

Elephants and Donkeys by Kathleen Klenetsky

Texas Democrats take on the Mondale-Hart crew

Fritz Mondale may have gained an ego boost from the New York primary results on April 3, but he is still far short of wrapping up the nomination. Both he and Hart remain incapable of sparking real enthusiasm among Democratic voters, and the possibility is greater than ever of a deadlocked convention—and a “dark horse” candidate.

Lack of support for Mondale and Hart is closest to the surface in the more conservative South, where “uncommitted” has received a *significant portion* of the votes in recent primaries and caucuses. In South Carolina’s first-round caucuses, 53% of the vote went uncommitted; in Virginia, 28.2%; in Mississippi 30.7%.

Although the Kennedy machine had a big hand in swinging the South into the uncommitted column—aiming to come to the convention with a large bloc of delegates to bargain with—other things are at work. Many Southern politicians simply can’t stand the two “frontrunners” and are looking for an alternative.

Last month in Texas, long-standing hostility broke into the open between the conservative and centrist Democrats, and the ultra-liberals (like state party chairman Bob Slagel and Houston mayor Kathy Whitmire) who have captured the party’s leadership. Charles Stenholm, a popular congressman from Texas’s major cattle-ranching area and founder of the “Boll Weevil” caucus on Capitol Hill, announced that he will remain uncommitted until the convention because

neither Hart nor Mondale is acceptable. Stenholm said he was convinced that the convention would be deadlocked, and a more conservative Democrat would emerge as the party’s standard bearer.

Harris Kerr, a leading member of the state Democratic executive committee, resigned his post in early April, blasting Slagel for trying to railroad the party behind Mondale. Kerr declared that the (liberal) state party leadership, as well as Hart and Mondale, was completely out of step with the party rank and file.

One of the people who could benefit from this revolt is the Lone Star State’s well-known U.S. senator, Lloyd Bentsen. Bentsen is known to have entertained presidential aspirations of his own and is frequently cited as one of the “dark horses” who could come to the fore if the Democratic convention deadlocks. The Mondale camp has been negotiating with Bentsen over the vice-presidential slot. Mondale’s strategists know that the Democrats need Texas to win in November, and the only way Mondale could take it is with a leading native son in his corner.

Meanwhile, for the record, the New York primary results: Mondale trounced Gary Hart by a margin of 45% to 27%, scoring big even among the so-called “yuppies” (young, upwardly mobile professionals) who were supposed to be Hart’s major base of support. Jesse Jackson garnered 25% of the vote, and finished in third place (he got 34% in New York City.).

LaRouche brings ‘campaign of patriots’ to Louisiana

Bentsen isn’t the only contender for the Democratic Party’s non-liberal rank and file. Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr., whose first primary race will be in Pennsylvania April 10, is engendering tremendous excitement for his tough

stand against Henry Kissinger and in favor of real economic development.

LaRouche took his message to Louisiana March 31, when he addressed the state party convention, but the effect of LaRouche’s “campaign of patriots” was evident even before he began.

The internationally known economist was introduced by leading Louisiana Democrat Fred Huenefeld, who earlier in the day had successfully introduced a resolution backing farm parity by the state party. Huenefeld told the convention: “When you voted for the parity resolution, you may not have realized that you acted in the economic tradition of George Washington, Alexander Hamilton, and Henry Carey. This is called the American economic system. Today it is my great pleasure to introduce to you the world’s foremost economist of the American System, Democratic presidential candidate Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr.”

LaRouche’s address stirred wide interest among Louisiana Democrats who are no happier with Hart and Mondale than their Texas neighbors. At the convention, numerous delegates wearing Hart buttons came up to the LaRouche table to say: “I’m only wearing this button because I hate Mondale. But I’d be pleased to distribute LaRouche’s material.” Another delegate, a union organizer, explained that the union rank and file despised Mondale and were outraged at AFL-CIO czar Lane Kirkland for forcing Fritz on the labor movement. And many black delegates were interested in LaRouche because they saw Jesse Jackson as an opportunistic hustler, unacceptable as a serious presidential candidate.

One leading Louisiana Democrat summed up: “LaRouche is the world’s leading exponent alive today of the policies of FDR, and this is the political philosophy that all the best Democrats in the state believe in. He can’t help but be liked in Louisiana for giving such a speech.”