

## U.S. POLITICAL NEWSLETTER

# And on the Mickey Mouse Front . . . . .

This week's installment in the prepackaged presidential primaries — Florida — proved to be another resounding flop. While the Atlanticists directed their ragtag band of candidates in a cacophony of diatribes against the evils of détente and Fidel Castro, Florida voters turned out in small numbers and with their minds on the state of the economy. And with the national press presenting column upon column analyzing the results, the majority of Americans looked for some other more interesting reading.

According to an NBC news poll, the majority of Florida voters were not interested in the red-scare hysteria but in the "health of the economy." On this vital issue, all the candidates, including "winners" Ford and Carter, had nothing to say.

This lack of substantive political discussion, to the extent that it is not due to the sheer incompetence of all the candidates, is part of a deliberate campaign strategy. According to a highly placed source close to one of the major candidates, the key thing is the "audience": "they (the candidates) have to say what people want to hear. It's like marketing a product — you say one thing to one group of people, something else to another group. It really doesn't matter to people if you contradict yourself, as long as the audience (the voters) think you are 'sincere'." Sources report that the President, for example, is more than willing "to say anything to anyone to get himself elected."

It is, therefore, necessary to distinguish actual administration policy statements from this "presidential chatter" by carefully gridding Ford's remarks against collateral evidence.

The Florida primary offers a dim preview of what the presidential caravan can expect when it staggers into the state of Illinois next week. Illinois is a Labor Party state. There, widespread penetration of the International Development Bank and debt moratoria proposals is combined with the state budget collapse and the precipitous decline of industrial production. Two weeks after Illinois, the traveling road show will play the New York primary, another state where the political field is already shaped by Labor Party organizing around debt moratoria.

The presidential pretenders who geared their Florida campaign to the 4 per cent of the electorate who are gusanos (Cuban exiles) know that they have to unearth their politics and croon a different tune for the Illinois and New York electorates.

### Ford's Goose Cooking In Florida Sun

In a speech March 9 before the veterans of Foreign Wars in Washington, Ford basked in what he called "a warm and comforting ray of Florida sunshine" after his victory over glamor boy Ronald Reagan. Exhibiting signs of too many

rays, in another speech yesterday Ford waxed about the hallucinatory upswing in the U.S. economy.

Despite Ford's prayers that the bottom stays attached to the economy until Nov. 5, his magician-style public performances — selling a hardline "détente is dead" to gusanos in Miami and then resurrecting détente for a Peoria, Ill., audience — are bound to end in a bust. With the world economy set for a blowout at any minute, by the time his campaign hits Illinois, Ford may have already cooked his own goose.

The Florida losers, Ronald Reagan and George Wallace, flew out of the state before the primary returns were in. Although both were touted by the press as easy winners, in earlier polls, the voters snubbed them.

Wallace got only 31 per cent of the Democratic vote compared with 42 per cent in the 1972 primaries, and he wound up 4 per cent behind the bouffant-haired peanut farmer from Georgia, Jimmy Carter. The Maoist candidate, Sen. Henry Jackson, finished a very scrutible third with 22 per cent of the vote.

Reagan, who broke his own "11th commandment" at the last minute by attacking Ford's defense policy, meanwhile was rejected for the third Republican primary in a row.

Jimmy Carter's "victory" in Florida however is less than meaningless. The non-descript populist still has not shown that he can win in a northern industrial state. His campaign, while trying to cover for their candidate's lack of popularity among workers have nonetheless already admitted "it would tax our limited resources" to mount a major campaign in the April 6 New York and Wisconsin primaries. Carter's campaign in Illinois next week, where Jacksons and liberal Rep. Moe Udall are not running, has set modest sights aiming to capture a few stray delegates while conceding most of the vote — and delegates — to Sen. Adlai Stevenson's favorite-son candidacy. Stevenson in turn is merely a placeholder for Chicago's Democratic power broker, Mayor Richard Daley.

### Hubert, the Non-Candidate

Meanwhile, Sen. Hubert Humphrey, the man most "insiders" think will be the next Democratic candidate, has continued his non-candidacy. Humphrey, the leading Harriman-Rockefeller hatchetman in Congress, is trying to back into the nomination.

His strategy has been to stay as far away as possible from the travelling clown show — let the primaries tar everybody except good old' Hubert. With the convention deadlocked — a near certainty — everyone will look for a saviour — then and only then will Hubert enter on his white mule and offer himself as the only man who can unite all sections of the party. But there are several people (not to mention most of the electorate) who would rather not see Humphrey and his controllers get away with their little game. In a column

yesterday in the New York Times, former Nixon staffer William Safire posed some "questions that Humphrey must answer" as a candidate. These include a \$100,000 gift Humphrey took from Howard Hughes in 1968, the involvement of his closest aides in the milk fund and other illegal donations and bribes, and the charge that his closest aide when he was Vice-President sought to get special teams of FBI agents to spy on trouble-makers at the 1968 Democratic convention. So far, Humphrey's response to the charges has been to lose his memory and his tongue.

### **Reagan Falters**

On the Republican side, the Reagan camp is weighing their capabilities for keeping their soap salesman candidate in the race. According to a column yesterday by Evans and Novak, the question being debated by Reagan supporters is whether Reagan can preserve his candidacy long enough "to keep pushing Ford rightward." The point to be considered, the columnists report, is whether continued Reagan candidacy in the primaries "will produce a hard line in the administration's national security policies." Evans and Novak

say that while continuation of the campaign may cost them humiliating defeats, Reagan backers are at least attempting to salvage their candidate's influence in the Party and confirm his right to speak for Ford and the Party on national security issues.

For public consumption, Reagan announced his intention to stay in the race until the bitter end. He told skeptical reporters on March 10 that he is not at all convinced that if the convention is deadlocked, the New York state delegation headed by Nelson Rockefeller would throw its support to Ford. Despite his latest bluster about how wonderful it is to be in second place (in a two-man race), Reagan's defeats are beginning to show in the candidate. Last night in Illinois he made an ass of himself declaring that "Gerald Ford was a Communist," before correcting himself. "I've got Communists on my mind all the time," he said, "it was a natural slip."

As this goes to press, the Rockefeller-controlled Reagan candidacy was given a boost by a kickback-type scandal involving Ford campaign manager Howard "Bo" Callaway. Ford reacted quickly by having Callaway resign until the scandal, which dates back to Callaway's tenure as Secretary of the Army, is cleared up.