

Closeups from the convention

Ninety percent of the convention activities were conducted in the countless cocktail parties, receptions, caucus meetings and just plain lobby button-holing that dominated New York's major hotels. EIR dispatched a network of reporters to these sometimes very informal affairs.

Carter thuggery

It was on Saturday, Aug. 9 that the convention delegates began to arrive in New York in large numbers. Even as the delegates checked into their hotels, the word began to spread that the Carter campaign was applying unheard-of pressure on its delegates to hold them in line for the crucial rules battle scheduled for Monday night.

California, the largest delegation, was the scene of much pressure. One young Carter delegate known for his independence summed up the situation this way:

“Virtually every Carter delegate is being closely watched. They are holding hands everywhere we go. This is the heaviest political babysitting I have ever seen.”

For another Californian, the pressure started even before the arrival in New York—it began on the plane. This woman, a longtime political activist who was not a delegate but rather a guest of the delegation, expressed her preference for LaRouche, to the dismay of the Carter forces. Hoping to shut her up, California Democratic Party chief Richard O’Neill threatened to have this loyal Democrat fired from her job, and ordered the delegation to not talk to her. She commented: “In the past, we have had heated fights and disagreements in the party, but at least we could talk about it. Now, it’s a conspiracy of silence.”

Every delegation reported feeling the Carter heat, in particular the Southern delegations that were supposed to be Carter strongholds. A black alternate delegate from Texas, who was scheduled to take the place of an absent delegate, was seen being forcibly taken from the convention floor after expressing his preference for an open convention. And delegates from Mississippi and Georgia, where most were Carter delegates but many were leaning toward voting for the open convention, also reported blatant blackmail and intimidation from the young “delegate hunters” of the Carter campaign.

A leading black member of the Mississippi delegation said: “I’m going to work to defeat Carter—not Reagan, Carter.”

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For many delegates, the pressure from the Carter campaign was a rude awakening to the way Carter’s boys viewed them. However, even a reporter who expected this kind of Carter action was a bit taken aback by the words of Robert Strauss, voiced to one of the leading New York supporters of the President. “Bob,” he said, “you’ve been too abusive to the delegates—you’re alienating people.”

“You don’t understand,” Strauss replied. “That’s my job. We’ve got to keep Kennedy in this thing. We know how he thinks—and we can’t have him going after some third candidate—so we’re pricking him.”

“But Bob, you’re going too far! You’re overdoing it.”

“Now look here,” replied Strauss. “You’ve got to stop thinking like a delegate. We’re the leaders of the party. We tell ’em what to think. Don’t go soft now—we have this thing locked up.”

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Money—lots of money—also did Carter’s talking.

A leading party broker reports that millions of dollars arrived in New York City Sunday night and were liberally distributed to Kennedy and Carter delegates alike to keep them in line. Some of the leading mayors and other public officials of the United States were on the recipient end of Carter’s green stuff. (Observers of these transactions noted the thinly veiled significance of the Carter campaign official color being green.) On top of direct dollar bills, there was many a scholarship awarded Sunday night for children of the delegates, and many long-stalled local economic projects pushed ahead as well. There are even reports that the administration promised to change its position on one of the most controversial land conservation programs in the country—all for the allegiance of wavering Carter delegates.

In the end however, it was the Carter pressure on

the Texas delegation that caused the most controversy and came closest to sparking an anti-Carter backlash. The target was the leadership of the American Agricultural Movement, which sent a team of delegates to New York committed to opening the convention.

The controversy began when Mr. Reagan Brown, the state commissioner of agriculture of Texas and a leading Carter supporter, warned AAM leader Clifford Hamilton to get some "burial insurance ready" when he returned home. Several other encounters also took place in the lobby of the New York Hilton Hotel, as Brown got increasingly angry that Hamilton and the AAM refused to buckle under.

As a matter of precaution, Hamilton reported the death threat from Brown to the New York Police Department. As word began to spread of the Carter/Brown heavy-handed tactics, John White, the national chairman of the Democratic Party and a native Texan, felt obliged to intervene and prevent the situation from backfiring against the Carter campaign. White ordered Brown to immediately leave New York and return to Texas.

Top Carter officials tried to downplay the significance of the incident. Caught in the lobby of the Sheraton Hotel, the Carter convention headquarters, Secretary of Agriculture Bob Bergland said: "Oh, you know how it is with Texans, a lot of hot air. Pinch a Texan and you get hot air." Later on, however, the delegation from Puerto Rico, Bergland was overheard talking with a leading party insider: "Listen, I've been talking to people in the Texas delegation and they are pretty angry about your policy on parity. They are saying there is a lack of help from the administration to the farm sector."

"Oh," Bergland said, "the farmers that don't like our policy are the fat cats. And we are not going to help the fat cats. They are the ones demanding price support parity. We're not going to change that policy. We're not going to give in to the fat cats. The problem in the Texas delegation is that guy Meek and his crew. Meek and his friends are really working for Reagan. That's why they're against us." Marvin Meek is the president of the AAM.

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As a sidelight, it should be noted that it was not only the Carter forces that did heavy lobbying before the rules vote Monday night. The Kennedy forces did some as well, but the effectiveness of their work is certainly questionable.

On Sunday night, leading Kennedy supporter Mayor Jane ("Byrne the Witch") Byrne of Chicago flew into New York to work over the Illinois delegation. At the time she arrived, there were thirty-two Illinois delegates leaning toward voting for the open convention. How-

ever, when the final tally was taken, only twenty-six delegates from Illinois sided with Kennedy—and Mrs. Byrne tried quietly to slip out of town.

