

Would the Democrats rather die than win?

by Stephen Pepper

From Paul Kirk, Democratic Party national chairman, to state chairmen Bob Slagle in Texas, Ed Mezvinsky in Pennsylvania, Jim Ruvolo in Ohio, and many more party officials is heard one repeated litany: LaRouche can't happen here. To hear these gentlemen devote most of their public statements to LaRouche and what the media now calls the "LaRouche phenomenon," it would appear that the Republican Party has ceased to exist. Indeed, as Republican National Chairman Frank Fahrenkopf was quick to point out shortly after the primaries of May 3 and 6, the Republicans are in far better shape than he expected because the Democrats have spent all their time and money trying to hunt down LaRouche candidates in their midst. He and others are confidently predicting that the GOP will hold on to the Senate in November.

What the Republicans are looking at is the sharp drop in Democratic vote totals of which the Texas primary is the best case in point. In Texas, the Democrats drew barely 1 million voters, one of the lowest totals in recent times. In 1982, the Democratic gubernatorial race drew 1.3 million voters. In Houston, an unbelievably low 5.9% of the eligible voters turned out, actually below the Republican total in this Democratic stronghold. The major contributing factor to this collapse was none other than state chairman Slagle and the *Houston Post*. Slagle, in an obvious attack on the "LaRouche phenomenon," urged voters to stay home unless they "knew" the candidates, as if voting had suddenly become slightly more intimate than holy matrimony. The *Houston Post* made the same point in an editorial, and then abetted the vote dissuasion movement by mixing the addresses of the Republican and Democratic polling places. This disenfranchised a large part of the black vote in Houston, because in the black wards there are no Republicans; so the newspaper indicated no contest in what were actually contested Democratic primaries.

Although Slagle and company were so fixated on "preventing another Illinois" that they depressed the Democratic vote, the result was that the candidates backed by the National Democratic Policy Committee drew their highest totals ever. Statewide, Noel Cowling received 182,000 for agriculture commissioner against a well-entrenched incumbent. In congressional races where there were no incumbents, the NDPC candidates polled consistently above 20%.

In black wards and Hispanic areas, the results were even higher. Harley Schlanger, running in the 8th CD in Texas, polled over 26% district-wide, but in the black wards where he campaigned, he ran from 29% to 48%. No wonder the Slagle organization wanted to disenfranchise the blacks. In two key Hispanic areas—Brownsville and San Antonio—NDPC-backed candidates scored significantly higher than their totals across the state. Cowling ran above 18% across the state, but in Cameron Co. (Brownsville) he ran 32% and in Bexar Co. (San Antonio), 27%. In the race for Democratic County chairman in Bexar County, NDPC-backed candidate Don Varella pulled off a little Illinois, coming in first in a field of five with 39% of the vote.

The Bexar County saga exposes just how deeply corrupt and impotent the Democratic "regular" organization is. Slagle went to San Antonio to warn against the danger of the LaRouche phenomenon. The voters listened, took down Varella's name, and then voted for him and Cowling. The Democrats reacted with their usual grace under pressure. They attacked Varella as if he were an Orangeman at a Catholic wake. Mayor Henry Cisneros, linked to drug-lobby advocates nationally and locally, announced that the "regulars" would bolt the party, and the current county chairman swore that Varella would not have a penny even to keep an office open. The DNC nationally was directly involved, and a fund of \$40,000 to defeat Varella was planned. Under this pressure, Varella withdrew because he and his family were not prepared to face the "smear" campaign, as he said in his statement of withdrawal.

Slagle, Cisneros, and the local Democrats breathed a sigh of relief, but their glee is both misplaced and short-lived. Varella was the only Hispanic in the race. By forcing him out, the DNC and the Texas organization have given an eloquent signal to minority voters. In November, Democratic Gov. Mark White will need every black and Hispanic vote he can find. But who will turn them out for him? Slagle? The man who orchestrated the lowest voter turnout in years in black wards? Cisneros, whose allegiance to the Anti-Defamation League is stronger than his ties to fellow Hispanics?

The only Democratic bloc that has shown it can excite the voters that Lyndon LaRouche has called the Forgotten Majority, is the NDPC. The laid-off blue-collar workers of Ft. Worth, Indiana, the debt-strapped farmers of western Ohio, just as the impoverished of southern Illinois, have turned out to vote the NDPC in the face of a storm of slanders. But the Democratic "regular" organization is either so corrupt or so stupid—or both—that it does not get the message. These blind fools are convincing the voters that only the NDPC will respond. The votes of the Forgotten Majority are indispensable to the Democratic Party. The pathetic performance of the party in national elections since 1968 is directly attributable to the alienation these voters experience. They will not stick to the party out of loyalty, as they proved when they swung behind Ronald Reagan. Could it be that the present pack of Democrats would rather die than win?