MOVIE – "BY THE PEOPLE"

I. Purpose: To expose you to an independent or "new politics" campaign – in this case a campaign to elect a delegate to the state constitutional convention from a district in Chicago, Illinois.

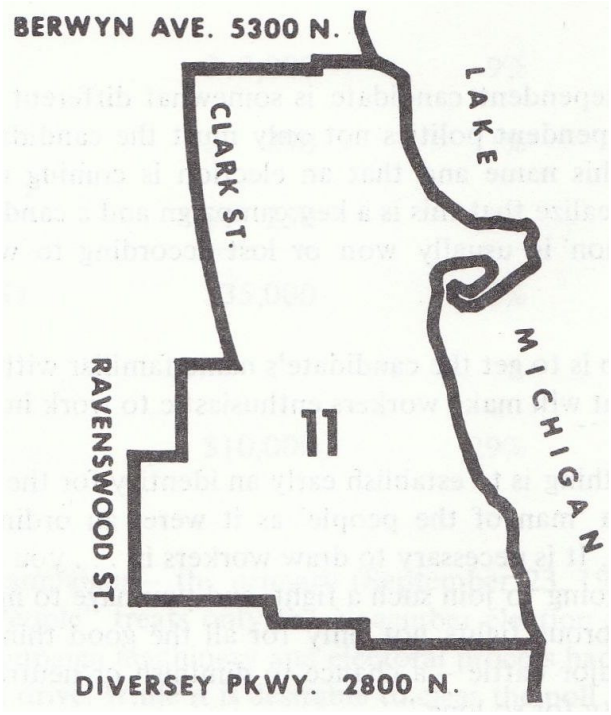
II. Concepts and Argument:

"Old" (Machine) Politics	An issueless politics controlled by party organization through material pay-offs and rewards for supporters.
"New" (Independent) Politics	An issue-oriented politics which encourages volunteers to work for candidates with whom they agree and trust. It stresses the personal, psychological rewards of political participation rather than material "pay-offs."

III. Quotations and Notes:

The District

The 11th Senatorial District is located on the north side of Chicago along Lake Michigan. It contains 148 precincts split among three wards. The76,306 voters of the district represent all economic classes with the wealthy living in high-rises and mansions along the lake, professionals concentrated in a middle strip, and working class and poor living primarily in the western section of the district. The largest group of poor are the Appalachians living in Uptown (48th Ward) and the Puerto Ricans living in Lakeview (46th Ward).



Lawsuit

One of the unusual aspects of the Weisberg campaign was that the candidate was involved in two successful lawsuits regarding the election. The first and most important case was against Paul Powell, Secretary of State, regarding placement on the ballot. The spectacular aspect of the case was Paul Powell's admission that he purposely arranged the ballot to benefit people that he knew and to disadvantage independents.

Paul Powell: "I sure wouldn't want to put on somebody there first that I didn't know. I might be getting a communist or somebody that is against our form of government. I am going to take care of people that I have known . . . an people I felt like would make good delegates to help rewrite our constitution."

The benefits of the lawsuit were several. Weisberg received a better place on the ballot which meant an increase of several hundred votes. More importantly, the publicity was excellent. It made the campaign stand out from all the others, demonstrated Weisberg's independence and concern for improving the political system, and made many people very mad at Paul Powell and more willing to contribute money and work.

The second lawsuit was over the primary election results. It was a partial victory in that the votes from several precincts were recounted and proved to be in error. They were not sufficient to make Weisberg the winner in the primary but increased his vote *and* again provided good publicity for several weeks.

Issues

There were many issues at stake in rewriting the entire constitution of the state. Some of those that Weisberg stressed most were revenue and the judicial system.

Bernie Weisberg: "The constitution affects a number of very, very important things in our lives; it affects for example the kid of taxes we pay. Because of the fact that we have a rather archaic and outmoded constitution in Illinois, our legislature is not able, for example, to remove the sales tax on groceries or medicine . . . Revenue is the one [issue] most usually put first and if past experience is any guide that revenue article, if it is approved by the voters, may be around a hundred years from now. Judicial reform [is another issue] whether or not we can find a method for getting better qualified men and women to be our judges and hopefully a method of selection which is less under the control of the dominant political party."

