

# Disenfranchised constituencies

## 1. Labor

As the Democratic Convention concluded this week, top labor officials met in the suite of rooms in New York's Sheraton Centre Hotel to assess the damage. Their conclusion: labor has no presidential candidate it really backs in the November election.

While union leaders such as the AFL-CIO's Lane Kirkland and the United Autoworkers' Doug Fraser say that they have no trouble choosing Jimmy Carter over Ronald Reagan, they have nothing from this convention to tell their members who blame the White House for the current depression. It is not just that Jimmy Carter is an unpopular, uninspiring candidate. The Democratic Party platform, said one AFL-CIO union president, is "nothing to write home about. It doesn't offer much hope on the economy."

Kirkland has been in constant touch with the White House for some time. About two weeks ago, he and top White House aides hit upon a formula for an economic program that the AFL-CIO president thought he could sell to the membership: the so-called Carter plan, an as yet unspecified scheme for economic revitalization that is to be the centerpiece of the Carter domestic program. Putting aside the merits of the proposal, which stresses energy conservation as a "growth industry," the Carter plan was not even really mentioned at the convention. Instead, there was debate on several minority platform planks authored by the Kennedy camp. Kirkland worked feverishly with Carter campaign aides to put together a series of concessions on the key planks that would at least give the impression to rank-and-file union members that the Carter administration was interested in stopping the depression its previous policies had created. This debate, which one labor leader termed an "organized charade," was the closest the convention came to debating real economic issues, and it was not very close at all.

Kirkland also made sure that there would be no real debate on foreign policy questions, and sold the MX missile program as a way to get more union jobs.

Kirkland issued a terse two-sentence acceptance of Carter's statement on the minority planks, which Carter

campaign officials jubilantly held up as "labor's endorsement."

But the showmanship on the convention floor and backrooms aside, labor's strategy for the election campaign calls for trying to minimize the "Carter problem" and emphasize the "Reagan problem." Said one top AFL-CIO official, "We are not campaigning for Jimmy Carter, really. We are going to go like hell against Ronald Reagan and hope for the best."

Only the week before, Kirkland had effectively kicked off the campaign against Reagan with a speech before the United Steelworkers convention which ripped into Ronald Reagan and the GOP economic program, without once praising anything that the Democrats had done over the last four years.

"There is a problem with what we are doing," Saul Miller, the AFL-CIO public relations director, said privately. "There are a hell of a lot of people who have been thrown out of work during the Carter term in the White House. How the hell do we blame that on Reagan?"

Plans now call for the AFL-CIO executive board to pass a recommendation to endorse the Carter/Mondale ticket when it meets Aug. 20 in Chicago. Kirkland will then ram the endorsement through the full AFL-CIO general board meeting in Washington early next month. In the meantime, Labor Secretary Ray Marshall plans to issue the "Carter plan" before the General Board meets. Marshall says that it will emphasize the use of tripartite—labor, management, government—boards to manage key sectors, such as steel and auto, and key depressed areas. There will be talk of a massive coal development program requiring "millions of jobs" to build ports, railroads, and other new facilities to handle it. But even Marshall admits that labor "doesn't believe anything that we tell them until they see it through Congress. . . . we don't have a great track record."

Over in UAW President Doug Fraser's rooms, there was a similar pall. Fraser was a Kennedy backer, but people close to him say that for the last four months he had been quietly building bridges to the White House. Carter people identified Fraser and UAW Secretary Treasurer Ray Majerus as having long ago struck a deal with the White House. The UAW president several weeks ago agreed to give the nominating speech for Mondale.

Fraser has been in touch with Kirkland and both were working "together" on Carter. Fraser was consulted on the drafting of the Carter response to the platform.

But the UAW, which has 300,000 of its members out of work, cannot sell Jimmy Carter to its members. Like the AFL-CIO, the UAW strategy calls for going after Reagan and hoping for the best.

