

REPRESENTATION ON THE OKLAHOMA DEMOCRATIC PARTY'S CENTRAL COMMITTEE: ONE PERSON/ONE VOTE?

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In the 1980s the Democratic party went through a series of reforms that restricted autonomy of state parties and democratized delegate selection for presidential nomination conventions. Between 1985 and 1988 rural and urban factions of the Democratic party of Oklahoma struggled over the question of one person/one vote in representation in the State Central Committee (SCC). The matter was resolved only when the Democratic National Committee threatened to bar a delegation from Oklahoma at the 1988 national convention unless the SCC was apportioned in accordance with the national party's constitution. The SCC was reconstituted on more democratic lines, and the state party, operating under a new constitution, has enjoyed a more united leadership. The struggle to reapportion the Democratic party of Oklahoma looms as the most important episode in the organization's fifty year history.

The Democratic Party, through reforms of the McGovern-Fraser Commission and its successors in the 1970s, restricted the autonomy of state parties and democratized delegate selection processes for the presidential nomination conventions. Most of these reforms were upheld in court decisions, further solidifying the new found authority of the national party. The confederated structure of the party, in which each state was sovereign in internal affairs, gave way to a centralized national authority on questions of representation and participation. By the early 1980s, the national Democratic party generally had achieved organizational reform throughout the country, and almost all state central committees were more representative of the rank and file membership.

Between 1985 and 1988, Oklahoma was the scene of a prolonged struggle over representation in the linchpin of the state Democratic party organization, the State Central Committee (SCC). This battle was the culmination of a longstanding feud between urban and rural factions—what former National Committeewoman Lou Watkins describes as the "most feared, divisive issue going back to the 1960s." At various times in the clash, the contestants were divided into two great camps on the basis of socioeconomic status, the faction in power versus the

faction out of power, and by ideology into liberals and conservatives. For three years, the conflict rocked the foundations of the party, drained energies of the faithful activists, and diverted their efforts from more important matters. The result was a more "democratic" SCC and a more unified party, but the toll on human capital had been debilitating.

THE URBAN CHALLENGE

The constitution of the Democratic Party of Oklahoma was adopted in 1921. The document reflected and reinforced the political power of rural interests that dominated state and local government at that time. Representation was by county rather than on the basis of population, the same scheme of representation used in the original Senate of the State of Oklahoma. Each county had an equal number of representatives on the SCC. This insured that rural party officials were overrepresented in the supreme governing body of the Democratic Party of Oklahoma. Although the number of registered Democrats and party votes in urban areas grew dramatically in the years after World War II, rural malapportionment in the SCC continued into the 1980s and remained an anomaly in the era of reform by the national Democratic party.

In 1985 the SCC had 259 members; 234 came from three-member county executive committees of the 77 counties and the special "Eastern Oklahoma County" created by the Oklahoma Democratic Party in 1969 to participate in party activities. In addition there were three members from each of the state's six Congressional districts, three state party officers, two national committee persons, and two national committee members-at-large.

In 1973, 1975, and again in 1977, urban Democrats brought suit to reapportion the Oklahoma State Democratic Party in Federal District Court (*Todd v. Oklahoma State Democratic Central Committee*, 361 F Supp 491 (1973); *Hunt et al. v. Democratic Party of Oklahoma*, 439 F Supp 788 (1977)). In all instances, the court held that it lacked jurisdiction to decide the issue, which was a "political question," and denied plaintiffs relief. The court ruled that the state party had the sole power to reapportion itself. Because the State of Oklahoma had "light" regulation of political parties, the Democratic Party could not be considered a part of the state's operation. Thus the urban plaintiffs found themselves in the same predicament as urban voters attempting

to change malapportioned legislatures prior to *Baker v. Carr*, 369 U.S. 186 (1962). All that needed to be done was to get rural interests to give up their power—not a very likely prospect in light of their having enjoyed dominance within the party for more than half a century.

