

Illinois: a primary of many tests

By David Moberg

CHICAGO

POLITICS HERE TOOK ON AN even more volatile character than usual as the vagaries of red-hot local politics blended with the shifting fortunes of the two remaining heavyweight Democratic presidential candidates and the one remaining serious symbolic candidate as the March 20 Illinois primary approached. It loomed as a test of whether Hart's base of younger, more affluent voters could be swelled to victory in a new area—the Midwestern industrial heartland—by enough defectors from what should have been a population sympathetic to Mondale's candidacy. But it also loomed as a test in Chicago between the reform political movement led by Mayor Harold Washington and the remnants of the old machine.

Here Mondale could count certain theoretical advantages. For what it is worth, he is a fellow Midwesterner. More important, Mondale could hope that the labor movement—representing 30 percent of the workforce—would do better for him here than it did in the Northeast. After all, union voters next door in Iowa gave Mondale a strong edge as they did in Alabama and, to a lesser extent, Georgia.

Also, Illinois Democrats have been traditionalist, even conservative. In the last presidential primary, for example, they chose Carter over Kennedy by a wide margin. Mondale is a familiar quantity and should have gained by that. He also has begun hammering at Hart's foreign policy from the right—attacking him for not identifying Cuba as "totalitarian" and for calling for reduction in U.S. troop levels in Europe—while hitting him from the left on arms control. That may play well to older, rural or urban ethnic voters, but it is not likely to cut into Hart's own growing base among younger, better-educated voters.

Illinois' economy, reliant on depressed heavy industry and farming, has come out of the recession slowly. Voters' biggest worry is unemployment, according to polls. Mondale should be able to play to that worry better than Hart—and he is in trouble if he doesn't.

In theory, the Chicago Democratic organization endorsement of Mondale should have counted as a clincher, but this year it could have been a clinker, since the machine is weakened in large parts of the city and held in contempt more widely. In some machine strongholds, precinct captains will be far more interested in local party contests, neglecting presidential politics. Also, in a move that mixed reform with obvious personal political benefit, Mayor Washington ordered an end to the tradition that city workers could take off on election day, reducing at least slightly the 8,000 or so machine political operatives who usually leave their jobs.

More important, Mondale needed, but could not count on, the black vote—13 percent of the state's population, a much higher percentage of Democrats. This is Jesse Jackson's home. He is both loved and hated here, even among blacks. Pre-election polls showed Jackson taking at least half and probably more of the black vote. Mondale probably fares best among older, more traditional blacks. Jackson is favored among local leaders and activists as well as the young (many of whom resent Mondale's endorsement of State's Attorney Richard Daley against Washington last year). Hart has barely been

considered by most blacks.

Washington has finessed the pressures to endorse Jackson in a shrewd way that maximizes his own strength. He decided to run favorite-son slates in six congressional districts (with strong chances in three), thus shutting Jackson out of winning delegates. But he expressed his "preference" for Jackson in the "beauty contest" primary vote. Washington made it clear that was different from an endorsement. He wants to go to the convention with a power base that will permit him to bargain over Democratic urban policy and, possibly, the nominee. If his support were too weak for the hometown candidate, he would offend his core supporters; if it were too strong, he could alienate his local sympathizers, white and black, who are not so enamored of Jackson. At the same time, Washington announced his own national voter-registration campaign.

speech before the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations had been arguing for her candidate. But as she talked, she concluded, "Hart represents an excellent chance of beating Reagan. They can't tar him with the same junk." Finally, distressed and perplexed, she said, "I don't know who to vote for." John Howland, a philosophy graduate student at the same gathering, thought Mondale would be a better president and he greatly disliked Hart's attack on the labor movement. "But I'll be pragmatic," he said. "I'll vote for whoever is the most effective against Reagan."

Prairie fire cools?

Mondale may have a slight advantage in Illinois as the "prairie fire" for Hart cools slightly and people learn more about him. Among public employees, phone calls to union homes showed new Hart interest because he seemed "young,

want to jump on a bandwagon of blasting the hell out of Hart. We can't lose sight of the main battle on November 6."

A pre-election Chicago *Sun-Times* poll showed Mondale still leading Hart slightly in voters' estimates of who could beat Reagan. Yet both the Chicago *Tribune* and *Sun-Times* showed Hart leading Mondale, although his margin came from "independents," not self-identified Democrats, and particularly from younger, more affluent voters. The Hart themes, however, have taken hold: 41 percent of those surveyed by the *Sun-Times* saw Mondale as "promising too much" (5 percent for Hart) and 54 percent saw Hart representing "new ideas" (12 percent for Mondale).

Until recently there had been little interest in the Illinois primary. Even registration had slipped. While 85,000 new voters had signed up, 160,000 had been dropped from the rolls. Blacks at Jack-



Lone Delevigne

Even among his core supporters, Mondale faced a serious problem of confidence. Many Democrats—especially the hard-hit people who have been Mondale's primary backers—have been committed above all to beating Reagan. Mondale benefited not only from the much-discussed sense of inevitability of his nomination that has now been shattered, but also from a calculation that he had the best chance to beat Reagan. Hart has cast doubt on that, however.