Ironically, it was labor that could have played a key role in efforts to open the convention for a third choice other than Carter or Kennedy, who only a few dreamers really saw as having a chance of winning in November. Kirkland reportedly put the word out that he did not back the idea of an open convention, since he saw no real candidate capable of beating both Carter and Reagan. This pulled the rug from under efforts of nearly three dozen union leaders, some backing Kennedy, others backing Scoop Jackson, Ed Muskie or Walter Mondale, to push for an open convention. Fraser, meanwhile, despite his support for Kennedy, did not back the Kennedy-sponsored minority report on rules that would have opened the convention. Without labor's backing, the convention stayed closed.

Leaders of COPE, the AFL-CIO political arm, and CAP, its UAW counterpart, are worried. They know that they have "no deal with content" to show the rank and file. They are talking about a low turnout from their members in November—which will mean certain defeat for Carter—and threaten to give the Congress to the GOP. The convention leaves key labor-backed seats in real jeopardy, said a COPE leader. "We're in trouble across the board."

COPE leaders say they expect most labor unions to line up behind the Carter ticket against Reagan. The possible exceptions are the Teamsters, who may go for Reagan or remain neutral, and William Winpisinger's International Association of Machinists.

"We are going through the motions and this time I don't think that it will work," said a state AFL-CIO head. "Face it, we don't have a candidate."

## 2. Blacks

Despite the fact that the 1980 Democratic National Convention had the largest representation of black voters of any previous convention, most of the 481 black delegates and 297 alternates left the convention without either a candidate or a platform that they can sell to their constituents back home.

Representing the section of Americans worst hit by the Carter administration economic policies, many black leaders were determined to see an open Democratic convention in the hope that a candidate other than Carter would be chosen as the party's standard-bearer. One of

the leaders of the open convention drive was Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm of New York, who formed part of the leadership of the Committee to Keep the Convention Open. Five black congressmen joined Chisholm and Dr. Ralph Abernathy, former head of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, in issuing a call several days before the convention started for an open convention. The statement, signed also by Congresswoman Cardiss Collins (D-Ill.), head of the Congressional Black Caucus, and Representatives Walter Fauntroy (D-D.C.), Louis Stokes (D-Ohio), William Clay (D-Mo.), and Augustus Hawkins (D-Calif.) declared: "We have fought long and hard for voting rights. But if the delegate's freedom is choked off, what will an open party mean? What will fair representation mean? Black people need a free voice and a free vote. That is what we marched for and worked for and sacrificed for in the 1960s."

Congressman Ron Dellums (D-Calif.) declared himself a presidential candidate on Aug. 11 in the hopes of winning more votes to the open convention. Dellums declared that only an open convention would allow for discussion of the crucial problems facing the nation and the selection of a presidential candidate based on his ability to solve these problems.

"I'm coming before this convention because the crucial issues facing this nation have not been addressed during the primary process and unless something is done immediately these issues will be ignored by this convention as well," Dellums said in his speech to the floor Aug. 12. "As early as March 1979 I publicly expressed my concern about the policy that this administration is imposing in terms of domestic economic policy and foreign affairs. I offer my candidacy in order to make possible an open discussion of the issues and an open consideration of candidates."

These black congressmen, as well as many other of the black delegates, were looking to Senator Ted Kennedy as a candidate who could reverse the depression that President Carter has created. A number of other blacks, including several key southern delegates and northern urban leaders, back the candidacy of Lyndon H. LaRouche, because he has detailed an economic revival and development policy for the United States as well as the Third World.

Two days before the convention began, Hulan Jack, former Manhattan Borough President and the unofficial mayor of Harlem, went on national television to declare his support for Mr. LaRouche. Mr. Jack and several dozen black convention delegates expressed their determination to ensure that America uses its technological resources to begin a major development of the Third World, by attending a policy forum on Aug. 14 sponsored by the LaRouche campaign, on exactly how such a global development plan could be implemented.

