

State chairmen

Protests against Carter's DNC

"Our unit running the general election is called Campaign Support Services, and those of you who are from states where there are targeted Senate races already know exactly what CSS is about," said Les Francis, Executive Director of the Democratic National Committee. He was addressing the assembled chairmen of state Democratic parties at a New York meeting June 26.

Most members of the Association of State Democratic Chairs indeed knew exactly what CSS is about—it's a Carter "plumbers unit." The state chairman accused Francis and party national chairman John White of turning the DNC into a "Committee to Re-elect the President," representative of no other Democrat. In the course of the meeting, calls were raised for an open national convention—to *not* renominate Carter—although the state chairmen never used the phrase "open."

Against such sentiment, White, Francis and their supporters tried threats. Any dissent threatens to "wreck the two-party system and the Democratic Party," said White. He threatened to take control of all fundraising, and warned of a financing cutoff in November for any state party not cooperating.

"I'm shocked by what I've seen here," said one Kennedy delegate. "This is supposed to be an open party. They're trying to stampede us through the convention. . . . I think there is a sentiment of revolt brewing."

'Nondebatable instructions'

Morley Winograd was moderator of the pre-convention meeting. He had authored DNC-proposed delegate-selection rules that would bind the delegates. "This discord must cease," he stated bluntly.

A succession of state chairmen rose. "We have got to have a rules change on these delegate selection plans," said Maryland's Rosalie Abrams. "They're making the party less accessible to the voters." Nevada vice-chairman Virginia Cain declared "The media has taken over the election process and the party has been restricted to one candidate!"

Winograd deferred to Les Francis—"who'll brief you on how the general election will be run." Francis declared, "our staff works under specific, nondebatable instructions to do nothing involving pre-convention

activities, but to devote their time and effort solely to the general election. We are of course basing our plans on the belief that the President will be renominated. . . ."

He continued: "We intend to place in each of 25 'Key States' one full-time, paid DNC staff person, to help your state parties run the general election. They will have extremely broad duties, helping coordinate your fundraising, assisting you to raise money for voter registration. . . . assisting you in making your state general election plans. . . . Most important, they will serve as the link between the Presidential, Congressional, and local races in your state."

He spoke of 200 phone banks nationally, profiling 3,000 voters a day, and a massive voter registration drive.

Again, the state chairmen rose to protest. "How in hell do you define 'Key States' and how will the DNC cooperate with the plans the state parties already have in motion?" demanded David Price of North Carolina. Alabama chairman Bayles added the central thought:

I'd like to say that we have received no cooperation whatsoever from the national party . . . We have senators and congressmen who are going to lose their jobs. We have Democrats running campaigns up and down our state who intend to dissociate themselves fully from the DNC and from the Carter/Mondale campaign and intend to win in November in spite of Carter/Mondale, not with their help.

The Carter campaign's answer is to send in the CSS plumbers. "Why didn't you even notify us that these people were coming down?" complained Kentucky chairman Bob Cobb. "We tried to get you on the phone," said Francis. "That's really kind of you," retorted the southerner. "Your staff has been making calls into my state . . . telling people how the campaign will be run, and no one calls me."

"We have a general election to run," said Francis. "It is our hope that when we designate a coordinator, that person can work cooperatively with the state party. However . . . there is no provision for signoff—for you to approve or disapprove whom we send in." "Besides," added Winograd. "The DNC can only budget money for you if you file an election plan with Les."

"I don't understand this whole procedure," said David Price. "We already have our own election programs; we have our own staff. We don't need staff, just money. Are you equipped to help? How do you even know what plans we have? No inquiries have been made."

Replied Francis: "Please remember, our staff is being sent out not to just do one thing or another, but to coordinate everything." Indeed.