

All-out war between the two Democratic parties in Texas

by Criton Zoakos

The May 5 primary election in Texas, which did not include a presidential primary, has made it more evident than ever before that there are two Democratic parties in this state, not one—and they are at war with each other. One is the Democratic Party of the voters which is made up of over half of the state's 6.5 million registered voters (voter registration in Texas is not by party affiliation). The other Democratic Party is that of the party-machine hacks, not more than 7,000 to 8,000 persons, whose job it is to steal votes, fix voting machines, manipulate voters, etc.

The primary election produced some very strange results which have now created an uproar. Vote recounts have been ordered in 68 counties. About a score of lawsuits has been filed to challenge the reported results of the election. Additional lawsuits are demanding that the primary election be held all over again. Some of these lawsuits may produce legal results which might constitute the basis for challenging the legitimacy of the Texas delegation to the Democratic national convention on July 16 in San Francisco.

This war between enraged Democratic voters and besieged party-machine hacks is likely to determine the calendar of political events between now and July 16. These events will include the following:

- On May 16, the Senate district caucuses will meet to select delegates for the state party convention to be held on June 15.
- On June 2, a run-off election will be held between the two top frontrunners in unresolved elections for a variety of local and state offices, including the Democratic candidate for the U.S. Senate.
- Finally, July 9 is the deadline for filing petitions for candidate for President of the United States on the "independent" line of the November ballot. LaRouche Democrats in the state have vowed to submit over 100,000 valid petition signatures before that date to put Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr. on the Texas ballot.

An uproar over the presidential caucuses

A pitifully small number of registered voters participated in the May 5 evening caucuses to select the Democratic nominee for President of the United States. The number of participants was so small that the state party organization and its chairman, Bob Slagle, have so far refused to divulge the

actual figures. An educated estimate by professional journalists has put the total of caucus participants at between 48,000 and 58,000—against 1.2 million voters who participated in the primaries and a total of 6.4 million registered voters. The reason for the low turnout is a bitterly contested party rule which says that when you go to the polling place to vote for every other office in the primary, you are not allowed to vote for the presidential candidate of your choice. Then when you participate in the evening presidential caucuses, you are not allowed in unless you first produce official proof that you voted in the Democratic primary earlier in the day.

This rule virtually limited participation in presidential caucuses to the 7,000-8,000 party-machine hacks, their spouses, their parents, and their children. As a result, the mass of the voters is in an uproar, especially the approximately 30% of them who comprise the state's voting minorities, Mexican-Americans and blacks. Many of those voting precincts of the state's total of 6,640 precincts which produced majorities for Jesse Jackson also passed resolutions demanding an end to the presidential caucus system and its replacement by a general presidential primary. These resolutions are supposed to be voted on by the state party convention on June 15-16. Their chances of passing are slim for two reasons. First, state party chairman Bob Slagle, his mentor Bob Strauss, former Special Trade Representative under Jimmy Carter, as well as the controller of both, Pamela Churchill Harriman, are violently against changing the party rules. Second, the delegates to the state convention will be persons who themselves have been selected on the basis of the crooked rule: To become a delegate to the state convention, you must first be elected a delegate at the presidential caucuses taking place at the precinct level. As a precinct delegate, you are then sent to the senate district caucuses; the 31 district caucuses then select their delegates to the state convention.

Democratic voters have grown so incensed about this unfair and dictatorial system, both before and after the primary election, that a vocal minority among party office holders, smelling trouble ahead, has taken to championing the cause of presidential primaries as opposed to caucuses.

This seemingly arcane issue is threatening to become the fuse which will blow the Texas Democratic Party machine sky-high in the next six to eight weeks—definitely before the national convention in San Francisco. It is intersecting the rivalry between nomination, and the Democratic governor, Mark White, who has vowed to go to San Francisco uncommitted.

The LaRouche factor in Texas

In the May 5 primary, nearly 200 LaRouche Democrats ran for various local offices in 25 counties of Texas's total of 245 counties. Their campaigns were based on LaRouche's famous half-hour nationally televised addresses and on printed materials of the LaRouche campaign. In all the counties in which they ran, they received between 46% and 20% of the vote, for a total of 125,000 votes. The counties in question



Henry Kissinger and the Democratic National Committee are feeling the heat from the LaRouche candidates' movement. Shown here, a Houston NDPC demonstration against Henry A. Kissinger.

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were a balanced representative mix of urban and rural areas. The LaRouche Democrat vote which was counted on a statewide basis was, on the average, 30% of the Democratic vote cast. Had there been a presidential primary rather than caucuses, LaRouche would have received at least 30% of the vote in a field of four competitors—a clear winner.

Even though the candidate himself has not as yet expressed any views on this, the LaRouche Democrats in the state have apparently taken matters into their own hands when they announced that they are launching a statewide petition drive to put LaRouche's name on the state's November ballot as an independent presidential candidate. The legal requirement for this is 44,000 petition signatures of registered voters. All voters are eligible, except for those who voted in the Republican primary. The petition and the application must be filed with the Texas Secretary of State not later than July 9, which is seven days before the Democratic national convention meets in San Francisco to select the presidential nominee.

There is widespread discussion among national Democratic Party circles that party chairman Charles T. Manatt, a bitter enemy of LaRouche, may not be kept on as chairman of the Democratic National Committee, even though party tradition dictates that the outgoing chairman be kept in place for the interim period between the convention and the general election. On the basis of this theory, Bob Strauss and Bob Slagle of Texas have been in contact with the governor of New York State, Mario Cuomo, and with Mayor Ed Koch of New York City to work out arrangements for the control of the next DNC chairman by the New York and Texas Democratic Party machines. As the hour of reckoning approaches, this Texas-New York deal is becoming more and more unlikely, as the Texas party organization is disintegrating at a growing rate. For one thing, any Texas delegation to be sent to San Francisco is bound to be split between the Mondale partisans from among the retinue of Bob Strauss and Bob Slagle, and those around Governor White who wish to go as uncommitted.

Beyond this inevitable split, however, it is not unlikely at all that any one of the numerous lawsuits now in litigation which challenge the May 5 primary may produce a legal finding which could cast grave doubts upon the very legitimacy of the Texas delegation, doubts which the national convention's Credentials Committee may have to seriously take into account.

Further, the legitimacy of the Texas delegation may well be challenged from a different direction: What if all those 125,000 registered Texas Democrats who voted for LaRouche decide to sign the petitions requiring LaRouche to be on the November ballot as an independent? This will be almost three times the number of registered Democrats who voted in the presidential caucuses of May 5 for Mondale, Hart, and Jackson combined. Who, then, according to the democratic principle of representation, would have the right to represent the Texas Democratic Party at the national convention? The machine-hack organization with its narrow power base of 7-8,000 apparatchiks and their families, or the Texas Democratic Party of the voters, 2 million-plus strong and in a state of revolt against the Strauss-Slagle-Harriman junta? This will most certainly make a very interesting legal case.

Beyond all this legalism however, there lurks the substantive political question: With LaRouche on the November Texas ballot as an independent, who as of May had a proven and counted 30% of the statewide vote, it is guaranteed that Walter Mondale (or his equivalent) could not possibly carry the state of Texas in November. This will be a known fact to the national convention's powerbrokers, so-called, one week before that convention opens. What is already known to these fellows is the fact that nobody in modern political history was ever elected President of the United States without winning the state of Texas.

This known fact is already strengthening the hand of Governor Mark White in his in-house rivalry against state party chairman Slagle, his mentor Bob Strauss, and Strauss's leading lady, Pamela Churchill Harriman.