A campaign worker at a Mondale

One AFSCME organizer said, "People say, 'We don't know what he stands for.' And then when they find out, people are really shocked."

In a recent Chicago *SUN-TIMES* poll, 54 percent thought Gary Hart represented "new ideas."

new and fresh," AFSCME political organizer Nancy Shier said. So the union quickly sent out fact sheets on Hart's votes for some Reagan domestic spending cuts, for ending state revenue sharing, against hospital cost containment and against other labor positions.

"People say, 'We don't know what he stands for,'" Shier said. "When they find out, people are really shocked." One active Hart supporter reversed her choice after receiving the literature.

As a way of countering the "union boss" backlash among members, Machinist telephone callers tell members, who were polled before the endorsement, that the union "took a cue from them that this was the guy they wanted. We're reminding them who they wanted and why," says Charlie Williams, who heads Midwestern political operations.

"People aren't against Mondale," Williams says. "They want someone who can win." Mondale may be uninspiring, and Hart may be running on "mystique," but Williams adds, "there's no way I

son's large rallies were not eager to plunk down cash, a striking contrast to crowds during the Washington campaign and a sign that blacks, while sympathetic, weren't taking his candidacy seriously.

Among local political workers, there is probably more interest in battles for the Democratic Party ward committeemen. Once the lords of the machine, they have little patronage or power now. In a further assault on their old political duchies, white and Hispanic independents are challenging machine committeemen in response to Washington's call to oust party chairman Ed Vrdolyak, his chief nemesis.

The reformers are not likely to win enough posts to do so without relying on some suburban breakaway regulars. At best they will end up with another machine politician as a compromise party chairman. But the independents argue that Vrdolyak's rule and continued machine policies—such as doing little to encourage registration that would upset their goal of a small but controlled vote—weakens the Democrats in Illinois, thus threatening county, state and even presidential candidates in the fall. And since Illinois, which has voted for Republican presidents since 1968, is key for a Democratic presidential victory, there are national stakes in these local battles.

Local politics has intruded into other

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IN SHORT

Strategic models

The State Department justifies its recent \$2 million sale of helicopter parts to Guatemala—a country named the “worst violator of human rights in the Western Hemisphere” by the Council on Hemispheric Affairs—partly on a document that reads more like a panegyric to military control than a human rights report. The report of UN Special Rapporteur Lord Colville is used to support the claim that the “model village counterinsurgency programs” springing up in that country help curb human rights abuses as well as increase employment. Reminiscent of the Vietnam strategic hamlets, the Guatemalan army relocates peasants to assigned villages to increase army control and in the words of Colville “evaporates the water in which the fishes [presumably guerrillas] swim.” Colville goes on to praise the “bullets and beans” program that lets the people “earn free food by work projects” during the day, when the men are not doing their obligatory civil-patrol jobs. The people, most descendants of Mayan Indians, are “by nature friendly, hard-working and long-suffering,” in Lord Colville’s words. In the last few years they built 400 kilometers of highway in return for their “free food.” Instead of “alleviating the serious problem of unemployment,” as Colville insists the model village program does, Guatemalan labor leader Gerardo Fiapo points to the regime’s dismissal of 10,000 mostly organized public-works employees in the last year and claims that this is union-busting in its most extreme form.

Coffee cant

Just as you were getting used to the idea that “coffee lets you calm yourself down” in the zippy patter of the National Coffee Association’s \$24 million ad campaign, they changed the blurb to “coffee is the calm moment that lets you think.” Not that the Center for Science in the Public Interest’s (CSPI) talks with the Better Business Bureau or its petition to the FTC prompted the change. The spokesman for the coffee lobby says that their own follow-up surveys showed that “there were a few folks who weren’t getting the simple message we were trying to convey.” The message, which the spokesman says has remained unchanged, is that there’s a whole “coffee experience” that lets people pause and refresh themselves. “I don’t know what this group’s problem is,” he adds in soothing, decaffeinated tones. “We make it clear in our commercials we’re not talking strictly pharmacologically, we’re talking about the whole ambience that surrounds a coffee break.” CSPI is dissatisfied with the changes, though, and the petition remains in FTC hands to pursue the commercial’s misleading claim.

Twisting the day away

Former IBM President William Laughlin knew in 1975 what it’d take to make the office of the future when he told *Business Week*, “People will adapt nicely to office systems—if their arms are broken. We’re in the twisting stage now.” VDT operators suffer from their share of “twisted arms”: red and watery eyes, continual muscle pains, those constant nagging headaches and the worry of working with very low frequency emissions. But 9to5 and concerned representatives in seven states (New York, Illinois, Oregon, Ohio, Rhode Island, California and Massachusetts) have introduced legislation to protect the female-dominated occupation from the worst effects of VDT use. The states’ bills differ in content and chances for passage but most share similar prohibitions and prescriptions: they outlaw keystroke monitoring (the ‘80s version of factory piecework), they call for worker-adjustable chairs and screens and filters to reduce emissions and glare; and they demand periodic shifts away from the video terminal.

