

Wallace Sees a Party Plot To Hinder a '76 Bid by Him

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By B. DRUMMOND AYRES Jr

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RALEIGH, N. C., April 9—Gov. George C. Wallace of Alabama charged today that the Democratic party's hierarchy was so afraid that he might run again for the Presidency that efforts were being made in many states, including North Carolina, to stack delegate-selection procedures against him.

Mr. Wallace, who insisted that he had not decided whether to be a candidate in 1976, made a special trip here to oppose a bill that would abolish this state's Presidential primary and allow Presidential delegates to the national Presidential convention to be chosen at state conventions.

He called for primaries in every state—about 30 now plan to hold them—and argued that conventions were “undemocratic” because they were subject to power-brokering instead of the will of the people.

“Let the people speak,” he said.

In Washington, Mark A. Siegel, the executive director of the Democratic National Committee, denied that there was any party effort to limit the influence of the public.

Mr. Siegel, a specialist in delegate selection procedures, said, “There is no conspiracy against the Governor or his supporters.”

Wallace Victory in '72

In 1972, Governor Wallace swept the North Carolina presidential primary, collecting more than half the popular vote and 37 of 64 delegates after only four hours of campaigning.

This morning, interrupted by the cheers of more than 500 supporters, he told the Government Committee of the North Carolina Senate:

“Had I not been here in 1972 and upset the apple cart of the Democratic hierarchy, we probably wouldn't be here today. Had North Carolina had a caucus (convention) system in 1972, I wouldn't have had a single vote.

“There are moves [to abolish or modify primary procedures] in North Carolina, Tennessee, Michigan, Maryland and Wisconsin. Lo and behold, those are the states I did so well in in 1972.”

Governor Wallace has always run best in primaries, mainly because he has usually been weak on organization, needed to get sympathetic delegates at the state conventions, but strong on name recognition and on convincing certain voters that he represents the interests of the average citizen.

In his testimony today, Mr. Wallace charged that some states were trying to escape that requirement by switching over to the convention method of selecting delegates.

The Governor asked to testify in favor of retaining the

primary here after a bill to abolish it was passed by the North Carolina House last month. His appearance today was said by some legislators to have reduced the bill's chances in the Senate to even, or less.

Others speaking out in favor of retaining the primary included the North Carolina Governor, James E. Holshouser Jr., and James Sugg, chairman of the North Carolina Democratic party.

Conventions Favored

Those who favored conventions argued that primaries were expensive to run and politically divisive.

There was no testimony to the effect that former Governor Terry Sanford reportedly was one of the men pushing hardest for the primary repeal.

In the 1972 primary, Mr. Wallace soundly thrashed Mr. Sanford. Now, it is rumored, Mr. Sanford is thinking about running again — if the North Carolina Senate votes in his favor.

But whatever the outcome of the Senate vote, Mr. Wallace seems sure to gain, coming off either as a giant killer or as the bullied defender of the little man.

“The Democratic party talks about ‘participatory democracy,’” he told the North Carolina legislators, “and now we have a move on to remove the little man—the textile worker, the farmer—from the process.

“One of the best ways to preserve the middle class of this country is to let them participate in democracy. I trust the people.”

20-Minute Argument

Mr. Wallace, who appeared in good health despite the paralysis in his legs, did not single out any member of the Democratic hierarchy during his 20-minute argument against changing delegate selection methods.

Besides switching from primaries to conventions, the Wallace forces also are worried somewhat about so-called “loophole” primaries.

These, in effect, permit slates of delegates to run in each Congressional district on a winning-slate-take-all basis.

“In some cases, the loophole can help us, but in other cases it can hurt,” says Mickey Griffin, the Wallace expert on delegate selection.

Of the 3,008 delegates to the Democratic National Convention, 1,665 will be chosen in “loopholed” primaries.

“You'll find them in big states like Ohio, Illinois, New York, Pennsylvania, California—even Alabama,” says Mark Siegel of the party's national committee. “It's the simplest and most direct method and gives the voters the ultimate and final decision.”