

IN SHORT

Critical support for Israel

Unswerving support of the Israeli government has long stood alongside apple pie and motherhood as a crucial issue that only foolhardy U.S. office seekers would line up against. Yet a recent poll indicates that the Israel lobby may be losing control of their most effective bargaining chip—the allegiance of Jewish voters in the U.S. *The American Jewish Committee*—a mainline New York organization that publishes the neo-conservative organ *Commentary*—reports that while 90 percent of U.S. Jews still call themselves “pro-Israel,” many have serious doubts about Israeli policies. Forty-eight percent said they are often troubled by these policies, compared to 29 percent who weren’t. Fifty-one percent said Israel should suspend settlements on the West Bank, while only 28 percent disagreed. And a whopping 70 percent feel Israel should negotiate with the PLO under certain conditions while 17 percent opposed such talks.

Pocketbook pacifists

Last April Joseph and Barbara Jenson of Baltimore included a personal appeal with the 1982 federal tax return that said their religious convictions preventing them from contributing the portion of their taxes they calculated would go toward the U.S. military. So imagine their surprise when the Jensons, who say they are Roman Catholic pacifists, received a refund check last month for \$4,741 from the Internal Revenue Service—which included the amount they claimed as a credit plus \$202 in interest. By making their tax return public, the Jensons risk an audit. But, they wrote in their appeal to the IRS, “The penalty is a small price to pay for the privilege of following and obeying God who gives life and peace.” An IRS spokesman said it is likely that the agency will investigate the Jenson’s refund in the future. The Jenson’s, however, consider the case closed. They’ve already donated most of the money to a Catholic Church program for world peace and justice and to a religious center.

Willing to take the Risk

Last April when the National Commission on Excellence in Education released its report, *A Nation at Risk*, President Reagan praised its findings, saying that they echoed his own beliefs. The Commission report made clear that while action at the local level is essential to improving the nation’s schools, the federal government must remain committed to protecting certain target groups of students, namely “the gifted and talented, the socioeconomically disadvantaged, minority and language minority students, and the handicapped.” If these echo Reagan’s conclusions, he’d have a hard time proving it. His right-wing appointees who occupy key positions in the Department of Education have done all in their power—which is considerable—to destroy the programs that aid just those target groups. *Common Cause Magazine* reports that since 1980, programs in bilingual education have been cut by 28 percent; with another 32 percent slated for 1984. Substantial cuts in funding for the handicapped, and calls for the elimination of programs addressing women’s educational equity, Indian education and civil rights training and assistance centers have been made in recent months, leading one to question how far the current administration’s commitment to “excellence in education” goes.

A piece of cake

Attempting to counteract rampant cutbacks in funding for social programs, a coalition of concerned citizens took its inspiration from the implicit attitude of the Reagan administration when planning the first national “Let Them Eat Cake” sale. On October 3, local groups in 100 U.S. communities set up stands in shopping malls, public parks, civic center plazas and on street corners that featured such appropriate delicacies as Reaganomics fortune cookies, fund raisin bread and trickle-down layer cake, its green frosting never reaching the bottom layer. In many cities, such carnival games as the “Help James Watt Put His Foot in His Mouth” shoe toss games ran beside the bake sales. The national event, conceived by Washington lawyer Ira Nerken, varied in its focus between fundraising and consciousness-raising, according to local planners’ discretion. In Eugene, Ore., Grateful Dead band members auctioned off their creation, a “Grateful to be Alive” cake, while in Paterson, N.J., using another strategy, organizers set up booths outside a health center and a welfare office, giving free cake and coffee to anyone who registered to vote. Numerous politicians did not fail to get their fingers in the cake, with such names as Sen. Daniel Moynihan (D-N.Y.), Rep. Robert Kastenmeier (D-Wis.) and St. Paul, Minn., Mayor George Latimer vending their concoctions alongside those of their constituents.



