

Billy-Libya issue won't hurt Carter, delegate says

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It shows some bad judgment on Jimmy's part certainly. Depending upon how he handles it, it can be seen as another "Well, look he did nothing wrong, let's support the President," even if it is another incident of bad judgment.

We don't have the choice of the ideal president. We have the choice of Carter or Ronald Reagan. COLLEGIAN: Even among party leaders, however, the Billy problem has created a certain panic. How do you feel that will affect the convention?
O'CONNOR: I don't think the Billy affair will affect much of anything.

I was at the '76 convention but the '76 convention was a big party and everybody tried to be on good behavior. It was an effort to put on a nice media show so we wouldn't blow it. "Come on, it's about time we get the Republicans out so let's be good boys and girls."

The delegates are by and large a bunch of amateurs. The only reason I won had nothing to do with my eloquence or expertise or views on the issues or anything else. I was the first Carter delegate on the ballot.

The only way I can account for my carrying places like Forest County and places I've never lived to certainly has nothing to do with people voting for me. (That is) another reason why I have arguments of "Let's be pure and let the delegates use their minds because after all they're respected by the people to exercise judgment," are bull.

COLLEGIAN: Do you feel that if the convention decides to adopt the rule to close the convention that it's breaking democratic party tradition?
O'CONNOR: I don't think so. I think all this rule basically does is formalize what's happened in the past.

The people who ran in 1976 as Udall delegates

were elected as Udall delegates and went there and voted for Udall. In '76 the Carter delegates voted for Carter. They didn't run committed to Carter because they liked Scoop Jackson.

I think if anything it's breaking tradition to say "Let's let delegates who ran and were elected by the voters to vote for Ted Kennedy vote for whoever they want."

If I were, as I am, a voter in the 23rd District, and I saw that Carter won this district by 2 to 1, a big margin, and I saw that the four delegates from this district all voted for Ted Kennedy or Scoop Jackson or Joe Blow, I'd just want to know why I even took the time to vote in April.

So all this purist talk about the open convention I think is really a bit on the silly side. Jim Eisenstein, a colleague of mine, said, "Next year we'll be talking about having an open electoral college. Let's not sign the electors to whom they are committed."

The old days of being picked by delegates where you entered two primaries are over, which accounts for the fact that the nominees were Carter and Reagan — are not aberrations of the system.

It's been argued for both parties that if you had the party leaders, Congress and governors, say who is most qualified in terms of administrative experience, you would not have gotten Carter in '76 and you would not have gotten Ronald Reagan in 1980.

COLLEGIAN: There has been talk among the Carter delegates about a change of heart. Why not allow that change of heart to be voiced at this convention?
O'CONNOR: Well, I would argue that if you have a change of heart and you have some strong evidence that the voters back home, the people who sent you, have had a change of heart, then maybe ethically and morally you should change.

If we had the Democratic primary tomorrow in the 23rd District I would bet on Jimmy Carter.

COLLEGIAN: What do you think about Kennedy's push to get several planks onto the platform?
O'CONNOR: I think it is fine, I support them. I think the platform is too conservative.

COLLEGIAN: Right now wage and price control is not a good idea, other means of helping social justice would be more effective.
O'CONNOR: Which planks do you think should be included?
O'CONNOR: The solar plank, which is a minority plank, is a good one. It is a sensible one. It is not extreme, it doesn't say "Let's phase out oil tomorrow," or anything else.

COLLEGIAN: Did Carter fulfill your expectations of four years ago?
O'CONNOR: No, he certainly hasn't. You can look at his acceptance speech in which he talks about how we are going to get tax reform... Well, we got tax reform — Robin

I think he'd beat Ted Kennedy. A lot of people in April who voted for him were not terribly pleased with his performance then, but they preferred him to Kennedy.

So believing in democratic norms, with a small "d," it's very difficult to say one should ignore the election results and in essence ignore the wishes of the Democratic voters.

COLLEGIAN: There has been a recent drive to recruit Edmund Muskie. How do you think that will affect the convention?
O'CONNOR: They are trying. I keep getting these mailgrams from the Open Convention people and the Muskie people. They seem to have the same address.

