

Elephants and Donkeys by Kathleen Klenetsky

He's b-a-a-ck—maybe

Ross Perot has jumped back into the presidential race—sort of. Just a few weeks after stunning his followers by declaring that he was terminating his officially unannounced candidacy, the Texas billionaire began telling various media outlets he was once again considering getting into the fray.

That's not as far-fetched as it might at first seem. Perot never stopped funding efforts to get his name on the presidential ballot. Right now, he's financing 64 offices across the country which are coordinating petitioning efforts to put him on the ballot.

Perot has qualified for the ballot in 36 states, so far; petitions have been filed in a number of others. Conceivably, Perot's name could appear on the ballot in all 50 states come November.

Perot's efforts are not confined to petitioning, however. During the week of the Republican convention, a million copies of his newly published program, *United We Stand: How We Can Take Back Our Country*, began to inundate the nation's bookstores.

Same austerity story

Described by Perot as "a plan for the 21st century," the program smacks of the same kinds of austerity policies that have emerged as the liberal establishment's "answer" to the U.S. economic collapse. Specifically, Perot proposes to:

- Cut Medicare and Medicaid by a whopping \$141 billion over five years. (He claims this will somehow "improve both the quality and delivery of medical services." He also

states, "Our biggest problem is entitlement programs. These include Social Security, government retirement, Medicare, and Medicaid.")

- Raise taxes on Social Security receipts for individuals who earn more than \$25,000 and for families earning more than \$32,000—hardly the "rich" Perot claimed to be targeting; in fact, these income levels barely qualify for middle-class status.

- Establish a "national health board as an independent federal agency to oversee cost containment and comprehensive health-care reform efforts." Health care must be "reformed" because "our companies are forced to divert money from jobs, higher wages, and research and development because of skyrocketing health and insurance costs."

- Increase the gasoline tax 50¢ a gallon.

- Eliminate Space Station Freedom entirely, one of many important scientific programs Perot describes as "nice but not necessary."

- Require all federal departments to cut 15% from their discretionary budgets.

- "Encourage environmental protection," by "support[ing] business strategies for sustainable economic development and assist[ing] local communities in making the transition away from dying industries." Further, "American companies should be at the forefront of emerging global markets for environmental technology."

- Continue U.S. help to "countries that seek to stabilize their population growth to decrease poverty," since this is "in our best interests."

- Enact a "real deficit reduction law" and a "line-item veto."

Perot bluntly describes his program as "a plan that includes shared

pain for everybody." "There's nothing pretty in my plan," he told CBS News on Aug. 13. "If you find you have cancer, the idea of chemotherapy is not pleasant. You'd like aspirin, right? But you've got to do it. . . . We've got to go from way down the ladder in terms of competitiveness to the top. That takes more money. That's going to take a number of years of pain and sacrifice. Let's do it. The American people are ready."

'Greenie' Gore rakes it in from mining

Democratic vice presidential candidate Al Gore receives \$20,000 yearly from a lucrative lease which his father, Al Gore, Sr., arranged with the late Armand Hammer.

According to the Aug. 15 *Washington Post*, the lease, which has been paying Gore, Jr. \$20,000 a year since 1974, is "unusually valuable." The zinc lease amounts to \$227 an acre, "much more than the \$30 an acre Occidental Minerals, part of Hammer's oil company [on whose board Gore, Sr. has served since 1972] paid the senior Gore and some neighbors a few years before," the *Post* commented.

Moreover, Occidental didn't mine the property for the first 11 years of the lease, during which time it paid Gore, Jr. nearly \$200,000.

Gore, Sr. told the *Washington Post* that his lawyer advised him to prepare a statement about the arrangement with Hammer for Clinton aides who were checking his son's background prior to tapping him for the vice presidential slot. The lawyer felt that the "unusual" amount of the royalty, "might appear . . . as questionable or might arouse curiosity."

Can't imagine why. . . .