Scrapping some bombs is NATO ‘goodwill’ ploy

GENEVA—As usual, American officials ignored the women who formed a “peace chain” last month between the Soviet and U.S. delegations in Geneva to express their desire for agreement that would prevent deployment of Pershing II and Cruise missiles. The women had come to Geneva on a month-long march from West Berlin. Welcomed by the Swiss Peace Committee and joined by women and men from other deployment countries, as well as from Spain, Sweden and North America, they held a loose “alternative disarmament conference” of their own September 18.

The women, who were diverse in their lifestyles and attitudes, seemed to share an unbridgeable distance from power and a readiness to make up for this helplessness with determination.

This was most strikingly illustrated by Andrea Elukovich, the San Francisco woman who chose to end her 43-day “Fast for Life” at the conference. Speaking in Geneva of the need to get in touch with a “higher power” in order to find the strength for the mighty task of “saving the world from impending destruction,” she recommended fasting as a way to achieve this, and suggested that people fast once a week and give the money saved to help feed the poor.

Since most of the peace movement was uneasy, or downright hostile, about the “Fast for Life” as a form of action, people were happy to see it end without tragedy. The fasters explained that the risk to their own lives only illustrated the risk to all our lives if the Pershing II and Cruise missiles are deployed. Their action also illustrated poignantly the physical weakness they were trying to overcome by moral strength and sheer will power.

At the women’s conference, Christa Randzio Plath, vice president of Socialist International Women from the German Social Democratic Party, proposed a political objective: the interna-

tional women’s peace movement should work to get representatives (not just some “token woman”) into the governments of their respective countries as cabinet ministers for disarmament. They would work for the real thing, instead of the sort of negotiations that so far have only “controlled more and more arm-

ament.” The women attending the meeting did not try to resolve the great diversity of expectation within the peace movement as to the outcome of the Geneva talks on “intermediate range nuclear forces” (INF). Many still seem to be expecting an agreement that will stop deployment of the NATO missiles, and are actually



Women peace marchers in Geneva

wondering how the movement can digest such a victory.

Others are wondering how it can digest the defeat when deployment occurs at the end of the year. And still others worry about an “interim solution” that would allow partial deployment and seem to give the peace movement a partial victory, yet perhaps dividing and silencing it.

In and out of the peace movement, there seems little awareness of the Reagan administration’s determination to go ahead with deployment as part of a precise and firm shift in NATO strategy. Many people still seem to think that all that is behind the arms race is “superpower pride,” which can be assuaged by face-

Andrea Elukovich ended her publicized anti-arms fast at a peace rally in Geneva.

saving devices or public opinion.

NATO is getting ready to announce the retirement of 1,000 “tactical” nuclear weapons in its psychological war against the peace movement. This scrapping of short-range nuclear weapons is in fact part of the NATO “double decision” of December 1979. It fits in with a strategic shift of the battlefield from Western to Eastern Europe. With the transition by NATO from a defensive to an offensive posture, NATO will no longer prepare to repulse attack at the German-German border, but to carry the war into Eastern Europe.

This new strategy is known as the “Rogers doctrine,” after NATO supreme commander U.S. Gen. Bernard Rogers, or “Air-

land battle.” Tactical nuclear weapons are too short range to fit into this posture. That is why they will be scrapped. Yet NATO is getting ready to sell this move as a great “unilateral nuclear disarmament” gesture. This “good-will” gesture is likely to pay off, especially since around the same time the Russians, if they live up to their threats, will be increasing their nuclear arsenal in Eastern Europe precisely in order to counter the new NATO strategy and make sure that the nuclear battlefield will be located in Western Europe. This will give American and NATO propagandists a new bonanza in pointing to the Soviet threat.

—Diana Johnstone

By Joan Walsh

WASHINGTON

U.S. REP. KATIE HALL (D-IND.) stood before a portrait of General Dwight Eisenhower in the Washington Hilton Military Room, sharing electoral strategies with a standing-room-only crowd of would-be women candidates and campaigners at the annual National Organization for Women (NOW) conference the first weekend in October. Eisenhower, for the record, was the first American president to inspire a notable (if not then named) electoral gender gap—he won the presidency with 6 percent more support from women than men—but this year it's unlikely the general himself could swing a female voting majority back to the Republicans.

