Madame Chair
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I had served on the Democratic National Committee for only a few months when I attended the spring meeting to finalize convention plans. We met again in Chicago immediately before the 1968 convention and adopted the report of the special equal rights committee, chaired by Governor Richard Hughes of New Jersey. In part, the report stated that a commission on party structure should study the relationship between the Democratic National Party and its constituent state Democratic parties in order that full participation of all Democrats regardless of race, color, creed or national origin may be facilitated by uniform standards for structure and operation.

We specified six anti-discrimination guidelines to help achieve that full participation. The resolution sailed through the Chicago convention soon after the sessions opened and before any other reform recommendations reached the floor. Thus we ended up in a mess regarding which commission should handle reforms between 1969 and 1972 and in what areas the DNC retained authority.

The mess occurred this way: another politician named “Hughes” also took part in the reform effort. Governor Harold Hughes, of Iowa, chaired an unofficial commission formed by a group of party liberals. The unofficial commission also took its findings to the Rules Committee. The Rules Committee then voted to establish a committee to study and codify the rules of past conventions, to investigate needed changes, and to report its findings to the DNC in time for them to be readied for the 1972 convention.

Then a minority report, sponsored by Joe Crangle of New York, gleaned enough votes to reach the floor. It required the 1972 convention call to assure that delegates were selected through a process in which all Democratic voters had a full and timely opportunity to participate.
The old unit rule of majority-takes-all was forbidden at any stage, and procedures were open to public participation in primary, convention, or committee processes, all conducted within the calendar year of the convention. The convention also mandated a minority report.

After the 1968 convention we met again. Chair John Bailey, of Connecticut, handed his gavel to the new chair, Lawrence (Larry) O’Brien, a Kennedy man from Massachusetts. The newly elected committee members and women from all the states were formally installed. Our western caucus included Idaho, Oregon, Washington, Montana, Wyoming, California, Nevada, Colorado, Arizona, Utah, Hawaii, Alaska, and Guam. We agreed that the coastal states and the Pacific Islands would combine to elect one member to the executive committee, and the inland Rocky Mountain states would elect the other. Ellen Healed, from Coeur d’Alene, Idaho, had long served on the DNC. She was presently a member of the executive committee but rotated off that year.

Some of the former Kennedy supporters nominated Steve Reinhardt, a young attorney from Los Angeles, who was new to the committee. Several others also were nominated. Then, to my surprise, Senator Frank Church, of Idaho, nominated me. Most members knew me because of my role in the big campaign conference earlier that year, and I had been a Humphrey delegate. And so Steve and I were elected to the executive committee.

I had juggled politics with family and mink ranching for decades, and changes now brewed at home. Our son Rick wanted to leave the leased Henderson ranch and develop a ranch of his own. A few years earlier Dick and I had bought a farm in the Highland Bench area, east and south of Salt Lake City, with the idea that someday we might choose to live in a less metropolitan locale. We sold this property to Rick, on time and below market value. Since Rick wanted to be independent, we extricated him from the family partnership, giving him his share of the mink and other assets. He built a house and readied a small ranch where his bred females could birth their kits.

Our long interest in national mink ranching and marketing went international. Breeding stock sales involving Canadians had resulted in the Scandinavian countries developing their own mink industry. We never would sell them any mink but other Americans did. The Scandinavian governments backed the ranchers because pelts could be sold for outside currency. With government aid, they built a large cooperative auction house in Oslo, Norway, for all of their pelts. The Scandinavian ranchers actually owned this auction house and need not pay commissions, as we did, to Hudson’s Bay or to other commercial auction companies. The
Oslo auction was said to have the most modern facilities in the world. The Scandinavians invited the officers of the two marketing associations in the United States to visit their auction house in January 1969.

John and Ella Adkins, from Coalville, Utah, and Don Gather from Anthon, Iowa, represented the dark mink association. Dick and I, along with Red Zimmerman from Wisconsin, represented the EMBA, the mutation mink association. Together we flew across the Atlantic to observe the Scandinavian industry. Once in Oslo, we were treated like state guests, enjoying a banquet at the museum where explorer Thor Heyerdahl’s ship was housed, and meeting all the city and regional officials. We stayed on the square across from Parliament.

