

Delegate Fight Poised To Go to Convention

by Patricia Salisbury

On the eve of the May 31 showdown in Washington, D.C. over seating the elected Florida and Michigan delegations to the August Democratic Party National Convention, Lyndon LaRouche repeated the principle that “either the DNC [Democratic National Committee] must seat all of the delegates of both states as they are elected in the primaries, or the Democratic Party is looking for the greatest defeat in its history—or even its disintegration.” LaRouche was commenting on the announcement by the Democratic Rules Committee that it had received “legal advice” from Party lawyers that it could seat only 50% of the Florida and Michigan delegations, or give those states half their apportioned votes at the Convention.

Approximately 1,000 outraged citizens, from 33 states, showed up outside the hotel where the DNC was meeting, to express their opposition to this planned disenfranchisement. Led by the group Florida Demands Representation (FDR), and including groups such as the National Association of Women, the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), and others, the demonstrators insisted all votes be counted. FDR head Jim Hannagan, whose group includes Obama delegates as well as those of Clinton, and others, made the most forceful point: This fight does not end today, he said. If we lose, we will go all the way to the Convention.

Counting the Votes

Whatever the Rules Committee decides, it is clear that the issue will not go away, until a fair and straightforward seating of the delegations is conceded. Organizers from FDR, Women Count, and other groups have gathered hundreds of thousands of petitions, and taken out newspaper ads. The DNC appeared so flummoxed by the prospect of protests at their meeting, that the Committee made it known there would be special security at the hotel; and while the public was grudgingly granted access to the meeting, in accordance with longstanding “Open Party” rules, the DNC declared that no one not on the official agenda would be allowed to speak.

The intensity of the battle over the delegates derives from the fact that, how the number of votes from Florida and Michigan are counted, will determine which candidate receives the nomination, based on both the total number of delegates needed for a majority at the convention, and the calculation of which candidate is ahead, and by how much, in the popular vote. In a letter sent to superdelegates on May 28, Clinton pointed out that she has earned more votes than anyone in the history of the Democratic primaries, and that she will lead in

the popular vote, with more than 17 million ballots cast when the primaries conclude on June 3. Spokespersons for the Obama campaign insist that Obama will amass the majority of the delegates.

Pressure on Hillary to drop out was so intense, that former President Bill Clinton felt compelled to lay out the issue to a crowd of Hillary supporters in Ft. Thompson, South Dakota on May 25.

“Why have all these people tried to force her out of this race?” Bill Clinton asked the South Dakota crowd. “This is *really* interesting. . . . Because, if you vote for her, and she does well in Montana, and wins in Puerto Rico, then she will be ahead in the popular vote, and they’re trying to get her to cry ‘Uncle’ before the Democratic Party has to decide what to do about Florida and Michigan. . . . They are closing it out, saying it takes 2,029 votes on the first ballot to win. It takes a lot more if you put Florida and Michigan back in. Well, they’ll have to put them back in, unless we want to lose the [November] election.”

The former President also pointed out that the latest opinion polls indicate that Hillary has a solid lead in the general election against John McCain, in contrast to Obama, who is running about even with McCain in the polls.

Meanwhile, a number of prominent Democrats, including former President Jimmy Carter, and the Democratic Party Congressional “leadership,” House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, are escalating their demands that Clinton drop out. Carter, interviewed on Rupert Murdoch’s Sky TV, on May 25, stated, “I’m a superdelegate. I think a lot of the superdelegates will make a decision, announced quite rapidly after the final primary on June 3. . . . I have not yet announced publicly, but I think at that point it will be time for her to give it up.”

‘The Process Must Continue’

Even larger considerations about the disposition of the delegates are being raised by leaders of the Coalition which is demanding its seating. James Hannagan of FDR, in a statement released on May 25, urged that the current Presidential campaign process must remain true to principles of representation for which our forefathers fought and died. Hannagan pointed out that many of our nation’s greatest leaders, such as George Washington, Alexander Hamilton, Abraham Lincoln, Harriet Tubman, Susan B. Anthony, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Ella Grasso (the first woman to win election as a state governor, in Connecticut), overcame tremendous odds before succeeding, but because they persevered, today they are among our most revered citizens and leaders.

