

Democrats pro-defense? Emperor's new clothes

by Kathleen Klenetsky

Two Democratic Party policy groups, the Democratic Policy Commission, established in 1985 by Democratic National Committee chairman Paul Kirk, and the ostensibly more conservative Democratic Leadership Commission, currently chaired by former Virginia governor Charles Robb, issued reports in late September which amply testify to the bind in which the party finds itself.

Billed as signifying a shift from McGovern-style liberalism to a more "mainstream" stance, the policy statements contain little that is new, different, or positive. They show only that the party's current leadership is congenitally incapable of policies in the national interest.

The reports are the result of several years of "soul searching," which the party leadership has allegedly engaged in since Walter Mondale's humiliating defeat in November 1984. That disaster forced even the dumbest DNC members to wake up to the fact that the party, as reflected in its 1984 platform endorsing sodomy, the nuclear freeze, etc., had fallen so far out of step with the mainstream, that unless its image were radically retooled, it would either wither away or, worse, be taken over by a coalition of moderate and conservative Democrats catalyzed by Lyndon LaRouche.

With these reports, no wonder LaRouche is smiling.

This is pro-defense?

Loftily titled "Defending America: Building a New Foundation for National Strength," the DLC statement deals specifically with defense and foreign policy. Its explicit task—and what a challenge it is!—is to eliminate the party's anti-defense, pro-Moscow image. It fails miserably.

Authored by the party's leading "defense experts"—House Armed Services Committee chairman Rep. Les Aspin (Wisc.), (Ga.)—the report calls for developing a "cogent" strategic policy, for spending too much money on the military, and for creating a "mismatch" between strategy and forces. Admittedly, the report has some bold anti-Soviet rhetoric—for this gang, at least—and even supports some weapons-systems, Henry Kissinger's Midgletman missile, for instance.

The Democratic leadership is as committed as ever to institutionalizing U.S. military inferiority. Among the key

proposals are the following:

- Defense "reform," including the wholesale reorganization of the Pentagon, cutting the size of "bloated headquarters staffs and defense agencies by . . . more than 17,000," and changing the Joint Chiefs of Staff. In this, the report merely echoes the defense reorganization legislation recently passed by both Houses of Congress. Although President Reagan was somehow persuaded that defense reform will help the military, the heads of all the military services have protested the legislation, charging it would make a "hash" of the defense structure, and could cause a significant decline in military efficiency and effectiveness. And without "bloated" headquarters staffs, no capacity for emergency mobilization exists.

- Dismembering NATO. The report calls for "redistributing the allied defense burden to bring about a more sensible division of military responsibilities within NATO"—a euphemism for Henry Kissinger and Zbigniew Brezinski's demand for America to withdraw troops from Europe, ceding the continent to the Soviets. Two of the report's authors, Nunn and Aspin, have backed a U.S. troop cutback.

- "Defining a vigorous—but more clearly defined program of strategic defense research. . . ." By vigorous, the authors apparently mean dead. All three have led the fight against full funding for the SDI, and Nunn is personally responsible for an amendment that would restrict the SDI to missile defense—a proposal the report also embraces—and would preserve Mutually Assured Destruction. In addition, it calls for the United States to continue to honor the ABM Treaty, and castigates President Reagan, not only for trying "to sell the American people the dream of erecting an impenetrable 'peace shield' over the U.S. and its allies," but for proposing to share U.S. strategic defense technology with the Soviets.

- Sticking with arms-control. The report demands that the United States continue to abide by SALT II, and lashes out at Reagan's decision to break out of the treaty as a "serious step backward" which will "accelerate the superpower arms race."

Most of the same recommendations are repeated in the Democratic Policy Commission study, "New Choices in a Changing America," another laughable instance of the Emperor's new clothes.

For example, "New Choices" calls arms control one of the most important aspects of the U.S.-Soviet relationship, says it is "crucial" for the United States to abide by the SALT accords and a "restrictive interpretation" of the ABM Treaty, and urges negotiations for a comprehensive test-ban treaty. In sum, Gorbachov's program.

On the SDI, the study says the program "must be limited to research until the fundamental questions of feasibility are qualified," which "can be accomplished at levels far lower than the excessive budgets now being requested by the administration."

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