

Conservative Revolution suffers election defeats

by Mel Klenetsky

The American public has been treated to a year of Newt Gingrich's minions playing hardball in Congress; ripping up the social safety net of Medicare, Medicaid, and welfare, in the face of continued economic collapse; and a "chicken game" threatening to bring government to a grinding halt, unless President Clinton knuckles under to the radical budget-cutting mania of the seven-year "balance-the-budget-at-all-costs" ideologues.

It has been one year since Gingrich's Conservative Revolution handed stunning electoral defeats to the Democratic Party on the federal and state levels. This year's Nov. 7 election, in many cases, was a test of the popularity of Gingrich's budget-cutting fanaticism and the result, in general, verified the trend of decreasing popularity for the Speaker of the House, and increasing voter approval for President Clinton. The 1995 election results were not what Gingrich and Haley Barbour, the Republican National Committee chairman, hoped for.

Gingrich has been faring more and more poorly in national polls. Sen. Phil Gramm (R-Tex.) has found his Presidential campaign failing, as well, to the point that the latest Texas polls show Gramm and Sen. Robert Dole (R-Kan.) neck and neck in Texas, which Gramm expected to have locked up. California Gov. Pete Wilson, who also made his 1994 electoral reputation by being a hardliner on some of the Conservative Revolution social issues, has dropped out of the Presidential race. Wilson won the governorship race by advocating brutal policies on the immigration issue (no education or health care for the children of illegal immigrants), extreme positions on states' rights questions, and a "tough on crime" posture typical of this crowd. The bankruptcy of Orange County and the Los Angeles County budget crisis finished off Wilson, as his California financial backers did not bankroll his Presidential aspirations.

Elections in Kentucky, Virginia, New Jersey, Mississippi, Maine, and New York show that the "Contract on America's" electoral steamroller has slowed and in many cases come to a screeching halt. CityVote, the urban experimental straw poll, conducted in 18 cities, gave Clinton a significant victory over all of his opponents, punctuating the growing difficulties of Gingrich's Contract with America.

Colin Powell's announcement that he would not run for President in 1996, ostensibly for personal reasons, came a day after the electoral results, in spite of the fact that polls showed him beating Dole for the Republican nomination and even besting Clinton. The timing of the announcement, one day after the election, raises the question of whether the poor showing by the Republicans may also have contributed to Powell's decision. Gingrich quickly announced that he would now consider getting in the race himself, despite the fact that his early sojourns to New Hampshire to test the waters wound up with citizens railing against his callous policies. Gingrich has said that he will let the American public know about his decision after Thanksgiving.

Who won, and why

In the 1994 elections, the Republicans had scored an overwhelming victory, winning a majority in both the Senate and the House of Representatives for the first time in 40 years. Massachusetts Sen. Ted Kennedy's 1994 campaign against Milt Romney was one of the few Democratic efforts to succeed. Kennedy dug in his heels on traditional Democratic Party values, calling on his support by labor and minorities, to handily beat back a well-financed and nationally publicized campaign to unseat him. To those Democrats who felt that to succeed, they had to sound more like Republicans, Kennedy said, in a speech on Jan. 11, 1995, "If Democrats run for cover, if we become pale carbon copies of the opposition and

act like Republicans, we will lose, and deserve to lose.”

For those candidates who followed Kennedy’s advice, success was found in the Nov. 7, 1995 elections.

Lyndon LaRouche, in an “EIR Talks” radio interview on Nov. 8, commented that Democrats can win, if they “stick to the real issues: the issue of Medicare, the issue of Medicaid, the issue of pensions, the issue of *fear* of what Newt Gingrich and his ‘Contract on America’ represent.”

First, take the case of Kentucky. Lt. Gov. Paul Patton beat back a Republican challenger, Larry Forgy, to win the governorship. The race had become a forum for both local issues and national policies. In his victory speech Patton said, “Kentucky has said, ‘No to Newt Gingrich.’ Kentucky has said, ‘No to Bob Dole.’ Kentucky has said, ‘No to cuts in Medicare, and no to cuts in school lunches.’ Kentucky has said, ‘No to the Contract with America.’ ”

Patton’s television commercials went at the Medicare policy of the Republicans and the character of Newt Gingrich. Forgy campaigned on the Gingrich program. Democrats also won the lieutenant governor position and five other state offices, sweeping back the Republican challenge. Kentucky State Rep. Perry Clark, a Democrat, said that Patton’s making Medicaid and other budget cuts the issue, “really helped the Democrats. I think a lot of people know that we’ve got to be a little more fiscally responsible . . . but you can’t make draconian measures and cuts on everything.”

