

2. Will it be Reagan... or FEMA?

It is all but certain that Ronald Reagan will be heading the GOP ticket in the upcoming November elections. Yet, despite all surface indications that the former California governor commands a fanatically loyal popular following that could propel him into the Oval Office, Reagan's base is beginning to show signs of the same kind of softness that is more obviously afflicting Jimmy Carter.

Contrary to media-built expectations, Reagan has not only *not* maintained the depth of support that made him an easy victor in the Feb. 26 New Hampshire primary, but has noticeably declined in strength among voter blocs crucial to a November victory.

For example, the blue-collar vote. Knowing that it would be impossible for Reagan to be elected President without attracting a significant Democratic cross-over (as Nixon did in 1968 and 1972), his campaign strategists have been heavily concentrating on wooing what is loosely identified as the old George Wallace base: conservative Democrats, drawn mainly from among skilled and semi-skilled blue collar workers in the industrial centers of the Midwest, plus certain small business and semi-professional strata. Despite a noticeable investment of time and energy in targetting this layer, the Reagan strategy fell flat on its face in its first really important test—the May 20 Michigan primary. Defeated two to one by George Bush—whose candidacy was a dead letter by then—Reagan failed to attract more than a smattering of blue-collar voters.

Reagan's vagueness

The reasons are not hard to uncover. Compared to 1968 and 1972, the current election year finds the United States on the brink of economic catastrophe, scorned by its European allies, and seemingly unable to develop a positive foreign policy which would justify its claims to moral leadership of the world community. Where Nixon could get away with bypassing the economic issue, Reagan is finding out the hard way that his strategy of avoiding controversy by making only the vaguest comments on crucial policy questions is just not working. The economic situation is getting too serious for Reagan's shibboleths about "free enterprise" and "limited government."

Where Reagan has been forced to say something more substantial—as he was just prior to the Michigan primary when he made public his opposition to federal loans to the Detroit-based Chrysler Corp., in a state where massive auto industry layoffs have pushed the unemployment rate to the 12-13 percent range— he's been soundly rejected.

Part of Reagan's problem is that while he attracts most of his support because he's perceived to be an opponent of the liberal Eastern Establishment, the bulk of his policy experts and campaign honchos are drawn straight from the "right-wing" arm of that same ruling elite. Top campaign manager William Casey is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations. Foreign policy coordinator Richard Allen is a former National Security Council staffer under Henry Kissinger; labor and economics adviser Murray Weidenbaum, assisted Paul Volcker and John Connally in devising the August 1971 dollar devaluation which ruined the U.S. currency; senior adviser Milton Friedman is a loud proponent of legalizing all dangerous drugs.

Under the influence of these and other GOP insiders, the Republican Party-Reagan 1980 platform is shaping up as a hideous combination of British liberal "free trade" economic policies—which will destroy the U.S. industrial economy—and a dangerous foreign policy orientation, which, though loudly anti-Soviet, is already aimed more at blackmailing Europe and Japan.

Anderson and FEMA

Reagan's weakening support is no doubt one of the key factors which the Eastern Establishment's election-fixers are carefully monitoring. Can he sell the CFR's 'controlled economic disintegration' policy to the American electorate, or would it be simply more efficient to install "Reichstag fire" emergency government?

In the event the CFR decides the answer is the latter, the John Anderson option will be deployed.

As the major media has been pointing out for weeks, a three way race, pitting a Democrat, a Republican and Anderson against one another, could well result in a deadlocked vote in the Electoral College. Should this occur, the Constitution mandates that the House of Representatives select the next President. Given the pres-

ent economic crisis and general social breakdown in the nation, a profound constitutional crisis would almost inevitably occur in which the CFR would attempt to manipulate the population into accepting an “interim emergency government.” Such a government-in-the-wings already exists in the form of FEMA—the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Anderson, one might say, is FEMA’s stalking horse.

First floated as a possibility in April by the *Los Angeles Times*, the so-called House of Representatives scenario has been a recurring theme in the major media over the past month. Typical of the coverage is the May 17 edition of the London *Economist*—organ of the British elite, of which the New York CFR is a junior partner. The *Economist* positively gloats about the prospects of a major constitutional crisis in the U.S.

‘If it’s a deadlock, the possibilities are intriguing’

Every major news organ has featured coverage of the “deadlocked election” scenario. Here’s a sampling of what’s being said:

The (London) Economist, May 17, “The unthinkable’: Peculiarities in the American electoral process mean that the independent presidential candidacy of Mr. John Anderson, the Republican congressman from Illinois, could result in a political crisis next January. The chances of such an event are remote. Nothing like it has happened for nearly a century. But in a close election, an Anderson victory in a single state, combined with a divided congress, might leave America without a president to swear in on inauguration day.

... Now for the most intriguing possibility of all: that no candidate would achieve a majority in the house (House of Representatives—ed.) either. It could happen in several ways ... The result would be a further deadlock.

But what happens if the house cannot make up its mind?

The constitution says that if no president is selected by inauguration day, January 20th, the vice-president-elect takes the office. But he, too, would have failed to achieve a majority of electoral votes. This time the choice would fall to the senate to decide by a majority of senators, not the states. If the Democrats retain control of the senate their candidate would presumably prevail. No doubt Vice-President Walter Mondale would be the clear favorite. If Mr. Ronald Reagan were to win the majority of the popular vote, however, Republican senators might be able to prevent the choice of Mr. Mondale

by absenting themselves in protest, thus depriving the Democrats of a quorum.

If chosen, Mr. Mondale could serve as acting president at least until a new congress was elected in 1983. Another interesting possibility is that the Senate might elect a Democrat only to have the house later break its deadlock in favour of a Republican president, thus giving the country its first split administration since 1800, when Thomas Jefferson was second in command to an unhappy John Adams.

The Wall Street Journal, May 15, “What if the Election Deadlocks?”: By mid-morning Wednesday, Nov. 5, 1980, it is finally clear: The Republicans have won control of the Senate, the Democrats have managed to hang on in the House of Representatives—and nobody has been elected President.

Ronald Reagan, the Republican, has come in first, collecting about 37 million popular votes, carrying 26 states and 257 electoral votes. But he needed 270 electoral votes to win. Jimmy Carter, the Democrat, has finished second, collecting about 35 million popular votes, carrying 18 states and the District of Columbia with 231 electoral votes. The candidate responsible for the stand-off, John Anderson, the independent, has won about 11 million popular votes, carried six states and collected 50 electoral votes.

So, what happens now? The election heads for the House of Representatives and the nation holds its breath.

... Such scenarios are being churned out in Washington these days faster than OSHA regulations. For if Rep. Anderson runs a strong race this fall, the election could easily go to the House because it isn’t possible to split the electoral vote more or less evenly three ways and come up with a winner.

... The House has until Jan. 20—Inauguration Day—to reach a decision. If it hasn’t come up with a President by then, the Vice President chosen by the Senate (presuming the Senate has been able to pick one) would become the acting President. ...

Consider the possibility if *neither* the House nor the Senate is able to reach a decision by Jan. 20. One possibility would be for Congress to pass emergency legislation keeping the old administration in power until something is decided. Another would be to crank in the Succession Act, in which the Speaker of the House would become the acting President, possibly going on to serve out the full four-year term.

But if the Speaker couldn’t serve for one reason or another and the President Pro Tem of the Senate couldn’t serve, then the Secretary of State—still on the job even though his President and Vice President would be long gone—gets the job. Edmund S. Muskie of Maine, who couldn’t be elected the conventional way, may make it yet.