In 1983 a dissatisfied contingent of urban Democrats turned to the Democratic National Committee (DNC) as the only body that might move the SCC to action. Representatives of the Democratic party of Oklahoma County, led by Professor Tim Mauldin of the History and Political Science Department, Oklahoma City University, brought a challenge against the Oklahoma Delegate Selection Plan of 1984, based on malapportionment of the Oklahoma Democratic Party. The challenge was withdrawn, in part, to insure harmony during the Presidential election year, but also because of a promise by the officers of the Oklahoma Democratic Party to diligently pursue reapportionment. The DNC gave the state party until March 1985 to reapportion, but no action was taken.

On 23 April 1985, a challenge to the credentials of the Oklahoma State Party officers as voting members of the DNC was filed by Mauldin on behalf of the Democratic Party of Oklahoma County. The petition requested the DNC to uphold its earlier challenge by withholding seating of the Oklahoma State Chair Jim Frasier and Co-Chair Betty Hall until "new elections are conducted by the Democratic party of Oklahoma" (Statement, 1985) under rules consistent with the Charter and By-Laws of the DNC. The Oklahoma County petition stated that the SCC was "malapportioned to the point that a minority of registered Democrats (21%) ... control the Party organization" (Statement, 1985). The petition pointed out that SCC malapportionment discriminated against a majority of Party members in Oklahoma, against a majority of Democratic voters, and against key constituencies including blacks, Hispanics, Native Americans, and labor (Statement, 1985).

The Credentials Committee of the Democratic National Committee held a hearing on the Oklahoma County challenge on 24 June 1985. Urban Democrats maintained that inequities in representation on the SCC made some votes worth far more than others. Statistics backed up that claim. In the most extreme instances, the Democratic voters in the previous gubernatorial and presidential elections from Cimarron County carried 111 times the value of the votes from Oklahoma County. Furthermore, the 12 most populous counties that make up only 15% of

the SCC contained more than half the State's population and registered Democrats, 60% of the civilian labor force, 61% of the Hispanics, 76% of the blacks, and 40% of the Native Americans (Statement, 1985).

The Oklahoma County Party submitted its own SCC reorganization plan asking that the DNC require the Oklahoma Democratic Party to adopt it. The oral presentation of the challenge concluded by stating that the DNC's charter "calls very strongly and clearly for fairness based upon one person/one vote" (Transcript, 1985, p. 17). Opponents of the challenge contended that the Oklahoma State Officers should be seated since the SCC had scheduled an autumn meeting that would address the malapportionment problem and "cure the inequities" (Transcript, 1985, p. 26). When pressed by the committee chair to address the one man, one vote issue, the opponents' main contention was that the Oklahoma Democrats should be allowed to clean their own house "with a plan which is a consensus of all Democrats and not one county dictating to 76 others" (Transcript, 1985, p. 24).

The Credentials Committee voted unanimously to withhold seating of the Oklahoma State officers until new elections were conducted by a more representative body. Chairman Tom McGee bluntly warned the Oklahoma delegation: "Goddamit, don't come back unless and until you've done the one man/one vote, and that's it" (Transcript, 1985, pp. 44-45).

RURAL FACTION RESPONSE: THE SAM PLAN

The Oklahoma SCC immediately set about developing plans to restructure the State party leadership. Rather than working on a single joint plan, representatives of various factions developed their own models with little consultation with other groups. All of the plans provided for amendments to the state party constitution. A two-thirds majority vote of the SCC was required to ratify an amendment. Five different plans were given serious consideration by the SCC. These plans were:

1. The Oklahoma County challengers' plan greatly enlarged the SCC size to 1,315 members. This one person/one vote plan was calculated on the basis of one delegate for every 1,000 registered Democrats in each county (with a minimum three-person delegation from each county).

Jim McGoodwin, an Oklahoma City attorney, drafted the Oklahoma County Plan to show rural Democrats what a pure one person, one vote apportionment plan would do. He "felt this was necessary because the plans submitted by urban factions were viewed by rural interests as a baseline bargaining position from which to negotiate rather than good faith attempts to find a compromise." (Letter, McGoodwin to Vestal, 11/22/91).

