

Editorial

The stench of stupidity

We were on the scene at a gathering of the largest Hispanic-American association in the United States, which represents the most overwhelmingly Democratic voting bloc in the country. Here's the way the President chose to deal with this constituency.

By all appearances, the White House had grabbed an important chunk of the Hispanic leadership from the Kennedy camp over the past few months, through abundant use of its patronage powers. This effort was recently capped by Ruben Bonilla's defection from Kennedy to Carter. Bonilla is the president of the League of United Latin American Citizens, known as LULAC.

The 100,000-member organization held its annual convention this week, selecting Washington, D.C. as the site instead of the usual Southwestern choice, in order to make the greatest possible effect on the race for the Democratic nomination. Five hundred delegates and 600 other members gathered to represent the League, which is largely composed of professionals, businessmen, and civic boosters.

Each presidential candidate was invited to address the group. Carter, however, declined—he would be too busy vacationing at Camp David, a few minutes away from the convention. Instead he dispatched his Attorney General, Benjamin Civiletti, to the event.

Presumably Civiletti conveyed Carter's deep regrets at his inability to attend, and a message on the administration's commitment to the civil rights enforcement and economic expansion demanded by minorities? Don't bet your thumbscrew. The eminent liberal from the Justice Department arrived at the second day's session of the convention and announced that the Carter administration proposes to issue special work cards to the entire U.S. labor force in order to crack down on what it

referred to as "illegal aliens."

This went over like Ham Jordan informing a Right to Life meeting that the government was about to introduce mandatory abortions for unwed mothers. Outrage and alarm were combined with a vivid sense of insult.

Alongside this masterly programmatic outreach to Hispanics, the Carter plumbers had been busy finetuning some subtle White House diplomacy vis-à-vis the other candidates. Democratic contender Lyndon LaRouche and independent candidate John Anderson, both attending the convention, drew enthusiastic responses. (Kennedy declined because of Bonilla's support for Carter.) LaRouche had widely circulated invitations to his own 9:30 speech June 28 and a 4:30 reception the same afternoon. The night before the speech, most delegates found under their hotel doors a White House telegram inviting them to... a 9:00 tour of the White House and a 4:30 reception there.

The next morning, Carter's aide for Hispanic Affairs, Esteban Torres, greeted on the White House doorstep exactly two LULAC members, the Florida state chairman and his wife. Esteban informed them that everyone else had said "no thanks," but would they like to tour the White House anyway? The visitors also said no thanks, explaining that they had already had the pleasure during Lyndon Johnson's term, and rushed back to the convention to join the boycott.

The White House canceled its 4:30 reception.

LaRouche proceeded to meet with 75 LULAC leaders, including four regional vice-presidents, the executive director, the Puerto Rican caucus, and two former national presidents, during seven hours of private meetings and reception.

We don't know what conclusions the White House has drawn from all this. Our own conclusion is that a thug is a thug, but a stupid thug is a loser.