Our guide and host, who headed the Scandinavian Inter-Country Marketing Association, took a fancy to me and informed me of local customs. I learned that if somebody “skoals” you, you have to drink for as long as they gaze into your eyes. At huge smorgasbords, he kept lifting his glass of wine and skoaling me. This interplay contrasted with John and Ella Adkins’ approach—wine glasses filled with apple juice and gift copies of the *Book of Mormon* for all the Scandinavian participants.

More than the short icy days complicated our visit. At home, our mink ranching associations were pushing an import control bill through Congress because the Scandinavians were flooding our market with mink pelts. They could pelt earlier than we could and thus set the market price. And now they had newer and better auction facilities! Our purpose was to learn ways to economize, improve our products, streamline our procedures, and generally see what they were up to. Their purpose in inviting us and treating us so well was to persuade us to back off that import control bill.

Over the weekend the Norwegians took us up-country to visit their mink ranches. Immediately we noted that they were bundling mink differently, gathering them in huge lots of several hundred pelts, whereas we tried to match enough pelts for one or two garments. They also prepared the mink for market in a different way. We had much to learn.

When we returned to our hotel late on Sunday night, I spotted a message in our box and thought: Oh, no, somebody’s sick.

But the message read, “Jean, if it is not after midnight when you get back, please call. Hubert.” The only Hubert I knew had the last name of Humphrey, and the telephone number on the message was a room number in our hotel.

Hubert informed me of a state funeral for Trygve Lie, a former secretary general to the United Nations. As one of Humphrey’s last official
duties, LBJ had assigned him to represent the White House at the funeral, sending the Humphrey family on Air Force One. With his usual gregarious impulse, Humphrey had looked through the hotel register to see if he knew anyone else visiting in Oslo. Thus I attended the funeral with Hubert and Muriel the following morning while Dick toured the auction house. Then Dick and I went off to Copenhagen to tour the Danish auction house, meet the furriers and ranchers, and enjoy a performance of *The Little Mermaid* before flying back to the States.

It is an understatement to say Dick and I were both leading busy lives. These years comprised Dick’s most active in the national realm of fur breeders’ politics. He served as national president of the EMBA Mink Breeders’ Association, marketing mutation mink pelts for the entire United States. By contrast, I was involved in Utah politics most of the time. My support of Dick headed my list, but our worlds often intermingled.

After our trip to Copenhagen, Dick stayed in New York for some pelt auction sales and a style show. I went to Washington to participate in a week of DNC meetings preceding the Nixon “inaugural” at the Republican convention. Even though Lyndon Johnson was a supreme politician, he never had been willing to open the White House for Democratic Party purposes. But during their final week in the White House, Lyndon and Lady Bird hosted a formal dinner for the DNC, an appropriate grace note as his presidency ended.

The arrival of our invitation prompted clearance by the FBI and the Secret Service. Each of us received a certain time to arrive at the outside gate of the White House complex. We were then checked through, placed in an official limousine, escorted by two Marines into the White House, and announced. I had drawn one of the earlier times, which prolonged our visit; I suspected Mike Manatos might have something to do with that. LBJ spent several minutes with each committeeman and committeewoman, one hundred of us in all.

Then we were each escorted into the library to chat and enjoy refreshments. Before long, guides led us through the family portion of the White House, which visitors seldom see, then back downstairs. The Marine Band piped the Johnsons into the dining room, where we enjoyed a state dinner. We recognized cabinet members and a contingent of Broadway stars, and of course we knew Hubert and Muriel Humphrey. Rather than return upstairs, the Johnsons said their goodbyes and entered a waiting helicopter. We witnessed their official departure from the White House.
The January 1969 DNC meeting commenced at the Mayflower Hotel, beginning with a reception in the grand ballroom, followed by two days of sessions. Looking back, I realized this event paved the way for Humphrey’s choice—Senator Fred R. Harris of Oklahoma—to be elected our new chair, for Larry O’Brien already had decided not to run for another term.

