

Eye on Democrats by Molly Kronberg

Depression in the ranks over Mondale's gains

As far as the eye can see and the ear hear, Walter Mondale has put out the word: He has the 1984 Democratic presidential nomination locked up. And so, presumably, he does.

But the effect on the Democratic Party seems to be disarray. The public perception is simply that Mondale is a shoo-in for the nomination, and a shoo-in for defeat by Ronald Reagan in November.

The chaos in the party at the grassroots level shows that Mondale's half-Nelson on the primary and delegate-selection process doesn't guarantee a thing in the way of votes at the polls this fall. Instead, it's widening the great gap between the "Eastern Establishment" that picked Mondale—Averell Harriman, the AFL-CIO's Lane Kirkland, DNC chairman Charles Manatt—and the American voter.

Most telling of all, when it comes to political muscle, is the following set of facts. Ever since the Philadelphia mini-convention of 1982, Charles Manatt has spent two years crisscrossing the country telling local Democrats that economist and political figure Lyndon LaRouche is not a "real Democrat." Manatt, Kirkland, and Mondale have made sure that LaRouche, who announced his candidacy for the Democratic presidential nomination last September, has been excluded from every state convention, every Democratic debate, since then. But the Mondale-Manatt machine, which tries to control the party with a Stalinesque grip, last week couldn't even keep LaRouche off the California party primary ballot!

The mess in the party has spilled into the pages of the press with increasing untidiness in the past couple of weeks. It looks as if John Glenn is

going down for the last time. His early Southern support is eroding, with black Democrats jumping ship for Jackson, and other previously committed Glenn delegates deciding to run as Mondale delegates instead.

The media are not being kind to John Glenn, and innumerable articles focusing on his flubbed speeches, abrupt campaign staff shifts, and fund-raising failures are enhancing Mondale's "aura of power."

Mondale, Kirkland, and Manatt are using that, and every other opportunity, to try for a bandwagon effect. For example: At the end of January former DNC chairman Bob Strauss announced on ABC's "Nightline" his endorsement of Mondale. Strauss is a heavy hitter in the Democratic Party—protégé of Averell Harriman, intimate of Harriman's wife Pamela, government trade representative in the long-ago days of the Carter-Mondale era. Then House Speaker Tip O'Neill announced *his* endorsement of Mondale, breaking his own precedent of never endorsing a candidate before the party convention.

In the other Democratic camps the wailing and gnashing of teeth is ear-splitting. Jesse Jackson let fly against O'Neill with the observation that O'Neill is such a poor spokesman for the Democratic Party that Reagan doesn't have much competition in the "Great Communicator" contest. Roy Innis, national director of CORE, in turn slammed Jackson's candidacy as divisive and "purely symbolic." And black labor leaders have just formed a coalition to try to keep the 3.3 million black rank-and-file members of trade unions in the fold for Fritz Mondale.

How did LaRouche get on California ballot?

The weakness of the Mondale-Manatt operation was spotlighted in the most

embarrassing fashion with the California episode. On Feb. 1, California Secretary of State March Fong Eu (herself a Democrat) made the decision to place LaRouche on the ballot for the state Democratic presidential primary June 5 because he filled all the requirements to be considered a major candidate.

LaRouche, she said, has met the three qualifications required for ballot status: He has demonstrated a sufficient level of support in the state and the nation; he is actively campaigning for the presidency, made clear among other things by his half-hour national CBS political broadcast on Jan. 21; and he has qualified for FEC matching funds.

The ironies of the situation are multiple. California is Charles Manatt's home state. His law partner Peter Kelly is chairman of the California Democratic Party; his protégé Nancy Pelosi runs the national Democratic Party's Compliance Review Commission, and ran the California Democratic Party until Kelly took over. But Manatt can't seem to get fellow California Democrat Fong Eu (who is among his "honored guests" at the Feb. 4 state convention) to do his bidding on the LaRouche question. This is not a matter Manatt takes lightly. He has opened almost every public statement for two years (including his comments at a Washington, D.C. debate last month with RNC chairman Frank Fahrenkopf) by attacking LaRouche.

Also awkward for Manatt and Mondale is the following state of affairs. California is the most populous state in the union. LaRouche campaign workers have signed up so far about 580 fellow Democrats to run for office as part of an expanded "LaRouche slate," and in state primary elections in 1982 a campaign by LaRouche Democrats turned the tide against Jerry Brown in the latter's senatorial bid.