I don't really know what to say. My suspicion is that in part it's a matter of group dynamics. The Pennsylvania Carter delegation is going to meet Sunday (yesterday) afternoon. You'll have Rep. K. Leroy Irvis (minority leader of the state House — Representatives) and Al Benedict (state auditor general) and there will be kind of an atmosphere created... If you vote against Kennedy, you're a traitor, you may be thrown out a window. You're just trustworthy, you're not a true Carter person, and you're disloyal. You'd better come through.

You also better not be partying Monday. You'd better show up to vote — get there or else.

With these people, even if some have been disillusioned along the way, one person who will not get the nomination is Ted Kennedy, because I just think Ted turned out to be such a poor campaigner.

If you thought the (Pa. delegate) Kennedy people would be liberals and the Carter people sort of Democratic moderates or conservatives, the caucuses cut across both parties — the labor caucus, the women's caucus. My point is, you have liberals on both sides.

Kennedy did really well on the eastern side of the state, so you have the (support of) Philadelphia machine-types... but I think if you took just the Pennsylvania delegation they'd try to come up with a compromise candidate besides Kennedy.

I have no intention of voting for Kennedy, although I will support a number of his platform positions. I think he's a weak candidate. And one thing we cannot afford to do is to have a weak candidate. I think he'd be weaker than just about anyone, including Jimmy Carter.

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Hood tax reform — more tax breaks for the upper class. Trickle down economics. Some foreign policy efforts have not been as bad as a lot of people think.

Afghanistan would have happened if we had Jimmy Carter or Ronald Reagan. (I don't think Ron's really going to send American troops there tomorrow.)

(Majority Leader Robert) Byrd cannot get the Senate caucus to say "Okay, this is where we are going to go because I just agreed to it with Jimmy Carter."

In the House you can do that a little more easily, and Carter's problems have not been with the House. He's gotten along quite well with (Speaker Tip) O'Neill.

'What is distressing about the Republican platform is that there is a kind of between-the-lines (wish) to get back to the good ole days with women in the kitchen and big cars to drive around. It's the good ole days for the upper and upper-middle class, it's not the good ole days for blacks and for workers.'

—Robert O'Connor

Carter was not very good on Iran, he made mistakes there. Embracing the Shah nine months before the guy was going to fall... He was given extremely bad advice from our intelligence agencies.

The low point of the entire four years was a statement he made at a press conference. They were discussing the cutting back of money for abortions for poor women and he was asked, "Isn't this a basic area for medical funding and if so isn't it unfair to cut it?"

Carter said, "Life is unfair." Well I think as president of the United States one should try to be fair.

COLLEGIAN: When Carter campaigned in '76 he ran a very anti-Washington campaign. Do you think he has fulfilled that promise or worked with Washington?
O'CONNOR: Now that's the outsider campaign, the "I'm going bring Washington bureaucrats to their knees," the "We're going to have a daily fogging of a bureaucrat" campaign; that's scapegoating.

(Ronald Reagan) talks about the government — God, I can't believe we haven't revolted if they are doing these things — he talks about Washington like it is a foreign country. Like somebody in Bulgaria is running us and telling us what to do.

Washington inefficiencies are just a matter of different policy choices. Some people think that spending money to enforce the voting rights act — to guarantee that anybody has a right to vote regardless of sex, race, etc. — that that is wasted money.

For the little amount of money here, it is being well spent because the right to vote in a democracy is a precious right.

COLLEGIAN: Agreed, but a lot of Democratic leaders in Congress have argued that Jimmy Carter is not a good leader. What do you think about his leadership?
O'CONNOR: I think that right now we have a lot of structural reforms coming out of Congress that make it much harder for anyone to run Congress.

The reforms have given every first day senator the chairmanship of a subcommittee and it has been said the problem that Jimmy Carter faces is that there are 100 Jimmy Carters in the Senate. If he wants to go and make a deal with the Senate leadership, fine. But the Senate leadership cannot produce.

O'CONNOR: Maybe. I know who wouldn't be — Ronald Reagan.



