked at the personalities of the Democratic and Republican candidates and their respective campaigns. If the incumbent Democrat was invisible in his district, had a poor reputation for constituent work, voted regularly against the ideology of his district, so that the district was considered winnable (on the basis of data from the computer ranking), we placed the race on the targeted list. Our analysis of each race included a careful distinction between the quality of the campaign and the candidate.

We had many excellent candidates by training, reputation, character, and education who were articulate and presentable, but for whatever reason ran poor campaigns. Some candidates of good character made a mediocre impression, because of inability to speak in public, personal shyness, or aloofness in campaign style, yet ran technically proficient campaigns. The two principal personal characteristics we search for in a candidate are an intense desire to win and integrity. This latter characteristic I deemed important because if we elected rogues to office, our small remaining base in the state would fast erode.

Early in the campaign we explained to each candidate the definition of a technically proficient campaign to which their campaigns had to conform in order to be *considered* for targeting. Requirements included (1) a campaign manager (candidates shouldn't run their own campaigns); (2) a threshold level of funds to be raised by the campaign (\$5,000 for the House, \$15,000 for the Senate); (3) a written campaign plan that was being imple-

mented (as opposed to being strictly on paper); (4) attendance by manager and candidate at a campaign school; and (5) in House races, the candidate's agreement to knock on each door in the district.

Using these criteria, the districts and candidates were ranked in three categories: likely winners, marginal seats, and unlikely or hopeless races. We hired campaign field workers who then determined the mix of services and direct financial help each of the likely winners needed. Given the wide differences in campaign quality and resources, each mix of services was different. Some races needed nothing but large amounts of money; others had limitless money but poor campaign literature. For those presentable candidates whose campaigns were generally well directed but whose judgment on spending money we questioned, our field staff spent the money from our treasury for them. In lieu of a direct contribution we would produce and place a newspaper or radio advertisement, write and print a brochure, or do a direct mail piece. In 1984 we wrote, laid out, and printed 500,000 campaign tabloids for legislative candidates. We thus ensured that campaign weaknesses were remedied without argument or extensive explanation, since most candidates were happy to accept any help from us.

We concentrated not only resources but also our candidate recruitment efforts in targeted districts. While it was certainly desirable to have Republican candidates for every seat, it was far more important that winnable seats be sought by good candidates.

In early 1981 we developed our first campaign school (one night a week for ten weeks) for potential candidates and their managers. The party suffered from an absence of trained and seasoned Massachusetts Republican operatives to run campaigns. The state committee had not run real campaign schools for more than fifteen years; the Republican leadership in the House had held some classes, but they turned out to be war story seminars. Thomas Jefferson would lose a race for the legislature if incompetent managers were running his campaign, while an average candidate could win with hard work and skilled operatives directing the effort.

The schools covered polling and survey research, campaign literature design, election laws, personal campaigning by the candidate, identifying voter support, getting out supporters on Election Day, fund-raising, advertising, media relations, overall strategy and the use of issues, how to research an incumbent's record, direct mail, and targeting by precinct and demographic groups. We also issued a manual that covered all these subjects as supplemental reading; it remains in use by the state party today.

As a follow-up to the school, each election year we produced a newsletter for candidates and managers that outlined what a campaign should be accomplishing in each of its phases. Later in the election year we held schools for targeted race personnel only, in which we reviewed recent state polling data and developed campaign themes that were beginning to come into focus. As a group, we reviewed each of the campaigns individually to critique them and share experiences to bring perspective to the candidates who were, without doubt, simultaneously in advanced states of shock and exhilaration. Sharing the fears common to each of them helped relieve the candidates' anxiety and focused attention on the important goals to be accomplished before Election Day.

One of the weaknesses of the Campaign Service Bureau, which we remedied in 1986, was incumbent research. Most candidates, no matter how well instructed, seldom found the time or developed the expertise to analyze thoroughly their opponents' record. For the 1986 election we constructed a file on each incumbent Democrat with their voting records judged by a variety of special-interest groups (which rated them), their opponents' personal financial disclosure forms (required by state law), attendance at legislative sessions,

roll call votes on a broad spectrum of issues, their campaign finance reports from preceding elections, and any statements made on the floor of the legislature (recorded by television cameras — all sessions of the House were televised). We had to leave it to candidates to research their opponents' local press statements and any contradictions between them and their voting records. A hard look at voting records usually yielded a supply of contradictory votes and statements which, if cleverly advertised, could unseat an incumbent.

In 1982 we had one Democratic candidate for state representative in an open seat directly contradict himself from one speech to another on major issues, depending on the group he was addressing, so we wrote an attack brochure for our Republican candidate, documenting these convenient changes in conscience by date and location. This became the central issue of the campaign.

Former Congresswoman Margaret Heckler, in one of her races for Congress, found through careful incumbent research that her Democratic opponent had never before registered to vote, while claiming to have been an active party Democrat. She chose the right time and place during a debate, with all the media watching, to announce her interesting discovery.

