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Thanks to television, New Bernians have had a ringside seat for the Republican National Convention in San Francisco. Very soon now, they'll be afforded a chance to view the Democratic get together from the same excellent vantage point.

Like the coffee we drink each morning, today's political coverage is instant. In our own living rooms, we learn the news (good or bad) as quickly as anyone else, not second hand but as an eye witness to important events.

Back in George Washington's day (the year was 1789) it took a messenger on horseback seven days to bring G. W. the news that he had been elected president. Now the same information is flashed to all interested Americans as rapidly as the beat of one's heart.

Most of us have the mistaken idea that the nominating conventions date from the very beginning of our nation. Truthfully, our founding fathers made no provision for such gatherings, when they drew up the Constitution. Since Congress has let the matter stand, they are (as David Brinkley says) unofficially official.

How were the candidates selected before the conventions came into being? They were picked in closed congressional caucuses. Congress did the job, through necessity, because roads were few, newspapers fewer, and communication between the states exceedingly limited.

Although conventions might have come later, Andrew Jackson hastened their arrival on the scene. When a congressional caucus balked at naming him for the ticket, after the General's military heroism at New Orleans, the resulting indignation made Congress run for cover. The convention idea was born then and there.

During North Carolina's recent Second Democratic Primary, the Preyer forces made a great deal of noise over Dan Moore's refusal to engage in television debate, and allowed as how the Mountain Man had no program to offer fellow Tar Heels. Moore's cardinal sin seemed to be, in the eyes of his opponents, an inclination to talk less than they wanted him to.

In politics, as in everything else, it's possible for a fellow to talk too much. When William Henry Harrison ran successfully for president in 1840, his campaign manager issued strict orders to those around him to keep the candidate quiet.

"Let him say not one single word about his principles or his creed--let him say nothing--promise nothing," was the advice handed out. "Let no committee, no convention, no town meeting ever extract from him a single word about what he thinks now or will do hereafter. Let the use of pen and ink be wholly forbidden."

This strategy of muzzling Harrison was rigidly enforced. Meanwhile, his close associates staged one of the noisiest campaigns in history. There were parades galore, songfests, cider parties and gala balls all over the country.

Harrison, of course, didn't put in an appearance at any of these political festivities.

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GRIM SAFETY LESSON—At the risk of being criticized for publishing such pictures, The Mirror is printing these stark scenes of multiple tragedy in the hope that needless slaughter on North Carolina highways can be reduced. Mrs. Christine Register Thomas, a former New Bernian living in Rocky Mount, died instantly in this head-on crash near Mount Olive, along with her husband, John Robert Thomas, and John Robert, Jr., 9. Her daughter Nancy, 11, died Sunday night, several

hours after an afternoon wreck that saw Wendell Weeks of Mount Olive, a rural mail carrier suffer serious head and chest injuries. The Thomas 1963 Rambler station wagon reportedly was passing a line of cars on Highway 117, enroute to Carolina Beach, when it collided with a 1964 Ford driven by Weeks. Countless Tar Heel motorists do this often. Your family could be the next one wiped out.—Photos by Vaden Brock (Mount Olive Tribune).

