

## Elephants and Donkeys by Kathleen Klenetsky

### Out of the woodwork

George Bush's mounting political difficulties have brought to an end the image of invulnerability that had all but buried the Democratic presidential option in 1992.

Until just a few short weeks ago, conventional wisdom held that Bush's popularity rating was so high, it would be folly to mount a serious challenge to his reelection. As a result, potential Democratic challengers acted like characters from the "Night of the Living Dead," lurching around the political landscape like purposeless zombies.

Contrasted with presidential elections of the past 30 years, where by this time in the process the field was crawling with candidates, the 1992 campaign had been starkly different. Until just a few weeks ago, when former Massachusetts Sen. Paul Tsongas declared his candidacy, only one individual, political prisoner Lyndon H. LaRouche, had shown the guts and sense of moral responsibility to formally challenge George Bush.

### The 'undead'

But Bush's failing political fortunes have changed all this. The resurrection of the Iran-Contra scandal, renewed questions about Bush's role in the "October Surprise," the mess he's made of the Middle East, and the nosediving economy, have managed to bring the dead to life.

The United States is now being swamped by would-be Presidents, in various stages of "considering" or "exploring" formal candidacies.

Virginia Gov. Douglas Wilder, who set up an exploratory campaign committee late last winter, has been popping up in politically strategic locations, like Iowa, generating reams

of media coverage across the country.

Likewise, the ultra-liberal Tsongas followed up his formal declaration with a series of nationwide speaking engagements.

Rep. Richard Gephardt (D-Mo.), who until recently had been protesting that he had no interest in the 1992 campaign, has abruptly started singing a different tune.

Ditto for New York Gov. Mario Cuomo.

Jay Rockefeller, currently serving as the senator from West Virginia, is also making noises about running. Just last March, Rockefeller had publicly denied any interest in the presidential race. But on May 7, after addressing the Democratic Leadership Council's convention in Cleveland, he told reporters, "I'm looking at the situation. The door is a little more open to me."

The list of the suddenly "undead" goes on. Sen. Albert Gore (D-Tenn.), Sen. Tom Harkin (D-Iowa), Arkansas Gov. Bill Clinton, and Washington, D.C. shadow Sen. Jesse Jackson, have all begun mooting an interest in the 1992 race.

### Still Bush Democrats

Does all this activity mean that the Democrats are offering a substantive alternative to George Bush? Specifically, have they come up with an economic program that can reverse the depression?

Hardly. With the exception of LaRouche, who is perhaps best known for his proposals for a global economic and cultural renaissance based on the principles of Alexander Hamilton and Friedrich List, the rest of the Democratic "wannabes" remain "Bush Democrats" at heart.

Take Tsongas, for example. His

83-page platform, "A Call to Economic Arms: Forging a New American Mandate," combines rhetorical support for reviving U.S. basic industry, with a completely contradictory insistence on slashing global population, elevating environmentalism to quasi-religious status, and establishing an "equilibrium" economy.

Douglas Wilder is another case in point. In what some observers believe is an attempt to compensate for being black, Wilder has adopted a "more fiscally conservative than thou" stance, slashing state spending on social services in hopes of appealing to conservative white Democratic voters.

"Bush Democratism" reigned supreme at the Democratic Leadership Council convention in Cleveland earlier this month. Founded in 1985 by self-styled Democratic centrists, led by Sen. Sam Nunn (D-Ga.), Sen. Chuck Robb (D-Va.), and Richard Gephardt, the DLC embarked for the first time this year on an aggressive grass-roots operation, and has set up local organizations in a number of key presidential primary states.

Addressed by Rockefeller, Gore, Wilder, Clinton, Gephardt, and Tsongas, the DLC convention adopted a policy declaration that might as well have been penned by the Bush White House staff.

The group's "New Choices" resolution not only endorsed Bush's latest project, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), it also called for adoption of a host of other Bush programs, ranging from strict new limits on government spending on social programs, to tenant ownership of public housing and school vouchers.

No wonder the local United Auto Workers (UAW) union picketed the meeting with signs reading, "One GOP is enough!"