

How did Dukakis and the Democrats lose?

by Mel Klenetsky

The failure of Michael Dukakis to win the presidency was neither a gauge of Bush's popularity nor an indication that the American public believed the GOP's myth of economic prosperity. The trade deficit tells the story as does any simple jaunt through the Midwest, with huge industrial complexes boarded up like ghost towns and the continuing plethora of farm auctions. So the Democrats lost in an election which by all rights belonged to them and no one else.

How and why did they lose? Neither the Democrats nor the Republicans have had any answers on the economy, though the Democrats manage to sound more compassionate. The main exception to this is Lyndon H. LaRouche, who ran for the Democratic nomination and as an independent Democratic presidential candidate. The effect his television broadcasts have had on the electorate; the ability of LaRouche and LaRouche Democrats to articulate a workable economic reconstruction program; and the demonstration of this by the March victory of LaRouche Democrat Claude Jones for Harris County, Texas Democratic Party chairman (the country's second largest electoral district), have shown the way back to vitality for the otherwise moribund Democratic Party. The solid 20-33% of the vote in the latest round of elections for LaRouche Democrats, in spite of underfunded campaigns, exclusion or slander by the media, and all-out harassment by much of the party leadership simply reinforces the lesson.

Voter distrust of Democrats

The Democratic Party has been fissured since FDR's wartime years, and Americans have had a growing distrust of it, both in foreign and domestic policy. Kennedy (1960) and Carter (1976) both won very close races, taking office thanks to the 1958 recession, Watergate, and most importantly, vote fraud. Kennedy benefited from the ability of Chicago Mayor Richard Daley and the infamous Cook County to vote the dead. (Thousands of absentee ballots were found floating up the Chicago River).

Kennedy did some important things like the Apollo-Moon project and his investment tax program, which reversed the 1958 recession. His martyred death, these valuable initia-

tives, and voters' distrust of Goldwater, handed Lyndon Johnson the only easy Democratic presidential victory since FDR. "In your guts you know he's nuts," was a famous anti-Goldwater bumper sticker of the 1964 election.

After Jimmy Carter won, he and Vice President Walter Mondale alienated the Americans by their crackpot deindustrialization and malthusian policies, coupled with the Iran fiasco. In 1980 and '84, 26% and 24% of Democrats respectively voted for Reagan, the Carter taint carrying over to Mondale. Dukakis did nothing to reverse that pattern of distrust, attacking various defense systems and the Strategic Defense Initiative as "pie in the sky." When the polls went against Dukakis, he tried to shift, but Dukakis riding around in a tank was ludicrous, and the Bush team, having a sense of the anti-liberal pulse of the electorate, made this footage part of their more effective advertisements.

Even though Bush lost some of Reagan's Democratic support, he still came in with 48% of the 1984 Reagan Democrats, and a substantial 17% of the overall Democratic vote. Support for Bush and the GOP defense and foreign policy, while favored over a liberal Massachusetts governor, was not deep. Pre-election polls showed 70% were unhappy with both choices; the voter turnout of 49.1% was a 50-year historic low, and the Republicans lost ground in the House, Senate, and state governorships. Americans voted for Democratic candidates, because although they were not proposing any solutions, they sounded more concerned about closed-down industries, health care, low-income housing, and education.

And yet Dukakis succeeded in alienating both the black voters and the white ethnic voters. Bush got 12% of the black vote to Reagan's 9% in 1984, but very few blacks turned out. In Philadelphia, out of a low voter turnout of 49% of the voting-age population, there was an even lower turnout in the black community of registered voters, only 60%. In New York City, with heavy minority representation, voter turnout dropped from 2.3 million in 1984 to 1.9 million in 1988.

In New York State, where Dukakis won 36 of his 112 electoral votes, only 6.2 million voted, a 46.3% turnout, below the national average, compared to 7 million in 1984. Gov. Mario Cuomo, Dukakis's campaign co-chairman, avidly campaigned for Dukakis in the state. The Jewish community was turned off by Rev. Jesse Jackson, especially the Orthodox Jews who went for Bush in places like Brooklyn's Borough Park. Thus, the Jackson division in the party created alienation in the black community, and fissures with the Jewish voters who feared Jackson's anti-Semitic associations. Bush's 35% of the Jewish vote was better than the 31% that Reagan got in 1984.

On top of this, the union vote didn't mean that much. The AFL-CIO confederation and its president Lane Kirkland endorsed Dukakis, limiting Bush to only 42% of the union household vote, but he won 49% of the blue-collar vote overall. The National Rifle Association mobilized the white

ethnic communities in central Pennsylvania for Bush, for example, offsetting the trade union and minority turnouts in western Pennsylvania.