In the 1980–1984 election cycles we came to some conclusions about the relation between campaign spending and victory. While a big budget did not guarantee election, we found a striking correlation between spending and winning. Republican candidates were regularly outspent by their Democratic opponents, partly because 80 percent of the seats in the legislature were held by Democrats, and incumbents can raise money much more easily than challengers. To discourage any challengers of either party, Democratic incumbents raise enormous amounts of money for their campaigns in nonelection years. Republican incumbents seldom engage in similar tactics and must therefore build their war chests when opposition actually appears. Even given this disparity in behavior, our incumbents usually outraised their Democratic challengers by virtue of their incumbency. In open seats prior to 1984 Democratic candidates outspent our candidates by sizable ratios. This was because the Democratic Party had trained an army of grassroots Democrats to give money in political campaigns; once indoctrinated, these givers contributed to many Democratic campaigns. Our donor base, which had been strong in the 1960s, had deteriorated through disuse. Fewer campaigns meant fewer requests for donations, so our donors lost the habit of giving and new ones were not recruited to replace those who died, moved, or tired of politics.

In legislative races, establishing name recognition for the candidate is the greater part of the campaign work. Issues are of small consequence in low-visibility campaigns, so spending money to increase a candidate's name recognition is critical to victory. Improving a candidate's visibility requires money for direct mail, advertising, and campaign literature. Money is indispensable to victory.

Providing campaign services required more money and a larger staff for the state party. Income from fund-raising rose from \$203,000 in 1979 to \$910,000 in 1986, primarily attributable to an increase in small donations from people approached through in-house direct mail and telephone banks we created in 1983. The number of donors increased from 6,000 in 1979 to 35,000 in 1986. The staff level at party headquarters stood at three in the spring of 1980 and increased to twelve by 1986 (we reduced the staff after each election from twelve to seven or eight, expanding the staff in the spring of each election year).

We concentrated more money in our targeted races in each election between 1980 and 1986. We first did this systematically in the 1984 campaigns, giving targeted candidates

\$2,500 in direct contributions and \$1,000 in services. In the 1986 election cycle that combined figure was increased to \$7,500. In addition, we formed for the 1984 election cycle a quiet working group of Republican and business PACs interested in changing the complexion of the legislature. There were two conservative taxpayer PACs and two Republican PACs, one of the House Republican Committee and the other a moderate Republican PAC chaired by Elliott Richardson. The Friday Group, as we called it, met twice a month to discuss the races. We did not always agree on whom we would help. The conservative PACs also helped conservative Democrats, while the Republican groups never did. The state party made no ideological distinctions, while the Richardson PAC tended to give to more moderate candidates. The importance of the group was that it reached enough consensus that most targeted candidates received an additional \$3,000 to \$4,000 over what the state party contributed.

Deborah Cochran, who had been a state representative for four years, ran for Congress unsuccessfully and served as vice chairman of the Republican State Committee. In 1983 she entered the employ of Mike Valerio, a new right activist and businessman. Cochran arranged to have two dozen major business figures, moderate and conservative, pledge a certain amount of money to candidates on whom she, working with the Friday Group, agreed to concentrate resources. Valerio, to his credit, seldom interfered in decisions on who received money, even when moderate Republicans were included.

As a result of a Republican city and town committee program we initiated, fund-raising at the town and city committee level contributed dramatically to increased local party treasuries, which reached \$189,000 in 1984. Without central direction, these local committees poured their resources into legislative contests, further increasing our candidates' campaign funds.

Rebuilding the Party Organization

The realization of the importance of local organization gradually became clear at the Republican National Committee during the Dick Richards and Frank Fahrenkopf chairmanships (1981 to 1988). Both men brought long service as state and county party chairman (Utah and Nevada, respectively) to the national chairmanship. They did not have to be convinced that the missing element in the Brock program was local party development; both knew it from their own experience. Almost simultaneously with the national committee's new emphasis on organization, we in Massachusetts realized that the major weakness in both the 1980 and 1982 election campaigns was the absence of a coherent local organizational development program.

The Democratic Party's theory of organizational development relies on the interest groups with which the party is allied to provide workers. Thus the teachers' association, AFL-CIO, and state employee unions provide campaign help, contributions, and a mechanism to deliver the message of Democratic candidates. The Republican Party, conversely, contacts voters directly without intermediary interest groups, a much more expensive and technology-intensive mechanism than the Democratic medium of communication. The effort to create a Massachusetts Republican grassroots party organization was an attempt to remedy our overreliance on technology and underuse of people to win elections.

In 1983 we launched what became known as Project Grassroots. Our effort was entirely independent of the program the Republican National Committee had initiated, which was ill suited to the Massachusetts Republican organization. We weren't targeted for any help in this area in any case.

If the Republican Party had held the governorship, creating a new party organization would have been easier. Volunteers from the gubernatorial campaigns would have served as a list of potential party workers, particularly if the governor were closely identified with the party in their minds. The patronage power of the governor of a major industrial state like Massachusetts would attract volunteers whose enthusiasm would be in direct proportion to the perception of a public sector position awaiting them after good and faithful service in the campaign. We didn't hold the governor's chair, and none of the Republican candidates who had stood for statewide office in 1982 (all of whom lost) had generated extensive volunteer lists to draw upon.