During the 1968 fall campaign the Hughes ad hoc commission had fueled the reforms mandated at the convention. Now, Humphrey asked O’Brien to form a commission to study rules, and to issue a full press release to announce it. In other words, the study commission would keep the 1968 convention’s mandate on track. In December, O’Brien and his counsel decided to organize two commissions, and they asked for recommendations for each. For members, they clearly favored Humphrey supporters, the old Kennedy group, and the Hughes Commission.

Since O’Brien had resigned while we and Humphrey were in Norway, now Humphrey did not beg him to stay but considered former Governor Terry Sanford, of North Carolina, as a possible replacement. But Sanford, too, was reluctant. Fred Harris promptly offered to assume the position of chair, and Hubert agreed. So rather than endorse O’Brien, our January meeting elected Harris.

Earlier I mentioned my disillusionment with the passive role played by most members of the DNC. A semi-annual meeting in Washington allowed them time to meet with elected officials from their own states; these discussions then became resolutions that were passed by the committee.

I realized that many committee members enjoyed the large, formal receptions far more than they relished tinkering with the nuts and bolts of a campaign. These were people who raised money in their states, occupied head tables at official functions, opened conventions, and cut ribbons. This was hardly the energetic role I envisioned, and I suspected my constituents in Utah would agree. I wanted to represent my state by taking positions on national issues.

I suspect I would not have been elected to the executive committee (although Frank Church might have nominated me) if everyone had known my position on reform. As a Humphrey delegate and campaigner, I was perceived as an establishment politician. Actually, 1968 had provided a shockingly graphic image of party politics, a real shove from my realm of fun and fair politics. Somewhere between the Humphrey-Kennedy-McCarthy delegate deal in Utah, followed by the Chicago
convention, the compromised platform, and the fall campaign, I had experienced my own political transformation.

Joining me on the executive committee were, from the western states, Los Angeles attorney Stephen Reinhardt and Millie Jeffrey, an Auto Workers’ representative from Detroit. The United Auto Workers were not part of the AFL-CIO, and Walter Reuther was considered the dean of labor movement liberals. Millie became one of my dearest friends.

Seven other members from the regional caucuses joined us, and three alternates were chosen to substitute for any absent members. The officers were the chair, the vice chair, and the secretary, Dorothy Bush. Larry O’Brien initiated a motion to add a treasurer, Bob Short, perhaps to give him more votes to control. A member who was unable to attend the full days of meetings could give a proxy vote to another member or to an elected state official. Many state chairs began to attend the meetings to observe and try to influence their members’ votes. They formed their own association and lobbied to become voting members of the DNC.

Surprisingly, perhaps, the western conference boasted the most liberals in the full DNC, with most of the fourteen states offering a reform vote by at least one member. Other reform votes emerged throughout the regional conferences: Robert Dreyfuss or Jack English and Joe Crangle from New York State proved immensely helpful. So did the Wisconsin delegates, especially Donald Peterson. George Mitchell of Maine, Robert Vance of Alabama, Dick Koster from the Panama Canal Zone, Bob Fulton and Dagmar Vidal from Iowa, Koryne Horbal from Minnesota, Jean Wallin from New Hampshire, and still others provided the essential thirty-three votes we sought, and often found.

A group of conservative Democrats had emerged from the southern conference, and this group was disturbed by the DNC’s limitations. They wanted more say in the way civil rights legislation was implemented locally, and they wanted fundraising ability to sponsor specific candidates. My predecessor, Lucy Redd, had aligned herself with this group.

So, there we were with a new chair, bearing the immediate task of repaying a huge electoral debt. The DNC had grown used to largess from the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. Under a Republican administration, that source of funds completely vanished. McCarthy asked to have his debt paid as well, although he later withdrew that request. At our executive committee meeting, treasurer Bob Short told us that the campaign debt amounted to at least six million dollars. Worse, Humphrey’s fundraising efforts were meeting with little success.
At this point I received a telephone call from Wayne Owens, who had left Moss to work for Ted Kennedy. Wayne had Ted on the line. They reported successful fundraisers in an effort to resolve Robert Kennedy’s primary debt, but their campaign still owed around five hundred thousand dollars. Wayne said they would be willing to devote more of Ted’s time to speak at party fundraisers to pay off the entire debt, if the committee also would assume the debt left by Robert Kennedy’s candidacy.