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1 Makes enquiries
2 "Tonic" for one
3 The partner
4 "But golfer"
5 "I'm team"
6 "The Red"
7 Sign for motorists
8 Punctuation
9 Leave a note
10 Place to buy napoleons
11 Levee
12 Workshop
13 Fortified letters
14 Spanish gold
15 Weavers
16 Planarium lights
17 Green stroke
18 Converse
19 Physicist's concern
20 Accessory for one
21 Flax ingredients
22 Converse member
23 Location
24 Sign for motorists
25 Part of Edison's name
26 Drawn
27 Flight
28 Cake ingredient
29 European capital
30 Luau
31 Unemployed

Down

1 Play party
2 "Tonic" for one
3 The partner
4 "But golfer"
5 "I'm team"
6 "The Red"
7 Sign for motorists
8 Punctuation
9 Leave a note
10 Place to buy napoleons
11 Levee
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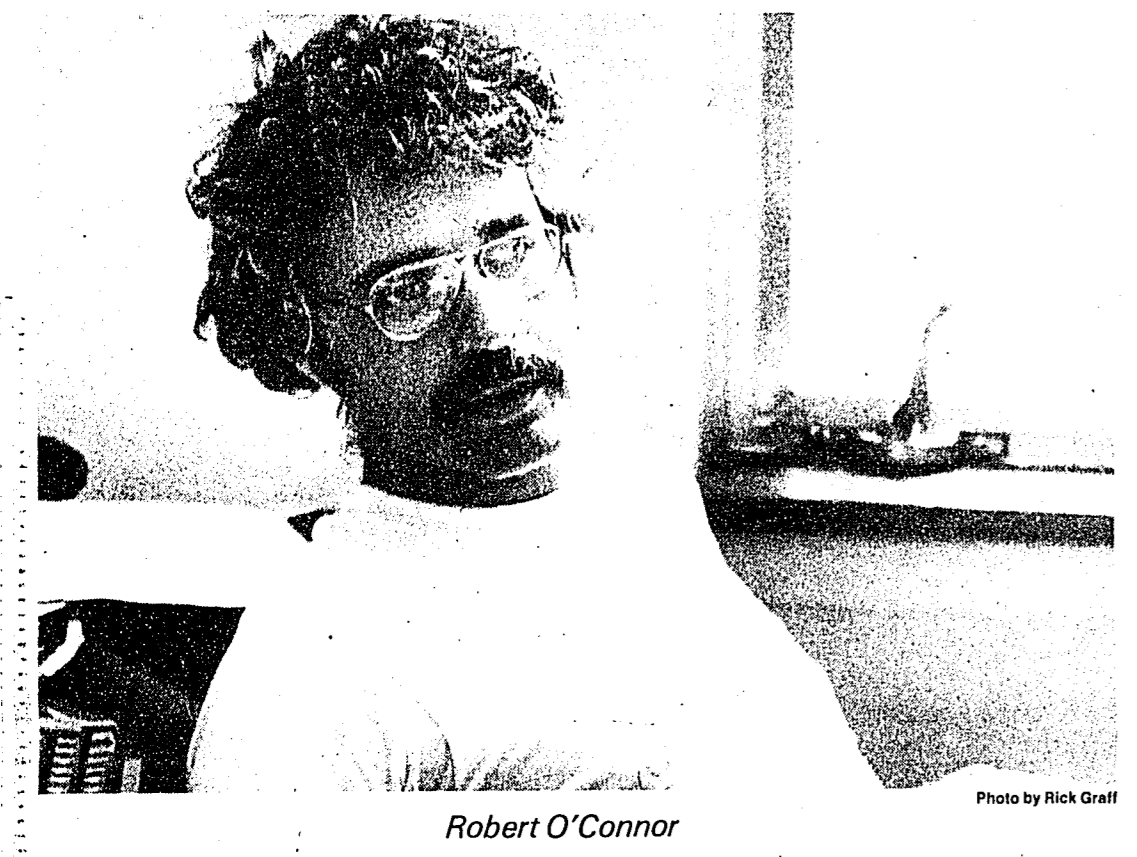
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