

## Voters take your choice: George Bush or a Bush clone

by Kathleen Klenetsky

The outcome of the latest round of presidential primaries suggests that the U.S. electorate may well be faced with a choice at the polls this November between George Bush and a George Bush clone, i.e., Arkansas Gov. Bill Clinton.

Between the March 10 Super Tuesday primaries, and the Midwest elections held the following week, President Bush and Governor Clinton edged significantly closer to clinching the nominations of their respective parties.

Despite his grossly anti-labor record, which includes support for right-to-work laws and the North American Free Trade Agreement, Clinton swept the two heavily unionized states of Illinois and Michigan March 18, taking approximately 50% of the vote in each.

With Paul Tsongas fading fast, the only media-designated "mainstream" Democratic candidate who will likely stay in the race through the June 2 California primary is Jerry Brown. Brown came in second in Michigan, largely because of union support, with 26% of the vote to Clinton's 50%.

On the Republican side, Bush, acting on his vow to do whatever it takes to win reelection, pulled out all the stops to keep Patrick Buchanan from scoring the one-third average he's been taking in previous primaries.

The President is now gloating that he's wrapped up the nomination. Bush issued a statement on March 17 crowing that the Michigan and Illinois votes "have pushed the delegate count to a level where my nomination is virtually assured."

The word from Clinton's camp is that the blow-dried *wunderkind*, who began his campaign by admonishing other Democratic candidates not to attack George Bush, shares the same certainty about his own future, but won't quite say so publicly.

### An opportunity squandered

The prospect of a Bush vs. Clinton face-off should send shivers up the spine of any U.S. citizen who doesn't want to

see his country continue its headlong plunge into economic and moral collapse.

This holds especially true for the Democratic Party, where disaffection among both rank-and-file and party insiders runs high over the prospects of fronting another presidential "loser."

In the midst of economic depression, it is now possible for the Democrats to mount a successful campaign for the White House, and, more importantly, to effect substantive policy shifts, which, like John F. Kennedy's investment tax credit, could help bring the depression to an end.

Yet, the party will squander that opportunity if it ultimately ends up giving the nod to "Slick Willy."

There are two main problems with Clinton. First is the "practical" question of his electability. The Democrats have demonstrated, with lemming-like regularity over the past two decades, an apparently infinite capacity for choosing a presidential candidate with absolutely no chance of winning. And with Clinton emerging as the designated front-runner, 1992 is shaping up as a continuation of this pattern.

As one wag put it (not referring only to his weight-gain problem): "Clinton's saddled with so much baggage that he needs a 747 jumbo jet to cart it around."

It is a well-known secret that the Bush gang wants the Democrats to nominate Clinton, because he would be such an easy target to scandalize into oblivion. The Bush campaign has already compiled a file on Clinton a mile thick; 35 researchers for the Republican National Committee's "opposition research team" reportedly have been put to work poring over every element of Clinton's background to add more dirt to the dossier.

The Bush team's strategy depends on holding back the scandal-mongering until *after* Clinton secures the nomination this summer, and then letting fly with one piece of dirt

after another once the Democrats have irrevocably committed themselves to a Clinton candidacy.

## No end to the Depression

The second, and much larger, problem is Clinton himself. Let's assume that Clinton ends up winning the Democratic nomination, manages to weather whatever sordid stories are unleashed during the general election campaign, and ends up in the White House.

This would be every bit as big a defeat for the country (and the Democratic Party) as a Bush victory.

One of the dirty secrets that has been carefully hidden by the media during the primaries is just how much Clinton resembles Bush in his policy orientation.

A Clinton presidency promises to continue more of the same deadly policies—economic and well as strategic—which have brought the United States to such a sorry pass under Bush's administration. The hairdo and accent would be different, but that's about all.

Indicative of the similarities, is the fact that Clinton began his candidacy by admonishing his fellow Democratic presidential hopefuls not to attack Bush. There was good reason why, and it had nothing to do with any misplaced sense of civility.