In a series of pilot mailings in 1983 and 1984, we asked for money and enclosed a volunteer card requesting volunteers to work for the Republican candidates on the ballot in the particular towns or cities in which the mailing was being done. While the response card still included a place to volunteer for party service, it was not a popular form of work; the candidates received more interest than the party. The results astonished us. When the state committee sent a mailing to all registered Massachusetts Republicans, one percent responded with a check, which was the financial break-even point. The mailing paid for itself but made no profit, except in adding names of new contributors for future use. The Project Grassroots mailings produced 5 to 8 percent response rates, with income five to six times the expense. On average, a thousand-piece mailing costing \$200 would generate fifty individual responses, averaging \$20 each, netting \$800 for Republican town committee treasuries. As important as the income produced was the number of volunteer cards returned with the contributions that indicated a willingness to work for one or more of the Republican candidates listed.

Our finance director, Jack Zadow, also expert in grassroots organizing, developed an intriguing explanation for the phenomenal response rates of these local mailings. First, the mailings were signed by a Republican leader. Even if the recipient did not know the name of the signatory, the title of the person (Chairman, East Podunk Republican Town Committee) meant a lot more to a potential donor on a letter than my name as the Republican State Committee chairman. Anything that made the mailing seem more authentically local and less professional increased the response rate. When the text of the solicitation letter and the response card included the names of specific Republican candidates, Republican voters could register their enthusiasm for a particular candidate by volunteering to work.

In all, 140 city and town committee mailings in 1984 raised \$189,000 for local treasuries, more than had been raised locally for the previous four elections combined.¹⁰ Five thousand new volunteers were recruited to party work, many for the U.S. Senate primary fight between Elliott Richardson and Ray Shamie. Both campaigns used the volunteer cards to help staff their telephone banks.

With the money and volunteers raised, we embarked on a second local party program, the Republican Candidate Directory, for the 1984 campaign. The directory consisted of eleven-by-seventeen-inch newspaper-style tabloids, which pictured on the front, with brief biographies, the president, vice president, and the Republican candidate for U.S. Senate, Ray Shamie. The inside pages featured all the Republican candidates for lower offices, from state representative to U.S. Congress, in the particular town or city for which each tabloid was produced. A quarter of the tabloid was devoted to a statement of the economic philosophy of the party. In all we designed and produced 450,000 of these tabloids for the seventy communities that agreed to distribute and pay the costs of producing them.

The party committee in each town or city had to be convinced to participate in the directory. Only 50 percent of the 140 towns and cities that participated in the Project Grassroots mailing also accepted the candidates' directory. The condition of the local party organization determined whether it was distributed door to door by party workers, mailed, or inserted in the local newspaper. In the majority of communities it was distributed to all voting households; in other areas it was mailed only to independents and Republicans. We let the local party committee decide its own strategy for targeted voters and methods of distribution. By requiring each local committee to pay for the design and printing we increased the likelihood of its actually being distributed, since it was unlikely that any community would pay for it and not make use of it. The project was simply conceived, so it was easily explained to local party leaders. We did not burden local committees with any unreasonable task they would be unable to complete. We did not want to frighten local committees unused to this sort of grassroots work.

A sizable proportion of the registered Republican voters in Massachusetts were contacted through four state party programs in 1984: the city and town mailing program; the Candidate Directory; a solicitation letter from the state committee to all registered Republicans, which I signed as chairman, asking for money with an enclosed membership card; and the state party telephone banks with which we prospected for new donors by calling every Republican household in the state and asking for \$15. These strategies were designed to show the Republican electorate, demoralized by a decade of defeats in Massachusetts, that the Massachusetts GOP, on its way to a comeback, needed their financial and volunteer help and their enthusiastic vote. Through these voter programs we hoped to mobilize the Republican electorate to more active participation in the political system, and in the process create a resurgent Republican party.

For the 1984 and 1986 elections we created a voter name file, a computerized list of all registered voters, with street address, zip code, and telephone number and demographic data such as ethnic background and sex, along with the federal census tract and party registration. All local party committees and Republican candidates had access to the computer system to produce mailing labels for any targeted universe of voters (for example, Italian-American independent women voters who live in western Massachusetts), telephone bank calling lists, or walking lists for door-to-door canvassing. We used the computer file for our own financial mailings and phone banks, while local party committees employed it for both the grassroots mailings and the distribution of the candidate directory. The Reagan-Bush and Shamie and Richardson U.S. Senate campaigns had each set up telephone banks to identify their respective voters and get them out to vote on Election Day. By using our voter name file, each campaign avoided the redundant effort of looking up telephone numbers. The state party produced the service for every campaign to avoid the inefficiency of candidate maintenance of the files, and we decided to provide it in all future elections.

The voter name file gave the state committee itself political power by making candidates dependent on the committee for these otherwise prohibitively expensive services. The file increased the technical capacity of each of our candidate's campaigns to contact voters quickly and efficiently: we could produce mailing labels for any universe of voters in forty-eight hours. The file was the most important work we did to facilitate contact between the party organization, our candidates, and the voting public.

The aftermath of the 1984 election presented us with unique opportunities for party building. Reagan-Bush won Massachusetts with 51.5 percent of the vote, nearly ten points better than 1980, Ray Shamie received 45 percent of the vote which, while not close to

winning, was a credible showing, and the party made its best gains in the legislature since 1962. Each successful local race, our local party-building projects, and the major state-wide campaigns, successful or not, had generated new volunteers who had never before participated in a political campaign.

