

# Electoral College, Once Termed Excellent, Now Seems Quaint And Creaky

WASHINGTON (AP)—The Electoral College, for choosing presidents, may be quaint and creaky today but in 1787 it seemed "if not perfect at least excellent."

And, cuss it as they may, lawmakers never since then have been able to agree on any better system.

That's why 537 almost unknown people are gathering in 50 state capitols today to elect the president you may think was elected last Nov. 8—Democrat John F. Kennedy.

Who are these 537 to whom the voters, whether they realized it or not, gave the power to choose the president? They are party faithful, generally, being recognized with a transient and unpaid honor. One way or another, the political parties pick the candidates for elector in every state.

Five do it by primary. Pennsylvania requires that the candidates be certified as presidential nominees themselves.

Sometimes the honor is eagerly sought—in West Virginia, for example, where elector candidates campaign vigorously for election. In that state, a record as elector is a handy thing to have in later tries for more durable offices.

But the vast majority of voters never know who the electors are when they cast their ballots—or so the voters think—for the presidential nominees. In most states electors' names don't even appear on the ballot, or are inconspicuously grouped under the names of the presidential candidates.

Under the circumstances, it may be remarkable that only a scattering of electors, over the years, have jumped the traces. The latest instance came in 1956 when one from Alabama, which Democrat Adlai E. Stevenson carried, defiantly cast his presidential vote instead for an Alabama circuit judge.

But this year, with the election breathtakingly close and much of the South bitter over integration, threats of a bolt by some Southern Democratic electors sent cold shivers down other Democrats' backs. In the midst of the Louisiana school crisis, some segregationist state legislators proposed removing the Kennedy-pledged electors and substituting others. The legislative leadership, however, would not go along.

The case of the unpledged electors in Mississippi and Alabama was different. These ran and were elected without committing themselves to any candidate. Their avowed purpose was to place the South in a bargaining position between the two parties, for if neither major candidate ob-

tained a majority of the electoral vote, the election would fall to the House of Representatives.

But the 14 votes of these Alabama and Mississippi electors, which are going today to conservative Democrat Sen. Harry F. Byrd of Virginia, weren't enough to influence the outcome.

Millions of words have been written and spoken for and against the present electoral system. The arguments most often heard boil down to this:

Direct election of the president by popular vote, or at least splitting the electoral vote of each state according to the popular vote, would be more democratic. It would encourage the two-party system, guarantee against capture by electors, reduce the influence of big, pivotal states and make it impossible for a candidate to win the presidency with fewer popular votes than his opponent. Two U.S. presidents have gone into office with more electoral votes, but fewer popular votes, than their major opponents—Rutherford B. Hayes and Benjamin Harrison.

But popular election, or a variation of it, would encourage the formation of splinter parties which have been the plague of democra-

ties elsewhere. More elections would be thrown into the House of Representatives which, under the Constitution, takes over if no candidate obtains an Electoral College majority. Moreover, the present importance of big urban states in presidential elections is in the complicated machinery of U.S. politics, a necessary counterbalance to the over-representation of rural areas in Congress and the legislatures.

The last big push to change the electoral system was made in 1956. It never came close to success. One of the leaders of the opposition to the modifications then suggested was Sen. Kennedy. Since then Kennedy has said "at least we ought to consider if there is any way that we can make it more responsive to the will of the people"—but he said he was not suggesting a major overhaul.

A proposed constitutional amendment now before the states or ratification would make a minor change in the Electoral College. It would give residents of the District of Columbia, now completely disfranchised, the right to vote for three presidential electors. This would be the first extension of the electoral system outside the states themselves.

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## Runaway Flatcars Race Into Merlin Community

GRANTS PASS (AP)—The railroad line was open again today, and nerves finally subsiding from Sunday when a series of runaway flatcars came racing into the little community of Merlin, northwest of Grants Pass.

The first one flashed through town at an estimated 60 miles an hour just after noon. It rolled down the long grade from the northwest, climbed part way up another grade on the other side of town, then came rumbling back through town again. It got part way up the northwest grade, then back it went into Merlin, where it stopped.

The second empty flatcar came along soon, banging into the first one and knocking it off the rails. Then came two more. They piled into the others, tearing up some track.

Railroad officials said the cars apparently were released from a siding three miles from town. On their way the cars raced past four road crossings without incident.

Repair crews cleared the line and had it back in operation after several hours. Only freight trains use the Southern Pacific line there. None was delayed by the incident.

Officials are searching for who ever released the cars.

## Lightning Storm Strikes Portland

PORTLAND (AP)—A brief lightning storm hit Portland Sunday, one bolt burning a row of shingles off a house in the fashionable Alameda district. No one was injured.

The bolt hit the home of Mrs. Hugh Hedinger. Firemen responded to her call, but found no flames. They put a cover over the damaged section to keep rain out.

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But, almost alone among the flexible and foreseeing provisions written into the Constitution 173 years ago, the Electoral College never worked as intended.