Not surprisingly, both black and white congressmen were in the leadership of the drive for the open convention, fearing that the Democratic Party would lose numerous congressional seats in November if Carter heads the ticket. Black congressmen are particularly concerned about losing local state legislative races as well, since state legislatures this year will reapportion congressional districts based on the 1980 census. Of the 20 districts showing the greatest population loss, and thus requiring redistricting, nine are held by black congressmen. Republican legislatures will obviously seek to redistrict to win a Republican Congress.

### **Fight on economic policy**

When the fight for the open convention was lost with the delegates' vote to accept Carter's rules binding them to the candidates they represented, the focus of black anger became the party platform. Although no one at the convention podium presented the party and the nation with an actual program for the high technology development of the United States, many angry blacks used Ted Kennedy's call for a \$12 billion jobs program, and demands that inflation not be halted through unemployment, as the basis of their fight against the Carter administration-caused depression.

Speaking on behalf of these programs, Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm declared to the convention that jobs must be the primary concern of the next administration. Chisholm warned the delegates that for every 1 percent unemployment, \$20 billion is added to the federal budget deficit.

Although the convention voted up these proposals, Carter refused to specifically agree to the details of the program. The convention's black caucus demanded a meeting with Carter. Carter refused, sending his campaign manager Robert Strauss and United Nations Ambassador McHenry instead. Angered, the caucus leaders threatened a walkout Thursday night. "Carter can't win without the black vote" declared caucus leader Newhouse, an Illinois state legislator.

Although a major walk out during Carter's acceptance speech did not materialize, blacks left the convention without a presidential candidate to represent their interests. "The problem for blacks this fall is very 'serious'" one Midwestern congressman said, "indicating that the job for blacks now is to strengthen their local machines to force changes on a national level. 'Carter is not really capable of being a winner. The whole convention was the process of forcing Carter to deal with the reality. Carter has a rose garden mind, is not in touch with the way people think. If he makes more mistakes even our hatred of Reagan won't save him. He must show that he understands how constituency politics works. It is a mess. Don't believe this unity garbage.'"

## **3. Hispanics**

The country's rapidly growing Hispanic population has traditionally been the most solidly Democratic constituency in the country. Upwards of 85 percent of Hispanic voters vote Democratic at the presidential level.

Yet, coming out of the New York convention, the talk was that this proportion could fall as low as 60 percent in November. Many Hispanics are looking at the Anderson option; and others are eyeing the Republicans, who beefed up their Hispanic Office at the Republican National Committee this year and are mounting an aggressive selling job in this formerly closed-off territory. And many plan on not voting for President at all.

On traditionally Kennedy turf, Carter came into the convention looking fairly good. Of the 204 Hispanic delegates—four times the number in 1976—he had secured some 90. Most of them were party regulars and elected officials, brought in on the basis of deals rather than commitment.

As the open convention drive gained force, Kennedy strategists particularly targeted this bloc. They hoped to pick up delegates not only because the deals were premised on an increasingly unlikely Carter victory in November, but because many of the Carter Hispanics depended on pro-Kennedy local machines for their own political careers.

The day before the convention opened, Kennedy in fact stole the show at the Hispanic American Democrats (HAD) conference, an organization painstakingly built up as a Carter reelection vehicle over the preceding two years. The day before, LaRouche Hispanic representatives had kicked up an anti-Carter storm at the same conference.

But the deals stuck. During the roll call on the rules vote Monday night, the states with significant numbers of Hispanic delegates—including California, Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, Texas, New York, New Jersey, Florida and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico—showed little if any slippage. In Texas, one of the areas under the most intense Kennedy pressure, and where the 30 Hispanic delegates split 17 to 13 in Kennedy's favor, there was none at all. Hard-courtied Miami Mayor Maurice Ferre likewise held.

The vote could not hide the generalized concern among both Kennedy and Carter Hispanics, however, that much more needed to be done to address the economic and social problems battering their communities.