2. Jim McGoodwin's second plan, presented as a member of the Democratic Party of Oklahoma, was based on the average vote by county in the last two presidential and gubernatorial elections (which would increase urban representation on the SCC) tempered by including elected Democratic legislators as members (which would somewhat dilute the urban shift). This SCC would have had 481 members.

3. The Cleveland County Democratic Party plan based SCC membership on another formula involving party registration by county with an increase in representation in the delegations of the 14 most populous counties. This plan produced a slightly smaller SCC of 318 members.

4. Rural forces' SAM Plan, an acronym for the co-authors, Holly Samples of Sapulpa, Pat Anderson of Tulsa, and Kenny Monroe of LeFlore, was the most complicated of the five and was based on a formula that included the average county party vote in the last previous congressional elections with bonus delegates for counties based on the percentage of registered Democrats who voted Democratic in the last two presidential, gubernatorial, and House elections. The 323 member SCC under this plan would have maintained rural strength and provided the smallest increase in delegates from Oklahoma City and Tulsa.

5. State Chair Frasier and National Committeeman George Krumme's middle ground plan would have expanded the SCC and the representation of the urban counties, while at the same time preserving the minimum three-person representation of the less populous counties and rural dominance of the Central Committee. The Frasier plan was based on the total number of Democratic votes cast in the last gubernatorial and presidential elections divided by the 77 counties (producing a denominator of 12,202 votes) with additional delegates based on the county vote above that median number (i.e., $12,202 \text{ votes} = \text{a } 3 \text{ person county committee on the SCC}$; $1/3 \text{ of } 12,202 = 4,067$ which provides one additional delegate to the SCC). Frasier thought the Democrat votes cast were a better measure than the "meaningless facade" found in some of

the registration figures. Under his plan, the SCC would have had a membership of 321.

A special task force to restructure the SCC met with the State Executive Committee in Tulsa on 8 September 1985. Chairman Frasier reminded the members that the DNC demanded intellectual integrity in the Oklahoma Party's efforts to reach a one man/one vote solution. He noted that even on a strict one person/one vote representation, rural interests would still dominate the SCC. Frasier urged "substantial compromise on the part of all factions" (Author's notes).

George Krumme warned that Oklahoma would not participate in the Democratic Party's 1988 Presidential selection plan unless the state chair and co-chair were chosen under new rules that reflected more democratic values. Spokesmen for rural interests discredited the DNC challenge as lacking teeth. They expounded a strong federalist theory of association, maintaining that the Bylaws of the Democratic Party of the U.S. set up a national organization and that therefore, state party organization could not be challenged. The Task Force duly passed a motion to adopt the SAM Plan with a roll call vote of 11 to 3.

The State Executive Committee was then convened and voted 16 for and 5 against the SAM Plan (with three members absent). The SAM Plan had not received a single vote from representatives of Tulsa or Oklahoma City. Frasier believed that the adopted plan would "not pass muster" with the DNC, but supporters of the plan thought that it would (Minutes, SEC, 14 July 1985). Rural proponents of the plan stated that they had compromised and acted in the best interest of the whole [Democratic Party] family." Furthermore, it was pointed out that representation of Tulsa County Democrats on the SCC had increased six-fold as a result of the day's actions. What had been missing in the formulation of the plan was communication and negotiation between rural and urban factions, actually delegates from Cleveland, Comanche, Oklahoma, and Tulsa counties on the one hand, and the rest of the state, on the other.

At the meeting of the State party in Oklahoma City on 6 October 1985, the SCC voted 164 to 23 to adopt the SAM Plan. The vote was divided on a strict urban-rural basis. The other plans were tabled by voice vote. The Chair of the Oklahoma County Party insisted that a minority report stressing the discrimination in favor of rural party members be included in the minutes of the meeting.

At the conclusion of the SCC meeting, the Executive Committee met and voted unanimously to (1) send the revised state party constitution to the DNC; (2) send representatives and supporters of the SAM Plan to the next meeting of the DNC prepared to defend the revised constitution in case it was challenged; and (3) postpone elections, if any, until after the DNC meeting.