Already I had discussed this plan over lunch with the committee treasurer, who thought it a great idea and suggested it to Larry, who still presided. After some discussion the executive committee proposed that the party assume all debt from the 1968 campaigns, and the motion passed the full committee. (Later, a “check-off tax” would help to ease this burden.)

Since Fred Harris had served as cochair of the Humphrey campaign, he felt partly responsible for a portion of the debt, and he had another priority: LaDonna Harris, Fred’s wife, was a prominent member of the Comanche Indian tribe. Thus Harris understood, almost firsthand, the frustration of racial and ethnic minorities who were virtually ignored in the political process. And finally, Fred was ambitious; he wanted to put wheels under the reform movement and someday steer his agenda into the White House. (Harris would run unsuccessfully for president in 1972 and 1976.)

Meanwhile, Harris hoped to revitalize the DNC. Nine years under Democratic presidents had allowed the committee’s power to dwindle. With Nixon in the White House, Harris reasoned, only a remodeled party could recover from public disgust regarding the Vietnam War and the ugly battles in Chicago. He pushed through a resolution to merge overlapping subcommittees, He also negotiated to appoint a party structure commission, with Senator George McGovern, of South Dakota, as commission chair.

Harris was easy to work with, but he had no power base in Washington. Rather than resolving debt and building the party, he ran the DNC hand-to-mouth. The wives and staff members of liberal senators volunteered to perform odd jobs; sometimes at night they were found answering mail and keeping the office in order. Fred was charged with operating the Reform Commission but had no money for staff. He felt it inappropriate to staff the office with members of the DNC because they had helped form the recommendations that needed to be reviewed and changed.

Most of us realized that reform was lost unless the DNC found the energy to enact change. Harris finally cobbled together a staff of sorts,
including Eli Segal, a young New York attorney; Ken Bode and Robert Nelson, both lured from McGovern’s staff; and political activist Carol Casey. As consultants, McGovern added Dick Wade, a historian at the University of Chicago; Anne Wexler, a political activist from the original McCarthy-Hughes group; and Alexander Bickel from the Yale University Law School.

While organizing, Harris openly sought geographic, ethnic, and partisan balance. He also wanted individuals loyal to him, or at least not threatening. Harris asked the DNC to appoint a resolutions committee to recommend reforms, designate the issues worth considering, and ease the process. He hoped to deal with issues relevant in various states; for instance, he sympathized with Millie Jeffrey, who wanted resolutions pertaining to some of the major strikes.

Despite the challenges, we returned home with high hopes for the future of the DNC. However Ted Kennedy gave only three fundraising speeches before a lighthearted occasion turned tragic. As Kennedy politicians had done before, Ted threw a party for the young people who had slaved away in Robert Kennedy’s campaign boiler room. Enough has been written about the tardily reported automobile accident that slightly injured Ted but cost young Mary Jo Kopechne her life. Kennedy’s official punishment for driving off a narrow bridge was predictably light, but his presidential aspirations vanished. So did his ability to rebuild the Democratic Party and help to resolve its debts.

Of course we soldiered on. Among the one hundred members of the DNC, around eleven of us emerged as outspoken liberals. Between the 1968 and 1972 conventions, we reformers could depend on thirty-three votes, at most. Yet, as we analyzed the committee’s make-up, we developed a strategy that miraculously transformed most of our ideas into policy.

From the outset the biggest reform was to eliminate appointed delegates to the convention. Nobody—whether governor or goose herder—could vote on the floor unless elected through a process that began in either a primary or a caucus. This process must be open to all party members, and candidates must be specifically identified although a slot could be reserved for local uncommitted delegates. Most of our concept was enacted, amended only to allow members of the DNC to serve as automatic delegates.

Then, a heated argument erupted. Would the winner take all a state’s votes in a primary election? Or would delegations honor proportional representation, as specified at the 1968 convention? A vote on
proportional representation carried, meaning each candidate’s share of delegates would be in proportion to his or her share of the public vote. Unfortunately this resolution passed in a cluster of unclear measures that well might bewilder state legislators.

