Teddy, Jimmy, Jerry seek Demo's favor

Will Kennedy run for President? Can Carter regain his lost popularity? Can Brown shake his image as a fiscal hawk? Will the Republicans regain the White House?

Even though the 1980 Presidential election is over a year away, the candidates and the campaign are rapidly gearing up. Kennedy has promised to make up his mind before the end of the year; Carter, Brown, and the Republican frontrunner Reagan are all expected to formally announce their candidacy in the next few months.

Each of the candidates has his own special problems which must be overcome before he can win the Presidency. In this column, I’ll look at what each of the Democratic candidates must do to win. I’ll look at the Republicans in a later column.

Jimmy Carter

The incumbent starts with the distinct disadvantage of a very negative rating in the polls. Currently he is less preferred by the voters than Kennedy or Reagan.

However, his ratings are probably artificially low because some people are favoring other candidates more to express their disapproval with the state of the nation than to support the candidate and his positions on the issues. “Anybody but Carter” is a popular phrase. However, if Carter should make it into the general election next fall, he will probably gain strength throughout the campaign as voters look at his opponent more and more as a man who might soon be acting as President, and less and less simply as a vehicle to express their disapproval of Carter’s handling of the government.

Edward Kennedy

Kennedy holds the unusual distinction of being the frontrunner when an incumbent President of his own party is running for re-election. In fact, Kennedy is so far in front it seems that the Democratic nomination is his if he wants it.

Kennedy does have his problems, however. While the Kennedy name does help gain support from many voters, it also gives him a very strong opposition of people who would never vote for a Kennedy.

Kennedy is also likely to lose support from the moment he announces his candidacy. If and when he announces, the Republicans will immediately begin to direct their attacks toward Kennedy instead of Carter. Also, many of the Kennedy supporters do not yet know where he stands on the issues, and when they find out, they may no longer be his supporters.

Still, Kennedy is almost certain to be the Democratic nominee if he runs. In a general election campaign, he will have to shake his image as a free-spending liberal and also defend himself on Chappaquiddick. If he can succeed, he might well end up in the White House in January, 1981.

Jerry Brown

Brown is the third man in what figures to boil down to a two-man race. Brown lost most of his appeal in the Democratic party where the switched sides on the Proposition 13 tax-cutting issue. His remaining appeal in the party is as an alternative to Carter. If Kennedy were to enter the race, Brown would lose this last advantage.

However, if Kennedy does not enter the race, Brown may have a chance. If he stays close to Carter in the Northeastern primaries and can hang on through the South, he might be able to overtake Carter in the Western primaries.

In the general election, Brown’s tax-cutting position could make him the Democratic Party’s best hope of capturing the current conservative mood of the country. If he can resurrect his 1976 popularity, he could find himself the surprise winner.

Next time: a look at the Republican candidates.

Steven Solnick

Food Service seeks a program

It’s time to look at the Report of the Committee on Campus Dining. This is the report which includes the Combined Room and Board proposal for McCormick, Baker, MacGregor, East Campus and Next House (we really need a better name for that dorm).

There are two main motivations behind this proposal. The creation of a dining “program“ to be integrated with the residency program is the noble cause repeatedly mentioned throughout the report. However, many critics of the report may claim a more overriding motive is to salvage the Food Services from impending financial ruin. I questioned Eugenie Brummer, Director of Housing and Food Services on this area.

The fact is that Food Services is not losing massive amounts of money. The $200,000 difference between income and expenses is offset in large part by a fee paid by all residents of Institute Houses which is incorporated into room rents. This fee, averaging about $58 per person, was instituted when MIT started its current program of voluntary common meals about seven years ago. Subsidies from vending and the employees’ benefit pool close the operating gap.

Does this mean that, in terms of real figures, the dining program is healthy? Not exactly, according to Brummer: “Food services is a business. If we treated this as a business, we’d be doing things very differently.”

The problem, it seems, is that Food Services is losing volume. More people are swiching from meal plans to points so the number of common meals served is declining. If this continues, according to Brummer, facilities would eventually need to be closed.

Now, in the recommendations of the Dining Committee, much space is devoted to programmatic improvements to make it more amenable to those students who will be automatically enrolled in meal plans. These include considerable menu revisions, decor changes, wider publicity, more facilities, over-dinner discussions and entertainment, greater faculty and alumni participation, a slick computerized checking system, and extensive capital improvements.

This would all be overseen by a dining advisory board, comprising Deans, students and staff. Since Dining Service would no longer need to convince students to take commons, this board is the only way to insure all the planned improvements would be made.

This would also cost a lot of money.

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