CHAPTER IX
THE MARYLAND VOTE—REFLECTIONS
AND PROJECTIONS

Maryland in Comparison with Other States

In 1776, President John Adams reportedly described politics in Maryland as follows:

It is so eccentric a colony—sometimes so hot, sometimes so cold, now so high, then so low—that I know not what to say about or expect from it.[1]

The observation about the Maryland political climate made over two hundred years ago has demonstrated itself to be remarkably accurate throughout the history of presidential elections. Maryland had been a puzzlement to many historians, commentators and political pundits and has largely been ignored in the various national analyses of presidential elections. This lack of attention may derive from numerous reasons including Maryland's modest total of electoral votes[2] and the absence of a popularly recognized role in the contemporary nominating process.[3] However, this neglect of Maryland more likely stems from the difficulty in classifying the "Free State" either as part of a region or as possessing a unified political philosophy.

Maryland is not a bellwether state for predicting the winners of presidential elections, or even presidential nominees. The State has cast a majority of its electoral votes for the winning candidate in 32 out of the 49 presidential elections since 1789. There are 36 states with better records than Maryland led by New Mexico, Arizona, Illinois, New York and California.[4] The 13 states with worse records than Maryland are all border or southern states except for Vermont and South Dakota.[5] In 10 Democratic primary elections the State has favored the eventual nominee only five times while in the 13 Republican primaries the State's voters have picked the nominee eight times.

Uncertainty over Maryland's identity or classification is reflected in the different groupings in which it is placed. It is perhaps most frequently called a border state by political scientists, which generally includes Delaware, West Virginia, Kentucky and Missouri, and occasionally, Tennessee, Oklahoma and Virginia.[6] The Census Bureau most often places Maryland in a "South Atlantic" grouping with Delaware, West Virginia, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Florida.[7] Political scientists and commentators have also placed Maryland in such diverse groupings as "Northeast" (with New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, New York and Massachusetts),[8] "Mid-Atlantic" (with New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Delaware),[9] and "Southern" (with Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia).[10] From the perspective of presidential election results none of the groupings suggested above adequately describes Maryland or conveys a correct sense of presidential politics in the