Declaring the defeat of Ronald Reagan in 1984 its first priority, NOW announced at the conference its intent to endorse a Democratic primary candidate before the end of the year, the first such endorsement in its 16-year history. In response, the six major Democratic contenders who addressed the convention pledged their support to virtually every item on the 250,000-member group's agenda, from the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) and pay equity to—theoretically, at least—selection of a female vice president.

The NOW-Democratic alliance is a relationship born of mutual need. Women need to see Reagan defeated, and the Democrats need their votes to do it.

"We can't win without you," Walter Mondale told the 2,000 conference delegates, and his rivals obviously agreed.

But even as the endorsement decision was making headlines, NOW was beginning to deal with its implications: how to maintain its organizational integrity, keep attention focused on its issues and avoid being Democratic hostages while playing anyone-but-Reagan politics.

The weekend was an unequivocal success for a group that just 15 months ago suffered a stinging setback in the defeat of the ERA. In some ways, though, the unsuccessful ERA campaign put NOW in its current strong political position. Having made ERA passage its top goal, the group almost immediately added electoral work to its lobbying, learning quickly that the only way to move confirmed anti-ERA legislators was to vote them out. That nationwide ERA network outlived the amendment and played an important role in the November 1982 elections. NOW's unsuccessful Florida ERA machine wound up helping to double the number of women in the state House. In non-ERA Illinois, enough NOW-backed state legislators were elected to have passed the amendment had it not expired. In congressional and gubernatorial races all over the country, NOW's work was credited with widening the gender gap for the Democrats.

The convergence of NOW's growing electoral clout and Reagan's plummeting approval rating among women made it inevitable that the group would try to

channel that anti-Reagan vote with a presidential endorsement. And with Democrats anxious to harness the organized women's vote—they trooped to San Antonio in July for a convention of the bipartisan but anti-Reagan National Women's Political Caucus—there was never any doubt that the major candidates would trip over each other on the way to the NOW conference. But for all its amity, the weekend also showed that most of the Democrats, despite the standing ovations and mutual admiration at the Washington Hilton, have a lot to learn about feminist politics, and that NOW has to learn how to teach them.

Democrats' designs.

It's unfortunate how apt the whole catalogue of traditional mating metaphors are for describing male Democrats' designs on the women's vote this season. "So you'd say Gary Hart has satisfied you," a woman reporter asked coyly after NOW President Judy Goldsmith praised a recent Hart speech at a press conference.

But courting is the obvious word to describe the Democrats' approach to NOW. The six who spoke pledged devotion to the organization and commitment to its goals. There were notable differences among them, however, and the contrasts point up differing analyses of the gender gap and NOW's role in it.

All six speeches included ringing endorsements of women's rights, denunciations of the Reagan administration's transgressions and a commitment to better stands on women's issues, social spending and defense programs. But the proportions of each rhetorical ingredient differed significantly. Frontrunner Mondale, who had just won AFL-CIO back-

Losing the ERA fight gave NOW power, by teaching electoral strategy.

ing and a Maine straw vote, is considered the favorite for NOW's endorsement. He moved into his speech by declaring, "I am a feminist," and blended a heavy emphasis on ERA, reproductive rights and pay equity with commitments to "halt the feminization of poverty, bring the gunboats home from Central America and push the nuclear freeze"—issues the pollsters say are widening the gender gap.

Alan Cranston and George McGovern, on the other hand, relied too heavily on the economic and foreign policy explanations for women's aversion to Reagan. Cranston was hissed when he called the prevention of nuclear war "the most important women's issue." (And he didn't help his cause by kissing Goldsmith as he left the podium. You could hear women thinking, "He wouldn't do that to Lane Kirkland.")

