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The Foolhardy Formsheet

By TOM WICKER

WASHINGTON, March 8—The New York Stock Exchange and the new off-track betting agency in that city have been wrangling as to whether playing the ponies or plunging in the market is the safer investment. Neither is as risky as predicting elections, conventions, primaries, etc. Nevertheless, just one year before the primaries begin, here is one man's foolhardy formsheet on the Democratic prospects, such as they are:

Muskie: The Republicans circulated a statement last week that Senator Muskie's temper was too hot for him to be entrusted with the Presidency. This is a dangerous tactic, as the Democrats are in possession of the video tape of Mr. Nixon's "last press conference" in California.

Everything suggests that Mr. Muskie is the front runner but the polls that show him the choice of more people than Mr. Nixon are inconclusive; the primaries, the conventions, the campaign must intervene before voters privately make a real choice, a far different thing from stating an abstract preference eighteen months ahead of time.

Mr. Muskie has two major problems, not counting his temper. One is to carry most of the 23 state primaries, a tall order. The other is to win substantial support in the old antiwar factions of 1968 without alienating the Johnson-Humphrey forces of that year, and vice versa. This is an even taller order. Polls or no polls, the jury is out.

McGovern: The South Dakota Senator already is better organized, with more experienced supporters, than any other candidate or potential candidate, owing to his inheritance of the antiwar factions of 1968. This means that he is considerably stronger than is

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generally understood, despite the cliché view that he lacks personality.

Mr. McGovern's first problem is the same as Mr. Muskie's—to win heavily in the primaries. His second is that there appears to be no way he can get much support from the Johnson-Humphrey supporters of 1968, particularly in the South.

But will the announced Democratic party reforms in fact result in greatly increased convention strength for blacks, young people and women? If so, Mr. McGovern ought to be a substantial beneficiary, if he's still around by then.

Jackson: Setting himself against the antiwar trend of the party, Mr. Jackson of Washington is off by himself on the right of the spectrum. That appears at this distance to be an unlikely position from which to win the Democratic nomination in 1972, but the Senator's presence in the race gives hawks, cold warriors and big-bang defense men a substantial candidate round whom to rally. With such a candidate, they probably can exercise considerable influence on the platform and the ticket.

If Mr. Jackson, as now appears likely, enters some state primaries, would his candidacy siphon off potential Muskie votes, or would it benefit the Maine Senator by putting him in the center, between Mr. McGovern and Mr. Jackson? The tea leaves do not say.

Bayh: At his tender age and with his substantial backing from labor, what's to lose? Indefatigable, attractive and Midwestern, the Senator from Indiana could (a) grab off the Vice-Presidency, (b) get a head start for first place in 1976, (c) with a little bit of luck and a string of primary vic-

tories maybe surprise everyone in a contested convention.

Hughes: Big, thoughtful and impressive, the Iowa Senator could sell you a used car on the first pitch, and it would probably turn out to be a good buy. He has more personal presence than any other possibility, good credentials with the antiwar left, solid rapport with the hardhats, and a certain air of character honed by travail. He says he lacks familiarity with foreign affairs and critics say he lacks the killer instinct, but maybe the White House has had too much of both.

(Note: McGovern men would like to egg Mr. Bayh into the primaries to hinder Mr. Muskie; Muskie men would like to prod Mr. Hughes into the primaries to hamper Mr. McGovern.)

Lindsay: The New York Mayor's greatest attractions are his fresh face (among Democrats) and his nonpartisan independence. With such assets, he could be an attractive spokesman for urban interests and a formidable vote-getter—but will he be able to maintain that independent new look when and if he becomes just one more Democrat among a half-dozen scrambling for the brass ring in 23 primaries?

Humphrey: As a former Vice President and Presidential nominee, he is the only potential candidate with a valid reason for remaining aloof from that lethal run of state primaries. And if the other candidates take turns defeating each other in those party brawls, as may well happen, don't bet the Democratic convention won't turn again—if only by default—to HHH, the man who missed by a hair in troubled 1968.

Kennedy: A riddle wrapped in a mystery.

McCarthy: A riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma.

McGovern

Jackson

Muskie

Bayh

Hughes

Lindsay

