

The Democratic Party

Moderates look to leadership posts

by Lonnie Wolfe

A brawl is shaping up between moderate conservatives and liberals for control of the Democratic party apparatus and program.

Senator David Boren of Oklahoma reflected this fight when he announced Nov. 12 at a Washington press conference that he saw "a new bipartisan consensus emerging" in national politics, despite the opposition of liberal Democrats. He described a meeting of the Democratic Senate caucus earlier in the day.

"There are those who think we should give the Republicans everything they want," and then when the country falls on its face, this will lock the GOP out of politics for twenty-five years; there are others, Boren continued, notably "one of the Massachusetts senators," who said we must fight to ensure that programs are not dismantled. "But I am confident that people will not ignore the interests of the country." Boren indicated that the new consensus would be based on programs for new technology and capital formation.

Boren's statement identifies the central issue in the fight: will the Democratic Party fall back on the shopworn liberal prescriptions typified by the policies of Edward Kennedy and his backers, or pull together a new position in tune with the electorate that voted out Jimmy Carter and George McGovern?

'No need for liberal Dems'

One Democratic Party leader from upstate New York warned this week that the McGovernite wing of the party, which includes the ultraliberal section of Sen. Edward Kennedy's backers, "has destroyed our electoral base with their single-issuism." Noting the exodus of traditional constituencies like the blue-collar vote from the Democratic columns in this election, he stated: "We don't need any more of these platforms which talk for page after page about the ERA and abortion. . . . We don't need 'liberal Democrats' anymore."

Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr., the former Democratic presidential candidate and chairman of the advisory committee of the National Democratic Policy Committee, has called on conservative Democrats to take hold of their party and work with their counterparts in the GOP to define a new economic policy for the nation. The NDPC has sparked debate within the party leader-

ship and its congressional delegation with the circulation of draft legislation in several areas, including tax policy and reform of the Federal Reserve System.

The DNC fight

One of the first focal points for the fight within the party will be the selection of the party chairman. That subject is sure to come up at the emergency executive committee meeting of the Democratic National Committee on Dec. 9 in Washington, D.C. In a piece entitled "The Knives Are out for John White," syndicated columnists Germond and Witcover report that there is strong sentiment to remove Carter appointee John White, who was expected to do the "right thing" and step down, as did Democratic Chairwoman Jean Westwood immediately after the 1972 McGovern debacle.

Instead, White has announced that he intends to stay on through March at least and may stand for reelection. He boasts that he has the votes to win—a fact hotly contested within party ranks. There is some sentiment for a "nuts and bolts" man to rebuild the party, say Germond and Witcover, and many people would object to someone like outgoing Vice-President Walter Mondale, whose name has been mentioned, mostly by supporters of a Mondale presidential bid for 1984.

No Carter input

Few people feel that the Carter crowd should be given any voice in choosing a new chairman. As if oblivious to last week's election, the Carter honchos are nonetheless pushing various "options," including John White. Carter-Mondale campaign committee chairman Bob Strauss reportedly made more than 300 calls to DNC members recommending that Finance Committee Chairman Charles Manatt of California take the post; a few days later, Strauss reversed field and said that White should stay on for a "transition period."

Meanwhile, the names of a whole crop of Democratic losers from last week's election debacle are being floated including Sen. Birch Bayh and Rep. John Brademas, both of Indiana, and Gov. Bill Clinton of Arkansas.

The Kennedy crowd has yet to indicate their preference, but say they want White out. The McGovernites are expected to field a candidate for party chairman, though they have backed off from the ludicrous proposal that McGovern take the job himself.

At this point, the LaRouche faction and the moderate conservatives, who have a majority on the DNC, have yet to put forward a candidate. Discussion is, however, taking place on developing a policy consensus around the NDPC proposals. Such a consensus would finish off Strauss and White, whose only chance to hang onto the party power structure depends on misrepresenting themselves as a "consensus" leadership.