SECOND WARNING FROM THE DNC

On 6 March 1986, the Oklahoma SCC's delegation met in Washington, D.C., with Chairman Kirk's handpicked mediator, Joe Riser, legal counsel for the DNC. The DNC had reviewed the action of the Oklahoma party and the challenge by the Oklahoma County delegation and concluded that the revised constitutional amendments did not properly address the one person/one vote mandate. Riser found the numbers of the SAM Plan "horrific." Therefore, the previous ruling of the Credentials Committee stood, and the Oklahoma Chair and Co-Chair would have no votes in the DNC meeting. There were also hints that the DNC would "shut down activities in the state" (Recording, 5 March 1986) if the apportionment question were not resolved. This would mean that DNC financial support would go to candidates rather than to the state party.

Riser recommended that the Oklahoma SCC make use of the services of the DNC's Committee on State Participation (CSP), a five member body chaired by Ron Brown, a rising star in the ranks of the Democratic party. The CSP could provide a mechanism to mediate disputes and reach a political solution. Riser suggested the CSP could act as a catalyst to aid communication and to work out a compromise between the two factions. He estimated that the process would probably take a year and that it would create a standard that was fair.

The next day, on 7 March 1986, the Oklahoma delegation met with Ron Brown, the chairman of the DNC's Committee on State Participation. A short time before, Brown had established his reputation as party peacemaker by successfully mediating an intraparty battle in Puerto Rico. Brown was confident that the CSP could help negotiate a solution mutually satisfactory to both Sooner sides well before the 1988 national convention. The alternative would be adjudication which would probably take far more time.

Brown expressed his willingness to convene the CSP within two weeks and to hold meetings in Oklahoma if necessary. The session ended inconclusively with the SCC delegation promising to send Brown the names of contact people who could speak for each side of the dispute (Recording, 7 March 1986).

THE RURAL FACTION STONEWALLS

A month later, the Executive Committee of the SCC met in Oklahoma City to critique the actions taken by the DNC. Lou Watkins questioned by what authority the SCC delegation had asked for SPC intervention. Watkins believed that the Executive Committee should have been the body to take such action. She also pointed out that according to the new DNC Charter and Bylaws, all remedies at the state level should be exhausted before calling in the SPC (Recording, 6 Apr 1986).

Krumme noted that the Credentials Committee could refer the Oklahoma challenge to the SPC for adjudication and that it was up to the SCC to accept Brown's proffered help or face the possibility of such a move by the DNC. Despite the warning, the Executive Committee voted to send (1) "a letter of appreciation" to Ron Brown saying in effect, don't call us, we'll call you, and (2) a missive to National Chairman Paul Kirk stating that "Oklahoma is being held to a different standard of full participation than are other states and the DNC itself." Watkins maintained that only the Oklahoma party had been instructed by the DNC "to go home and write a plan based on one man, one vote." She went on to say that the Oklahoma party should challenge the apportionment of the DNC itself (Recording, 6 Apr 1986).

The Executive Committee decided to take no further action on apportionment until after the November elections, and by a vote of 18 to 8, the group resolved that the Oklahoma party was "to exhaust all remedies at the state level before calling in the State Participation Committee of the DNC" (Recording, 6 April 1986). Krumme reminded the members that a new Executive Committee would have to be elected before the state party could adopt a presidential delegate selection plan and that such action would have to be accomplished by May, 1987. With that Draconian timetable emblazoned in their minds, the members of the SCC then busied themselves "getting Democrats elected."

RAPPROCHEMENT ON THE POTOMAC

After the elections in November, the Oklahoma County party presented yet another challenge to the Credentials Committee of the DNC (Statement, November 1986). This time the dispute centered on the malapportioned Oklahoma party leadership's promulgating rules for the selection of delegates to the 1988 national convention. The challenge questioned the right of the Oklahoma party to send a delegation to the convention. In response to the challenge, Chairman Kirk wrote Frasier indicating that Scott Lang, a Boston attorney and, for the preceding fifteen years, special counsel to the DNC, had been assigned to work with the Oklahoma representatives at the next meeting of the DNC on November 21.

