

## Elephants and Donkeys by Kathleen Klenetsky

### The horsey set moves in

Pamela Harriman may have recently folded her political action committee, widely known as "Pam Pac," but she still aspires to being a Democratic kingmaker.

The widow of the late Averell Harriman hosted a behind-closed-doors meeting of top Democratic strategists and moneybags at her Middleburg, Virginia, estate in mid-June to review the party's prospects in the 1992 presidential elections.

Also attending the two-day meeting was a gaggle of current and potential presidential candidates, who trotted out to Middleburg to display their wares before the party muckety-mucks.

Paul Tsongas, Sens. Jay Rockefeller (W.Va.), Bill Bradley (N.J.), Tom Harkin (Ia.), Bob Kerrey (Neb.), George Mitchell (Me.) and Lloyd Bentsen (Tex.) were there, along with Reps. Richard Gephardt (Mo.) and Tom Foley (Wash.), and Gov. Bill Clinton of Arkansas.

Several other possible contenders—Sen. Al Gore (Tenn.), New York Gov. Mario Cuomo, Virginia Gov. Douglas Wilder, and Jesse Jackson—didn't show.

Although the meeting was off-limits to the press, party officials claimed that they wanted to start planning for 1992 because it has now become clear that Bush is no longer politically invulnerable.

"We've done a lot of polls, and I can assure you, Bush's support is skin-deep," said one party source. "Bush is vulnerable on the [Gulf] war, which is turning out not to have been a clean war. But he's really in trouble on economic issues."

Democratic National Committee Chairman Ron Brown told reporters

at a brief press conference at the meeting's end: "It is clear to us that President Bush is very vulnerable in 1992, because this administration has absolutely no domestic agenda."

Try as they might, however, the Democrats can't come up with an effective domestic agenda, either. The party is pushing a few sops in Congress, tax breaks for middle-class families chief among them. It has also embraced health care reform as a key issue. But the package unveiled by the party leadership in May is premised on the same lethal "cost containment" which has made the British national health system a virtual killing machine. This is hardly the kind of program that can galvanize the Democratic base.

### Third party option?

No wonder, then, that an anti-party revolt is gathering steam. While the Democratic elite was mingling with the horsey set in Virginia Hunt Country, several labor leaders were talking openly about forming a third party.

The *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* reported June 13 that labor, both local and national, was so angry over Dick Gephardt's decision to back Bush's free trade agreement with Mexico (NAFTA), despite the fact that it will lead to massive job and wage losses in the U.S., that serious talk is surfacing about forming a farmer-labor party.

The *Post-Dispatch* interviewed several top labor leaders, who railed against the Democratic Party for refusing to represent its traditional constituencies.

"There's a high level of frustration among labor with many leaders of the Democratic Party," Bob Kelley, president of the St. Louis Labor Council, told the paper. "Democratic

leadership appears to be becoming an oxymoron."

Kelley, who is not only an influential labor leader, but also belongs to the Democratic National Committee, added that he has "heard more talk about a labor party or a labor-farm coalition than I have in the past 15 years. And the guys who are doing the talking aren't the fringe, left-wing radicals who used to do the talking. It's more the moderates, the middle-of-the-road centrists."

Another area labor leader, Duke McVey, president of the Missouri AFL-CIO, echoed Kelley. "Some skeptics say we have one party—it's just two divisions of it," McVey said. "There's a frustration out there from working people that they're getting the shaft, maybe need to do their own thing."

"Basically, the Democratic Party has not delivered on a national basis. As time goes on and things get worse, the feeling from working people may be that they should articulate their own concerns."

Tony Mazzocchi, secretary-treasurer of the Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers International Union, has already set up an organization called Labor Party Advocates, which he describes as a "non-electoral party."

Mazzocchi told *EIR* that as soon as he's signed up 5,000 unionists, "we'll call a convention." He predicted that this would take place by the end of 1992. At that point, Labor Party Advocates will start fielding candidates.

"I've been polling union members across the country for three years, he said. "The result is the same: More and more people are alienated from the two parties, and are willing to break with existing institutions. . . . We need a national agenda for working people."