A DEFENSE OF THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY

‘PROS’ AND PROGRESSIVES... by G. Mennen Williams

IT SEEMS to be an axiom of political journalism in America that presidential elections should be preceded by a spate of articles asserting: The difference between the parties is the difference between tweedledum and tweedledee—and there is too much twaddle in both parties, anyway.

Thus, one historian ascribes Lincoln’s commitment to freedom in the territories not to any ideological orientation, but rather to the fact that he had to satisfy “conservative Whigs like himself, abolitionists whom he regarded as a radical nuisance, Middle-Western Germans who distrusted Know-Nothings, and Know-Nothings who distrusted immigrants.”

Despite the continuous cry that each party is nothing more than a potpourri of politicians selected at random, the quadrennial political scientist will usually concede that were things as they should be, the Democratic Party would be the party of the liberals. This year is no exception. Robert Spivack, writing recently in The Nation (“Bourbons, Bosses and Brokers,” April 30 issue), had this to say:

... The Democratic Party is not a national party at all, but essentially a collection of powerful, local-interest and special-interest parties, with no common philosophy... The key to understanding the Democratic Party is to understand the way Lyndon Johnson operates in the U.S. Senate.

And writing in The Progressive, the editor of the New York Post opined: “In recent years, ‘compromise’ has become almost an end in itself, and it is the liberal who is deemed extremist when he voices any strength of conviction.” He warned:

... The moment is approaching for a full-scale reappraisal of whether the present political divisions of the country make any sense, and whether there can be any great liberal revival as long as liberalism remains essentially wedded to that divided house called the Democratic Party.

Perhaps one reason for the public confusion regarding the ideology of today’s Democratic Party is the cornucopia of candidates who entered the race prior to the convention. The plethora of would-be Presidents seems to have created a presumption among the commentators that where there is so much quantity there cannot be too much quality. And so there is a tendency not to listen too closely as Democratic candidate after Democratic candidate affirms his belief in precisely the programs advocated by the members of the Fourth Estate who are doing most of the complaining.

This is not the place to debate candidate merits, but I think Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., has done well to remind us of Walter Lippmann’s observations regarding Franklin D. Roosevelt:

An amiable man with many philanthropic impulses, but he is not the dangerous enemy of anything. He is too eager to please. ... Franklin D. Roosevelt is no crusader. He is no tribune of the people. He is no enemy of entrenched privilege. He is a pleasant man who, without any important qualifications for the office, would very much like to be President.

IT IS MY belief that rarely has the Democratic Party been in better ideological shape than it is today. I do not contend that liberalism has completely won the day, that Senator Eastland has been converted by Senator Humphrey or that Senator Johnson’s secret candidate for the Presidency is Senator Proxmire. What I do submit is that there is an unmistakable, healthy trend towards programmatic liberalism, and that throughout the party there is a new and exciting concern with issues. We are on the eve of a convention preceded by a series of quiet but significant victories for the liberal forces. Liberals now have a unique chance to characterize the Democratic Party and help determine the destiny of the country for the next decade.

These liberal successes have been largely organizational rather than personal. As a result, they have had little political sex appeal and so the headlines have been few and far apart. Furthermore, many of these events have occurred West of the Hudson and Potomac rivers, and hence outside the traditional newsmaking capitals. But telling liberal triumphs at the state, regional and national levels may very well have significant repercussions at the coming convention.

At the state level, a new kind of Democrat is emerging. In Maine, New Hampshire, Michigan, North Dakota, Washington, Kansas and other states there have been traveling platform hearings with issues rivaling personalities in the market place of public attention. Increasingly, in these states and in others such as Iowa, California, Wisconsin and Minnesota (with its Democratic Farmer-Labor Party), the kind of “pros” that have power are the progressives. Fund-raising on a year-round basis, with devices such as sustaining party memberships, and...
broad-based small contributions, are encouraged, and in turn programmatic participation replaces the old patronage-pillar of party strength. The Wall Street Journal, somewhat incredulously, has reported the Michigan self-image (it applies as well to many Democratic organizations throughout the country):

Michigan Democrats have developed a jargon all their own. They call themselves "Programmatic Democrats," devoted to a "liberal program rather than to the mere acquisition of power. They contend they are "issue-oriented" rather than "patronage-oriented." They make no secret that they would like to see the national party embrace this philosophy. The Michiganders have been critical of more traditional "machine" Democrats.

At the regional level, Democrats have been gathering in a series of conferences with far-reaching significance. There was a time when the Democratic Midwest Conference, which represents 458 delegate votes at the national convention, wouldn't touch an issue with a ten-foot pole (unless the equivalent of ten feet of public-opinion polls had first ascertained that it was non-controversial); yet at its gathering in Detroit earlier this year, the representatives of fourteen states sat three days debating foreign policy (with Chester Bowles as chairman), economic growth (with Leon Keyserling as chairman), urban affairs (with Mayor Richard Lee as chairman), and civil rights (with Congressman John Brademas as chairman). The tenor of the conference is illustrated by its civil-rights plank, which pledges "the full use of the power and prestige of the Executive Branch of Government and of the Congress to uphold the Supreme Court" and to

1. Provide effective guarantees of the right to vote in local, state and federal elections.
2. Complete desegregation of public schools and all other tax-supported public facilities.
3. Eliminate discrimination in housing because of race, religion or national origin.
4. Secure to all persons equal and non-segregated access to commercial places of public accommodation.
5. Eliminate discrimination in em-

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**AS FOR THE REPUBLICANS...**

[Senator Goldwater, writer of the following letter, is a chief spokesman for the Republican Right, and author of The Conscience of a Conservative.]