Other proposed reforms included opening each state delegation to minorities—women, African Americans, Latinos, American Indians, Pacific Islanders, and youth. The quota idea to empower minorities became our strongest reform. The Civil Rights Act did not specify ways to implement civil rights, so, in the beginning, enforcement reacted to individual lawsuits brought by an aggrieved party. The Jewish community perceived the quota system differently. To them, quotas meant how many students could enroll in a university rather than opening a political process that everyone could share.

Unions opposed quotas within political parties because they accurately foresaw this practice spilling into the workplace—essentially becoming affirmative action. Ironically, given the number of women stuffing envelopes, calling voter precincts, and voting on the convention floor, we would not agree until 1976 that half of any delegation must be female.

Despite resistance, the concept of quotas caught fire in the 1970s. All around Washington knowledgeable conversations debated the quota system and affirmative action. Inserting the concept into delegate selection energized it for a leap into certain legislative actions. Simply by developing the concept, we accomplished many reforms.

On the home front I emerged from the ranks of the “agin-ers.” As a member of the executive committee, I became part of the establishment. Of course I remained friends with my longtime group in the western part of Salt Lake County; I continued to run governor’s balls, arrange conferences, attend county conventions, work with local candidates, speak to various groups, and show up at the state party office almost daily. In short, I kept doing everything I had promised to do as a national committeewoman, including a detailed report to Utah Democrats on actions of the national party through its committee. An observer might suggest I was building a broad base and network, both nationally and locally. Yet in my eyes it formed more by happenstance than design.

On November 19, 1969, the full national party structure commission met and enacted new guidelines: 1) four new guidelines replaced those inhibiting access; 2) seven new guidelines replaced those diluting influence; and 3) six new guidelines changed factors in the first two areas.

The staff still needed to complete some technical work, and the chair had not yet distributed the guidelines to state parties, but most
commission members considered their work done. Harris’s fundraising efforts had vanished when he faced the resistance of organized labor and lost Kennedy’s clout. Minimal funds were available to enforce compliance with our reforms.

The small staff remaining at the Reform Commission sent individual compliance letters to inform state chairs of their specific responsibilities. These included a general report for the public, which addressed strategic questions, including how and when to approach the DNC to gain further authority. The staff hunted for individual successes to use as examples and sought suggestions to encourage state parties to enact the reforms.

Then, on February 6, 1970, Fred Harris abruptly resigned, effective in two weeks. Humphrey, as the nominal party head, thought he (Humphrey) should choose a new chair. Some of the reform activists disagreed, recalling the void of effective leadership at the notorious Chicago convention. Confidently, Hubert turned to Larry O’Brien. But Larry turned him down, offering only a vague explanation.

Humphrey advisor Bill O’Connell (who long had doubted Larry’s sincerity regarding reforms) now suggested Matthew E. Welsh, a former governor of Indiana who excelled at organizing machine politics. The reformers rejected Welsh and suggested Joe Crangle, county chair for Erie County, New York. At the 1968 convention Joe had introduced the Rules minority report, which instigated the entire reform episode. But Indiana’s state chair, Gordon St. Angelo, decided to run as the candidate of committed party regulars and launched a full, election-style campaign. Joe Dooley, the mayor of Providence, Rhode Island, announced that he, too, was available.

The executive committee met to discuss the campaign fever raging in the commissions, the efforts to raise money, and the agenda for full committee meetings. But no real decisions were made. As his last charge to us, Fred had said, “I think you should take some hold in this. Maybe you ought to interview the candidates ahead of time and make a recommendation to the whole Democratic National Committee.”

This sounded unnecessarly risky to Jake Arvey, an Illinois political boss, a friend of Mayor Daley, and an executive committee member from the Midwest conference. Uneasiness also stalked conference members from the South. But the executive committee finally decided to take Fred’s advice and interview all the candidates before proceeding.

We met on a Sunday afternoon, on March 1, 1970, at the Mayflower Hotel. Humphrey attended to boost the candidacy of Matt Welsh, but the handful of competitors denied Humphrey a consensus. Neither St.
Angelo nor Dooley had any real support. Welsh had a working majority, but the balance of the committee (including me) supported Crangle, and we did not intend to give in. Both candidates intended to approach the full committee, and St. Angelo decided to do the same. By bedtime we could almost sniff the tear gas infiltrating our hotel, a sensory flashback to the Chicago convention. With nothing resolved, Millie Jeffrey and I went downstairs to find a drink, wishing that O’Brien would return; we knew many individuals from each side would accept him.