At the DNC meeting in Washington, D.C., the Oklahoma Chair and Co-Chair were again refused seating as voting members. The Oklahoma delegation—Lou Watkins and her husband, Congressman Wes Watkins, Krumme, Frasier, Monroe, McGoodwin, Betty McElderry of Purcell, State Co-Chair elect, and Pat Anderson, President of the Oklahoma Democratic Party Federated Women—faced the problem of finding some form of rapprochement with the national party.

To hammer out the mechanics of a compromise, the Oklahoma delegation was closeted in the National Democratic Party Headquarters for eight hours with Scott Lang. Speaking for the DNC, Lang reported that the Credentials Committee would not seat Oklahoma's Chair and Co-Chair and that the committee was also going to refuse to recognize the state's National Committeeman and Committeewoman. Lang further warned that the DNC might "do the presidential delegate selection plan for the State" (Notes of McGoodwin).

In such a situation—with the prospect of no longer being a part of the Democratic Party hanging in the balance—the negotiating committee from the SCC made the pragmatic choice of reaching a reconciliation on apportionment. The SAM Plan, with its organization weighted heavily in favor of rural counties, was quickly buried. Lang, in a patient, evenhanded way, guided the delegation with persuasion, new ideas, incentives, and threats—the whole basket of instruments available. He suggested that the easiest way to settle the matter would be to add

additional members to the SCC representing a certain percentage of membership, i.e., if current members accounted for 25% of the reapportioned body, 75% more should be "add-ons." Such an arrangement would require about 536 new members. Representatives of the rural faction believed that Lang's plan was the best they could get under the circumstances. After an exhausting day of negotiating, a consensus was reached that further action, in keeping with the tenor of the meeting, should be taken (Notes of McGoodwin).

Three weeks later the Executive Committee of the SCC held a retreat at Lake Texoma and heard a report on the Washington meeting. Amidst continued grumbling from the rural faction, a committee on style composed of the eight SCC members who had been in the meeting with Lang, was appointed to work out the wording of the proposed constitutional amendments and the mathematical details of a reapportionment plan (Notes of McGoodwin).

The committee met on 20 December at Jim Frasier's office in Tulsa and completed the new calculus of representation. The proposed plan would enlarge central committee membership from 307 to 786, giving every county additional voting members and realigning the power structure more toward urban representatives. It would include at least three county officers from each county but also add members on the basis of Democratic voting strength, as judged by both presidential and gubernatorial elections. At the conclusion of the meeting, Frasier telephoned Lang to inform him of the new Oklahoma formula. Lang wrote Frasier on 14 January 1987 indicating that the proposed changes in the SCC would receive the DNC's approval (Notes of McGoodwin). On 24 January, the Executive Committee of the SCC adopted the report of the committee on style.

ONCE MORE INTO THE BREACH

On 28 March 1987, the SCC met in Oklahoma City, and Bill Bullard of Oklahoma City, was elected state chairman, succeeding Jim Frasier. Betty McElderry was elected co-chairman. The Oklahoma party then "in effect dared the DNC to take control of the state party and reconstitute the SCC by mandate" (Hammer, 1987a). On three separate votes, the SCC turned down the amendment to the state party's constitution

agreed to in principle in the meeting in Lang's office the month before.

Lang, representing the DNC, was present at the meeting and observed in amazement the debate of the one person/one vote topic. McGoodwin presented the new plan to the meeting. The opposition was led by three state legislators, Darrel Roberts of Ardmore, Larry Dickerson of Poteau, and Bill Brewster of Marietta, who preached persuasively to rural caucuses that a vote against the plan was a vote for democracy and for "the people" (Notes of McGoodwin).

Since the proposed plan amended the state party constitution, it required a two-thirds majority vote to pass. The plan was approved by a show of hands 168 to 95, but that was nine votes shy of the two-thirds majority. A roll call then was ordered by chairman Bullard, and the second vote was 155 to 103, some 18 votes shy.