Brawl expected

A meeting of the Democratic Party state chairmen in mid-November is expected to break out into a brawl. The Jesse Jackson stalwarts hope to put in their candidate, Ron Brown, as the new chairman of the Democratic National Committee, replacing Paul Kirk. Ron Brown was convention chairman for Jackson, a former aide to Sen. Ted Kennedy, and currently a lawyer and lobbyist for the National Urban League. Moderates and centrists in the party fear that the Jackson forces might split the party. There is talk of giving Kirk the chairmanship again to avoid dissension.

This approach and that of Alvin From, director of the Democratic Leadership Council (DLC), all miss the boat. From correctly analyzes the problems with the Democratic Party presidential efforts as stemming from control of the primary process by liberal special interests. From says, "We need to have a message that resonates with the American people, and we have to find that message."

The DLC was formed in 1985 after Mondale's crushing defeat. Robert Strauss, Virginia's newly elected Sen. Chuck Robb, Georgia's Sen. Sam Nunn, and even Tennessee's Al Gore are the core of the DLC, who are attempting to present themselves as a policy alternative to the left wing of the party. Their economic policies are straightforward austerity policies, and while pretending they are pro-defense by recognizing the need for the SDI, they are no better than the anti-defense liberals, calling for cuts in the SDI budget and restricting the SDI.

The DLC is analogous to the Coalition for a Democratic Majority, which arose in the wake of the 1972 McGovern takeover of the Democratic Party, trying to distance itself from the radical McGovernites. McGovern was trounced by Nixon, but not before the McGovernites had done a final wrecking job on the farmer-minority-labor alliance that FDR's wartime Democratic Party built.

Secrets of the FDR coalition

In the past 50 years, FDR's wartime Democratic Party was the only one which had the support of labor, minorities, and farmers in both the economic and foreign policy realm. Lincoln's Republican Party right up until Teddy Roosevelt, was this kind of party, supporting industrial growth and opposing England's colonial interests. Teddy Roosevelt wrecked this Lincoln-style coalition by siding with Great Britain and attacking industry.

FDR's building of the Democratic Party was designed to pick up on the old Republican Party that Teddy Roosevelt helped destroy. FDR, however, was trying to implement fascist economic policies, just as the Trilateral Commission did with Jimmy Carter. The Russell Sage Foundation ran his

experimental programs as New York governor, which later became the New Deal. With the formation of the CIO in 1935, FDR brought labor and minorities into the Democratic Party to help crush the party leaders, like James Curley in Boston, New Jersey's Frank Hague, and the Prendergast machine of Missouri, who tended to resist Roosevelt's Mussolini-style corporatist programs.

The fissures of the party were set aside when Roosevelt abandoned the New Deal programs to build up a war machine. The Democratic coalition of that period, unified in foreign policy and committed to economic progress, was the kind of party that is currently needed and represented by the LaRouche Democrats. Even before the war ended, unfortunately, Roosevelt and Truman had alienated the ethnic Eastern European blue-collar workers by selling out Eastern Europe at Yalta. The reaction of the Polish-American Congress and other groups was so strong that Truman, at Potsdam, reminded Stalin that free elections in Poland, reported in the American press, would make it much easier to deal with the 6 million Poles in the United States.

Truman, increasingly unpopular, pulled out of the 1952 race after it was clear that he would be badly beaten. The Democratic Party, from 1948 on, was split between the left and right New Dealers, characterized by Henry Wallace of Progressive Citizens of America and the American Labor Party, and the anti-communist Americans for Democratic Action, featuring Hubert Humphrey. Eisenhower, in his campaign of 1952, denounced Yalta and promised to reverse it, winning much support from Eastern European workers in Buffalo, Cleveland, and Chicago.

The Texas Shivers Democrats broke with Adlai Stevenson to vote for Ike, a foretaste of Democrats for Nixon and the Reagan Democrats. FDR's New Deal, followed through by the reform Democratic movement of Eleanor Roosevelt and Adlai Stevenson in the late 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, set the stage for what became the McGovern takeover of the 1970s and the Carter-Mondale mafia, all of which paved the way for the fissures now being played out by the Jesse Jackson movement. In 1960 Kennedy won, with the help of the political machines of Chicago and Philadelphia, which the later reformers helped destroy. Philadelphia's Bill Green, for example, in 1960, turned out a record 330,000 voters for Kennedy.

The fissures that Jackson and company represent will continue to plague the party. It will either split into two parties, or become impotent, unless the party regroups on the domestic and foreign policy perspectives that the LaRouche Democrats have defined. In 1984 and 1988, LaRouche tried to present these perspectives to the national conventions of the Democratic Party in San Francisco and Atlanta, but was excluded. Reminiscent of FDR's 1941-44 Democratic Party and Lincoln's Republican Party, the approach of the LaRouche Democrats, is the only one capable of saving the Democratic Party.