

## Elephants & Donkeys by Kathleen Klenetsky

### Shaping the next presidency

Behind the superficial trappings of the U.S. presidential campaign—the baby-kissing, the meaningless slogans, and other banalities—the real work of shaping the policies of the next presidency is taking place.

Just as the New York Council on Foreign Relations' *1980s Project* set the agenda, and contributed the key members, of the Carter administration, leading think tanks and policy institutions have hunkered down to draw up the blueprint for the next administration.

There is a plethora of such projects under way. Among the potentially most influential are:

- "Governing America: Presidential Choices for the Next Decade," a project launched earlier this year by the Center for National Policy (CNP). One of the most influential Democratic think tanks, the Center is currently chaired by Carter-era Secretary of State Edmund Muskie, and its board of directors includes such stars of the party firmament as Cyrus Vance, Pamela Harriman, Bob Strauss, and Lloyd Cutler.

Underwritten by the Alfred P. Sloan, General Electric, and AT&T Foundations, the Center's "Governing America" project is run by a steering committee which includes former Federal Reserve Chairman Paul Volcker, the man who drove the U.S. economy to near extinction when he hiked interest rates to the 20%-plus mark during the final year of the Carter administration; Sen. Bill Bradley (D-N.J.), and former Senator Charles

Mathias, a member of the Inter-American Dialogue, which has called repeatedly for legalizing drugs, and others.

According to CNP Executive Vice President Maureen Steinbruner, the project's purpose is to shape the incoming administration's policy outlook, by "identifying what the strategic choices" facing the next President will be.

Given that two CNP board members—Richard Moe and Anne Wexler—as well as the Center's president, longtime Kennedy family operative Kirk O'Donnell, have just signed on with the Michael Dukakis campaign, that's not an idle boast.

Steinbruner says that the project will focus on two principal areas: the "role of the U.S. in an emerging global economy," and "a review of the U.S. posture in national security terms."

Cutting back on U.S. military commitments abroad, expanding East-West economic dealings and integrating the Soviet bloc into the international monetary system, as well as reducing domestic entitlement programs—Social Security, Medicare, farm price supports, etc.—will "definitely be discussed."

- The American Agenda, a new bipartisan operation that will attempt to define a "considered agenda" of the five or six most serious issues which will confront President Reagan's successor.

Funded by the Times-Mirror Co., the organization's purpose, according to a prospectus, is to "help create for the next President and for the nation a summary agenda of where we as a nation are, where we want to go, and what we must do to get there."

Co-chaired by former Presidents Jimmy Carter and Gerald Ford, the group is jointly directed by Stuart Eizenstat, a former top Carter administration functionary (and a member of

CNP's board), and James M. Cannon, who previously served as an adviser to Nelson Rockefeller and Howard Baker, while the latter was a senator.

The organization has enlisted on its executive committee Henry Kissinger, former National Security Adviser (and current George Bush adviser), Brent Scowcroft, ex-Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, Bob Strauss, former Congressional Budget Office Director Alice M. Rivlin, American Express CEO James Robinson, and a slew of similar types.

The group makes no bones about the fact that it fully intends to tell the next President what to do. Its prospectus observes that neither party's nominee "will have the time or opportunity or the responsibility" during the campaign to think about policy; thus, presumably, the need for a gang of unselected "experts" to script the next President's policy initiatives, personnel choices, etc.

Although neither the Center for National Policy nor American Agenda says so publicly, it is clear from off-the-record discussions with people involved that the driving motivation behind these and other projects, is to ensure that the next President—Republican or Democrat—will be situated to ram through politically unpalatable proposals during his first few months in office. Major cuts in social spending, a further slowdown in the Strategic Defense Initiative, and a partial withdrawal of American troops from Europe, are all part of the hidden agenda now being drawn up by the "experts."

As the American Agenda's Cannon told the *Washington Post*, "The first six months is the period when the President has the least familiarity with the office but also the greatest opportunity to make changes because it is likely to be the time when he has the most bipartisan support."