If you think "college" is an odd name for it, look up the word in Webster's unabridged. The first definition is not an educational institution, but "a collection of persons—having common duties."

The Electoral College had little to do in the first two presidential

## Smith Rites Held At Bly

BLY—The Rev. LeRoy Redal officiated Wednesday afternoon at military funeral services at Klamath Memorial Park for Dale B. "Snuffy" Smith, Sprague River Justice Court judge, who died Sunday in an auto accident near here.

Members of American Legion were pallbearers. Willie House was soloist. Solemn ceremonies included military "Taps" and a salute from a volley of riflemen.

Smith was past commander of American Legion Post 13, Bly; past president of Bly Lions Club, an active member of Bly Grange and officer of various stations, a member of the Democratic Club of Klamath Falls, and a Democratic precinct committeeman for six years, justice court judge since 1957 and a lumber grader at Bly for the past several years.

He was a resident of Bly nearly all his life. As a young man, he was a rancher in the area. He enjoyed outdoor sports.

He served in Pacific and European theaters of operation during

World War II and until 1948. Smith practiced law enforcement for 10 years—first as investigator in an Army hospital and criminal ward. He later spent two years as deputy sheriff of the Bly area.

Smith, 35, was pinned beneath his car on Ivory Pine Road near here early Sunday morning. He apparently fell asleep at the wheel, investigating deputy sheriffs said, and drove off the road and into a barrow pit.

Survivors include the widow, Doris Marie; four children, Shaun, Christian, Linda and Brian, all of Bly; his father, Norman A. Smith, Bly; his mother, Muriel Joneschiet, Martell, Calif.; two brothers, Selmer Olsen, Martell, and Leonard Olsen, and his grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. George Belton, Medford.

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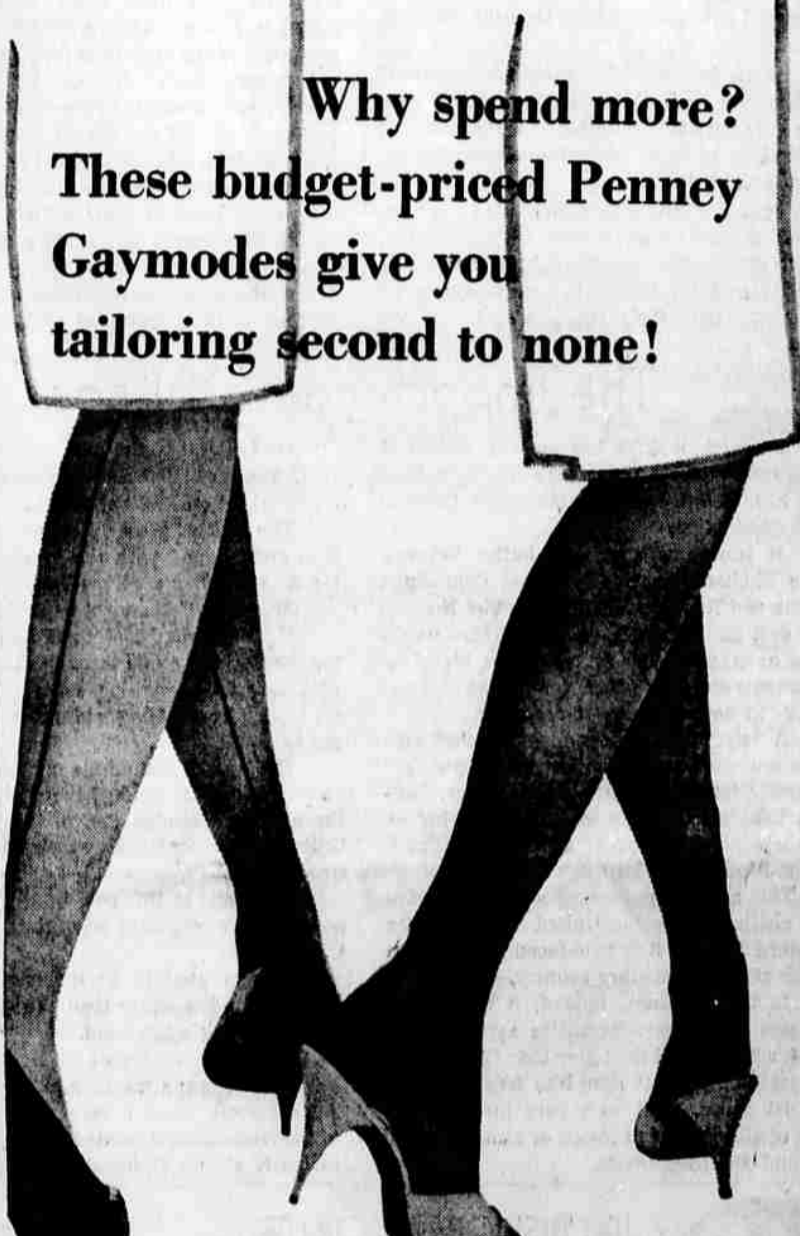
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