

Democrats split at the Texas convention

by Laurence Hecht

“Party unity”—that is the slogan by which the family of Averell Harriman and their tool, party chairman Charles T. Manatt, have maintained control over the Democratic Party without being able to offer any program. But it did not work at the Democratic Party convention in Texas the week of Sept. 10. Texas chapters of Lyndon H. LaRouche’s National Democratic Policy Committee, led by state chairman Nick Benton, interjected a strong note of political debate into what was to have been a repeat of the vapid proceedings of the national party “mini-convention” held in Philadelphia in July.

In Philadelphia, party chairman Manatt had contrived to keep delegates from the NDPC out of the convention—although it is the largest political action committee in the party. Confused delegates were shuffled like sheep from one gala to another. Political discussion was non-existent; no substantive votes occurred.

But that did not happen in Dallas. Although state party chairman Robert Slagle, who is owned by Jimmy Carter’s Harrimanite political mechanic, Robert Strauss, was easily re-elected chairman, NDPC delegates nominated and seconded Benton, who delivered a 15-minute speech on the international financial crisis, and LaRouche’s program to end the world depression. “The international banking community is now trying to assert that by taking these moves López Portillo has become a ‘socialist.’ Bunk!” Benton said. “What he has done is exactly, from the standpoint of economic practice, what our Founding Fathers did when we kicked out the British to found our nation, and build our economy. Ironically enough, it is also exactly what Franklin D. Roosevelt did in 1939 to finally bring this nation out of a depression.

“The López Portillo policy is exactly along the lines of what we need to do to get our own nation out of the trend toward our greatest depression in history. . . . We must nationalize the Federal Reserve, to put it under the control of the U.S. Congress as the Constitution specifies, and out of the hands of private bankers. We need to remonetize gold, and place a 5 percent ceiling on interest rates. . . . Why are we not convened together here to discuss such things?”

Benton’s presentation stirred a flurry of political debate in caucus meetings, on the convention floor, and in hallways, to the consternation of the convention managers.

By the end of the convention, the Strauss-Slagle crowd ran into opposition when they put forward an extraordinary procedure resolution banning all discussion of party resolutions at future conventions—1,500 of the 3,400 delegates voted against them. Supporting an end to political discussion were the state’s liberals, and the powerful “Gay Political Caucus.” On the other side were Mexican-Americans, black representatives, and farmers, the constituencies that LaRouche’s NDPC has been working to bring together.

It was a very important development, if not quite yet a “split” in the Texas party. Texas is not only one of the larger states—with 26 electoral college votes. Its status as a Democratic Party stronghold reaches back a century.

Trouble for the Harrimanites began before the convention. NDPC leader Nick Benton informed each delegate by letter that Robert Strauss was “a mere tool of an international banking oligarchy that is operating on a scenario to impose 1930s-style fascism on the United States and the world.” He also called Strauss the “sex object” of Pamela Harriman, the British wife of nonagenarian patrician Averell Harriman.

Before the convention, Benton sought to address the Mexican-American Caucus, but its chairman was Slagle’s sergeant-at-arms, who shut off the microphone and had Benton thrown out amid an uproar.

Benton succeeded in addressing the Black Caucus and the Right to Life Caucus, and the chairman of two right-to-life county organizations in Texas endorsed his candidacy for state party chairman. Following his nomination on the convention floor, he rose to address the 5,000 delegates.

“We are on the brink of the greatest depression collapse in the history of this nation,” he stated. “It will bring upon this nation a kind of misery beyond the imagination of most Americans, unless decisive, forceful steps are taken to prevent it, the kind of steps that Lyndon LaRouche outlined throughout his 1980 presidential campaign.

“If the nations of Latin America are forced to organize a Latin American-wide ‘debt bomb’ to protect themselves against the IMF . . . this depression could hit with the full force of a banking collapse within weeks.

“Why then are we not discussing these issues at this convention?”

He answered by pointing to the Strauss-Slagle leadership. “There is not a black or Hispanic delegate at this convention who does not know, in his heart of hearts, that the leadership of the Democratic Party of Texas is a white racist power structure. There is not one farmer, worker, or pro-life advocate at this convention who does not know, in his heart of hearts, that the Democratic Party is committed to zero-growth environmentalism, the policies that are destroying our farms, and creating conditions for genocide on a world scale unparalleled in human history.”

Afterward, a table set up by supporters under a huge banner, “Draft LaRouche,” was mobbed by delegates asking questions on political policy, and demanding answers. It is not what the Strauss-Slagle crowd wanted to see.