Applying this perspective to the current political situation, Hannagan wrote: “The presidential nominating process, while reformed over the course of American history, has a consistency that has endured: the Convention. History shows that the betterment of our Democracy occurs best when the



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Demanding their votes be counted in full, demonstrators rally outside the Washington, D.C. hotel where the Democratic National Committee met May 31, to determine how to apportion the primary votes from Florida and Michigan.

principles upon which it is founded are allowed to flourish, rather than being stymied by self-serving interests and political elitists.”

Arguing that the media and some elected officials have recently begun to confuse the Presidential preference primary process with the nominating process, Hannagan delivered a pointed reminder that the nominating process, which is entrusted to the delegates elected through the primary process, *begins* at the national conventions of the respective political parties.

He concluded: “Recent calls for the presidential nominating process to end before it has begun set a dangerous precedent—one that could potentially change the context in which our Democracy operates. Every candidate has the right and the moral obligation, based on his or her beliefs and principles, to remain part of this process until it terminates. That termination occurs with the nomination.”

Hannagan added that if the current notion of the nominating process being bandied about in the press were to play out, at least two American legends might not have served the country as President. The first, Abraham Lincoln, was nominated on the third ballot of the Republican National Convention in 1860, and then went on to save the Union in the Civil War, and produce the Emancipation Proclamation. In 1932, Franklin Delano Roosevelt would not have become President, since he was not nominated until the fourth ballot at the Democratic National Convention. The only four-term President, he guided the country through a great global conflict, and defeated a tyrannical dictator the likes of which the world had never seen.

Returning to current history, Hannagan pointed out that, “To call for the early termination of the democratic process, to call for a presidential candidate to suspend his or her quest to be potentially one of our countries greatest, is an insult not only to our Democracy but also to the electorate. The Democratic Party is appearing less than democratic. Not only does

the Party lack the ability to adhere to the principle of fair and just representation demonstrated by the current situation in Florida and Michigan, it is an abuse of power akin to an autocracy, not our founders’ vision of democracy.”

Florida Voters Standing on Principle

Results of a survey recently conducted by Florida Demands Representation, in conjunction with the SaveTheVoters.org in April-May 2008, underscores the point that the potentially disenfranchised voters of Florida are outraged by their treatment at the hands of the DNC thus far, and are united in their demand for representation, whatever their preference

in the current Democratic primary process. That is, these voters clearly put the democratic process above their concern about a particular candidate. Asked the question, “Do you believe the DNC made the right decision by stripping Florida of all its delegates?” the Florida voters surveyed, regardless of candidate preference, opposed the decision. The result ranged from a low “No” vote of 66.67% among Bill Richardson voters, to 92.35% of Obama supporters, and 98.21 of Clinton supporters.

Similarly, the voters overwhelmingly supported using the Jan. 29 primary results to determine the composition of delegates to the Democratic Convention: 87.95% of Clinton supporters favored that option, while 71.04% of Obama supporters favored it. Only 17.49% of Obama voters supported the option of splitting the delegates evenly between the candidates, the option that comes closest to the current punitive plan being foisted on the Rules and By-Laws Committee by “Party lawyers.”

Other questions in the survey pointed to the deep divisions being caused by the misleadership coming from the likes of Dean, Pelosi, and portions of the DNC. Clinton voters were found to be deeply skeptical of the Obama campaign, with four in five believing his campaign has acted deliberately to prevent Florida’s vote from being counted. Over 85% of those surveyed indicated that they would use their voting power to unseat elected officials if it became known that they had deliberately acted to prevent Florida votes from counting, and over 84% would support an effort to recall elected officials who deliberately acted to prevent Florida’s vote from being counted.

Finally, permanent and irreparable damage to the Party is indicated, if the Florida votes are not counted. Three of five Clinton voters indicated that they would vote for the Republican or a third party candidate, if the delegation is not seated according to the will of Florida voters, and only 17% will vote Democratic. Such a result could cost the Democratic Party the Presidency.