These new workers had to be quickly integrated into the party structure while their interest remained high. As previously indicated, the town and city committees had dwindled in membership from 14,000 in the late 1960s to 6,000 in 1980. We counted between 3,000 and 4,000 new workers, most of them under fifty years old, who participated in the 1984 election cycle. The Shamie-Richardson primary contest drew 107,000 independent and former Democrat votes in a total Republican primary vote of 270,000. Richardson polling data as of the day before the primary showed him beating Shamie, albeit narrowly, among registered Republicans. The conservative Ray Shamie received a sizable majority from nontraditional Republican voters, most of whom were Roman Catholic, young voters. While these people did not participate as workers, they had voted, perhaps for the first time, in a Republican primary, and might if asked through a direct mail piece, register as Republicans. Party building would be conducted on two levels, among the new workers and the new voters.

To reach the new voters we first had to organize the new workers. In his victory speech on primary night, Ray Shamie referred to the new Republican Party upon which his victory was founded. The new party was more conservative, more ethnic, and less WASP than the traditional party. Elliott Richardson, who had turned a forty-point lead over Shamie in the polls six months earlier into a twenty-point defeat, represented the old party in almost every respect. A respected international statesman, he was Harvard educated, had been both lieutenant governor and attorney general before his appointment as undersecretary of State in January 1969 by President Nixon. He held more cabinet posts than any man in American history, resigning in the middle of the Watergate scandal rather than accede to Nixon's demand to fire the Watergate special prosecutor, Archibald Cox. Richardson, a Brahmin Yankee gentleman, quintessential WASP of Colonial lineage, was a moderate Republican who spent virtually his entire career in public service. He was crushed in the primary by a newcomer to politics, Ray Shamie, a conservative businessman who had run for the U.S. Senate in 1982 against Ted Kennedy. Shamie was of Syrian and French extraction, Roman Catholic upbringing, and Republican by choice, not family background. Brought up in a poor family, he had made millions by his own invention and entrepreneurial enterprise.

These two men epitomized the organizational conflict that was to develop between the old and new party as we tried to graft onto the traditional structure the new workers who had emerged as a force in the 1984 election. Having had much experience in previous elections with turf battles between factions in the party, we decided to create a new level of organization rather than force unwilling local party committees to accept unwelcome new people into their midst. In some areas of the state the new people quietly took over committee leadership with no fight at all. In the more vibrant and active committees the new workers were not only welcomed, they were immediately given responsibility. The more inactive and useless the committee, the more threatened it was by interlopers who arrived on the scene with new ideas on organizational development. The fights from these leadership conflicts would have been so contentious and unsettling and the scars so long lasting that we decided systematically to avoid them if we could.

Outside New England the fundamental organizational unit at the grassroots level of the party is the precinct, which is organized by the county party committee, the intermediate

organizational entity between the precinct and the state committee. In Massachusetts there existed no intermediate party committees, only the town ward and state committees. This means in practical terms that the state committee must deal with 351 city and town party committees, a managerial nightmare. Forty years ago each county in Massachusetts had a strong county Republican Club which, while formally chartered by the state committee, was not statutorily mandated.

The state party bylaws still provide for regional units of organization. In each of the forty Massachusetts senatorial districts, there is supposed to be a council made up of the two elected state committee members and the ward, town, and city committee chairmen of the communities in the district. At least for the past decade, these senatorial committees have been completely inoperative, having diminished in vigor as the towns and wards did. The regional units of organization were central to the organizational theory of the old party leadership.

Combining our need for a regional political unit with the need to integrate new party workers into the traditional organization, we formed eleven Republican Congressional Councils, using Massachusetts's eleven congressional districts as boundaries. We simply went around the local stonewallers and created a new organizational entity to which the new workers could belong. Since it was they for the most part who would form these councils, we could be sure the exclusionary tendencies of the old party would be minimized. And eleven organizational units are a manageable number for us to deal with regularly.

The absence of vigorous leadership in the local party remained the single major obstacle to its renewal. We noticed that even in staunchly Democratic towns and cities, one or two strong Republican Party leaders at the head of a town committee could have profound effects on election results for local and state offices. Our problem was finding, training, and placing strong leaders in responsible positions in which they could employ their talents usefully. By creating a relatively small number of new organizations we could take the strongest leaders from the latest election campaign and give them a structure in which to channel their energies.

Under Massachusetts law no organization could use the names Republican or Democrat except by vote of the state committee of the respective party. The resistance we thought we might encounter from the old guard on the state committee when they were presented with the bylaws and charters of these new councils never materialized. A few of my adversaries were nervous that these councils would increase my power in the party, and grumbled as we presented each charter for approval. Rumors circulated in the networks of the old party of a move to counteract the councils' power by reinstating some of the old clubs. The old guard was itself split between those threatened by our new organizational inventions and those whose desire to win overcame their fear of losing turf. The old guard never rose from its lethargy to effectively oppose anything we did in organizational innovation. Those most threatened were coincidentally the least organized and effective. By 1986 we had organized seven congressional councils with 1,500 paid members.

Our second organizational innovation was the reform of the party nominating conventions held every four years to endorse a slate of candidates for constitutional office. The state Democrats, under Dukakis's rule, broadly expanded their conventions beyond participation by only Democratic town committees. Their conventions became opportunities to expand the worker base of the Democratic Party, to increase the sense of participation in party policy and ultimately in governance.