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For the overwhelming number of delegates, the question of opening the convention boiled down to a practical problem: the only "realistic" choice was between Carter and Kennedy. Many of the Carter delegates, being conservative, could not bring themselves to side with Kennedy and his liberal views on anything, so they stuck with Carter in what appeared to them to be their only choice. As one leading senator from a Midwestern state said, "The problem for the open convention is that there are only two candidates." Even more to the point was a comment from a delegate from New Mexico: "I'm probably going to be a charter member of the LaRouche in '84 Campaign Committee. But right now, I see this convention as an opportunity to rid our party of the Kennedy liberals once and for all."

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Once the issue of the open convention was settled, most attention turned to the fight over the party platform, and in particular, the question of reducing unemployment.

While few were genuinely enthusiastic about the Kennedy proposal for a \$12 billion "make-work" jobs program, the proposal took on a symbolic significance. It was a challenge to the Carter administration depression policy. And rather than deflect the challenge, Carter confronted it, rejecting the Kennedy proposal. The reaction was immediate outrage, from labor and blacks especially.

In the Sheraton Hotel lobby, a leading Democratic fundraiser was talking with a top labor official. "I can't understand why Carter is so stupid," the fundraiser said. "Why couldn't he say specifically that he endorses the jobs minority reports?"

"I know, I know," the labor official said. "I can't understand it, why is he so stupid?"

Albert Shanker, seen at the Sheraton Hotel, summed up the labor response: "I have to wait and see what he actually comes up with."

A leading black official from Ohio said: "The Carter people are not really capable of being winners. The whole convention was the process of forcing Carter to deal with reality."

And it was not simply Carter's rejection of the Kennedy jobs proposal that irked the labor and minority blocs—it was his method of rejection. Afraid that labor would vote against him if the issue was put to a roll call, Carter revoked the floor passes to the convention for the "whips" giving direction to the labor

delegates. Lane Kirkland is reported to have placed an angry phone call to Carter on this one.

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There are many cases of striking divergence between the way the media covered the convention, and what actually occurred. But there is no greater area in which this is the case than the LaRouche factor at the convention. Certainly, everyone in any way associated with the convention was struck by the apparent omnipresence of LaRouche campaign representatives and literature. A couple of the hundreds of comments made on this point during the convention suffice to make this clear.

The leaders of the Illinois state delegation, talking to each other shortly after LaRouche addressed their delegation, said: "If the convention opens up, LaRouche will be placed in nomination. It's important that we bring Kennedy in to speak to psychologically balance off the LaRouche speech."

Jesse Unruh, state treasurer of California and head of the Carter caucus, talking to a delegate. "Jesse, you know that if this convention opens up, even LaRouche will be nominated. That means 15 minutes on national television for him."

"I know, I know," Unruh said, frowning.

One hundred and thirty delegates signed LaRouche nominating petitions. Under the 1976 rules, in an open convention, 50 signatures would have meant that LaRouche would be nominated.

One of the more revealing aspects of this convention was the opportunity to watch Carter hatchetmen—Hamilton Jordan and Jody Powell.

Hamilton Jordan could be seen jogging around the lobby and outside perimeter of the Sheraton in pink shorts, blue sneakers and a blue polo shirt. When he was finally cornered in a candy store and asked about reports from several cabinet members that AFL-CIO chief Lane Kirkland had endorsed Carter, Jordan said: "Don't you know never to listen to a cabinet member about politics?" In fact, Kirkland had only endorsed the party platform. Powell spoke with similar disdain about the cabinet. "Well, you know these people shoot off their mouths and sometimes misunderstand things."

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Overall, delegates left New York with a sick feeling in their stomachs. Many were too demoralized to say much. But others were fighting mad. One delegate commented on Carter and his speech: "Last night [Thursday] I was embarrassed to be an American. To see the man who is supposed to be President groveling on national television for support. And from a loser like Kennedy, no less."

'Kennedy can hold Congress'

The following is an interview with Governor James B. Hunt of North Carolina, Southern Regional Coordinator for the Carter-Mondale Campaign. It took place after Kennedy's rousing convention speech Aug. 13, and before his perfunctory podium appearance with Carter.

Q: What will Ted Kennedy's speech mean to the election?

A: No one would have believed possible events over the last 48 hours. Carter's people have virtually assured Kennedy of the 1984 presidential nomination—and he deserves it. We'll be picking up 20 percent in the polls based on that speech. I'm a Southerner; I'm a Carter supporter and I don't like the Kennedys, but I was stirred to my bones by that speech—every person in that hall was moved. We now have a three-man ticket—Carter, Mondale, Kennedy.

Q: But Ted Kennedy is not a factor in the South and all the polls show that Carter is in deep trouble there—

A: I think we can win. And now we will definitely hold the Congress. The key to holding Congress is Kennedy.

The South, there are a couple of seats in jeopardy, but the Republican base in the South is weak, and only based upon the hope that the Republicans can take the Congress. If they can't deliver the Congress—the majority control of it—they can be routed in the South because the South believes in "constituency politics"; it gives nothing for nothing. Carter is a far more effective campaigner than he is a president.

Q: What about the Kennedy people threatening to walk out?

A: Let 'em walk, those people are not Democrats anyway, they're *kooks* [sic]. I don't think that labor will walk out. I've spoken to friends like Lane Kirkland, I spoke to Doug Fraser. . . . Carter people tell me they had firm assurances that if the convention went as it did with Ted, then the AFL-CIO would be 100 percent behind the ticket.

Q: Will Kennedy be on the platform tomorrow night?

A: If he wants to be in the White House in 1985, and he does.