



What Happens When You've Got Two Terrific Candidates, But Just Can't Make Up Your Mind?

Rodrigo Praino (May 18, 2008)



American political history shows this isn't the first time the country has been dealt a real head-scratcher. Hillary or Obama, Coke or Pepsi? The choice can be overwhelming, but maybe what we really want is a twist on the classic, something akin to those newfangled Diet Cherry Dr. Peppers.



Our resident political analyst explains

When the Democratic National Convention met under an extremely hot sun, nothing was decided yet. There were two potential candidates for the Presidency of the United States. The first one represented change: he would be the first person of his background to run for President. He was young and clever, had a spotless record of hardworking and public commitment, and delivered inspiring speeches that made crowds cheer with joy. His supporters were thrilled at the idea of such a formidable, novel Presidential candidate, and he was getting endorsements from the youngest, most prominent and promising members of his party. He represented a dream, a wonderful dream that just had to come true! The other candidate was a little bit older, but had a lot of experience in Federal Government. After a brief career as a lawyer, he honed his political skills at the White House. For several years he had had a significant role in a popular administration and extremely close, familiar ties to one of the most popular Presidents of all time. Moreover, this second politician could count on a life and career that embraced different areas of the country, from the Deep South to New York City. Experience and previous successes—including the successful Presidency of a family-member—were the solid pillars on which his candidacy relied. The delegates at the Democratic Convention simply could not come to a decision, and the Convention arrived at a terrible deadlock between the two candidates. Mountains of hot dogs and thousands of sodas were consumed, while prominent members of the party were shuffling up and down the podium talking about party unity and important decisions that had to be made as soon as possible for the sake of the country.

No, I don't have a crystal ball! And more importantly, I have no idea what's going to happen this summer at the Democratic National Convention. And that's because the candidates I was referring to are not Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton, and the Convention was—quite obviously, I might add!—not the 2008 Democratic National Convention. The “first candidate” in question was [Alfred E. Smith](#) [2], an Irish-American Catholic, while the second was [William G. McAdoo](#) [3], and the Convention was the infamous [1924 Democratic National Convention](#) [4]. History is full of interesting events, and most things that sound new and unique actually aren't. As anyone can deduct from the previous lines, American voters in 1924 had to make a decision that, in a way, is very close to what we are living right now. But what happened after that deadlock back in 1924? After nine days the Democratic Convention still hadn't chosen the party's Presidential nominee. Delegates were sweating to death in Madison Square Garden—the Convention met in New York City that year—no thanks to a heat wave in late June, but ballot after ballot they couldn't pick a nominee. After a while, famous comedian Will Rodgers felt the need to explain that the City of New York had invited the delegates to visit the city, not to live there! On the ninth day of stalemate Smith and McAdoo released their delegates, and on the 103rd ballot the Convention nominated [John W. Davis](#) [5]. With two highly desirable candidates, the only solution was to appoint a third, but only after destroying the party's reputation. Davis lost the general election to Calvin Coolidge in November.

What if something similar to this old and forgotten tale were to happen this summer? It's clear by now that neither Clinton nor Obama will be able to lock the nomination before the Convention gathers. This is dangerous for the party, and ultimately could result in a weird form of political suicide. What's more, this time around there's a not-so-unpopular, “dark horse” candidate lurking in the shadows. The big guy sitting on the sidelines, the one that simply refuses to run, is incredibly well-liked and has risen to superstar status. He's an Academy Award Winner who also happens to boast a Nobel Peace Prize and an impressive political record that spans Capitol Hill, two terms as Vice-President and a Presidential campaign in which, the loss of the Presidency notwithstanding, he secured a majority of the popular vote. Nobody actually knows or understands why this admittedly cool guy (he launched [the beard trend](#) [6]) has chosen to stay at home to play with his iPhone and [organize global concerts headlining international celebrities](#) [7]. When you say the name “Al Gore” to a Democrat or a non-Republican American, the answer you get is “that's exactly what we needed!”, and even some Republicans agree. So why isn't he in the race instead of the two candidates we have now, both wonderful people, but not quite as wonderful as Mr. Gore?



Yes, the Democratic National Convention can still nominate Al Gore, even if he is not officially running. Yes, the man that got the highest number of votes in 2000 and wasn't elected President can become the Democratic Party's Presidential candidate without receiving any votes and without taking part in any Primary election. And, even better, yes, he probably would win the general election in November against John McCain.

What is the Democratic Party waiting for? Maybe it's waiting for the 103rd ballot...

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