Publicity

Public relations for an independent candidate is somewhat different from that for party candidates, particularly in Chicago. In independent politics not only must the candidate get enough publicity that the average voter at least knows his name and that an election is coming up, but more important is that potential workers are made to realize that this is a key campaign and a candidate well worth working for. In independent

politics the election is usually won or lost according to whether enough workers can be activated and coordinated:

June Rosner: "Basically my job is to get the candidate's name familiar with voters and build the sort of image for him that will make workers enthusiastic to work in the campaign."

Don Rose: "The important thing is to establish early an identity for the candidate . . . The other reality is the image of a 'man of the people' as it were, an ordinary citizen fighting against the political machine. It is necessary to draw workers in . . . you do have a constituency of active people who are going to join such a fight, and you have to make clear that this is going to be one of those vigorous fights not only for all the good things in life and for constitutional reform, but a major battle – a chance to diminish or neutralize the machine that has been oppressing this city for so long."

Coffees

Coffees chaired by a member of the campaign and held in homes throughout the district proved an excellent means of gaining volunteers and picking up the many small financial contributions necessary to keep the campaign rolling. They begin with a discussion led by the coffee chairman. The candidate drops in for twenty or thirty minutes to give a brief talk and answer questions. The chairman then makes a "hard sell" for volunteers and the meeting breaks, at last, into an informal coffee hour. Bernie Weisberg went to 200 of these sessions during the seven-month campaign – making as many as four or five a night.

Cost

Expenses for a campaign vary greatly depending upon how many staff members work free, what equipment or services are given to the campaign, whether or not the candidate and the kind of politics for which he stands are well understood, and upon the size and constituency of the district. In the Weisberg campaign only 10% of the funds came from large contributions of more than $100. Another 25% of the budget was raised through benefits. The remaining 65% was in the form of small contributions.

These hard-earned funds were dispersed in a variety of ways. A breakdown of these expenses shows that public relations took about 40% of the budget with salaries and normal office expenses taking most of what remained. Only $25,000 of the $35,000 budget had been raised by the end of the campaign. The final $10,000 had to be procured after the election.

Item	*Cost*	*Percent of Budget*	
1. Printing, Public Relations	$13,3000	39% (Printing alone – 36%)	
2. Salaries	$7,300	22%	28% Headquarters Expenses
3. Rent, Office Equipment, Supplies	$3,800	11%	
4. Postage	$3,800	11%	
5. Telephone	$2,200	6%	
6. Miscellaneous Petty Cash Expenditures	$3,000	9%	

7. Parties (refreshment)	$290	1%
8. Political Contributions	$250	1%
TOTAL CAMPAIGN COST	**$35,000**	**100%**
Deficit still to be raised after campaign was over	$10,000	29%

Today, a similar campaign would cost at least $250,000 but the proportions spent for each of the items would be similar. The principal difference is that more would be spent for advertising either in the form of direct mail, radio ads, or, possibly, community newspaper ads.

Precinct work

Although there were two campaigns – the primary (September 23, 1969) and the election (November 18, 1969) – the film "By the People" treats only the November election campaign. However, the primary was similar, because the same campaign machinery and electoral process had to be put together for both.

First comes the registration drive. While it is desirable to clear the poll lists of voters who no longer live in the district, the main purpose of the drive is to register new voters. Not only does this have the effect of helping citizens to participate in the political process but nearly every voter registered will be in favor of the candidate whose workers helped him register. In the Weisberg election campaign, more than 1,000 new voters were registered.

The second stage of door-to-door precinct work is the canvass to locate all the voters willing to support Weisberg. In giving canvassers instructions, the precinct coordinator explained the procedure this way.

Jim Chapman: "If the person indicates to you, 'Yes, I will vote for Bernie,' on your precinct list put a plus. If he says no, put a minus. And if the person says, 'I haven't made up my mind yet,' you put down a zero, so that when we come to election day there is a system where we will then try and reach these people – to call them, to go to their doors – and this is called getting our plus vote out. And this is the whole point of what this really important canvass is about, is locating Bernie's favorable vote and at the same time educating people to him in the process of getting their favorable response."

