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## A letter from the PUBLISHER

James R. Shepley

AST week in Viet Nam, during - a Communist attack on Saigon, TIME Correspondent John L. Cantwell, 30, was killed. Cantwell and four other journalists had taken a jeep and driven to Saigon's Chinese section of Cholon to investigate the extent of the attack when they were ambushed by Viet Cong soldiers. Though the journalists, who were dressed in civilian clothes, repeatedly cried out "Bao Chi! Bao Chi!" (reporter), the Viet Cong opened up on them with a burst of fire from their automatic weapons. They cut down all but one, an Australian freelance photographer who escaped by playing dead. Cantwell, a native of Sidney, Australia, had worked for Australian and Hong Kong newspapers and the Associated Press before joining TIME as a stringer-correspondent, spoke three Chinese dialects and was an avid student of Asian languages and culture. During the past year, he had covered a wide variety of stories about the Vietnamese war for TIME. He was about to rejoin his wife and three children in Hong Kong when he set forth on his last assignment.

URING the 1964 primary campaigns, Robert Harris, then president of the student body at Michigan State University, was bothered by what he felt to be inaccurate claims of campus support being trumpeted by some of the candidates. But he saw no point in taking his protest to the picket lines. He did not stage a sit-in, or even dream of holding a faculty member hostage. Instead, as this year's election approached, he came to TIME with an idea. Why not find out what the students really think?

To answer Harris' question, TIME and Sperry Rand's Univac Division agreed to help conduct the first unofficial nationwide presidential primary, called Choice 68. On April 24. a total of more than 1,000,000 ballots were cast on campuses from Maine to California. Merely by punching out perforations in computer cards, they indicated their first, second and third choices for President, their views on the Viet Nam war, and their attitudes toward urban problems. Fed into the UNIVAC 1108's memory bank in Washington, the results were tabulated and analyzed within 15 minutes after the "command" button was pushed on the giant computer, making Eugene McCarthy a happy man (see THE NATION).

The vote was broken down according to colleges, regions, student ages-just about any sort of analysis wanted was quickly and easily available. And since almost half of those who turned in their ballots will be eligible to vote in November, CHOICE 68 could hardly be dismissed by losers as one more insignificant election on the campus. Indeed, Dr. Carl Hammer, director of scientific and computer services for Univac, saw the exercise as a preview of election techniques of the near future.

Before the century ends, says Dr. Hammer, the voting booth may be a relic of the past. Present-day computers could be programmed to count and analyze ballots cast from any number of remote points anywhere in the country, and to keep a single running, up-to-the-second record of any election. In the future, any home with a telephone will be within dialing reach of election computers; voters, says Dr. Hammer, will be able to call in their ballots without leaving their homes. As an optimistic scientist, he sees the problems of identification of voters as an engineering problem that will soon be solved. Someday, he says, a huge data bank may contain "voice prints" of eligible voters. Then, the mere sound of their voice on the telephone as they call in their choice, will verify their right to a ballot.

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