

## Eye on Democrats by Anita Gallagher

### 'Hey, we were never a juggernaut'

Walter Mondale's well-publicized campaign steamroller is beginning to show signs of turning into a rickety piece of junk.

The news media decline to focus on the obvious—that Mondale is a sure loser and a treacherous snake to boot—but press reports of trouble and trepidation in his campaign organization are coming from all sides.

Mondale has fired his campaign coordinator in Iowa, a little less than one month before the nation's first caucus. The reason: The Mondale campaign has been a non-starter, despite the press hype. His aides say that reports of a big win in Iowa are overblown. "Hey, we were never the juggernaut that people thought we were," said one aide.

Aides are now openly worried that all the propaganda about Mondale's invincibility may have blown his balloon up too far; if he fails to live up to the media-created perceptions, Mondale suddenly looks like a loser—even if he wins the Feb. 20 caucus. And once the loser tag is on Mondale, it will be hard for him to shake it.

Iowa is known for rigged, stage-managed caucus results. The last two elections have featured major surprises—unknown Trilateral zombie Jimmy Carter winning the 1976 Democratic caucus and George Bush upsetting Ronald Reagan in the GOP 1980 caucus. Is somebody orchestrating a surprise for Mondale?

The key component of Mondale's vote-delivery machine, the AFL-CIO, is having trouble delivering. Labor is

way behind in setting up its Mondale-for-President phone banks in Iowa and in recruiting local coordinators. Nationally, AFL-CIO head Lane Kirkland's ability to deliver labor anywhere is questionable at best and Mondale is counting on Kirkland. These failures have produced some friction between Mondale and his labor "backers." The position of Iowa labor liaison to the campaign is now vacant.

Mondale's new campaign director in the state, Joe Trippi, trying to hold down expectations for the caucus balloting, stated, "If you ask me today which campaign is best equipped to turn out the vote, I'd say it is Alan Cranston's."

Our labor-union sources suggest that Mondale might be in even bigger trouble in Iowa than his aides will admit. For example, key leaders of the Iowa building trades are not only not doing anything to help the campaign, they are telling other people to stay away.

### Traps for Mondale in New Hampshire and New York

In New Hampshire, the biggest event of the primary season so far will be an all-major-candidate debate on Jan. 15 which now appears to be "everybody against Mondale." The three-hour debate will be broadcast live nationally.

Mondale originally planned to duck the debate, but had second thoughts, remembering the disaster that befell George Bush when he refused to appear at a similar event in 1980. Mondale generally does from poor to awful in such settings and his aides know it. His aides are telling the press that they fear everybody will gang up on poor Walter. Private meetings among the candidates to arrange such a Mondale trap are said to already have taken place.

Strange things may also be in preparation for Mondale in New York. To do well in the state, he must do well among three constituencies—labor, minorities, and Jewish voters. His delivery apparatus in all these areas is weak at best.

Labor is in worst shape. The head of the state AFL-CIO, Ray Corbett, has been eased out at the behest of Mondale loyalist, the unpopular Victor Gotbaum of AFSCME District 37. The fear was that Corbett would organize a sit-down strike against the AFL-CIO-endorsed Mondale, as he did to Jimmy Carter in 1980. Meanwhile, Gotbaum and AFSCME will come under "raiding attack" by the pro-Reagan Teamsters. One labor source predicts "bloody warfare" and few votes for Mondale.

Mondale's New York campaign chairman, Gov. Mario Cuomo, has let his lack of enthusiasm for the candidate be known in several ways. Cuomo gave several interviews late last year saying that unless things change dramatically, Reagan is a favorite for reelection. He criticized the Democrats for misestimating the mood of the country. Fear grows that Cuomo may be a "submarine" for Glenn.

Meanwhile, New York Mayor Ed Koch has also been decidedly unenthusiastic about the Democratic front-runner, and has shown some friendliness toward John Glenn's campaign. No one is predicting a setback for Mondale in New York, yet. But neither is anyone talking about a great victory. Again, if the right strings are pulled, Mondale is in trouble.

Mondale insiders are worried about candidates like George McGovern and Jesse Jackson. They have no chance of winning the nomination, yet appear content to wreck Mondale and promote maximum chaos.

"Nothing is decided yet," said one Democratic insider. "If and when Mondale starts to fall, it will be a long sudden drop."