If enough favorable, voters could be found and if they could be convinced, cajoled, and dragged to the polls, then a candidate like Weisberg would win. If there were not enough workers to make this personal contact with nearly all 75,000 voters, then he would lose. Before the primary election only about 85 of the 148 precincts had been canvassed – some thoroughly and some only slightly, but thoroughly enough to reach the voters necessary for victory.

Results

In the September primary the filed of eight candidates was reduced to four with voters able to vote for any two candidates of their choice.

Tuchow	*Weisberg*	*Hennigan*	*Harvey*	*Ball*	*Graham*	*Mages*	*Tunis*
10,015	9,950	8,369	5,104	4,472	4,458	667	611

In the November election the top two candidates were elected as delegates with each voter again able to vote for two.

Weisberg	Tuchow	Hennigan	Harvey
15,301	13,518	13,171	12,809

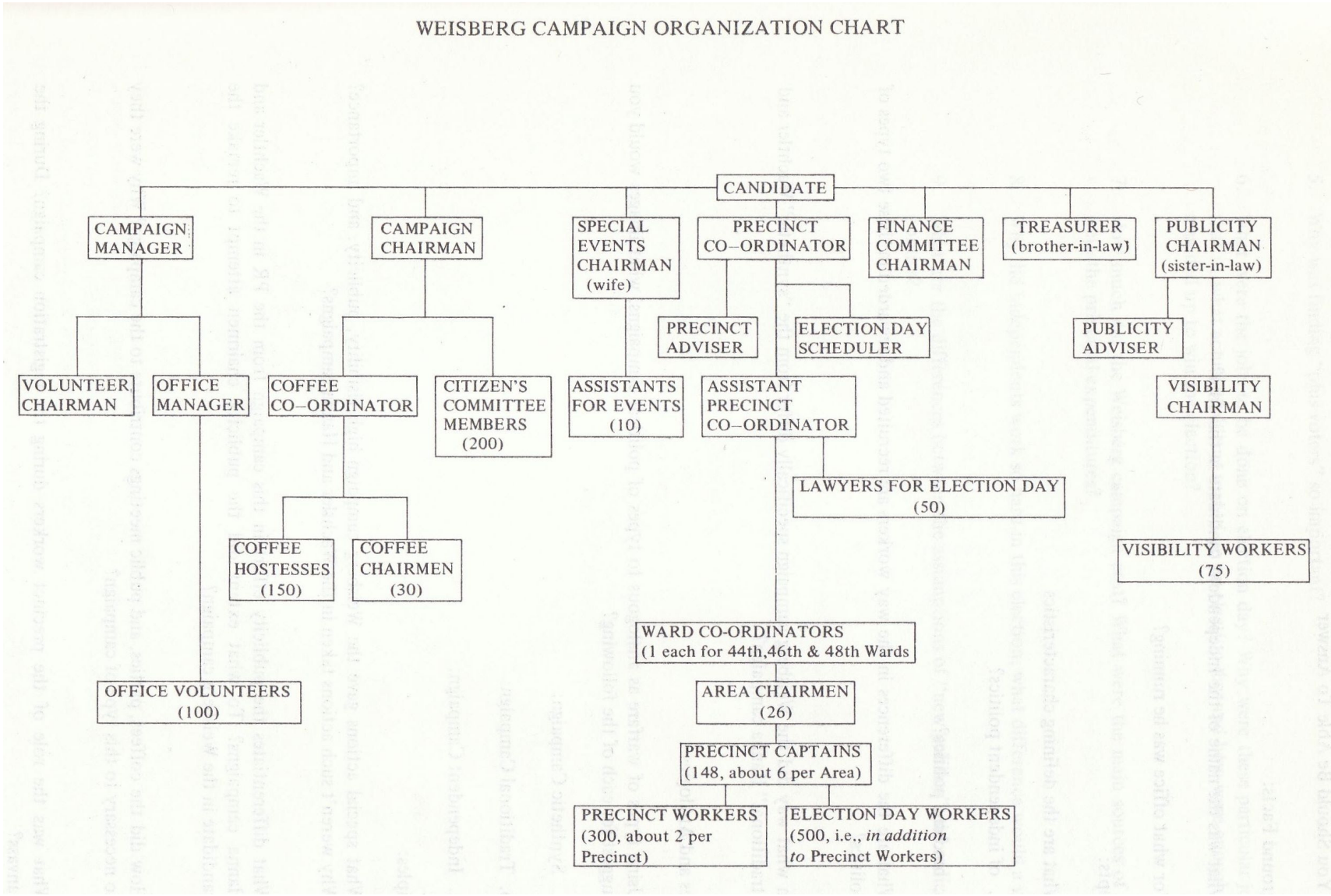
As to the importance of this victory, campaign workers believed that it would not only elect an excellent candidate, but would also result in regular machine precinct captains being fired, in better candidates being nominated in the future, and in the beginning of a wave of genuine reform. The campaign chairman summer up their point of view:

Donald Page Moore: "What it means is that a lot of people in this city are group up, and people working together for principles are showing that they're mature enough and steadfast enough to build a democracy the way a democracy ought to be built. And we don't have to take the dictates of a lot of miserable, patronage style politicians who have been choking this city and wrecking this city for three generations. We're getting to be too good for them the people of this city. We're growing up."

IV. Additional Material:

The campaign chart on the next page is rough approximation of the actual structure and interaction of the Weisberg campaign organization. Around the candidate were a group of some six or seven people who made the basic campaign decisions, and attempted to coordinate the efforts by the staff and hundreds of volunteers carrying out the publicity, fund raising, recruiting, training, precinct canvassing, and office work necessary for victory. The Clearest hierarchy of work was in the precinct structure with precinct captains coordinating the efforts in each of the 148 precincts and being coordinated in turn by area chairmen who reported to ward coordinators who worked directly with the overall precinct coordinators.

WEISBERG CAMPAIGN ORGANIZATION CHART



IV. Questions You Should Be Able to Answer

A. Background Facts

1. What was the name of the Independent candidate in this film?

2. For what office was he running?

B. Concepts:

1. What are the defining characteristics

a. of independent politics?

b. of machine politics?

2. What are the differences in the way workers are recruited and rewarded in these two types of politics?

C. Principles

1. What special actions gave the Weisberg campaign high visibility, publicity, and importance?

2. How did the coffees, parties, and public meetings contribute to the campaign? Why were they so necessary to this type of campaign?

3. What was the role of the precinct workers during the registration campaign? During the canvass?

4. Why was finding "plus voters" so important?

5. What were the jobs to be done on election day? Why were these particular jobs necessary – that is, what actual problems turned up on election day and how were enough Weisberg voters rounded up to win the election?

6. How much did the Weisberg campaign cost? What were the main sourced of funds and what were the principal expenditures?

7. Why did independents work so hard in this election; what difference would a victory make?

CAMPAIGN	VARIABLES						
	Total Cost	*Number of Registered Voters*	*Cost Per Registered Voter*	*Number of Volunteers*	*Public Opinion Polls Taken*	*Minutes of Paid TV Exposure*	*Total Cost of PR*
Wachtler	$706,000	800,000	$0.88	Unknown	Major polls on attitudes ($10,000)	200	$203,000
Hanna	$ 55,000	215,000	$0.26	500?	Poll on candidate support (free)	0	$ 20,000
Weisberg	$ 35,000	$ 75,000	$0.46	1,500	None	0	$ 13,000

CAMPAIGN	*Number of Paid Staff*	*Control of staff over candidate (Scale 0-10)*	*Importance of Issues to Campaign (Scale 0-10)*	*Type of Image* *1 – Education, Skills, New Ideas, Witty* *2 – Practical, Strong Party Man, Honest* *3 – Physically Attractive, Young, Prestige*
Wachtler	15+	10	2	3
Hanna	5?	2	10	2
Weisberg	3	2	10	1

Hypothesis to be tested by further research:

1. The greater the cost per registered voter, then the fewer the volunteers, the more numerous the polls, the greater the television exposure, the greater the cost of PR, the larger the staff, the greater the control of staff, the less important the issues, and the greater the likelihood of attractiveness as crucial to the candidate's image. (The hypotheses are only partially supported by the above table).

2. Variance of the table from the above hypotheses can partially be accounted for by the fact that every campaign must expend a similar amount of money for a headquarters and for salaries of the basic stuff.

3. The Hanna campaign was strongly issue-oriented because Hanna's opponent represented a different political philosophy. Most traditional campaigns are much less issue-oriented.