

Elephants & Donkeys by Kathleen Klenetsky

Nunn's nyet dashes neo-conservative hopes

Poor Project Democracy! Sen. Sam Nunn's decision not to enter the presidential race has caused great weeping and gnashing of teeth among the Project Democracy gang, who had been counting on the Georgia Democrat to reassert their political power. The Ben Wattenbergs, George Wills, and other "neo-conservatives" have reacted to Nunn's decision with outrage and dismay.

Perhaps the most cataclysmic appraisal came from *Christian Science Monitor* columnist Joseph Harsch, who wrote Sept. 12 that, with Nunn out of the race, "It is now time for American voters to give serious thought to the respective merits of George Bush and Robert Dole, because the chances are that one or the other will be the next President of the United States."

Harsch reiterated the by-now-standard analysis that Nunn represented the Democrats' last best hope of recapturing key constituencies, the white Southerners and Northern working-class ethnics who fled the party in droves after the McGovernites took power in the 1970s. By virtue of his carefully cultivated "pro-defense" image, Nunn was supposed to stand out in stark contrast to the seven Democratic dwarfs, who differ only in the intensity of their commitment to selling out the country.

No matter that Nunn favors a return to SALT II, strangling the Strategic Defense Initiative, and pulling out American troops from Western Europe! His support of the drug-running Contras, and perhaps the fact that he knows how to pronounce Reykja-

vik, were deemed sufficient to qualify him as hawk-of-the-year.

Nunn's official reason for foregoing the presidential race—he was concerned that it would undercut his responsibilities as chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee and was afraid of its impact on his family—don't hold much water. The real reasons have yet to come to light. But it is interesting that he reached his decision shortly after returning from an Aspen Institute conference in Switzerland. The meeting, which ran Aug. 11-16, was part of an ongoing Aspen program designed to create an informal cadre group in Congress who will promote Aspen's Soviet appeasement policies.

Nunn seems to have received a new infusion of treachery from the seminar. On Sept. 2, he threatened to hold up ratification of the prospective INF treaty, unless the Reagan administration reneges on its commitment to the so-called broad interpretation of the ABM Treaty. If the administration were to concede, this would bring the SDI to a screeching halt. Is it possible that Nunn's controllers at Aspen and other centers decided that he couldn't win the nomination, and would be a lot more useful full-time in the Senate?

Jimmy Carter to the rescue?

With Nunn out of the race, attention is now focused on who might function as a substitute savior for the Democrats. Speculation is centering on Sen. Bill Bradley and New York Gov. Mario Cuomo—who heads off for Moscow Sept. 19, following a speech to a U.S.-Soviet conference in Chautauqua, New York which sounded so much like Neville Chamberlain that even the *New York Times* felt called

upon to criticize it. The *Times*, in a lead editorial Aug. 29, compared Cuomo's speech to the conference to that given by Bradley, and concluded that the latter was much more "realistic" in assessing Soviet intentions.

There's another candidate itching to step into Nunn's shoes: Jimmy Carter! According to the Aug. 28 *New York Post*, longtime cronies of the former President, who also happens to be Nunn's fourth cousin, are mounting a campaign to return him to the White House.

Leon Charney, a New York lawyer who was one of Carter's earliest supporters, plans to form a campaign committee and start seeking contributions. "I believe if there was a groundswell, if enough people asked him to run, he would do it . . . as a patriot," Charney told the *Post*. "Rosalynn would like him to run. She said he's the only man qualified to lead the Western world."

Will Gary Hart be back in?

Nunn's withdrawal wasn't the only development which shook the Democrats in August. There were also mootings that Gary Hart might get back into the race. Hart's former campaign manager, Bill Dixon, touched off speculation when he told a radio interviewer that Hart was interested in reviving his candidacy. If Hart did, said Dixon, he would run a "non-traditional" campaign.

Hart himself has refused to categorically rule out a candidacy; he is expected to make his intentions known on ABC's "NightLine" Sept. 8. Whether Hart is seriously interested in winning the Democratic presidential nomination, or is considering a "potemkin" campaign to qualify for FEC matching funds and pay off some of his campaign debt, is as yet unclear.