

Opinion/Commentary/Letters

System almost perfect for Carter

WASHINGTON — If proof were still needed of the impotence and irrelevance of political party organizations in the era of the personalized presidency, last week's meeting of the Democratic National Committee would be Exhibit A.



David S. Broder

The leadership of the Democratic party gathered in the nation's capital for the first time since the day after President Carter's inaugural. It was an important time for the young administration.

Carter's soaring personal popularity was being tested on two fronts. In the Democratic Congress, action on his economic stimulus package — his basic response to the problem of unemployment that was so central to his campaign — had been brought to a halt by a combination of conservative doubts and water-project politics.

In Moscow, the President's most important foreign policy initiative — the bid to halt the nuclear arms race — had been rebuffed by Soviet leaders, raising grave questions about the future of America's international relations.

In a healthy political system, a President facing that situation would have turned to his party leaders for both advice and support in meeting a challenge that involved them almost as much as it did him.

Instead, Carter ignored the meeting of his party's national committee. And its members demeaned themselves by a public display of petulance over the pettiest patronage matters. A more dramatic example of the breach between presidential leadership and party responsibility

could not have been staged. While Carter was on his lonely pedestal, the politicians were scrambling at his feet for jobs.

Except for a 20-minute visit from Vice President Mondale, there was nothing but the patronage squawks to tell a visitor that the men and women of the Democratic National Committee had any connection with the government of the world's most powerful nation. Nominally, they represented the party in power; in reality, as Mondale's talk reflected, they were a roomful of paper tigers, easily fobbed off with a few jokes.

Adapting easily to such treatment, the committee members focused on the parochial business of apportioning some largely empty titles and appointments among themselves and their friends.

Great emphasis was placed on the "victory" of blacks in gaining 10 seats on the party's executive committee. But not one word was said about the consequences to the Democratic Party of Carter having named to the top positions in the Justice Department two of his own political pals, Griffin Bell and Peter Flaherty, who were opposed by the nation's largest

and most responsible civil rights organization, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

Labor, another vital part of the Democratic coalition, was "rewarded" with its ten executive committee seats. But not one voice was raised at the party meeting to ask where the administration was going on minimum-wage legislation, or common-site picketing, or the issue of foreign imports.

At one point, someone did suggest to Carter's handpicked Democratic national chairman, Kenneth B. Curtis, that it might be a good idea for him to send a copy of the Democratic platform to members of Congress and the administration, with a suggestion that they read it.

Curtis said he'd see if he could hunt up some copies of the platform, but added, with a modesty that becomes his position, "I'm not sure they'd appreciate my telling them what to read."

There's nothing new about this. The other modern-era Presidents have treated their party with equal contempt. And why not? They don't need the party for anything — they think.

Jimmy Carter won the Democratic nomination in the primaries, with his own organization, and graciously accepted the surrender of the Democratic Party at Madison Square Garden. He immediately picked up a \$20 million Treasury check for his campaign and never had to give another thought to the party that nominated him. In the White House, he has sought to govern, not by strengthening his party

alliances, but by projecting himself directly to the public through television.

It was no different for the Republicans with Eisenhower and Nixon, or the Democrats with Kennedy and Johnson. The party leaders, so-called, just have to keep their fingers crossed, knowing they will share only meagerly in a President's success but will suffer the full consequences of his failure.

There are a few people around who nourish the dream of seeing a political party strong enough to sustain a President in times of trouble and confident enough to restrain him when his misjudgments threaten his party with ruin.

A number of those advocates of party responsibility — some of them active politicians, some of them academics — have found places on the Democratic Party commission assigned to evaluate the current presidential primary system. The commission is named for its head, Michigan Democratic Chairman Morley Winograd.

If there is any chance for the Democratic party leaders to reclaim their place in the sun, it lies in the Winograd Commission finding some way to take the runaway power of the proliferating presidential primaries. Only if the politicians recapture a voice in selecting the President will they have any influence with him.

But don't make any bets on this happening. Jimmy Carter has pronounced the present system "almost perfect." And for him, in this spring of high popularity, it is.