McGovern delivered a forceful nine-point summary of his presidential priorities that set him admirably apart from

WOMEN

Gender gap gives NOW new power

the pack on most issues, but unexpectedly he saved his women's agenda for last. Later, an eloquent account of how his liberal stands on women's issues cost him his South Dakota Senate seat in 1980 was wasted on reporters in a post-conference press briefing.

The standouts were Gary Hart and John Glenn. (Ernest Hollings, with a spotty women's record, was invited and attended mostly out of courtesy; anti-choice Reuben Askew wasn't asked.) Hart got it all right. With an eye to the NOW conference, he had addressed Americans for Democratic Action the previous weekend and told them women's rights had to top the party's agenda. And he repeated that pledge before the NOW audience. He got the biggest hand of the day by remarking he would be "proud to run with a woman—on either end of the ticket." With the best record on women's issues of all the candidates, Hart's only hope for major organizational support rests with NOW. Although Mondale's electability will likely outweigh the Coloradoan's slightly better positions, Hart's conference performance only helped his cause.

Glenn's speech was the big surprise, for better and worse. He appeared most astute about what NOW wanted to hear, stressing his women's rights record, support for women candidates, his commitment to restoring cuts in social programs for women despite his fiscally conservative background. He even quoted Elizabeth Cady Stanton: "To men, their rights and nothing more; to women, their rights and nothing less."

But he flubbed his splashdown. In response to a closing question about why the ERA failed, he responded with a "challenge," telling the crowd, "We all loafed a little bit on the ERA.... The other side outthusted us."

"Maybe you did, buddy," women shouted angrily in response. And at a reception immediately following his speech, one woman after another on the receiving line chided Glenn for his criticism. Betty Friedan grabbed his hand firmly and advised him, "Maybe you didn't work hard enough, but we did."

Glenn nervously assured her he meant "we, the Democratic leadership" and immediately put out a press release to that effect.

Glenn's blunder was the most graphic evidence that the Democratic candidates are going to have to size up their female constituency more carefully. "He may not have understood how many of us gave up time for the ERA," Goldsmith said later. The flap served notice to the Democrats that while the pollsters may

find Reagan's economic and military politics more relevant to the gender gap than women's issues, NOW members and their political action committees (PACs) do not.

Running women.

Although the visits by NOW's male presidential suitors grabbed most of the headlines, more conference time was actually spent discussing women's candidacies, from local offices to the vice-presidency. NOW is developing into a quasi-women's party of late, taking the lead in finding, grooming and supporting women candidates around the country. At workshops and issues hearings the focus was electoral action.

Each conference room had a table with cards where women who had campaign experience could sign up and make themselves available to feminist candidates around the country. NOW's new toll-free number for would-be women candidates—800-ERA-1984—was publicized at every session, and longtime NOW activist Molly Yard hawked the Women's Political Education Fund's comprehensive *Campaign Workbook* throughout the weekend.

Women candidates in key congressional races got a lot of attention. A special PAC event (speeches and hat-passing) at a Saturday plenary session raised \$62,000 for Oregon state senators Ruth McFarland and Margie Hendrikson, running for House and Senate respectively, Colorado Lieutenant Governor and Senate candidate Nancy Dick, U.S. House of Representatives candidate from New Hampshire Dudley Dudley and Minnesota Senate candidate Joan Grove and others. NOW also announced plans to participate in a Harris Associates congressional poll, trading thousands of hours of volunteer polling time from its members for information about close races involving women. Identifying elections where women are down a few percentage points—like Harriet Woods' one-point Senate loss in Missouri last November—will allow NOW, its PACs and volunteers to come in for a last-minute push.

But the priority was placing a woman vice-president on the Democratic Party's political agenda. Former NOW president Eleanor Smeal drafted a resolution that the NOW/PAC will "advocate" a feminist woman candidate for vice-president and "will not accept" a male candidate who balances the presidential ticket by a weak commitment or opposition to women's rights. Given that NOW plans to endorse long before the party nominee is chosen or selects his running mate, the

Continued on following page

