

The Democratic platform: a born-again loser

by Barbara Dreyfuss

"They have now ensured that a large part of the Democratic Party will go over to the Republicans in November," the angry delegate declared to me at the Democratic Party Platform Committee hearings this week in Washington, D.C. Behind him a number of delegates were cheering the passage of the energy and agriculture section of the platform. By the time the remainder of the platform was completed 48 hours later, I was in complete agreement that this platform would destroy the Democratic Party.

The platform that was adopted by over 150 delegates at June 21-24 meetings, if also adopted by the Democratic Party convention in August, would commit the party to the full-scale deindustrialization of the United States. The energy policy, the agricultural program, and major planks in the economic section would, if implemented, ensure not only zero economic growth for the nation, but actually dismantle industrial production.

This platform draft is such an atrocity that some observers have wondered whether it was adopted in a suicidal move to throw the election away.

The Carter administration openly used thuggery to ensure complete support for the activities of the Carter administration during the last four years. Virtually every other paragraph in the preamble and numerous other places throughout the platform draft extol the progress made by the Carter administration.

Mayor Coleman Young of Detroit, who presides over the city with the nation's highest rate of unemployment, chaired the entire proceedings. "I hope nobody here attacks the program of the President," he warned.

Most of the delegates were ready to jump to his commands. Very few represented actual constituencies; those who did often stood up to make a plea for their

particular interests and then voted the way they were told. If they were offered a few words in the platform in support of their constituencies, they responded with complete loyalty on the rest of the platform.

A few of the delegates, however, feared the wrath of their constituents more than they did the Carter administration and could not be silenced. "We will be the laughing stock of New Jersey if we adopt language like this," one New Jersey man stood up to declare. "How do you expect me to tell my people back in Essex County, where unemployment is soaring, that we have increased employment? How do you expect me to say we have been fighting inflation?"

The platform fully confirms the Carter administration's complete commitment to economic austerity. The platform would ensure the collapse of the U.S. economy by its energy policy alone. The platform states: "We must make conservation and renewable energy our nation's energy priorities for the future. Through the federal government's commitment to renewable energy sources and energy efficiency, and as alternative fuels become available in the future, we will retire nuclear power plants in an orderly manner."

Instead of nuclear energy the platform demands that 20 percent of our energy needs eventually be met by extremely low-yield solar energy, and major development of the exorbitantly expensive, low-yield synthetic fuels program first developed in Nazi Germany.

Although the platform declares that the Democratic Party has consistently supported low interest rates to finance small business development, homebuilding, and farm production, Carter demanded and got support for the Federal Reserve's tight monetary policies.

The other programs delineated by the platform

committee to end the "recession" included trucking deregulation, which would cost the economy billions of dollars and millions of jobs. In the introduction to the agriculture section, the cornerstone of the American farm sector, its productivity, is attacked, and the vital price control systems that have kept farm prices slightly above depression levels, are blamed for lowering farm income. The entire farm section is filled with platitudes about the importance of American agriculture to the world, but there are no statements of intent to ensure that farmers receive an income that will allow them to expand production and advanced technologies. Efforts on the floor of the committee meeting to include statements on these matters were beaten down.

I noted with amusement the articles in several of the major Eastern papers that talked continuously about the "roaring fights" between the Carter and Kennedy delegates. I had observed during the proceedings that some of the Kennedy campaign leaders were clearly at odds with the spirit of the Kennedy delegates dedicated to fighting Carter and forcing an open convention. This was corroborated by numbers of Kennedy supporters around the country who support an open convention but had received no directives from the Kennedy leadership.

Theodore Sorenson, who had been an assistant to John F. Kennedy and led the Ted Kennedy campaign's platform delegates dealing with the foreign policy plank, had conceded the nomination to Carter. Sorenson warned the Carter people that unless there was some basis for a "Kennedy victory" in the platform, the Kennedy people would have to back Anderson or Reagan in the election. The vote on the phase-out of nuclear energy was carefully stage-managed by the Carter and Kennedy leadership to provide a "Kennedy victory."

At the energy caucus meeting Sunday, tension filled the air as a Carter delegate, Carey Wasley, working closely with the Kennedy delegates and the Campaign for Safe Energy environmentalist group, proposed the immediate phase-out plan. Everyone in the room but the delegates stood up. Twenty environmentalists surrounded the Carter delegates. The vote was called. When it looked close, all hell broke loose. The Kennedy leadership and their environmentalist allies began screaming at the delegates, warning those who had promised to vote in favor of the phase-out. One man even had his arm lifted for him by a Kennedy organizer. Finally the vote was taken—the majority had agreed that nuclear energy should die.

The same tension filled the room the following day when the matter was brought to the entire platform committee. People scurried about making deals, issuing threats. One leading Kennedy delegate whispered to the Carter point-man Marty Franks, "I don't really care one way or the other about nuclear energy, but I will

lose my job if I don't vote for the phase-out." Just before the vote was taken, Wasley hurriedly called for a five-minute recess—"We're near a compromise." A huddle in the center of the room suddenly erupted in cheers, as a compromise agreement was announced.

