



Satur4day, October 8, 1988

Thomas Schaffner has a solution to...

VOTE EARLY, VOTE OFTEN.

Thomas Schaffner has a solution to voter apathy: "Vote early and vote often." To promote his idea -- and sign up subscribers to his newsletter about Chicago -- he is selling a Campaign '88 button that reads: "Two ballots please . . . I'm from Chicago." With current and former Windy City residents picking up the slack from apathetic voters, turnout could exceed 100 percent on Nov. 8, said Schaffner, publisher of Chicago File. He devoted the October issue to Chicago's history of get-out-the-vote techniques and residents' commitment to democracy. "Many carry the 'right to vote' all the way to their graves, often unknowingly. Once there, they continue to faithfully cast ballots," wrote Schaffner. He said, "Elections are Chicago's Mardi Gras." Hizzoner Daley couldn't have said it better.



Thursday, October 6, 1988

Chicago vote buttoned down

Chicago elections used to mean a chicken in every pot or a bottle of wine for every wino.

People voted often and early. Election judges did not discriminate between the living and the dead. Residents of empty lots and doorways did their duty. The "poll tax" worked in reverse, and those who voted were rewarded with \$2, a bottle of wine or a chicken. One per vote.

"This year's election campaign is pretty dull," said Chicago publisher Tom Schaffner, who is trying to preserve the memory of a traditional Chicago election for former Chicagoans around the globe.

The 1,000-plus subscribers to his monthly "The Chicago File" newsletter in 50 states and several foreign countries received a white and blue button from their kind of town that reads, "Two Ballots Please . . . I'm from Chicago."

"That's one button I think you could wear today anywhere in the country and almost anyone would get the joke," he added. "Like it or not, that reputation exists. I'm just trying to say, 'Go with it.' If you have an image, exploit that.

"Voter interest in U.S. presidential elections has been declining for several years. We thought we would take the initiative and show the nation that

Chicagoans are more than capable of taking up the slack."

Reaction to the button has been positive, said Schaffner.

"It kind of amazes me," he said. "Now, I'm not necessarily trying to encourage anyone to cheat. Just to have a laugh."



Friday, October 14, 1988

A Chicago-style double play to spice the election

If this presidential election were held during the World Series, I'd bet that the number of people watching the games live or on TV would exceed the number of people voting.

Which has some political folks worried. Even though voter registration has been pushed by everyone from Rev. Jesse Jackson to Washington state tavern owners, the experts fear that Apathy will win this year's elections.

The polls show it. The people say it: "Who cares who's the next president. You wanna take the Dodgers in seven games?"

What we need, according to some political observers back in Chicago, is some good old Chicago election shenanigans. Which is why they're sending thousands of former Chicagoans big buttons which read:

"Two ballots please . . . I'm from Chicago."

There never used to be voter apathy in Chicago. Voters there were so dedicated that they rose from the dead to cast their ballots. "Elections are Chicago's great sport," said Thomas P. Schaffner, the public relations man who dreamed up the buttons.

AT THIRTY-SOMETHING, Schaffner is too young to remember some of the really infamous election activities, but he has researched some in his latest issue of "Chicago File," a monthly newsletter for Chicagophiles and former Chicagoans.

So far, according to Schaffner, more than 1,000 buttons have been sent to Chicago natives new living across the country in Thailand, France, London and Northern Ireland. And, of course, in Chicago. "That doesn't sound like a lot, but they've only been out a week now, and we're not having any bi-deal local elections this time," Schaffner said.

Things are sort of slow these days in the city where two former governors (one sitting federal judge), an attorney general and Lord-only-knows how many judges, alderman and other officials have been sent to jail. A current grand jury has so far returned indictment against 75 Chicago-area judges and political officials.

But no special election has been set to fill the mayoral vacancy left after the death of Harold Washington. "No mayoral election, combined with dwindling voter interest in the presidential campaigns, made me think

that we needed something to spark interest," Schaffner said.

Presidential election time was always a busy time for precinct captains and election judges in Chicago. In 1960, former Mayor Richard J. Daley's political machine was credited with stealing a winning plurality and handing the election to John F. Kennedy.

SCHAFFNER'S SMALL

PUBLICATION recounts the popular rumor that on election night Robert Kennedy called Daley and asked: "How many votes do we have in Cook County?" To which Daley reportedly replied: "How many do you need?"

The truth is just a bit stranger than Chicago election fiction. Sidney Holzman, former head of the Chicago Election Board, was quoted as saying:

"...A good precinct captain will always find a way to steal votes." And also:

"In city elections, we (Democrats) don't have to steal to win. And in statewide elections, the Republicans are stealing so much downstate that all we do is balance out."

John J. Brett, a Chicago schoolteacher, came all the way to Seattle this year in an effort to get on the presidential ballot. At least twice before, the Democratic machine in Chicago did nasty numbers that kicked his aldermanic election bids, Brett charged. Once, his home was gerrymandered out of the ward in which he hoped to run, while his machine opponent's home was left in a tiny silver of land still within ward boundaries.

When Brett held his official nominating convention in Denny Park last summer, fewer than 20 people showed up. "No one is discussing the issues, and the voters don't seem to care," Brett said. "We haven't had debates as much as we've had pre-arranged forums."

The result, he said, is voter apathy. In the last presidential election, only 53 percent of eligible voters cast ballots. "I wouldn't expect much more than 45 percent this time," Brett said.

We could boost that — if each of us voted two ballots. This election, remember that old Chicago slogan: *Vote early...and often.*



Thursday, October 6, 1988

Fighting Apathy, The Chicago Way

So they're bored in Chicago with the Presidential race.

But since Chicago is a city that takes elections seriously, Thomas P. Schaffner is trying to do something about the political lassitude.

Mr. Schaffner is editor and publisher of The Chicago File, a newsletter sent to diehard Chicagoans who have moved elsewhere. "We thought we'd take the

initiative and show the nation that Chicagoans are more than capable of picking up any slack in voter participation," he said.

Accordingly, Mr. Schaffner sent out buttons to his subscribers, buttons that are also sold on the city's street. The buttons define a Chicago tradition. They say, "I'm From Chicago: Vote Twice."