

Elephants & Donkeys by Kathleen Klenetsky

Candidates macho it out over Panama policy

The Republican candidates—or what's left of them—are engaged in a pathetic war-of-the-words to see who can sound the toughest regarding Panama's Gen. Manuel Noriega.

During the Republican Party debate Feb. 28, Bob Dole called for a trade embargo against Panama, while Jack Kemp said the United States should not turn over the Panama Canal, as the treaty signed in 1979 calls for, unless Noriega is ousted.

"If the Panamanians want to keep Noriega, the United States of America is going to keep the Panama Canal," Kemp blustered. Dole tried to outdo that with the statement: "We ought to give Noriega 30 days to get out of Panama or tell them we're going to have a trade embargo."

Dole was even more demagogic in a Feb. 26 campaign statement. "It's time to send this no-nonsense, no-bluff, no-compromise message to Panama: The U.S. has had enough of Noriega; and will have nothing to do with any phony civilian, Noriega-puppet government."

This, mind you, is the same Dole who is leading the fight in the Senate for ratification of the INF treaty, and who has energetically promoted the sale of U.S. farm goods to Moscow at bargain-basement prices. One can only assume that he thinks Russia has a freely elected, democratic government, which is why the United States can do business with the Kremlin, but not with one of its staunchest allies in Central America.

George "I'm no wimp" Bush suggested they consider military intervention against Noriega. Campaigning in Greenville, South Carolina, Feb. 26, he said the United States should reserve the right to do "whatever is necessary, including military force," to protect its "sacred" interests in Panama.

Dole has decided to up the ante by trying to link Bush to Noriega. At a March 2 press conference, Dole asked whether Noriega was "on the [CIA] payroll" when Bush ran the agency. Dole elaborated that Bush's former chief of staff, retired Adm. Daniel Murphy, "represented Panama" and that there is "some evidence that [Noriega] was on the CIA payroll for some time."

Dole's charges produced an unexpected reaction. Bush press secretary Peter Teeley replied, "This campaign with him [Dole] is beginning to sound like a campaign with Lyndon H. LaRouche."

The Bush camp appears to have LaRouche on the brain. Bush has publicly attacked the Democratic presidential candidate numerous times over the course of the past six months or so. Just how much of an obsession the vice president has, was underscored during the final days of the New Hampshire campaign, when Bush replied to a question about his ties to the Council on Foreign Relations and Trilateral Commission by ranting about LaRouche's role in circulating this information.

LaRouche challenges Bush to debate

Charging that "the clock is ticking away on Bush," LaRouche told a Baton Rouge, Louisiana press conference March 3 that he was fed up with Bush's cowardly "going behind my

back" and challenged him to a debate before the March 8 Super Tuesday primaries.

The real issue of the campaign, LaRouche said, is the economic collapse otherwise known as the "Reagan-Bush recovery," especially in the oil-producing states. LaRouche repeated his proposal for a parity price for oil, scoring Bush for opposing this obvious solution to the collapse of the domestic U.S. energy industry.

LaRouche sent the debate challenge to Bush via a telegram later that day. "You and your office have repeatedly caused public and false attacks on me to appear in the news," it read. "If you are man enough, you will accept my challenge to a debate before the citizens of this country on the subject of a \$26 per barrel trigger price for oil before the 'Super Tuesday' primaries. If the debate has not occurred by sundown on Monday, you will go down in history in the eyes of citizens of this country as a yellow dog."

Al Gore receives New Republic endorsement

The magazine which spearheaded American liberals' love affair with Benito Mussolini in the 1920s and '30s has found a new hero—Albert Gore. The *New Republic*, which lavished praise on the fascist dictator, and whose former owner, Michael Straight, openly admitted several years ago that he had been recruited by Soviet intelligence, endorsed Gore's presidential bid in its March 7 issue.

Why? Because of the Tennessee senator's "mastery" of arms control, his "fixation . . . on the disappearing ozone layer, toxic wastes, and other threats to the environment," and, most of all, the fact that "Russian politicians, scientists, and strategists whom he has met have been impressed."