In 1982 the Republican State Committee ran a traditional convention using rules for delegate selection and allocation long accepted by the party organization. All delegates to the convention were either chosen by the Republican town and city committees or the formal grassroots party organization or were voting ex-officio delegates (legislators, congressmen, and county officials). The number of delegates allocated to each local committee was based on the vote for president in the 1980 election. After a rather contentious debate, the state committee, at my strong urging, voted to hold a smaller convention (1,600 delegates), both because of the space limitations in the location at which we had contracted to hold the event and because I believed it would involve less staff time.

While this convention may have been a model of administrative efficiency, it failed to build the party organization except cosmetically, lacked credibility to the news media and opinion makers, and smacked of bossism and manipulation.

The small size of the convention only underscored the small base of the party in Massachusetts. We had no requirement in the rules that a person be registered as a Republican for some period of time before being chosen as a delegate. In the older urban areas where the party was a paper organization or totally nonexistent, the Democratic political machines, in concert with one of our Republican candidates for governor, organized the local party committees with Democrats who had recently registered as Republicans, but showed no genuine change of party allegiance, as members. These new committee members elected themselves delegates to the Republican convention. Under our rules a party committee could be formed where none had existed by a simple meeting of interested “Republicans” and a petition sent to the state committee stating their interest in being designated an official committee, which would then be automatically approved. Using this technique, Democratic Mayor Kevin White controlled much of the Boston Republican delegation to the 1982 state convention. This packing of the convention gave credibility to those defeated candidates who questioned whether the convention was representative of the party. John Sears, who ultimately received the party’s nomination in the primary, did not even bother having his name placed in nomination at the convention. Since there was no legal requirement that a candidate compete at the convention, he simply avoided it altogether. Finally, nothing in the rules distinguished between active working committees and inactive ones, which, while fulfilling the legal requirement for existence, were incapable of doing any work at all and sometimes discouraged party activity by Republicans not on the committee, as a threat to their turf.

The convention rules needed reform. In 1985, preparing for the 1986 convention to nominate candidates for statewide office — governor, lieutenant governor, attorney general, secretary of state, treasurer, and auditor — we drafted a set of reforms designed to cure what had ailed the convention four years earlier. Our original draft proposed several important changes:

- An increase in the size of the convention from 1,600 to 3,000 delegates to indicate a wider base of party support.
- Three bonus delegates to reward those local committees which performed seven tasks we thought important. (Did the committee in 1984 or 1985 raise and spend money for candidate support, have a candidate for the House or Senate on the ballot, distribute the candidate’s literature to each household, start a Young Republican Club, get a local Democratic

official to switch parties, have full committee membership, or hold a political event?)

- The election of 40 percent of the delegates at forty regional caucuses at which *any* registered Republican could vote or run for delegate, with 50 percent of the delegates allocated on the basis of the presidential vote plus any bonus delegates to be selected using the traditional delegate selection method — Republican town and ward committees.
- Automatic delegate status for elected Republican officeholders, state committee members (both traditional categories), and any officially chartered Republican organizations. (We had created two dozen in the previous five years.)
- No exclusionary rule requiring, as the Democrats did, a candidate for any statewide office to receive 15 percent or more of the delegate vote to be allowed access to the Republican primary ballot.
- Listing the winners of the convention first on the primary ballot under the office they were running for and noting “endorsed by the Republican State Convention.”
- Making it virtually impossible to pack inactive or nonexistent committees by moving up the date by which they had to be organized.

These reforms were designed to open the convention to greater participation by party workers, candidates, and donors, not only members of Republican town and city committees; reward activity by local committees with bonus delegates; make the convention a main media event with enough credibility by its size and breadth of representation that its endorsement would be a major benefit to a candidate (thereby increasing the likelihood that all candidates would participate in the convention); reduce the bossism and manipulation endemic to previous conventions; and do all this in such a way that we could institutionalize the reforms as a permanent change in our organization and conduct of conventions in the future. This latter condition meant widely publicizing the changes, holding a public hearing, encouraging party debate about them, putting on the drafting committee some opponents of the reforms, and genuinely allowing the Rules Committee to modify our initial proposal and winning the reforms on the floor of the state committee by a decisive margin.

The local party organizations, outraged by the dilution of their power at the convention implicit in these reforms, protested at sporadic meetings they held — for some moribund committees the first in years — across the state. If nothing else, the plan resuscitated, at least temporarily, inactive and paper committees anxious to protect their threatened political turf. In my announcement of the plan I attacked the useless committees, hoping that since nothing else seemed to work perhaps open criticism might force some activity. Negative incentives do work sometimes. While every local party official was initially upset by the rumors of what was included in the plan, the most inactive or useless committees were those which screamed the loudest. A complete explanation of the reforms satisfied all the

active committees, particularly when they realized that they would be recognized and rewarded by the incentive system for their good work.

The final plan proposed by the Rules Committee and approved by the state committee, while containing the major points of my original plan, was different enough that it did not smack of a rubber stamp. Adopted unanimously by the state committee, it was accepted by most factions of the party, increasing the likelihood that its initiatives would be part of future conventions. (In fact, Ray Shamie's 1990 state convention rules contained all the 1986 reforms and broadly expanded the number of open-caucus-selected delegates.) One contentious change was the 15 percent rule, which requires a candidate to obtain at least that percentage of the convention vote to appear on the primary ballot. The Rules Committee proposed, and the state committee adopted, a 10 percent rule, which while less restrictive than the Democrats' 15 percent rule, nevertheless emphasized the exclusionary image from which the Republican Party had suffered for many years. The Democratic Party in Massachusetts held enough political capital with the electorate that it could afford to look exclusionary at its convention without damage at the polls. We could not, so I opposed the rule.

