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Mayor Daley's Achilles' Heel

Post reborn

CHICAGO—The Achilles' heel of Mayor Richard J. Daley's Democratic organization, the most resilient and therefore most enduring of big city machines, is now responsible for a radically-altered political climate here that might well give Richard M. Nixon a second term as President.

The Daley organization's flexibility was demonstrated two weeks ago when it endorsed Lt. Gov. Paul Simon, a downstate liberal, instead of one of its own for governor. But immediately thereafter it displayed self-destructive rigidity by endorsing tempestuous Edward V. Hanrahan, under an indictment growing out of his notorious Dec. 4, 1969, raid on Chicago Black Panthers, for another term as state's attorney (chief prosecutor of Cook County) Chicago.

Anathema to blacks and white liberals, Hanrahan will cost the Illinois Democratic ticket dearly. There is a real possibility that he could cause Negro voters to stay home next November in sufficient numbers to deny this pivotal state to President Nixon's Democratic opponent.

Why then did Daley, the supreme pragmatist, keep Hanrahan on the ticket? The answer: The Daley organization's Achilles' heel. Though it can reach outside

the organization to run Paul Simon for governor and Adlai E. Stevenson III for senator, its inner dynamics prevent it from purging one of its own under assault from the outside world.

Certainly, the outside world was hot after Hanrahan ever since the Black Panther raid, conducted with Keystone Kop efficiency by police assigned to Hanrahan, which resulted in two Panthers killed. The ensuing developments ended with Hanrahan's indictment for conspiracy to obstruct justice. The press, the bar and liberal Democrats assumed the terrible-tempered prosecutor's career was ended.

BUT DALEY told friends he could see no wrongdoing by Hanrahan, a sentiment shared by party regulars who resented his critics. Hanrahan's argument to organization leaders was essentially this: Are you going to let "them" push "us" around?—"them" being Negroes, liberal Jews, intellectuals, the bar association and the newspapers.

Thus, as candidates for all offices attended Chicago ward meetings last month, the most boisterous ovations went to Hanrahan—the overwhelming choice of precinct captains, whose mood weighs heavily on Daley.

Somewhat belatedly, Simon and Stevenson intervened with Daley against Hanrahan. So did Thomas Foran, the widely-respected former U.S. attorney here (prosecutor of the Chicago conspiracy case) whose credentials as an organization Democrat are impeccable. But Foran, having lost the endorsement for governor to Simon, was the logical alternative to Hanrahan for state's attorney—a job he did not want—and therefore could not oppose him too vehemently.

Apart from tribal unity against foreign assault, the endorsement of Hanrahan was based on polls showing him leading the ticket because of his tough law-and-order image. Hanrahan conceivably could gain many more votes in Berwyn, Cicero and other Republican backlash suburbs than he would lose in black slums.

BUT OTHER Democrats on the ticket, including Mr. Nixon's opponent, would not. Ever since Hanrahan's endorsement, Negro resentment has been building. That could mean a massive stay-at-home vote among Chicago's half-million black voters. Efforts by west side gangs to intimidate slum Negroes into not voting, less than successful in 1968, would be vastly reinforced.

Moreover, Simon is horribly trapped. He can try to avoid Hanrahan, but he cannot repudiate him. This helps both maverick Democrats Dan Walker's primary campaign against Simon and Republican Gov. Richard Ogilvie's uphill fight for reelection. Add to this the shocking indictment of former Gov. Otto Kerner and Democratic prospects are clouded.

Consequently, highly-placed organization Democrats, having second thoughts about Hanrahan, have concocted this scenario: After Hanrahan wins the March 21 primary against a last-minute anti-organization challenger, his indictment will be quashed and, his good name restored, he will voluntarily leave the ticket. But that seems too fanciful. "If you think we can force that on him, you don't know Ed Hanrahan," a key organization figure told us. "And I don't think he'd agree to it by himself."

If so, the burden for 1972 will be upon Daley's regular organization to deliver the Negro vote as usual despite the Hanrahan stigma—a task more formidable than any in the past. If it fails, Daley's Achilles' heel could damage his party far beyond parochial Cook County politics.

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