

Campus Caucuses

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Politics has become almost as prevalent on the college campus as it has on the national scene. All elections, no matter how trivial, are domineered by this or that "party" — the caucus. It no longer seems that a person is elected to a college office or honor because of his own personal abilities or personality. He is now elected because members of his caucus demand it, and, with rare exceptions, the largest organization claims the victor.

The best way I know to illustrate the advantages and disadvantages of caucused politics on college campuses is to cite examples with which I am familiar. For the most part these examples must be taken from the political system here at Butler University, since the situations vary at every school and since most of them are foreign to me.

I am convinced that the advantages of caucuses are far outnumbered by the disadvantages. I say this not because of prejudices which have arisen from previous campus elections but because it is an opinion I formed long before I came to Butler.

Like any other person at Butler who is affiliated with an organization, I am a member of one of the caucuses on campus. My membership was certainly not voluntary; if it had been, I would have had no part at all in the caucus system. My main objection to this type of voting system is that everyone does not have an equal chance. Each social organization nominates candidates, but only occasionally is the organization allowed

to vote for that person. Many times an organization's nominee is not even supported by the very people who chose him as a representative!

Others will argue that only through caucuses does everyone have an equal opportunity to win. "You support us and we will support you" is the philosophy they stress. Why not let the candidates prove themselves worthy of the honor? If caucuses were eliminated they could do just that, and in ninety-nine percent of the elections the most deserving person would triumph.

Caucuses create in many students a lack of perseverance. "Why try? We have no chance of winning this time" is a feeling that prevails near election time. One organization may externally do extensive campaigning for another, but internally the desire for victory is not passionately strong. However, that internal desire exhibits itself in external form when one's own candidate is being supported.

Caucused voting leaves no suspense, no excitement in elections. Winners can be predicted accurately in almost every instance. When this point is carefully considered, we see that it is rather useless to conduct elections at all. The University of Michigan, for this reason, banned queenship elections from campus activities and dispensed with caucuses altogether.

The only advantage I can see in the caucus system is that it has a positive effect in uniting campus organizations. Caucuses do teach college students how to work together and how to compromise when it becomes necessary. Because of the inevitably close association of caucus members, a deep sense of understanding and responsibility exists among the participating organizations.

If caucuses were eliminated from college campuses, and if politics were confined to state and national affairs, our student elections could be made cleaner, fairer, and more worthwhile.