

Illinois Democrats on the run from LaRouche

by Patricia Salisbury

On Jan. 21, the once proud and belligerent Democratic Party of Illinois shut the doors of its office in downtown Chicago on orders of its state chairman, because of a press conference slated for the site by a faction of the party which the party regulars describe as illegitimate and negligible. The bizarre event occurred when the entire Chicago press corps assembled for a press conference which had been called by leaders of the candidate slate associated with American statesman and political economist Lyndon LaRouche.

In 1986, LaRouche's associates had stunned the Democratic Party and the political world by winning the party's nomination for lieutenant governor and secretary of state in the Illinois primary. Party gubernatorial nominee Adlai Stevenson foolishly refused to run on the slate with them and mounted a third party campaign that went down to defeat. Chicago political circles have been awash in speculation about how party regulars will handle the LaRouche factor in the 1994 state primary.

At Illinois Democratic Party headquarters, the media were confronted by a locked door, from which the party bosses had even removed the Democratic Party logo; a hand-written sign informed them that the entire office had relocated to Springfield for 24 hours, and building security guards made thuggish but futile efforts to drive the press away. The regular Dems apparently chose to cut and run, despite the repeated claims of state party chairman Gary LaPaille that the party intends to run an informational campaign which, by identifying the slate to the public, would assure that the events of the 1986 primary would not be repeated. But, some of Chicago's more astute political observers wondered, if the essence of the party strategy is to identify the slate with LaRouche in the public mind, why run from a chance to accomplish exactly such an identification publicly, and at no cost? What could Chairman LaPaille hope to accomplish, by leaving his office empty and undefended, and the challenges of the insurgent slate unanswered. Perhaps the "regular" Chicago Dems know they have more to fear from the LaRouche-associated candidates, than from some purported confusion among voters.

For example, Chairman LaPaille would undoubtedly have found it difficult to substantiate his slanders of LaRouche-associated candidates as racist: Gubernatorial candidate Sheila Jones is an African-American and a former youth leader of the civil rights movement; she was joined by

Rev. James Bevel, former top aide to Dr. Martin Luther King and, in 1992, Lyndon LaRouche's vice-presidential running mate, and Nancy Spannaus, the LaRouche Democrat for U.S. Senate in Virginia, who is well known for her defense of minority and civil rights.

Dr. Conrad Worril, head of the Black United Front, in an interview with the *Chicago Defender*, suggested that Democrats may be afraid to debate LaRouche-associated candidates for fear that *they* might be exposed as lacking on minority issues. Worril is quoted as saying that party bosses are threatened, because, regardless of the controversial issues the LaRouche candidates raise, they allegedly don't want to answer some questions that may prove embarrassing to their party.

The lack of leadership on issues among the Democratic regulars was starkly exposed in a *Chicago Tribune* article of Jan. 17, headlined "LaRouche Factor Lurking Again in Democratic Primary." The article covers a poll conducted by the Market Shares Corp. on Jan. 9, based on phone interviews with a random sample of 1,500 Illinois registered voters likely to vote in the March 15 primaries. Nine hundred interviews were conducted with likely Democratic voters and 600 with likely Republican voters. The lead finding is that an overwhelming majority of the electorate, 65%, are undecided in their candidate preference, causing the *Tribune* to characterize the primaries as "wide open." The article also reports that some LaRouche associates are polling hefty percentages, as in the case of lieutenant governor candidate Anthony Harper, currently running a close third with 8%, behind the Democratic Party slated candidate, Sheila Smith, with 14%, and one Penny Severs, with 12%. Rosemarie Love, the LaRouche supporter running for the nomination for secretary of state and herself a longtime Democrat and former member of the Cook County Commission, was leading State Sen. Denny Jacobs of Moline. The article also reports that many party-sanctioned candidates are as well known to the public as "toll booth operators."

Olive branch offered

Meanwhile, the LaRouche-associated candidates are campaigning aggressively, and inviting the party bosses to debate the issues. At the Jan. 21 press conference, Sheila Jones hammered home the point that, in 1986, when the Democratic Party insisted on responding to the primary victories of LaRouche Democrats with a campaign of slanders, the result was not only the defeat of the party in the election, but also that the catastrophic policies which have destroyed the nation's economy and culture were permitted to remain in place. Jones indicated that she is offering party leaders "the olive branch," in hope they will find the courage to admit past mistakes and accept LaRouche's policy leadership before it is too late. The Democratic Party, Jones stated, must unite to tell "the New York asset-strippers, the bankers, and the Michael Milken of this world, that we are not going to allow thievery against our economy anymore."