In fundamental ways, Clinton is a Bush Democrat *par excellence*. The illustrations are endless. For one, Clinton boasts of being the only one of the Democratic candidates who supported Bush's Persian Gulf war. In a recent poll of the presidential candidates' positions on whether economic sanctions should be continued against a devastated and starving Iraq, which was conducted by the Committee to Save the Children in Iraq, Clinton spokesman Bruce Reed said that Clinton "supports the U.S. sanctions" and believes that "lifting sanctions will not help the people of Iraq."

Clinton's brutality hardly ends there. This self-styled defender of civil rights and the minority community not only backs the death penalty but, for the sake of political gain, personally presided over the execution of a lobotomized black prisoner earlier this year—a sick stunt that makes Bush's manipulation of the Willie Horton story look angelic.

Despite Clinton's recent decision to go after Bush on the economy, there is little difference between his program and that of Bush. Indeed, Clinton, until recently, served as chairman of the Democratic Leadership Council, set up in 1985 to Republicanize the Democratic Party.

Where Bush has tried to cut back Social Security and Medicare, Clinton voted for a National Governor's Association resolution endorsing the same approach. Where Bush is a typical Republican right-to-work advocate, Clinton's labor record in Arkansas—which includes backing right-to-work laws—has been condemned by the head of the Arkansas AFL-CIO. Where Bush supports "free trade" and cooked up the hideous North American Free Trade Agreement that would send millions of U.S. industrial jobs to Mexican slave-

labor centers, Clinton has made backing NAFTA a keystone of his economic program.

About the only issue the two differ on is the foolish one of whether or not to enact a so-called middle-class tax cut. Clinton would have the country believe that his proposed tax cut—which would return about a dollar a day for the average family—will spark an economic recovery, at a time when the entire tax base is being destroyed by the depression.

## Clinton and Iran-Contra

There is an even more intriguing area where Bush and Clinton coincide: the Iran-Contra scandal. During the Reagan years, when Vice President Bush was running the Nicaraguan Contra program, Clinton actively supported a string of secret training camps and airstrips in western Arkansas that have been identified by eyewitnesses as hubs of Oliver North's guns-for-drugs trafficking "resupply" program in the Iran-Contra mess.

According to court records, eyewitness reports, and press accounts, North personally held a series of meetings in Little Rock, the Arkansas capital, in the early 1980s to set up the secret, illegal Contra weapons pipeline. One of the key players in that secret program was a former TWA pilot named Barry Seal, who worked for years for the Colombian drug cartels shuttling cocaine into the United States.

Seal's operation was based at Intermountain Regional Airport in Mena, Arkansas. Seal owned a small fleet of planes that reportedly ran weapons into the Contras in Central America and brought shipments of cocaine into the United States. Another player in the Arkansas network was Terry Reed, a former combat pilot in Laos who moved to Little Rock in the autumn of 1983 (reportedly at North's request) and set up a training base for Contra guerillas at Nella, Arkansas, located 11 miles from Mena.

Reed testified in 1989 that at least one of the early meetings at which the Nella camp was planned, and at which a number of Contra-related front companies were established, was attended by Roger Clinton, the brother of Gov. Bill Clinton, who was later busted for selling cocaine. According to Reed, similar meetings were attended by Don Lassiter, a Clinton friend and backer.

When Reed tried to pull out of the Contra resupply operation (after discovering that a company he nominally owned in Guadalajara, Mexico was smuggling cocaine into the United States), he was indicted by the U.S. Attorney in Kansas on charges that he had falsely claimed one of his airplanes had been stolen, in order to collect insurance money.

The Kansas indictment was set up by Buddy Young, the head of Governor Clinton's personal security detail. The case against Reed was dismissed by federal Judge Frank Theis, who accused Young of "reckless disregard for the truth." Last July, Reed filed a civil suit accusing Young and others of engineering a false prosecution to silence him.