In the fallout from the vote, angry Kennedy Hispanics attempted to introduce Arizona Lieutenant. Gov. Roberto Mondragon into nomination in a parallel

protest action to Ron Dellums's move from the black delegates. But Mondragon fell some 150 signatures short of the 330 required. Other Kennedy Hispanics, such as State Senator Paul Moreno of Texas, walked out. Texas, one of the major Hispanic states, shows the deepest split. The talk was rife of letting "the Carter people get out there campaigning on the sidewalks if they like Jimmy so much. We'll work for our local candidates."

California's Hispanics seemed to keep a strong "unity" profile, in part because key patronage machines span both camps, like that of David Lizarraga, chief honcho of the East Los Angeles Community Union.

Puerto Rico is a special case where there will be no reconciliation. Its delegation was evenly split between the island's two major parties.

## 4. Farmers

*Marvin Meek, the president of the American Agriculture Movement, arrived in New York backed up by a motorcade of tractors and a team of AAM organizers on Aug. 10, the day before the start of the Democratic National Convention. What follows are some of the team's comments at a press conference Aug. 14 at the Statler Hilton Hotel. Meek made it clear that the AAM will organize against President Carter's reelection, principally because the Carter administration has refused support of anything like 100 percent farm parity, the prices agricultural producers must gain at market if they are to meet the full costs of production, capital investment, and upkeep.*

**Q:** What has been your chief complaint against the Carter administration?

**Meek:** He has lied to us. The biggest lie that he told was in his campaign promises. It was, "I will never tell you a lie."

He campaigned for parity for agriculture; he promised us parity agriculture. Not only did he *not* do that, but he worked against parity legislation. In 1977, we had the flexible parity bill that he worked against and killed singlehandedly.

**Q:** The Democratic platform—it removed the concept of parity?

**Meek:** Well, they took parity out because it's embarrassing to have it in there and work against it. That's why they wanted it out.

This year he has kept his mouthpieces there in Congress, trying to keep HR 6815, which is a 65 percent parity bill. In other words, farmers would get 65 percent of what we really ought to have, instead of 100 percent. It would be like you working for 65 percent of what

you're making right now. You wouldn't do it, and you wouldn't back a President who made you do it. That's why I'm not going to back Carter. That's why I'm going to campaign against him.

**Q:** Why does the dairy industry have a significantly higher parity rate?

**Meek:** The only reason that dairy is on parity is because we got an extremely bad dairy industry condition back when they initiated the parity talks, and they were trying to stimulate additional dairies because we were getting into a short supply situation on milk. If they hadn't done this, milk would probably be \$5 a gallon right now.

You know, dairy is a dirty job, it's expensive and highly technical. So people wouldn't risk money without quite a bit of incentive financially. When they found out that there was no other way to stimulate the dairy industry, they had to come in and set a floor for dairy prices. They did, and it's worked beautifully for the dairy industry; it's worked beautifully for the consumers. It assures you first of all of good quantity and quality too, at a reasonable price, and it stays constant.

**Q:** Why do you emphasize the "owner-operated" farm?

**Gerald McCathern:** I would really like to declare war on those multinational corporations who would like to place agriculture in a situation they control. They realize that the most important thing in the world is food. I think that the big multinational corporations would like to have a stranglehold on our industry, including agriculture.

I will tell you why I think that's true. Cargill, an American company, is one of the world's largest international grain dealers; it is the only American one of the five major international grain companies. In my part of the country today, it buys up all of the cattle feed lots. They are also buying up the large packing houses. All they lack in having a total integration of the meat industry is the farms where we produce the grain. I'm convinced that they would like to see a corporate structure in agriculture the way they have it in every other industry.

Kissinger made a statement in 1976, I believe, that said to get control of a nation, you've got to control the food, the energy, the monetary system, and the guns. Well, they've got control of the money industry, and they've got control of the energy situation. . . .

**Q:** If the farmer is doing as poorly in the market place as you say he is, why are food prices so high?

**Meek:** We're spending 3 percent less on food than we are on recreation, per family. And that shows you how cheap food is. The United States has the cheapest food in the world, at 17 percent [of disposable income]; many nations spend as high as 90 percent.