

Democrats revolt against the President

by Vin Berg and Kathy Burdman

The movement to save the Democratic Party from Jimmy Carter has not quite reached juggernaut proportions—but nearly so. That movement has been developing on two parallel levels.

For weeks, a grassroots push by farmers and labor leaders at the state and local level has been building in every region of the country toward an open convention to deny the President the nomination. This farmer-labor alliance is of the sort that used to dominate the Democratic Party, and the catalytic role has been played by Lyndon LaRouche. In the process, LaRouche, a dark-horse Democratic contender, has become an increasing factor in “alternative candidate” considerations.

Most recently, seizing the opportunity presented by “Billygate,” the powerbroker level of Democratic Party officialdom has begun to move strongly for an open convention, with the same objective: dump Carter.

Barring an abrupt reversal in the current trend, Jimmy Carter will be denied the Democratic nomination for a second term at the Democratic National Convention.

A sure loser

The fact is that Carter would lose the November election—badly. Harris polls in the past week gave Ronald Reagan a two-to-one victory over the President, who drew Carter an “all time low” job rating from the voters: 77 percent negative on overall performance, and an 86-89 percent thumbs-down on specific issues like inflation and the economy. Yet another Harris poll projected a Republican sweep of both houses of Congress. Internal polling of AFL-CIO members indicates

that up to 50 percent would vote for Reagan on an “anyone but Carter” basis if Carter is the nominee.

Senators, congressmen, governors and others running with a Democratic label have grown desperate; they would be sure losers under a Reagan landslide.

Then came Billygate.

On July 28, 50 congressmen, led by Michael Barnes of Maryland, called a press conference to announce their formation of a committee for an open convention. New York Governor Hugh Carey, an early proponent of that course, was joined by Connecticut Governor Ella Grasso’s open convention call July 29. A few days earlier, Congressman James Scheuer of Queens, New York, told the *Buffalo Evening News* that a movement was afoot in Congress to form a delegation to visit the Oval Office under House Majority Leader Tip O’Neill: “They could tell President Carter to abandon his candidacy and that if he doesn’t quit, they will go to the public and, in effect, seal his fate.”

The congressmen have plans to persuade delegates pledged to Carter to “absent themselves from the floor” on the first ballot, if Carter doesn’t step aside first.

On July 25, Congressman Stephen Solarz of Brooklyn, New York, announced his resignation as a Carter delegate to the convention, citing the Billygate scandal.

Kansas Governor John W. Carlin, a long-standing vehement Carter supporter, announced for the open convention at a press conference. In a separate press conference, Kansas Democratic Party chairman Larry Bengsten called for an open convention. A meeting for the state’s Carter delegation scheduled for Aug. 3 was

abruptly canceled by Carter's Kansas chiefs.

On July 31, Washington Senator Warren Magnuson joined with Scoop Jackson and Gaylord Nelson in calling for the open convention. Senate Majority leader Robert Byrd met with 15 Democratic senators, and asked each of them whether Carter could carry their states in November. Only Sam Nunn of Georgia answered in the affirmative.

Other choices for nominee

A United Autoworkers official stated in Washington that "There is a very systematic effort underway to find a third candidate. We're starting to get calls about Billy Carter from states like Ohio where people have been completely engrossed in unemployment. This is just turning them off even more." Lane Kirkland, president of the AFL-CIO, who had promised to endorse Carter earlier in the week, is now reported to be "very much in favor of a Henry Jackson candidacy." Ed Carlough, president of the Sheet Metal Workers Union, will announce Aug. 1 the formation of "Labor Unions for an Open Convention." Carlough is a prominent Jackson supporter.

In the Congressional Black Caucus, where an open convention resolution is circulating under the signature of its leader, Rep. Augustus Hawkins, Edmund Muskie is the preferred alternative.

Meanwhile, the Committee for an Open Convention, which is composed of top Democratic financiers, industrialists and powerbrokers, held its first meeting July 24-25 in Washington under the leadership of United Artists executive Arnold Picker. The committee is now described as "40 percent Jackson, 15 percent Mondale, 5 percent Muskie, with a smattering for [Senate Majority Leader] Byrd." Sonny Harrison Dogole, a top Jackson fundraiser, has formed a draft-Jackson organization, and told the *Washington Post* that Jackson's candidacy is "a long-shot deal, but Jimmy Carter is almost unelectable now, and it will be worse yet for him after Billygate. Kennedy is unelectable, too." Picker also emphasized the need for a "third choice" in a CBS interview.

Picker's committee and the 50 congressmen who called a press conference July 28 have already merged their organizations, and set the goal of defeating Rule F(3)(c), the floor version of 1978's Rule 11-H. If passed by the convention, enough delegates would be bound to President Carter to guarantee him the nomination. With \$200,000 from Picker's group, the congressmen plan to contact each of 3,331 Democratic delegates.

What about issues?

There is one weakness in the perspective of the Committee for an Open Convention. While they ponder

alternative candidates, they have not raised policy issues in urging the delegates to dump Carter. This opened them to attack from Carter officials as merely "a front for the Kennedy campaign."

This reflects the question raised earlier by dark-horse contender LaRouche: "On what basis is the convention to be opened? Will it be to seek a candidate who will break with Carter's disastrous policies, or merely to trade in Jimmy Carter for another Carter?" That, LaRouche has indicated, is where his efforts on behalf of a farmer-labor alliance come in.

One of the leaders in that alliance is Marvin Meek, head of the American Agricultural Movement. In a press conference in Amarillo, Texas, Meek announced that "the AAM demands an open convention" and will demonstrate outside Madison Square Garden with a tractor parade to ensure it. He added that one of the most important *issues* facing the American economy today is the Carter administration's willful destruction of agriculture through high interest rates and harmful pricing policies. "The AAM's program is for 100 percent parity"—a price that not only gives farmers a profit, but enough for reinvestment in technological improvements that can expand the food supply and bring prices down. Parity isn't just for farmers, Meek said. "The food on the average American's table depends on it."

Meek promised that the AAM would have as many as 50 tractors in New York on the convention's first day. The first twelve would "symbolize the 12 broken promises of the Carter administration" to farmers.

Carter's foreign policy was slammed in similar terms in New Orleans by candidate LaRouche, who called on the U.S. government to "dump the China card, dump [National Security Adviser] Brzezinski, and Brzezinski's 'Islamic fundamentalism' card."

The real scandal behind Billygate, LaRouche said, is that the administration has strategically misaligned the nation with the Muslim Brotherhood which controls the regimes of Libya and Iran. What is needed now, he said, is a doctrine of "strategic stability" for America, to protect the nation from "a strategic humiliation, strategic confrontation, and thermonuclear war." LaRouche proposed that the United States join with its European allies, France and West Germany, who have begun a policy of isolating the Khomeini regime in Iran and the Maoist regime in Peking in order to cool international tensions.

LaRouche attacked Carter, on the issues. He told the New Orleans press conference that the Democratic National Convention must be opened up, because if Carter is nominated "that will be the end of the Democratic Party," but also, he said with emphasis, "the end of this nation."