At that point Lang talked for ten minutes pointing out that the formula of the proposed amendments was based on one used in other states and would give the Oklahoma party "full participation and fair apportionment" (Biskupic, 1987). But he warned that Oklahoma Democrats were risking control of their party being taken away from them. Said Lang: "The national rules have to be adhered to or we won't have a national party" ("State Demos Reject," 1987). He noted that there was nothing to prevent the DNC from calling a new meeting and imposing its own formula on the state.

Krumme pleaded with the delegates to approve the new plan on the basis of fairness and broadening the party's base. He then asked the SCC to vote to reconsider the plan presented by McGoodwin. The measure again failed to gain the requisite majority by a vote of 154 to 85, only seven votes shy of two-thirds. After the final vote, most of the delegates left the meeting and failed to consider 66 pending resolutions, leaving the state Democratic Party without a new platform until 1988 (Hammer, 1987a).

Lang indicated that the next move would be for the DNC, meeting the following month in Santa Fe, New Mexico, to hold a full hearing on whether the Oklahoma SCC was apportioned correctly. If Oklahoma lost the ruling from the hearing, the DNC then would issue an ultimatum to the Oklahoma party, take control of it and reconstitute it according to its own numerical formula. Lang indicated that states normally lose at such hearings ("State Demos Reject," 1987).

At the DNC's April 1987 meeting, Credentials Committee chairman,

Charles Whitehead of Florida, issued an edict to the Oklahomans: "Either weight your votes [to reflect party voting strength] on the present SCC or adopt a new constitution" (Notes of McGoodwin). The DNC ruled that until the state committee was reapportioned, it could not sponsor a delegation to the 1988 national convention. This was the third time that the DNC had found that the Oklahoma party was apportioned in violation of the national party's constitution (Findings, 1987).

This action led to a joint statement by Oklahoma's leading elected Democratic officials—Senator David Boren and Representatives Mike Synar, Wes Watkins, Dave McCurdy and Glenn English—urging the reapportionment of the SCC. State Chairman Bullard responded that he was optimistic the SCC would "now approve reapportionment" (English, 1987).

COMPLIANCE BY ACCLAMATION

At a special meeting of the Oklahoma SCC in Oklahoma City on 30 May 1987, the party leadership finally ratified constitutional amendments to enlarge the SCC and provide greater representation to urban counties. The meeting started with three proposed amendments to the state party constitution. Amid pleas to end bickering, the SCC voted to uphold a Bullard ruling that it was proper to consolidate the three amendments and then approve the actual consolidations. Consolidated were the overall formula reapportioning the SCC; a section to retain the separate eastern Oklahoma County delegation; and a section to use Democratic votes in primary elections as part of the continuing apportionment formula ("State Demos Comply," 1987). The consolidated measure would not bring the representation all that close to the one person, one vote concept, but it was a bona fide reapportionment effort that party leaders thought should be acceptable to the DNC.

SCC members accepted the amendments by acclamation, and Bullard had all members stand and link hands to signify their new-found unity and renewed dedication to beating Republicans in the 1988 election (Hammer, 1987b). Bullard had wisely bent the motion-amending rules to offer an olive branch to what remained of the rural faction. By winning a hard fought battle on the use of primary election votes in the formula, actually a minor point, the rural folk saved face and felt

sufficiently victorious to join in the amen!of acclamation.

The DNC, pleased to get the Oklahoma thorn out from under its saddle, approved the reorganization plan, and the Sooner State's delegation to the national party was again accorded the rights and privileges of full membership. Scott Lang, the veteran negotiator in many of the McGovern-Fraser reform battles of the previous 15 years, told Lou Watkins that "the Oklahoma group was the toughest he had ever worked with" (Interview with Watkins, 18 October 1991).

SWEET ARE THE USES OF ADVERSITY

Why was the Oklahoma Democratic Party able to resist the tide of representation reform that swept the national party and almost all of the other state parties in the 1970s and early 1980s? One factor was opposition to change by the state party's top leadership. Jim Frasier had been handpicked for the state Chairmanship by newly elected Senator David Boren and Governor George Nigh, who admonished him not to bring up the one man, one vote apportionment issue in the SCC (Interview with Frasier, 29 October 1991). Such benevolent neglect reinforced the instinct of rural interests to maintain their accustomed powers in party circles.