When the Democrats had adopted their 15 percent convention rule in 1982, it was promptly challenged by several Democratic candidates for lieutenant governor who were denied access to the primary ballot because they did not meet the requirement. Massachusetts election law explicitly permitted anyone, properly registered and having obtained the requisite number of signatures on nomination papers, a place on the primary ballot. Court decisions in other states had for a decade been moving toward the deregulation of the political parties, giving them greater authority over the conduct of their internal affairs. The Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court held, in a landmark decision which astonished both political activists and the legal community, that in spite of state law providing full access to the primary ballot, political parties could within limits restrict that access even for those candidates who met all the legal requirements. The 15 percent rule was thus upheld by the courts.

The effect of both the Democratic 15 percent and Republican 10 percent rules was the same. By requiring a minimum convention vote, both ensured that all candidates for state-wide office would have their names placed in nomination at the convention, making a serious effort at appealing to delegates for their support. These rules clearly enhanced the power of the convention and the formal party organization over what it had with unrestricted ballot access. A second effect was to concentrate attention in the primary on fewer candidates. Fringe or weak candidates who might distort the primary vote would be excluded from consideration.

Primary debates with fewer candidates would mean that each would have more time to discuss his or her views and the media more space per candidate for in-depth analysis of the views. The rules increased the likelihood that a candidate could obtain the primary nomination with a majority rather than plurality vote, and therefore the possibility that the nominated candidate was truly representative of the respective party. Our 10 percent rule was good for the party and organization, but bad for our image.

The ultimate measure of success for political parties remains the number of votes the party nominees receive on Election Day. While intermediate goals such as party registration, the number of candidates who run for office, advances in fund-raising, campaign services, issue research, and image building may improve prospects for long-term success

at the voting booth, they don't assure it. Such other factors as national policy and economic conditions, the perceived ability of the party to govern if its candidates are elected, the number of incumbent officeholders retiring, the relative personal strengths of the nominees of both parties matched against each other, and chance historical events affect the result. State party organizations have little if any control over these factors, but they can be decisive in the volatile climate of a political campaign.

Based on the results of the four election cycles (1980–1986) covered by this article, I suggest some speculative conclusions about the Republican Party's efforts at party renewal, the weaknesses of the Brock model for party renewal, and the prospects for the party in 1990 in Massachusetts.

Measured by intermediate goals, the renewal program was a great success: the income of the state party increased 450 percent, campaign services and technology that were nonexistent in the state before 1980 were developed and targeted to legislative races, and the number of, and mechanisms for participation by, party workers increased. Measured by the ultimate goals of electing more Republicans to the legislature — the central focus of this party renewal effort — the effort was a more modest success. In legislative races the party made the following net gains or losses: gained one House and one Senate seat in 1980 (30 House and 7 Senate), lost one House seat and remained the same in the Senate in 1982 (29 House and 7 Senate), gained five House and one Senate seat in 1984 (34 House and 8 Senate), and lost one House seat and remained the same in the Senate in 1986 (33 House and 8 Senate). Over these four election cycles the party gained six seats in the legislative delegation, a 17 percent increase. The legislative gains in 1984 were the largest since 1962 in absolute numbers, the party having lost seats fairly steadily in each election since the mid-1960s.

The most striking aspects of these four election cycles is the disparity between the dramatic increase in Republican resources measured in money, workers, and campaign services, and the modest improvement (17 percent) in the number of legislative seats. Substantially more resources did not translate into substantially more seats. The gains in legislative seats were made in 1980 and 1984, when Ronald Reagan headed the Republican ticket and the Democratic presidential ticket was particularly weak. In both 1980 and 1984 Reagan carried Massachusetts, however narrowly, for the first time for a Republican presidential candidate since 1956.

Republican legislative gains in 1984 may be attributable to two factors working at the same time: the Reagan coattails and the campaign services and financial contributions made by the state party in targeted races. Either one alone would have been insufficient. Table 1 shows the number of races that Republican House candidates lost by under 1,500 votes over five elections cycles, the increase in the number of House seats, the percentage of vote of the Republican candidate at the top of the ticket (gubernatorial or presidential), and average campaign contributions.¹¹

The data in Table 1 suggests that the party campaign service programs moved narrow races to victorious ones, since the number of races Republican candidates lost by under 1,500 votes declined from fourteen in 1978, a year in which Frank Hatch received 47 percent of the vote for governor, to eight in 1980 and four in 1984. All the races targeted by the state party from 1982 onward turned out to include the races won or lost narrowly.

