

Elephants & Donkeys by Kathleen Klenetsky

Dole: Don't make AIDS a campaign issue

Republican Presidential hopeful Bob Dole recently called on his fellow candidates to keep the AIDS issue out of the 1988 campaign.

The Kansas senator called reporters into his office Aug. 6, where he declared: "To try to make this a Democratic or Republican issue is a loser. It's a loser for the people involved, and it's a loser for the people we're trying to protect."

Dole also criticized one of his rivals, Rep. Jack Kemp (R-N.Y.), for having urged, in a speech last month, that the government undertake a broad program of mandatory AIDS testing. "I viewed that speech as Jack trying to capture anyone on the right side of the issue," said Dole. "I just happen to believe it's not that kind of issue."

Dole's demand is ludicrous. First, it's just not possible to prevent AIDS from becoming one of the most significant issues in the elections. The nature of the disease itself is seeing to that. As any political analyst, Democrat or Republican, will concede, the American people consider the epidemic to be of paramount importance, and want their political leaders—and especially their would-be Presidents—to have something sensible to say on the issue.

Second, given the criminal failure of the U.S. government and the American medical establishment to deal adequately with the AIDS threat, forcing a national debate is the only way to ensure that proper action is taken. One of the best vehicles available for such a debate, is the presidential campaign.

Dole is smart enough to recognize this. So why is he moving so adamantly in the opposite direction?

One obvious answer is that Dole, like the Reagan administration, is so enmeshed in the ideology of fiscal conservatism and budget cutting, that he can't bring himself to spend the money necessary to counter an epidemic which is threatening to claim millions of victims over the next few years.

But there's also a very strong possibility that Dole is propitiating the powerful homosexual network within the Republican Party—which includes the Log Cabin Club, and the network around the late Terry Dolan, the New Right activist who succumbed last year to AIDS.

In any case, Dole has staked out a particularly opportunistic position on AIDS. On the one hand, he introduced legislation this year to set up a national commission on AIDS; on the other, he has consistently opposed any form of mandatory testing. Indeed, he led the fight against an amendment, proposed by Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) in May, which would have withheld certain federal funds from states unless they required AIDS tests for marriage-license applicants. With his latest gambit, Dole is attempting to extend his AIDS protection racket from Capitol Hill, to the national election arena.

Democrats prefer Hart to seven dwarfs

Democrats are singularly unimpressed by the "seven dwarfs"—so unimpressed, in fact, that they would rather see Gary Hart as the party's nominee than any of the other officially sanctioned candidates.

That's the conclusion of a Gallup Poll commissioned by *The Nation* magazine, and released early in August. It showed that 25% of the Democrats and pro-Democrat indepen-

dents interviewed preferred Hart to the rest of the field—even though Hart was forced to withdraw from the race in May following the Donna Rice revelations. (The poll did not include Democratic candidate Lyndon H. LaRouche.)

The poll gave Jesse Jackson second place, with 13%, followed by Sen. Paul Simon with 6%. "Undecided" topped the list, with 32%.

Victor Navasky, editor of *The Nation*, said that the results indicated that "the entire army of so-called experts, editorial writers, and other pundits profoundly misjudged something important about our country, our character, and the state of public opinion."

Schroeder: Make allies shoulder defense burden

Rep. Pat Schroeder (D-Colo.), on the verge of becoming Snow White to the seven dwarfs, has unveiled a new ally-bashing proposal which she intends to make a major plank of her campaign, if she decides to become a candidate.

Discussing her "burden-sharing" plan in the Aug. 6 *Los Angeles Times*, Schroeder said it would require Japan, Canada, and the European allies—"an ungrateful little bunch!"—to contribute the same share of their gross national product to defense that the United States contributes. This would require substantial increases in these countries' defense budgets—which would, of course, make it more difficult for them to import U.S. goods, as the United States is demanding.

Countries that refuse to go along with the proposal would face a "service charge" or import fee on goods imported by the United States.

The proposal is vintage Schroeder: A supporter of NATO "decoupling," she introduced legislation last year to reduce American troop commitment to Western Europe by 50%.