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Hopes still running very high for U.S.-Soviet arms limitation

WASHINGTON — President Carter wants to end the nuclear arms race and to set the superpowers on a course to wipe all the doomsday weapons off the face of the earth.

But his first attempts to persuade the Soviets that there is a better way than the balance of terror are being written off as a failure by old-line diplomats.

In the 1950s, Russian leaders repeatedly called for "general and complete disarmament." But those

were the days of clear American nuclear superiority.

President Richard Nixon changed the strategy at the start of his administration from "superiority" to "sufficiency." Since then, U.S.-Soviet

Commentary

negotiations for offensive nuclear arms limitation have centered on parity, if such a thing is possible.

But now, Carter has introduced a new element — a reduction of the arsenals and a retreat from development of even more sophisticated missiles and first-strike capabilities. He is trying to put a cap on the arms competition before the technological explosion makes that an impossibility.

Kremlinologists and the pundits are critical of Carter's package of proposals, but even more so of his approach to the Soviets. They say that kid gloves and greater secrecy would have been more appropriate; that the Politburo should not have been caught off guard by dramatic new proposals; that Carter has naively put the Russians on the defensive.

His critics also say Carter has clouded the carefully nurtured atmosphere of détente by sending Secretary of State Cyrus Vance to Moscow with radically new proposals, and no advance warnings.

Carter's diplomatic advisers see it differently. They say that since the election, Carter has signaled his intention to seek more far-reaching goals in arms control than his predecessors. Furthermore, they say Carter does not view the Vance mission as a bust.

"Jimmy is a patient guy who thinks of the long haul," said one aide. He doesn't mind one step backward to take two steps forward.

He's looking to long range.

his and the secretary's. A team of

Both Vance and National computer program Affairs Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski insist they did not want the effort to go beyond established

On the positive side, some such as

With U.S.-Soviet arms limitation talks summing next month, the news is "no panic."

Readers' forum

Guest viewpoints, in small, maybe a

• Typed triple space, 10 lines, 100 characters, 60 characters, 100 lines, 100 lines

McDonald 217, College Station, Texas, 77843.

Slouch

by Jim Earle



"NOW THERE'S A GUY WHO REALLY WANTS TO BE ELECTED!"

Coleman hearing 'was a joke'

Editor: In reference to Wednesday's senate nominating committee meeting on the appointment of Dr. John B. Coleman to the Board of Regents, there are a few points I'd like to bring up.

First of all, no one seemed concerned with the welfare of Texas A&M. All that was discussed dealt with the morality of abortion, which all people who testified insisted was as bad as Nazi Germany killing Jews.

On Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday Aggie Blood Drive was held in the Memorial Student Center (MSC). Although I did see advertisements in The Battalion, I never read a story about what Aggie Blood Drive was all about.

Also, last Saturday starting at 2 p.m. and lasting until 6 a.m. Sunday morning, Alpha Phi Omega, a National Service Fraternity on cam-

reduce the number of abortions needed and certainly should be considered less "immoral" than abortions.

All in all, the meeting was a joke. I wish more Aggies could have been there. It just didn't seem to show enough concern over our university.

— Scott Gordon '79

What about campus reports?

Editor: Last week two activities took place on the TAMU campus which were never reported in The Battalion.

Also, we are limited to a certain extent in what we can cover because of the limited size of our reporting staff. The editors have to make decisions concerning priorities in coverage as we cannot report everything that happens on campus.

We ordinarily try to give advance notice of events to our readers. Any oversights are not intentional or deliberate.

Advertisement for Watercolors of the Southwest exhibition at TAMU.

Advertisement for Needlepoint at its finest! by The Owl and Spinning Wheel.

Advertisement for The Battalion newspaper, including staff list and contact information.

Advertisement for Embrey's Jewelry, specializing in Aggie Rings and Diamonds.

Advertisement for Happy Cottage, featuring Easter gifts and wooden figurines.

Large advertisement for CELEBRATE LIFE! at the First Baptist Church, featuring musical and drama.

Advertisement for The Peanut Gallery, announcing it is open Sundays with 5c beer and 25c bar drinks.

Advertisement for Wyatt's Cafeteria, listing menu items for Friday, Saturday, and Sunday.