Fighting 9to5 is CEBEMA—the Computer, Business Equipment and Management Association—which has threatened to pull business out of the states contemplating passage of the bills. Shielding the cathode ray tube only costs an extra \$30 on machines that retail for thousands of dollars, but the issue is who will break rank and up their manufacturing costs in this highly competitive industry.

Food fright

If the use of EDB hasn’t made you think twice about that orange or slice of whole wheat toast, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration may soon approve of a food preservation process that will: large-scale irradiation of fruits, vegetables and seasonings to “extend shelf life,” reports Stewart Burns. Last July, the FDA approved doses of up to one million rads of low-level radiation to control bacteria in seasonings and spices. The recent proposals would allow up to 100,000 rads of gamma radiation to be used on fruits and vegetables—100,000 times the amount of radiation present in a medical X-ray. Agribusiness companies are already constructing treatment plants in a move that’s expected by industry officials to revolutionize the food industry in much the same way as freezing or canning did. Apparently they’re worried, however, that if the FDA forces the industry to label their vegetables “irradiated,” consumers will dub the result “nuke food” and flee empty-handed from the produce counter.

—Beth Maschinot



Chicago neighborhoods will get a boost from First National’s \$100 million loan program.

Neighborhoods win loan aid

CHICAGO—A coalition of community organizations has prodded the First National Bank of Chicago to agree to make \$100 million in loan money available over the next five years to low and moderate income neighborhoods through a newly formed Neighborhood Banking Division.

Although there are similar programs in other cities, designed to keep the depositors’ money invested in their communities, the size of First National’s pledge is unprecedented. Gail Cincotta, executive director of the National Training and Information Center—a member group of the Community Reinvestment Alliance—calls the loan program “a national model for how a partnership can be forged between a city’s neighborhoods and a lending institution.”

The loan money will be used by families to purchase and upgrade single-family homes, by commercial and not-for-profit apartment developers, and by small businesses for purchasing equipment.

The housing loans will be made exclusively in low and moderate income neighborhoods. To be eligible, areas must have average incomes less than 80 percent of the metropolitan area’s median income. This makes vast portions of the city’s central, west and southside neighborhoods eligible.

The Neighborhood Banking Division was created only after persistent and widespread community pressure on First National, which is one of the city’s largest banks.

Thirty-five community organi-

zations participated in a number of open meetings to air complaints of community disinvestment and to set the agenda for negotiating with the bank. The Community Reinvestment Alliance (CRA)—a coalition of seven community and umbrella organizations such as the Chicago Rehab Network, the Chicago Association of Neighborhood Development Organizations and the National Training and Information Center—found an opening in First National’s armor in August when the bank announced plans to acquire American National, another local bank.

This acquisition was subject to federal approval, and would have given the Alliance a right to challenge the bank’s record on reinvestment according to the guidelines of the Federal Community Reinvestment Act. The 1977 Reinvestment Act requires banks to make loans in their immediate communities, and it permits interested parties such as community organizations to lodge complaints against recalcitrant lenders. The Alliance’s threat to block First National’s plans was successful: First National agreed to most of their demands in order to clear the way for the acquisition.

In addition to being the impetus in creating the program, the community group will also influence the implementation. Apartment building rehab loans will be available to non-profit community housing developers, and many business loans will be made through community economic development organizations. Also, a review board will monitor the program throughout its five-year duration. Half of the 10 review board members will be appointed by the CRA.

Ironically, it has fallen to community organizations such as the

CRA to make Reagan’s promise of private initiatives work. For more information on the program, contact Larry Swift at the Woodstock Institute, 417 S. Dearborn, Chicago, IL 60605, (312) 427-8070.

—Paul Ginger

Goode beats Philly cold

PHILADELPHIA—In Mayor Wilson Goode’s first test case on public policy—a directive to reform both procedure and structure of utility policy—Philadelphia community leaders and energy activists are guardedly optimistic.

Shut-offs will be curtailed through March 31 for those who can show proof that pre-schoolers, senior citizens or sick and infirm reside in the home. In addition, the five-member Philadelphia Gas Commission would finally be provided with adequate staff and a consumer advocate’s office to represent consumer interest at all commission rate hearings.

Although not very radical, considering current municipal and state utility policy around the country, the late February directive is a major departure from past practice in Philadelphia. The most criticized aspect of that former policy was the “callous and cold-hearted” attitude of the Philadelphia Gas Works (PGW) concerning winter shut-offs. Any homeowner who owed PGW more than \$300 was a potential candidate for disconnection. In fact, 35,000 Philadelphia homeowners were shut off in 1983.

The mayor was in a particularly vulnerable position because of his unique experience in the util-

by Nicole Hollander

SYLVIA

of course everyone associated with television will have difficulty getting into Heaven, but some more than others.

YOU SCHEDULED NOTHING BUT SPORTS ON WEEKENDS.

LISTEN IF I HAD HAD MY WAY, WE’D HAVE AN ALL-BOWLING CHANNEL.

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