

Campaign 1980 by Kathleen Murphy

Inching closer to a constitutional crisis

The League of Women Voters announcement Sept. 10 that it will invite John Anderson to participate in its upcoming series of nationally-televised presidential debates has effectively moved the United States much closer to a profound political crisis.

As most political analysts agree, Anderson's participation in the debates—with or without Carter—can only enhance his credibility as the "third alternative" in the presidential race, thus bolstering his vote-getting capability.

The League's decision capped a week which saw a sudden reversal in Anderson's declining political fortunes. On Sept. 4, the Federal Elections Commission did a 180 degree about face on their previous rulings and decided that Anderson's independent candidacy should be considered a "third party." The practical significance of the FEC's decision is that it makes Anderson eligible for federal funds if he registers a minimum of 5 percent in the popular vote; this, in turn, greatly enhances his fundraising abilities.

Then the executive board of the Liberal Party in New York voted Sept. 6 to put Anderson on their ballot line in November, a dubious honor usually reserved for the Democratic nominee. According to Liberal Party chairman Raymond Harding: "We're confident that Anderson will take the state. The Kennedy wing of the party is with us. So are a lot of the unions, despite their pro forma endorsements of Carter. We've got a phenomenal situation in this country. . . ."

If Harding is right, and Anderson takes New York, that would almost definitely ensure that the Electoral College is caught in a



three-way deadlock. This would mean that the House of Representatives would have to choose the next President—which could augur a period of total political paralysis.

Some political observers believe that the political circles pushing Anderson aren't interested in putting him in the White House but want to use his candidacy to disrupt the American electoral system and set the stage for carrying out a drastic transformation of the nation's basic governing institutions. One highly-placed source confided recently that "There's a grouping, let's call it the Harriman circles, who want to create a multi-party system in the United States. They see Anderson as a vehicle for accomplishing this."

Javits loss an Anderson victory?

Jacob Javits's unexpected loss to Alphonse D'Amato in the Sept. 9 New York Republican senatorial primary could well boost John Anderson's chances of winning the state in the November elections. As one astute observer of the state's politics explained: "There are a hell of a lot of sane, liberal and centrist Republicans who won't vote for

D'Amato under any circumstances. He's too conservative and they don't like the way he treated Javits during the campaign. Since Javits will still be in the race, on the Liberal Party line, I expect lots of those Republicans to vote Liberal. And once they get into that voting booth, I'll eat my hat if they don't also pull the lever for Anderson."

The best of friends?

Henry Kissinger drove down to Ronald Reagan's Virginia estate last week for a series of consultations on the Republican presidential nominee's campaign. According to reliable sources, Kissinger offered Reagan a deal: In return for being given direct control over the campaign, Kissinger said he would use his influence to tone down the East Coast media assault against Reagan which by then had reached feverish heights.

Did Reagan agree? It's not clear. But another campaign insider told us that a sudden decision had been made in the campaign's higher circles that Reagan wouldn't say another word on the China policy controversy. Reagan's repeated references to improving relations with Taiwan has been a major cause for alarm among the Eastern Establishment types that have latched on to his candidacy.

Meanwhile, Kissinger is receiving some important back-up from media expert James Barber, who heads up a new program at Duke University to teach journalists how to shape the issues and outcome of elections. Barber is mobilizing his friends in the press corps to, as he put it in a recent interview, "mount a campaign to force Reagan to dump some of his old California mafia—Lyn Nofziger, Ed Meese, Mike Deaver—and bring in people with broader experience."