In 1988, with Bush winning 46 percent of the vote in Massachusetts, the Republican Party saw a net decline of one seat in the House while the Senate remained the same. Shamie dramatically increased state party funding to \$1.5 million in 1988 from our high point of \$910,000 in 1986, but he did not regard campaign services and direct contributions to

Table 1

| Year | No. of GOP House Candidates Losing by Less Than 1,500 Votes | GOP Net Gain or Loss in House | Republican Presidential/ Gubernatorial Percentage in Massachusetts | Contribution of State Party to Targeted Seats* |
|------|---|-------------------------------|--|--|
| 1976 | 11 | -2 | 42% | \$ 500 |
| 1978 | 14 | -1 | 47% | \$1,000 |
| 1980 | 8 | +1 | 42%* | \$1,500 |
| 1982 | 4 | -1 | 38% | \$2,000 |
| 1984 | 4 | +5 | 51% | \$3,500** |
| 1986 | 2 | -1 | 30% | \$7,800** |

*John Anderson took 15% of the Massachusetts vote, though Reagan carried the state narrowly.

**The Friday Group was responsible for \$3,000-\$4,000 in additional campaign contributions per targeted candidate.

candidates as the central work of the committee. He instead concentrated on party organizational development.

My own view is that the Republican voter base in the state remains too small to make any dramatic improvement in the legislative or congressional delegation without the addition of new voter blocs that are not part of the National Republican Presidential Coalition. In fact, in the last four presidential races, the Republican nominee consistently received 8 percent fewer votes in Massachusetts than nationally, as shown in Table 2.

The Republican presidential coalition vote is 8 percent smaller in Massachusetts than in the country as a whole. The party must increase its base 8 to 10 percent in Massachusetts to become competitive in statewide and legislative races. This will require the Massachusetts party to look and think differently from the Republican National Party. This does not mean returning to the age of liberal Republicanism or adopting the Dukakis agenda of New Age liberalism.

It does mean designing a new party platform on top of, not in place of, the national platform, which appeals to specific identified voter groups that presently float between the parties in varying degrees without alienating the existing base. The political technology of the Republican state party will certainly be helpful in delivering the message and images that may attract these new voter groups. But in this case the technology is not the message; it is no more than a medium to communicate a carefully crafted message. Political technology has its limit, and the Massachusetts party has reached it. The fascination with high-tech campaigns, expensive political technology, direct mail and telephone banks which we fostered in the state party by adopting the Brock model of party renewal has obscured the weakness in the party's base of support. Well-financed and well-run

Table 2

| | | Percentage of Two-Party Vote, Massachusetts | Percentage of Two-Party Vote, Nationally |
|--------|------|---|--|
| Ford | 1976 | 42 | 51 |
| Reagan | 1980 | 42 | 50 |
| Reagan | 1984 | 51 | 59 |
| Bush | 1988 | 46 | 54 |

campaigns with appealing candidates are a necessary but insufficient condition for election success in Massachusetts: an expanded platform skillfully communicated to voters extending beyond the national party agenda is the missing element.

Party workers have long argued that the state party has failed to articulate the national party agenda of economic conservatism and that this failure is responsible for the party's failure to achieve majority status. A poll conducted by Arthur Finkelstein and Associates in March 1986 for the state party indicated that the Massachusetts electorate believed Republicans were more likely to cut taxes than the Democrats by a 44 percent to 30 percent margin, and to impose the death penalty (Republicans 43%, Democrats 18%) and less likely to support giveaway programs (49% Democrats vs. 16% Republicans). The voters do understand the Republican message; it simply is not enough to attract sufficient of their votes to win.

During 1980–1986 the state party engaged in a number of programs to present the traditional Republican message to Massachusetts voters. In 1986 we ran a \$30,000 institutional radio advertising campaign to improve the image of the party, using orthodox Republican themes. In 1981 and 1983–1984, we instituted the legislative reform initiative petition; and in 1985–1986, with Citizens for Limited Taxation, we initiated the income surtax repeal petition to recover the party's lost reputation for government reform. We created a shadow cabinet parallel to the Dukakis cabinet to publicize Republican responses to the Democratic agenda. The Republican caucus in the legislature filed a package of bills each year for a decade of innovation in state government policy, but all were guided by orthodox Republican ideology. The party in the legislature and the state committee relentlessly attacked Dukakis and his Democratic troops for high taxes, overregulation, bureaucratic excesses, runaway spending, and liberal social policy. While the Republicans accurately anticipated the current fiscal crisis of the state in their decade-long attack on Dukakis, prophetic success has not improved the party's standing among the voters according to a poll taken by the state party in the spring of 1989.

Two issues, corruption and taxes, have traditionally dominated state politics in Massachusetts. Whether deserved or not, Massachusetts had a reputation as one of the most "squalid, corrupt and despicable" political systems of the fifty states, as Theodore H. White once wrote.¹² The term "Taxachusetts" arose from public perception of extraordinarily high taxes in Massachusetts. Michael Dukakis capitalized on the tax issue to win the 1974 gubernatorial election when he gave a lead-pipe guarantee not to raise state taxes to balance the state budget. His subtheme in that same campaign, as well as the 1982 race, was integrity in government. Dukakis's popularity in Massachusetts and its subsequent collapse after his defeat for president in 1988 are attributable to his reputation for personal integrity (a characteristic that the public perceives absent in the political system generally in Massachusetts) and his voter-perceived loss of integrity following that election.