Dear Sirs: It is difficult to comment on Robert Spivack's article, "How Modern is Republicanism" [The Nation, June 18], because Mr. Spivack obviously doesn't understand the basic tenets of the Republican Party. This is not an unusual situation, nor should it be considered derogatory to Mr. Spivack. It seems to be a common failing among most of the writers who grew up during the one-party days of Roosevelt and Truman.

First, Mr. Spivack assumes that in order for the Republican Party to be successful, it must achieve that success through a "sizable group of intellectuals." I don't think either party has a corner on intellectuals. I think intellectuals choose their party with the same discretion as non-intellectuals.

A bit further along, Mr. Spivack asks: "How deep is Goldwaterism? And what does it portend for the future of the GOP?" That is the end of any discussion of my Republican philosophy. What he has done here is to resort to a word — "Goldwaterism" — hoping that, without explanation, it will mean something to the general public. I stated in the preface of my book, The Conscience of a Conservative, that "this book is not written with the idea of adding to, or improving on, a conservative philosophy."

[It would seem] that Mr. Spivack will never be satisfied with government unless government is in a constant turmoil of change. While he doesn't specifically say so, I am strongly inclined to believe that he does not recognize that crises are caused by men, not conditions. He believes further that only the federal government can correct these conditions. It is probably here that his philosophy and mine take off in opposite directions: I feel that man can solve his own problems and, in doing so, can overcome crises and conditions.

Mr. Spivack indicates that Mr. [Herbert] Brownell failed to make something of the Republican Admin-

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**Mr. Spivack Answers**

Dear Sirs: Unlike Senator Goldwater, I believe the Republicans have suffered many of their defeats because only occasionally — for about three months every four years — do they talk like liberal Democrats. To even the most innocent voter, this quadrennial wooing can scarcely seem the height of political passion.

Robert G. Spivack
Washington, D.C.

July 9, 1960
The Democratic Midwest Conference took on its new look only after a parliamentary victory by that organization's constitutionalists at a Kansas City gathering in the fall of 1959. Now the conference is a significant edifice on the Democratic Party's landscape and its presence has an effect on state party organizations, on other regional groups such as the Democratic Western Conference, and on the National Party organization. Its members will keep in touch through the Midwest Conference Liaison Committee at the National Convention.

At the national level, perhaps the most significant development has been the maturation of the Democratic Advisory Council. Despite initial rebuffs, the council has gone on to grow. And as things have turned out, it has served consistently as the liberal conscience of the party, issuing over half-a-hundred documents, each swiftly circulating among the nation's political pace-setters. Topics have ranged from Eisenhower's inept handling of the Fau bus fiasco to the creation of a National Peace Agency.

IT SEEMS to me that the growth of the Advisory Council and its special committees (at last count there were 225 top-echelon participants) both reflects and encourages the surge of liberalism within today's Democratic Party. National Chairman Paul Butler has announced his intention to ask the convention to endorse the council's many policy proclamations, and make it a permanent party agency. This is the kind of non-spectacular institutionalization of liberalism which counts. It undoubtedly helped generate enthusiasm for the new Democratic Liberal Study Group which was formed in the Congress.

Commentators who point to the party's "Bosses, Bourbon and Brokers" are ignoring our Programs, Policies and Progressivism. Now I recognize that liberalism, like bourbon, can be served in a variety of combinations. Yet the fact that a bow in the liberal direction is part of the toll exacted at the Democratic Presidential gate, indicates to me which segment of our party is on the upbeat.

Let us not despair on the eve of a convention which can culminate in a crucial conquest for the party's programmatic liberals—but will do so only if there is maximum energy and effort directed towards that end.

LIMITATIONS OF DIPLOMACY... by J. David Singer

NOW THAT the hue and cry over the Summit collapse has begun to dwindle, it might be appropriate to see whether any important lessons are to be learned from that disenchanted experience. As might have been expected, each side has laid the blame on the other, primarily because of concern with what has come to be called "world opinion." Furthermore, a staggering number of hypotheses have been advanced by those whose role it is to explain and predict political events. Surprisingly, a considerable number of commentators have shown enough sophistication to suggest that Soviet domestic politics may have been the decisive factor. Without denying that other forces may well have been at work, let us look into the possible role which domestic politics may have played on both sides in this and other diplomatic debacles.

I refer to the frequent allusions to Soviet domestic complications as "surprising" because there has always been a tendency, especially in this country, to view the USSR as a monolithic system in which all power lies in the hands of a dictator and his clique. The fact is, of course, that the foreign policy of all nations is essentially one of compromise—the result of the pushing and pulling of a multitude of forces, some internal and some external. There may be less partisanship in foreign policy-making than in domestic, but partisanship is always present, whether the state be democratic, Fascist, Communist, or feudal.

Domestic forces infringe on diplomacy most obviously in the field of national security. National defense requires money, men and moral support. The people must be persuaded to pay their taxes, enlist in the military services (or accept conscription), acquiesce in government-al encroachment on hitherto private domain, tolerate a diminution of civil liberties, and (more recently) learn to live with an increasingly radioactive atmosphere. Neither Americans nor Russians are born believing that the other represents a threat; this is something that must be learned. And while the learning may be relatively easy, given the universal and eternal tendency toward ethnocentrism, it still must be helped along. This role is performed to a great extent by government, even in societies where the information media are essentially independent of governmental control. After all, the media will give far greater coverage to the utterances of a governmental official than to those of the private citizen; the latter may be more knowledgeable, but he is clearly less "newsworthy." And in the United States, the government has at its command the genteel and informal technique of withholding information from uncooperative and difficult reporters and publishers. Thus, given the need to mold opin-

J. DAVID SINGER, Professor of Political Science at Michigan University, is currently serving as consultant in international relations at the Naval War College. The views expressed in this article are his own, and do not reflect official policy.
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