
DEMOCRATIC PARTY

Strategists say the U.S. system is dead

by Ronald Kokinda

The Democratic National Strategy Council of approximately 100 elected Democratic officials and former office holders met here last week only to be lectured by the Democratic National Committee leadership that the party of FDR no longer has a place in the United States.

The assembled Democrats were told that the country is "moving toward a union-free society"; that "Congress is becoming an increasingly obsolete institution"; that the family is no longer the basic unit of our society; that the Democratic, Republican, and other political parties exist in name only; that "wages and prices must be controlled"; that we are "going to save some of our cities . . . we are not going to save others"; and that, in short, the United States has already become a post-industrial society, and that must be the basis of formulating party strategy.

The Democratic National Committee, under the leadership of California banker Charles Manatt, has maintained the lie that the Democratic Party will let President Reagan take the blame of the collapse of the country and that the Democrats will put forward no policy alternatives to take the heat off the administration. That stance has translated into Democratic Party leadership protection especially for Federal Reserve Chairman Paul Volcker and his high interest rates.

So intent on remaining to appear "policyless" is Manatt, however, that he will not allow the group to use the word "policy" in its name, rather "strategy." But as the Oct. 16-17 conference showed, the next six to eight months are intended by the DNC to be full of "T-group" soft brainwashing sessions, in which the Democratic Party, traditionally resting on a producers' coalition of labor, small business, and farmers, will be reorganized around a set of zero-growth, wage-gouging proposals appropriate to the "post-industrial society" projected by Manatt and Co. The DNC expects this conversion to be accomplished by the spring of 1982, when the congressional elections will begin in earnest.

In this strategic framework, it is not so remarkable

that almost all of those on the meeting agenda are on public record in support of population reduction policies of the *Global 2000 Report*: Rep. Richard Gephardt (Mo.), Rep. Timothy Wirth (Colo.), Sen. Alan Cranston (Calif.), Rep. Barbara Milkulski (Md.), and invited speakers such as John Naisbitt, publisher of the *Trend Report*, and a member of the Club of Rome (the latter credential was, in fact, omitted from his program biography).

Wirth, formerly the manager of the Rocky Mountain office of the Arthur D. Little Co., declared that the country is falling apart economically, as measured by traditional yardsticks. His solution? Measure the economy differently. "Productivity may be declining in manufacturing, but it is growing in hard-to-measure areas of the service sector."

But it was Club of Rome member Naisbitt, who served as assistant to former Common Cause head John Gardner when Gardner was at the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, who declared that in a post-industrial society there is no need for labor unions, or political parties either. "We are no longer an industrial society," he said. "The fact that most of us were in industrial occupations until recently dictated the arrangements of the mass industrial society—which are now out of tune with the information society.

"Take for example labor unions. National political parties also had their heyday during the mass industrial society. Today, they exist in name only."

As for the party's urban base, Naisbitt stated, "We have no national urban policy today because the old 'top-down master plan' is completely out of tune with the times. We are going to save some of our cities, and not others."

Congress also "is becoming an increasingly obsolete institution. Its members spend more and more of their time . . . running errands for constituents and special interest groups," concluded Naisbitt.

Other participants joined in the effort to horrify the Democratic Party's traditional blue-collar, farmer, and small businessman base. Senator Gary Hart of Colorado announced that the Democratic Party was the real "free-market party" and then went on to call for wage-price controls. St. Louis Mayor Vince Schoemehl insisted that the Democratic Party "stands for the redistribution of wealth," a slogan of the Socialist International.

Detroit Mayor Coleman Young heatedly countered the post-industrial proposals to write off the auto and steel industries at the national level and leave it up to localities to save their own industrial bases. But, despite these and other reactions to the anti-labor, anti-constituency, and pro-Aquarian views that dominated, no one offered a sound economic development alternative for the Democratic Party.