

## Eye on Washington by Nicholas F. Benton

### Medical flap costs Dukakis 10 points

In the wake of the international uproar over his mental health, Michael Dukakis's standing in the polls took a precipitous decline in early August. A CBS poll, released Aug. 9, showed that the 17-point lead Dukakis held coming out of the Atlanta convention had been cut by a whopping 10 points.

Conducted over the Aug. 8 weekend, the nationwide telephone poll of 1,004 registered voters showed Dukakis leading his Republican rival, George Bush, 49% to 42%.

Dukakis partisans tried to play down the findings, ascribing their candidate's decline to an expected downturn from his immediate post-convention high. But Duke's nosedive clearly resulted from the furor over his emotional fitness for the presidency, which dominated the international media for the first week in August.

The CBS poll found the electorate singularly unenthusiastic about both candidates. Only 36% of those queried expressed a strong preference, evenly divided between Dukakis and Bush, while the remaining 64% polled said they either had no interest in either candidate, or a weak preference at best.

Only one incident occurred during the short period since the previous polls: my question to President Reagan about whether Dukakis should release his complete medical history, and Reagan's historic response, "Look, I'm not going to pick on an invalid."

In a shameful effort to characterize the question as scurrilous (even

though similar questions have been put to every presidential candidate who's ever run), the media engaged in frantic damage control, including some vicious personal slanders of me and *EIR's* founder, Lyndon LaRouche.

When news of the Gallup Poll first broke Aug. 9, reporter Bob Schieffer of CBS-TV news noted that it was the first poll released since the "rumors that Dukakis received psychiatric care broke out into the public." By the next morning, however, any correlation between the poll and the question of Dukakis's mental health was edited out of every report. The *Washington Post* claimed that the nosedive was the result of a "natural leveling off of popularity a candidate enjoys right after their national convention."

Even the *Washington Times*, which claimed credit for having broken the story of the unanswered questions about Dukakis's mental condition, made no mention of a correlation between the change in the polls and Dukakis's mental condition.

Conservative columnists Evans and Novak, in their Aug. 8 column, also misjudged badly. "The incident seemed to end with a classic backfire, Dukakis apparently unhurt and the Bush campaign linked to Lyndon LaRouche." On the contrary, the emergence of the Dukakis mental health issue, and Dukakis's failure to effectively deal with it, was bound to hurt his popularity. This was conceded by one network, which noted a poll showing that 33% of the American voting public "is strongly prejudiced against anyone who has received psychiatric care becoming President."

Another poll, conducted in 1982 by the Field Service in California, and recalled in the *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, showed that voters would elect a candidate who was "homosexual, bankrupt, radical, uneducated, inexperienced, foreign, or a lawyer before

they would cast their votes for anyone who had seen a psychiatrist."

### 'I'm convinced he's hiding something'

A senior columnist for a major national news magazine confided to me Aug. 9 that he is "absolutely convinced Dukakis is hiding something."

He, like the *Wall Street Journal* in its Aug. 5 editorial, agreed that the question of Dukakis's medical history was "perfectly legitimate," and backed that up by recounting how candidates going back to John F. Kennedy were required by the press to provide excruciating details of their medical conditions during their campaigns.

"It has always been very common for the media to probe into the intimate details about a candidate's health, and candidates have always been forthcoming," he said. "There was Kennedy's Addison's disease, and the fact he received medication for it, and his back problems as well. There was the fact that Johnson had a heart attack in 1954, and was receiving medication. There was Mondale's high blood pressure and the medication he was taking. These were all the subject of the closest scrutiny by the press."

By contrast, he said, "Dukakis is the most closeted candidate for the presidency we've ever had." He said that he'd gone through the files at his magazine going back over 30 years and was amazed to discover that Dukakis is the first nominee of a major party who has not opened himself up to the press, who has not, he said, "kicked his heels up onto his desk and opened up to the press about whatever was on their minds."

"Dukakis is very secretive and guarded. He carefully controls every word. . . . I'm sure there's something he's covering up," he said.