

Patrick Buchanan
Wallace
Has a Big
Head Start

Montgomery, Alabama

A VISIT to the heart of Dixie and Wallace headquarters convinces this observer that the Democratic party is in for a rude awakening in 1976.

Organizationally, Wallace is close to lapping the field. At this stage, his campaign effort is more advanced than the Nixon operation of 1967-68, which swept the Republican primaries, convention and election.



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One veteran political reporter for the Washington Post arrived here a few weeks back, surveyed the premises, took the first plane back to D.C. and has been writing Wake-Up America copy ever since.

Charles Snider, the Wallace campaign manager, speaks in tones Twain would have described as the "calm confidence of a Christian with four aces." His discussion is about perhaps 600 or 700 delegates — half the number needed

for nomination. But behind the public estimation lurks the hope that George Corley Wallace can just maybe, take it all in '76.

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THE ASSETS the governor will carry into the primaries are formidable. His national name recognition exceeds that of any other primary opponent, and totally eclipses most. The attempt on his life, three years ago, has made him a tragic figure to millions. His base of support is the broadest and most solid in the party.

Even the reforms imposed upon the Democratic party by its McGovern wing are backfiring. Holding primaries in half the states of the union, with proportionate distribution of delegates, means there could be Wallace delegates at the next convention with Boston and Brooklyn accents.

As for the non-primary or convention states, where the Wallace folks ran into the "new politics" crowd in 1972 and went home in a barrel, it is a new ball game. They have learned the rules; they are organizing in all 50 states.

In 1976, the women's liberationists and post-graduates with the wire-rim glasses and Trotsky beards who dominated the party caucuses in 1972 may find seated behind, beside and in front of them "good ole boys" brought in by pick-up truck from the Legion Halls and bowling alleys to vote for "Jawg."

Wallace enjoys other advantages he did not have in 1972. The old issues of forced busing, reverse discrimination against the white working class, and an increasingly arrogant and affluent bureaucracy using the tax dollars of the middle class to benefit itself and the welfare class, are more relevant than ever. On top of them is the American disaster in Southeast Asia.

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BUT IF the prospect of Wallace marching through the Democratic primaries like Uncle Billy Sherman through the Confederacy has Republicans chortling and conservatives slapping their thighs, they might consider this post-convention scenario.

In this observer's judgment, the Anybody-But-Wallace majority in the Democratic party will eventually unite to deny him the nomination, and keep him off the ticket. If that occurs, the Alabama governor, having swept perhaps a dozen primaries, will likely take a ride over to the American party convention where his return would be greeted like that of Douglas MacArthur to the Philippines. At which point, George Wallace becomes less a peril to the Democratic ticket than to the Republican party of Gerald Ford and Nelson Rockefeller.

Conceivably, George Wallace, running third party in 1976, could pull ten states out of the GOP column from 1972, and, by splitting the conservative vote send many more in the direction of a Kennedy-Jackson or Muskie-Glenn ticket.

Conservative strategists talk enthusiastically of a "Grand Coalition" of Goldwater Republicans and Wallace Democrats coalescing behind a Reagan-Wallace ticket. Down here, folks talk of the same ticket — only not in alphabetical order.

In short, I am suggesting that Wallace and his men did not invest a dozen years of blood, tears, toil and sweat to accept second place on a third-party ticket. Further, that while the immediate Wallace threat is to the party of Muskie and Kennedy, the ultimate peril may be to the party of Ford and Rockefeller.