By morning nothing had changed. Millie, Steve Reinhardt, and I cornered Jake Arvey, and said, “Jake, this isn’t going to work. We have an idea. We have heard that Larry O’Brien is unhappy with what Fred Harris has done with the committee. Also, Larry is not making the income he thought he would as a stockbroker for Howard Hughes. (The aeronautical hobbyist and Hollywood legend was as rich as he was eccentric and reclusive. Years later the public learned that Nixon’s curiosity about O’Brien’s retainer from Hughes—who regularly contributed to both political parties—was a chief motivator for the bugging of the DNC’s Watergate suite. Originally the burglars attached listening devices to the secretaries’ telephones, which were easily accessible. The transcripts, however, proved so trivial that Nixon’s men insisted that the burglars return and place a listening device on O’Brien’s telephone. On that occasion, they were caught.)

I took a breath and continued, ”We wonder if there’s any way we can get Larry to come back, but we reformers cannot persuade him ourselves. If you can get Daley to back you and then call and say that Illinois will back him, maybe Larry will return.”

Jake thought it over then asked, “Do you think we have the authority to do that?”

I said, “I don’t know if we’ve had the authority in the past. But I think it’s about time the executive committee started claiming some authority, and then maybe the Democratic National Committee will follow suit.”

I didn’t think Jake would agree, but he said, “Let me go call the mayor and see what he thinks.”

In the meantime, I checked with the New Yorkers, who were lobbying for Joe Crangle. I said, “You know, Joe’s not going to win. We’ll be left with a big split and no chance of ever raising money. We must have New York, California, Illinois, Texas, Massachusetts, and Florida in agreement before we can get the Democratic National Committee on its feet.”

I took another long breath and added, “Since Joe isn’t going to win, how would New York feel about bringing O’Brien back?”
My New Yorkers mused that Larry was a Kennedy man originally. He had worked for Hubert on the campaign, and he’d be an excellent chairman. They had not figured there was any chance of getting him back. But if Joe truly had no chance, they might agree on Larry.

We convened the executive committee for a discussion and vote. Then Jake Arvey called Larry to report that we had created the consensus he needed. Larry asked for twenty-four hours to survey the political landscape. While Larry thought over our offer, we called Humphrey, who was delighted.

When Larry responded to our request, he raised one condition—he would become chair only if Lyndon Johnson would give us someone from Texas to act as treasurer and to help with fundraising.

Jake told me, “You know, Lyndon thinks a lot of you.” (Really?—news to me.) “And he owes Illinois a lot,” Jake continued, “because of the way we put on the Chicago convention at his behest. So I think that if you and I telephone him, maybe we can talk him into it.”

We reached Lyndon’s aide and explained our mission. He said, “Well, we’ll have to get back to you, but I’m sure we’ll find a Texas money man; and then you can tell Larry we’ll back him.”

I was not surprised when Lyndon suggested Robert Strauss for treasurer; he had promoted Strauss as banking commissioner, and Strauss quickly had learned LBJ-style politics. Some of us felt strongly that we could not pay our debts and raise campaign funds for 1972 if we still wandered around in the whiff of remembered tear gas.

Hearing about the O’Brien-Strauss combination, Welsh withdrew. The next morning, O’Brien called to accept and Crangle withdrew. St. Angelo stayed in, but Humphrey started working the telephones on O’Brien’s behalf. Everyone closed ranks, and Larry re-assumed his seat as chair of the DNC, with all the power and freedom he might have enjoyed if he had been Humphrey’s nominee.

