Buchanan: next primaries vital

By Thomas J. Splesk

"The next ten days may decide the nominees of both parties," Patrick Buchanan, former White House speechwriter under Richard Nixon and a syndicated political columnist, told a lecture audience at BU's Morse Auditorium Wednesday night.

"Because Republicans are not rebels by nature, Reagan's candidacy demonstrates that Gerald Ford has not developed roots within his own party," Buchanan said.

A Reagan victory in Texas, the middle of the conservative heartland, Buchanan believes, would demonstrate that Ford is not electable in November; it "could be the first in a series of firecrackers since all the other May primaries are in essentially conservative states," he said. "Even with victories in the other primaries, the damage to Ford would make him vulnerable to the Democrats in November."

Buchanan also believes that the April 27 Pennsylvania Democratic race is between Jimmy Carter and the non-candidate, Hubert Humphrey, since neither Jackson nor Udall has enough support to stop Carter on his own. "Humphrey is now seen as the saviour of the McGovernites, but even now it may be too late since Carter faces the same primaries after Pennsylvania that Ford and Reagan do; the only way Carter could be stopped after Pennsylvania victory would be by a coalition of all the other candidates and favorite sons behind Humphrey," Buchanan maintained. "And robbing Carter of the nomination that way would alienate most of his constituency."

Carter threatens the Republican "New Majority" according to Buchanan, since he draws from the same constituency — the Old Confederacy and urban, ethnic voters.

Buchanan predicted that while Henry Kissinger could not be removed without contributing to "the unraveling image of the Ford administration because of the Schlesinger firing, he probably will not be Secretary of State in 1977." Detente is "not long for this world," and the US and the Soviet Union are entering a period of increased tensions following Soviet involvement in Angola.

Asked about the last days of the Nixon administration, Buchanan, who figures heavily in The Final Days, the Woodward and Bernstein account of the period, said the reporting of individual events was very good but "the events reported were chosen to support a thesis that the White House was falling apart then. It just wasn't that way at all."