Newly elected AFL-CIO President John J. Sweeney issued a press statement on Nov. 8 stating that “thanks to an eleventh-hour blitz led personally by AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Rich Trumka, voters turned out in Kentucky and the Democratic candidate for governor won by a 51-49 margin.” Trumka, the president of the United Mine Workers and newly elected to the AFL-CIO post, had gone to the Kentucky coalfields, rousing the miners to get out the vote. Part of Sweeney’s and Trumka’s campaign pledge was to have the AFL-CIO play a more aggressive role in fighting the Conservative Revolution.

Upset in Virginia

In Virginia, Conservative Revolution advocate Gov. George Allen, whom syndicated columnist Robert Novak described as “Little Newt,” was given a stinging rebuke. Allen, Gingrich, and Barbour had all declared that Virginia would be a battleground for Republican policies. Gingrich came to Virginia and, with great fanfare, handed the Virginia Republican Party a \$75,000 check for the Republican campaigns, to no avail.

The Democrats retained their 5-vote margin in the Virginia House, and the Senate is now split 20-20, with the tie-breaking vote held by Lt. Gov. Don Beyer, a Democrat. Four key Democrats were defeated in the legislature by well-targeted GOP money, and by their own failure to campaign against the Allen/Gingrich crowd. The powerful Senate Majority Leader, Hunter Andrews, for example, lost, campaigning on the fiscal conservative line. Allen’s failure has

fueled press speculation that he is no longer vice-presidential material.

Less known, but equally important, the anti-LaRouche Democrats were handed a stunning defeat in Loudoun County, where Lyndon LaRouche resides, and where publishing companies associated with him are located. Sheriff John Isom and Commonwealth Attorney Bill Burch, both of whom proudly participated in the “Get LaRouche” task force which carried out the political railroad that jailed LaRouche and a dozen associates, were crushed at the ballot box. A week before the election, the local newspaper *EIR News for Loudoun County* had mailed a special edition to 35,000 households in the county, exposing the dirty political apparatus of the super-rich Middleburg Hunt Country oligarchy that controls the county—including Isom and Burch. The dossier characterized this horsey set as “London’s ‘Rear End,’ ” revealing their ties to the British monarchy, the World Wide Fund for Nature, and other British intelligence operations. Kristen Umstattd, the Hunt Country’s candidate for chairman of the county Board of Supervisors, running as a Democrat on a program of radical fiscal conservatism, was also defeated. Of note was the successful resistance of State Sen. Charles Waddell (D), to a well-funded Conservative Revolution onslaught.

‘No’ to chain gangs and austerity

In Mississippi, while Gingrich-linked Republican incumbent Gov. Kirk Fordice won reelection, the other seven statewide candidates fielded by the Gingrich crowd were defeated, including Lt. Gov. Ed Briggs, who had pushed prison chain gangs as part of his election campaign. The Gingrich crowd also failed to take the state legislature, and Democrats won additional seats in the House. State Rep. Jim Evans, who had helped lead the strong voter registration and get-out-the-vote drive in the state, told *EIR* that the reason Democrat Dick Molpus lost was that “he didn’t run against the ‘Contract on America.’ He tried to be nice and conservative like Fordice.”

In Maine, where the GOP had had a 75-74 majority in the state House, there were two special elections; Democrats won both contests and thus took control away from the Republicans. In New York, the popular conservative Staten Island Borough President Guy Molinari (R), a close associate of both Gov. George Pataki and New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, lost to little-known incumbent Democrat Bill Murphy in his bid to become district attorney.

In New Jersey, where Conservative Revolution darling Gov. Christine Whitman and the GOP had gone all out to strengthen their position in the legislature, the Democrats pushed back the efforts. In Middlesex County, Democrats ousted three incumbent state legislators, fended off an aggressive Republican freeholder challenge, and won many municipal offices previously held by Republicans. These Democrats rode the backlash against the proposed federal cuts in Medicare and Medicaid.