The Carter administration, which had supposedly wanted only to ensure strong safety measures for nuclear plants, had "compromised." Instead of a plank declaring that the next administration "can" phase-out nuclear plants, the Carter people demanded for their compromise that the plank read that the administration "will" phase nuclear plants out. Fifteen minutes of applauding by both the Carter and Kennedy camps ensued, followed by speeches calling for a unified party at the convention.

Thuggery at work

The platform committee delegates had obviously been carefully chosen for their loyalty. Most were obviously eager for advancement in the party or better jobs. Many were young zero-growth adherents. Surely, the farm representatives would actually represent their base and support a high-technology expansion of farm production and exports, I thought.

I discussed with one young Southern farmer the need for a plank mandating an emergency measure to ensure the market at 90 percent of parity to save American farmers. She considered it, but she was too busy lobbying for an end to nuclear power to waste much time working on it. "I've had to make too many deals on this issue," she said, explaining why she had no more bargaining chips to use on the parity question. "They will kill us if we try to go with this," another delegate told me.

Everyone at the several days of meetings knew they were under a microscope. "A top Carter person warned me to be very careful about what I do here," one Kennedy woman told me candidly.

At the caucus meetings, and then at the full committee meetings, top administration people and Kennedy officials carefully watched every delegate, while whips ran up and down the aisles ensuring votes. Stu Eizenstat, Carter's economic adviser, was on hand to weigh each proposal that was raised, as were National Security Council members and an Assistant Secretary of Agriculture. Every word changed was brought to them for approval, and then the word went out publicly through their delegate-spokesmen—vote this one up, or vote it down. Every delegate painstakingly watched the leadership for instructions.

Careful not to alienate the orchestrators of the hearings, the delegates succeeded in alienating the American voters. Adoption of this platform by the party convention in August would not only seal the fate of the Democratic Party in the elections, but cause a major fracturing of the party.

Carter, Kennedy and LaRouche on the platform

The following is a comparison between the Democratic Party's Carter platforms in 1976 and 1980, and the proposals of candidates Kennedy and LaRouche.

The economy

1976: We must reverse the Nixon-Ford tight money policy, an important factor in our housing shortage. . . . Reasonable interest rates are essential to the effort to address our housing problems.

1980: We must continue to pursue a tough anti-inflationary policy which will lead to a reduction in interest rates on loans across the board. . . . The Federal Reserve shall use the tool of reserve requirements creatively in its efforts to fight inflation.

Kennedy: The Democratic Party remains committed to policies that will not produce high interest rates or high unemployment.

LaRouche: The only available way to stop double-digit inflation is to support the proposals of France and its European Monetary System partners. The United States must accept and support . . . a new, gold-based world monetary order . . . That will take hundreds of billions of Eurodollars off the present Eurodollar market. Those dollars, then held in the depositories of the bond-issuing agencies, can now be lent for world trade in hard-commodity investments at between 4 and 6 percent prime rates. . . . The existing U.S. Export-Import Bank is the institution for conducting the new, 4 to 5 percent credit back to exporting U.S. manufacturers, construction firms and farmers through local private banks.

Energy

1976: U.S. dependence on nuclear power should be kept to a minimum necessary to meet our needs. We should

apply stronger safety standards. We should be honest to our people concerning its problems and dangers as well as its benefits.

1980: We must make conservation and renewable energy our nation's energy priorities for the future. Through the Federal government's commitment to renewable energy sources and energy efficiency, and as alternative fuels become available in the future, we will retire nuclear power plants.

Kennedy: The 1980 nuclear phaseout energy plank was put forward by Kennedy.

LaRouche: To provide secure and economical energy now and in the future, and to regain leadership in science, industry and education, the U.S. requires a firm commitment to rapid production and siting of existing types of nuclear reactors and an aggressive research and development program for development of new nuclear technologies. To accomplish this needed buildup, a full-cycle nuclear industry must be rapidly created, and sufficient credits made available for backing up the export side of the industry.

Agriculture

1976: For its part the Democratic Party pledges: to give foremost attention to the development of a national food and fiber policy that will provide fair treatment to producers and consumers alike, that will continue the goal of full production within the framework of our traditional family farm system.

The Democratic Party believes that additional attention and support must be given to the protection, the parity protection to American producers, that recognizes changing costs of production.

1980: In 1977 the Democratic Administration inherited a farm economy that was in a serious state of overproduction and price support programs that were badly outdated. Farm prices and farm income were plummeting, partly in response to misguided attempts at price controls.

LaRouche: The president must act immediately to maintain the market at the ninety percent of parity which it is in the President's legal power and duty to ensure. Only such immediate action by the President can stop a depression-collapse of agriculture with irreparable damage to the dinner tables of all the nation's citizens during the 1981-1982 period.