Perhaps the most common refrain heard from voters in Massachusetts about Mike Dukakis, or a variation thereof, had been "At least he is honest. Even if you don't agree with him, you have to respect his honesty." During his years in public life Dukakis has assiduously cultivated this image of a Puritan in Babylon. His reputation for integrity and a booming state economy with a state treasury overflowing with tax revenue produced his 70 to 80 percent approval ratings and his 70 percent total vote in November 1986. The 1988 campaign for president brought out dramatically and colorfully damaging information about Dukakis's ten years as governor. But more damaging than any campaign advertising was the precipitous decline of the state economy and consequently state tax

revenues and the seemingly uncontrolled rise in the budget deficit caused both by enormous annual increases in the state budget during the preceding five years and falling revenues. Instead of accepting and dealing with the facts, Dukakis denied them in one statement after another. In the months following the 1988 election, the budget difficulties exploded, making it apparent to the voting public that Dukakis had been less than candid about the state's fiscal condition. The governor's disingenuous behavior and perceived failure to lead collapsed his public approval ratings from the highest of any governor in the United States to the lowest (one poll had him at a 13 percent approval rating, which may be the lowest for any governor in modern American political history).

The work of the Massachusetts Democrats will certainly be made much easier if Massachusetts Republicans fail to take advantage of their opponents' weakness. The uncertain future of the Democratic coalition with the departure of Mike Dukakis presents opportunities to the Republican Party to attract formerly Democratic voter blocs to their own coalition. Ultimately it must be the Republican standard-bearer who attracts new voter groups to the party. A good argument could be made that the Reagan coalition did not take conscious form until *after* the 1980 election. Voters did not cast their ballots to elect Ronald Reagan president as strongly as they did to remove Jimmy Carter from that position. Once in office, Reagan masterfully constructed a coalition that did reelect him and his program in 1984. Similarly, Massachusetts Republicans may need to win the governorship on the basis of William Weld's strengths and John Silber's weaknesses, and once in office consciously construct a more positive and lasting statewide coalition. The point is that it may not be necessary for the Republicans to define and form a gubernatorial coalition with a distinct set of issues to attract new voter groups if they can fully exploit Silber's weaknesses as a candidate: his abrasiveness, his alliance with the old Democratic Party of Kevin Harrington, William Bulger, and Kevin White, and his liberal fiscal policies designed to appeal to the construction and public employee unions and the interest groups that rely on state government largess.

Perhaps our greatest strategic failure during the seven years I served as chairman of the Massachusetts Republican Party was concentrating on legislative races to the exclusion of statewide ones. The top of the ticket usually has a profound effect on the outcome for legislative candidates. The great difficulty for the party in 1990 is that the coalition behind Bill Weld is different from the local aggregation of voter blocs Republican candidates for the legislature will attract. The top of the ticket may not provide the coattails needed to significantly improve Republican representation in the legislature.

Should Massachusetts Republicans lose the governorship in 1990 and fail to increase their numbers in the legislature, will the necessary conclusion be that party renewal is impossible? Given the sorry condition of state government and voter anger with incumbents, it would seem the Democrats would be in trouble and the Republicans would be the natural beneficiary of the situation. Perhaps the greatest opportunity the 1990 Democratic primary results present to the Republican Party is the collapse of the Dukakis coalition. Dukakis voters will never support John Silber, and the new party organization built by Dukakis will not mobilize the electorate for John Silber. Party loyalty is nevertheless a powerful magnate to keep parts of the Democratic coalition in place. Republicans are still outnumbered by the Democrats and will be for the foreseeable future. If the party doesn't make demonstrable progress in the 1990 elections under these circumstances, it will be a long time before it has this same opportunity again.

Victory in an election is forged from an imprecise and unpredictable combination of factors, many of which sometimes have little to do with the inherent strengths or weak-

nesses of political parties. An extraordinary candidate can raise a minority party to victory and a weak candidate take a majority party to defeat. A Watergate scandal or chance historical event such as the Iran hostage crisis can dominate a campaign in a way that ignores the relative position of the parties. Winning or losing a single election does not always indicate the real appeal of a political party — only long-term trends can do that. If the Republican Party wins the governorship in 1990 it will have an enormously powerful platform from which to build a more competitive party for the 1990s. Winning one election, however, will not itself suffice to rebuild the Republican Party. ❧

Notes

1. The term “swamp Yankee” refers in Massachusetts to the descendants of the original English colonial settlers, by religion, who neither went to an Ivy League college nor inherited any family money. They tend to be of the working class, artisans or small-business people. Swamp Yankees are distinguished from Brahmin Yankees, who are ethnically and religiously the same but somewhere made money that is passed from generation to generation and went to private schools and Ivy League colleges.
2. J. Joseph Huthmacher, *Massachusetts: People and Politics* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1959), 5.
3. *Ibid.*, 53.
4. *Ibid.*, 260–265.
5. J. W. Farley, general chairman, *Report of the Massachusetts Republican Finance Committee*, 1936.
6. Conversation with Richard Mastrangelo, former executive director of the Republican State Committee.
7. Annual reports of the Republican National Committee, 1976–1980.
8. Farley, *Report of Massachusetts Finance Committee*.
9. Nelson W. Polsby, *Consequences of Party Reform* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 78–80.
10. Data on Massachusetts state fund-raising may be found in the Annual Reports for 1984–1986.
11. All statistical data on election results are taken from Public Document #43 for the years 1976–1988, published by the Massachusetts secretary of state’s office.
12. Theodore H. White, *The Making of the President: 1960* (New York: Atheneum, 1961), 97.