In many ways, this was a historic event for the DNC. We created our power by this and later actions. Often O’Brien urged the executive committee to back his proposals. Objections came from those of us who favored more stringent reform. We then would lose the vote and appeal it to the floor. Sometimes we contrived extreme proposals. We knew they would lose, but we praised them in the executive committee and again on the floor. Late in the day, when many members were weary, or the next morning when they were anxious to end the meeting, we would get a middle-of-the-road committee member to propose a more moderate version (our original intent). We would agree to compromise and watch the measure slide through a vote.
Another tactic was focusing on one really hot issue, debating it, and losing. Then, as delegates unwound from the tension of the brawl, we would present a package of seemingly mild proposals. Close examination might prove some controversial, but in the metaphorical calm after the storm, they often were approved. Usually we had to get Larry to agree with these ahead of time, but a few times our proposals glided through without his prior knowledge. Among other things, these tactics curbed the power of the unions to grab more than their fair share of convention seats, and they gave young Democrats the right to run for delegate.

Since Harris’s resignation in February 1970, the McGovern commission had held regional hearings around the country. The commission decided to promulgate the reform recommendations nationwide without the full approval of the DNC. Harris agreed that the 1972 convention would be the final arbiter, but he felt the commission should report to the DNC and to the states—especially if they expected the new rules to be used before the 1972 convention. The commissions wanted funding from the DNC but also wanted total independence.

Objections to the power of the executive committee arose from the floor at the DNC meeting in April; but we prevailed, and from then on we helped set the agenda and make decisions at executive sessions. O’Brien became skillful at using us for his own ends, but we reformers also honed our techniques.

In April 1970, Grant Sawyer and I chaired a Western States Democratic Conference in Salt Lake City. I even arranged a fundraiser for DNC treasurer Bob Strauss. Ed Flynn, of Kennecott Copper, underwrote a fancy dinner at the Alta Club where John Klas, our new state chair was introduced. Ed helped me bring in money men from the mining industry. Others, such as Scott Matheson (our future governor) and Sid Bascom, helped us involve utilities and railroad people. Most came from western states, especially the Rocky Mountain area. We played down California in order to introduce Strauss to Rocky Mountain donors.

We convinced everyone to pledge money and to sponsor fundraisers in their own areas. O’Brien, Strauss, or I would visit their states as speakers or sponsors. O’Brien promised an attendance by congressional staffers, committees from the Department of the Interior, and so on. I helped arrange that type of function, and then Strauss used it as a base of power. Strauss even circled close enough to the California and Texas Republicans to become President George H. W. Bush’s envoy to Russia. Strauss was continually promoted by that Texas group, even living with John Connally at one point and sharing a joint law firm.
As governor of Texas, Connally had spoken at the 1968 conference in Phoenix, and my impression then was of a jovial old boy on the surface; below the surface lay ambition, for he and other Texans seemed to mind their own business before party business. I concluded that they would mix well with the eastern establishment. Entirely insensitive to the causes of women and racial and ethnic minorities, Strauss centered his attention on issues that would benefit him. People who were not in power, he just bulldozed.

One problem Strauss had within the party was an inability to raise money from liberals. After Jimmy Carter was elected president, the liberal wing came around and Strauss fared well with the labor bosses. I concluded that two types of people stood out in big labor. One was a big and brassy type, flaunting a huge salary, residing in Washington, close to the center of power, rather than close to the union membership. George Meany when head of the AFL-CIO offered an example. The other type reminded me of the United Auto Workers’ Walter Reuther and the Communication Workers’ Glenn Watts. They underwent truly democratic elections, kept their headquarters near the main union operation, and reported often to their members. Strauss was the Meany type, and he got along well with that group. I succeeded better with the other type.

O’Brien found his major funding in the unions. Larry had been as smooth and responsive a chair as anyone could wish during his early years. He claimed to never draw a salary, but by the 1970 and 1972 elections, he and his two main aides ran up high expenses, leasing expensive apartments in New York City and in Washington, D.C. Even more visibly, O’Brien favored custom-tailored suits and traveled in a chauffeur-driven limousine.

The truth is that the DNC required big money just to keep O’Brien comfortable. I wondered if Larry initially refused to return as chair because the new approach to fundraising might diminish his lifestyle. Gradually we realized that Larry did not really support all the reforms in our platform. On the surface he did; yet many unions opposed the reforms, and they were major donors. Donations were less regulated than they later became, especially for big labor.

Since I was definitely in the reform camp, it surprised me how well I got along, at least on the surface, with O’Brien, Strauss, and the others. Later, of course, our differences became apparent—when I went flying from my chair heading the DNC and Strauss settled in.