
Democratic Party

Candidate Klenetsky on New York's future

The following interview with Mel Klenetsky, candidate for the Democratic mayoral nomination in New York City, and a spokesman for the National Democratic Policy Committee, was conducted Sept. 13 by European Economics Editor Laurent Murawiec.

Murawiec: What have been your campaign experiences?

Klenetsky: I have seen that in spite of the "planned shrinkage" of the city, the population shows a tremendous degree of resiliency of spirit. In a way, this is crystallized around the Brooklyn Navy Yard. While only 3,000 are now employed at the yard, it had 60,000 to 80,000 during World War II. It turned out and repaired 5,000 ships, aircraft carriers, battleships, destroyers, escorts. There was a shortage of skilled labor in the city, so huge programs of crash apprenticeship and training were set up.

Murawiec: And what is your program to put the city into shape again?

Klenetsky: My policies reject the lie that resources are limited and we should reduce our consumption, anywhere in the world. I will establish a tax and credit base for attracting high-technology industry back into the city; I will apply punitive taxation on luxury hotels and office towers, and apply the forfeiture statute enabling us to seize the assets of those banks involved in the drug traffic and its financing. That will bring half a billion dollars for infrastructure; a tax on capital gains on transfer of property another half billion; and \$1.5 billion from assessing mid-Manhattan commercial property at its real value of \$40 to \$50 billion.

I will launch an all-out war on drugs; the third major program is restoring the schools and introducing classical education to develop culture and skills. The people who built this city are still there, with the same commitments and needs. They need organization, they need the old Democratic Party "delivery system" of services and jobs, but on a higher and bigger scale. And that is how the Democratic Party will be electable and nationally responsible.

Murawiec: What is the state of New York City's Democratic Party?

Klenetsky: My social-democratic opponent in the pri-

mary, State Assemblyman Frank Barbaro, is taking many of the reform Democrats in the direction of extremism. The Democratic incumbent, Ed Koch, is supported by the other reform Democrats and also the regulars, principally because he has played very tough operations with the [party] clubs. Koch played a key role in destroying the Manhattan regular Democratic machine as part of the Adlai Stevenson-Herbert Lehman-Eleanor Roosevelt operation to phase out constituency-based politics.

Now, the Brooklyn machine has remained more or less intact despite the efforts of former Rep. Elizabeth Holtzman, who is now a candidate for Brooklyn D.A.; if she wins, that will change, because she will witch-hunt the regulars. Bronx is in a shambles like Queens. There are certain elements within each borough with some strength, but the thing doesn't hang together or make for any kind of consistent policies which can reverse the deindustrialization—the same is true on the national level.

Murawiec: I know that Koch has not given labor exactly a friendly treatment. Who are they supporting?

Klenetsky: There is a group in the Central Labor Council which has come out in support of Barbaro, the left-wing Socialist International types and the old Communist Party-influenced unions. That group includes the Communication Workers, the hospital workers' Local 1199, District 65, which is now in the United Autoworkers, and so forth. Harry Van Arsdale, head of the council, has given in to these elements, despite Barbaro's commitment not to build the Westway project, which the council has fought for tooth and nail. The building trades, Teamsters, and Longshoremen have given no support to Barbaro, and instead backed out of real politics altogether.

Murawiec: What will you do if Koch is re-elected?

Klenetsky: The traditional unionists and the regular Dems see themselves in a terrific fix, caught between a Koch who is moving toward extreme Friedman-style policies, and the left-wing Barbaro. My candidacy has begun to fill that vacuum, and, as I have become well known as a "LaRouche Democrat," it represents at this point the most significant alternative for these people. The NDPC and its associates intend to take apart the race-riot apparatus that is designed to divide ethnic constituencies and prevent them from political initiatives. We intend to make every effort necessary to stop Koch from introducing "free-enterprise zones" in New York on the Hong Kong model. And we will expand the efforts, which I have already found have inspired so many New Yorkers, to halt the drug plague and bring to every schoolchild Beethoven and Mozart, Dante, Cervantes and Schiller, Shakespeare and Milton, and real science and history: that is the American Dream, to develop great minds.