

Elephants and Donkeys by Stephen Parsons

A lot of sound signifying nothing

It was a happy group of Republicans that gathered in Washington at the beginning of February for the Republican National Committee's winter meeting. After all, their President was riding a crest of popularity amid what everyone agreed was a surging economy. And the eight pitiful Democratic presidential candidates approved by party chairman Chuck Manatt and paced by the wet noodle Walter Mondale, had been reduced to carping at the strong incumbent.

What with the trip to the White House on the night of the President's re-election announcement, followed by a gala celebration keyed by Vice President Bush, then the RNC meeting itself with round upon round of receptions, all topped off Feb. 4 night by the tuxedoed Annual Inaugural Ball Celebration—it was understandable if the Republicans were experiencing that glorious and unchallengeable sensation of euphoria, superior intelligence, and heightened dexterity that comes to a drunk driver—just before he heads off the cliff.

The GOP has turned the Democratic tide, said Reagan campaign manager Ed Rollins on Feb. 3 in his luncheon address to the RNC. In 1980, for the first time in more than two decades, it had captured the Senate. It has reversed the economic slide caused by the wretched Jimmy Carter, has restored the nation's military might, and has rekindled hope in the future of America.

With all this, said Rollins, the GOP

is now positioned to do to the Democrats what Franklin Roosevelt did to Alf Landon and the Republicans in 1936: Crush their presidential candidate, and erase many of the gains the Democrats have had since 1936.

RNC Chairman Frank Fahrenkopf summed it all up in his charge to the delegates: "Today, on the eve of what historians may see as our greatest moment of challenge ... as Republicans, our party has never been stronger, more unified, or more capable of victory. As Americans, our future shines brighter than ever before."

The politics of euphoria—or the politics of delusion

What Rollins didn't mention in his comparison of the present to 1936 was that a fascist dictator, bent on world domination in the midst of a crippling depression, would soon plunge the globe into war—just as another fascist clique in Moscow is plotting today.

And no one, of course, wanted to remember the fate of a certain Republican president elected by a landslide in 1972 over a weak-kneed Democrat, and how, less than two years later, he was driven out of office in disgrace by a conspiracy of the same liberals and other corrupt men.

To be sure, most of the assembled Republicans privately acknowledged that perhaps the "recovery" wasn't quite what it was being cracked up to be, and that the Russians might be on the move militarily. Yet they dozed on in the tradition of the sheep-like millions who basked in the summer warmth of 1939.

Given this atmosphere, it was hardly surprising that at no point in the week-long festivities was there even a hint of discussion of any policy matter—let alone the deadly economic and military-strategic crises facing the nation—either publicly or informally.

Virtually every agenda item, and every private discussion that went beyond gossip, was devoted to the "cam-

paign business," in the words of the RNC's so-called director of political operations.

Perhaps the most "political" discussion came in a mind-deadening presentation by President Reagan's pollster, Richard Wirthlin, on "Decision-Making Information." This was a brainwashing session on the perception game played by the astute practical politicians who have been, all too successfully, advising the President to take a "moderate" profile.

For example, Wirthlin reported that, with the efforts of his "image" people, the population's perception of Ronald Reagan as a hawk irrevocably committed to building up our defenses and nuclear armaments has shifted to that of a man who would build up our arsenal as a condition for a reduction in nuclear weapons by both superpowers.

Most RNC members and Reagan campaign leaders are long-time party hacks for whom politics is by and large wheeling and dealing. This is not to say that the majority of them are unprincipled—in fact, most of them are decent folk committed to American principles of growth and development—but their principles are subjugated to "the lowest common denominator" in the interest of narrow "practical" objectives.

Thus, more than one Reagan state campaign chairman told this reporter that Lyndon LaRouche was doing a disservice to the President by trying to destroy Mondale's candidacy, because the GOP would prefer to run against such an inept and discredited Democrat. At least two RNC members confessed that *EIR* briefings on the operations against the President and on the series of crises facing the nation scared them too much.

"I know all this is important," said one RNC member from Alabama, "but I'm just so damn busy with my law practice, and I get so much mail, I just don't have time to think about these things."