

Elephants and Donkeys by Richard Cohen

The Jackson factor

Informed Democratic sources report that the braintrust behind Walter Mondale after a thorough reading of the results of the April Arizona caucuses.

While Sen. Gary Hart won the caucus vote 44% to Mondale's 41%, Mondale's advisers were pleasantly surprised at the unexpected 15% of caucus votes received by Jesse Jackson. Close scrutiny of that vote showed that Jackson had sharply cut into the Mexican-American vote, originally considered to be locked up by Hart. Most Democratic Party-watchers are expecting this Mexican-American vote pattern to hold in the important June 6 California primary. If it does, they say that Mondale will beat Hart in California.

California remains the last slim hope among both the Hart staff and those secretly pledged to preventing a Mondale first-ballot victory. It was assumed that a Hart victory in California just prior to the Democratic Party convention there could throw into doubt Mondale's credibility as a candidate who could beat President Ronald Reagan.

But while Jackson's showing in the Arizona caucuses may signal an easier road to the Democratic presidential nomination for Mondale, increasingly the Jackson factor is throwing extremely dark clouds over Mondale's road to the November presidential elections. On this point, according to well-placed sources, the Reagan reelection general staff is overjoyed.

Jackson and his inner staff find themselves—following the convincing shows of strength in Illinois and New York, and the winning of the city of Philadelphia in the Pennsylvania primary—in a position they had not dreamed of when Jackson decided to launch his campaign last year.

Jackson has, according to these sources, attained the rank of "Black Messiah" and unchallenged hege-



mony over the majority of the black vote. It is this card that many frightened Democratic Party officials—particularly elected officials—are terrified Jackson will play at the Democratic convention in San Francisco in July.

These Democratic officials are convinced that Jackson will bargain far higher than his announced "bottom line" demand that the Democratic Party eliminate second primaries now allowed in nine of eleven Southern states' Democratic primaries. If the second primaries are repudiated, a significant number of "white Southern Democratic candidates" would likely be replaced by blacks. Jackson already demonstrated that he plans to go far in challenging the Democratic establishment when he bluntly and repeatedly opened up on Mondale during the Pennsylvania primary, demanding that Mondale respond to his challenge that the Voting Rights Act be amended.

Countermoves afoot

These early warnings of a major disruptive fight within the party at the convention and after have already galvanized Democratic elected officials into action. The Democratic Governors Association is mobilizing to limit

the damage, if not confront expected Jackson convention demands. On April 13, word leaked that staffers of Virginia Gov. Charles Robb were in negotiations with the Governors Association staff over countering Jackson.

A memorandum signed by Association Executive Director Charles Dolan, Jr., which has circulated widely, reportedly warns of a Jackson strategy to control the convention. The memo reports that Jackson will deliver a "firestorm speech," igniting liberal and radical sentiment among the delegates. The memo forecasts that a whipped-up convention will be forced to pass a "McGovernite" party platform.

Among the platform planks feared by the Governors Association are the Voting Rights Act change, the extension of the Civil Rights Act to homosexuals, radical arms control measures, and a Middle East plank said to antagonize an already whipped-up Jewish community.

This year is the first in over a decade that large numbers of Democratic elected officials have been mandated to be present at the convention. They fear that their electability will be devastated by association with such a party platform. Dolan has warned: "It's becoming clear that Jesse Jackson believes his candidacy goes beyond the nomination process. He sees it as his cause to bring the Democratic Party closer to his ideological creed."

Jackson, even if his plan does not pass, will be forced to press for maximum concessions from Mondale, our sources report. The overall vote in the Democratic primaries in key states such as Pennsylvania has been smaller than in 1980, even though the 1980 primary occurred after an assured Carter nomination. But more blacks voted than previously, as has been the case in almost all the primary states. In short, if Mondale has any hope of victory, he needs an extremely large black vote. To get it, he needs Jackson.