The challenge to the status quo by the Oklahoma County party created a polarization of views. Instead of working with urban forces to correct imbalances or to give and get a quid pro quo, the ruralites isolated themselves and proceeded to denigrate their opponents as unseemly "radicals." All too often public debates were mean-spirited and self-serving. Shabby *ad hominem* attacks on individuals were common instead of the civil deliberations that, in theory, should be the stock in trade of a democratic party. Rural hostility was focused on Tim Mauldin, who brought the first challenges against the state party, Jamie Pitts, chair of the Oklahoma County party, and Frasier, who despite his best efforts to remain neutral was forced into the role of adversary.

Rural interests were only united by a strong hostility toward change in the party structure. The underlying splintered nature of the rural faction was demonstrated by the hiring of attorney Brad Morelli to respond to a DNC challenge without any rural member of the SEC knowing who had contacted him or who had authorized him to represent

the state party.

Communication problems were exacerbated by the lack of a recognized leader of the rural forces. While McGoodwin, of Oklahoma City, could serve as a spokesman for the urban interests, there was no single leader in the rural faction. When Ron Brown requested a spokesman for the rural side to work with the SPC, no one was identified. McGoodwin recalls rural leadership being a moving target with first one person and then another appearing to be dominant. Among those who "came and went" were Dwight Rymer of Morrison, Lorry Dyson of Guthrie, State Co-Chair Betty Hall, and National Committeewoman Lou Watkins—none of whom seemed to acknowledge the leadership of another (Interview with McGoodwin, 10 Nov 1991). This lack of a chief contributed to the ambiguity of whom to complain to or about—and ultimately it slowed down the restructuring of the apportionment system.

The metropolitans, being the minority, were acutely aware of their need of the support of the chuffs to bring about any reform. Urban members were frustrated by ups and downs, walkouts, consultations, assurances, clarifications, votes in assorted caucuses—every postponement tactic that rural forces could use—but rarely did tempers flare. Urban party activists continually stressed compromise and sought dialogue with their opponents. In contrast, correspondence from some members of the rural caucus were indicative of a bunker mentality.

The DNC had assumed it could ease the process of accommodation by providing the Oklahomans with its teams for handholding. The national party was somewhat nonplussed when the Oklahoma party, instead of grasping, nipped at the hand that fed it. When the carrot failed, only the stick of severance from the national party in a presidential election whipped the intractable rural faction into a new, more representative covenant.

What brought about the change in attitude in the ambiguous rural leadership to convert a critical mass of their faction to the side of one man/one vote? McGoodwin believes the shift slowly evolved through an educational process in which leading rural members of the SCC spent enough time with the DNC in Washington, D.C., to understand how boorishly the Oklahoma party was perceived by the national party. The fracas had also become an embarrassment to Oklahoma's Democratic congressional delegation, who tired of offering *apologia* for their recalcitrant party brethren (Interview with McGoodwin, 10 Nov 1991).

The persistence of the Oklahoma County party in maintaining challenges to malapportionment provided ample time for the tempering of attitudes. The mailed fist of the DNC, when finally it hit home in the solar plexus of the Oklahoma party, was, of course, the ultimate discourager of further hesitancy.

In the end, what did all the fuss accomplish? Most Oklahomans and many Democrats were not aware of the SCC dispute nor did they care. The media really showed an interest only in the last year of the squabble when the state's embarrassment index was reaching the danger zone.

Since resolving the apportionment donnybrook, there has been little rural and urban dissension. Personal animosities have dissolved into the background of a united party leadership. The Oklahoma Democratic Party did get one significant by-product of the travail in reconstituting the SCC—a revised Constitution and By-Laws adopted 18 March 1989.

The struggle to reapportion the Democratic party of Oklahoma looms as the most important episode in the organization's fifty year history. As a result of the conflict, the Oklahoma party, while maintaining its rural roots, could take its rightful place in the national party of representation.

NOTES

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