

HOW RIGHT IS REAGAN?

The GOP platform is a curious mixture of pragmatism and purity.

WHAT COULD WE EXPECT from Ronald Reagan in the White House? To what extent would a Reagan administration continue traditional Republican policies, as opposed to branching out in new directions inspired by the various forces contending for influence within the ranks—the populist New Right, the sophisticated neoconservatives, and the libertarians?

Although it makes sense not to take party platforms very seriously as predictors of action, the 1980 GOP document—and the speeches at the convention that shaped it—can still give us some clues about the divergent strains of thought contending for Ronald Reagan's soul. And that combination ends up being a mixed bag as far as liberty is concerned.

Although the GOP expresses generous concern for individual rights and responsibilities—in convention speeches William Simon denounced government “coercion” and Reagan himself called for restoration of “the American spirit of voluntary service”—when it comes to expressions of individual choice the GOP speaks with a starkly different voice. The party today enthusiastically supports government suppression of drugs and drug paraphernalia and favors a nationwide ban on abortions. At the convention, concern over morality never extended to the propriety of such instances of coercion as taxation, regulation, or minimum-wage laws.



BY DOUG BANDOW

Republicans today find themselves in greatest agreement on foreign and defense policy. (This section of their platform, termed “Peace and Freedom,” was approved in a mere one and a half hours.) The GOP is now committed to a “superior” defense, which, if it means overall superiority, rather than qualitative excellence, could portend an arms race: the Soviets—not unreasonably—may reject “inferiority.”

To attain a “superior” defense, Reagan and the GOP are calling for a massive arms buildup, including: the MX missile, manned strategic bomber, air defense system, accelerated cruise missile, antiballistic missile system, Mid-East presence,

improved navy, improved air and sea mobility, modernization and increased production of armor, and increased airlift capability. Some of these programs are undoubtedly cost-effective and necessary for our defense—but *all* of them?

Moreover, the Republicans promise to promote American influence in virtually every continent, as part of what Senator Richard Lugar has termed an “effective free-world alliance.” Yet many of these allied countries are ruled by what Gerald Ford once described as “assassins” and “despots.” Why US taxpayers should be forced to protect a world full of despots has never been adequately explained.

Although debate over the ERA and abortion attracted most of the media attention at the convention, the GOP does have notable positions on domestic issues that are more significant. For instance, the platform excoriates Jimmy Carter for deliberately causing a recession. Republicans have now solidly embraced tax-rate cuts, accelerated depreciation, spending limitations, and budget balancing. Rep. Jack Kemp's economic-oriented speech was one of the highlights of the convention.

The Republicans are also taking out after “Big Government,” noting that the government's power to tax and regulate has “reached extravagant proportions.” House Minority Leader Rhodes speaks of lavish and reckless spending boosting taxation

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ED CLARK:

Another Kind of Candidate

The Libertarian Party looks like it's here to stay.

IN PERSON, ED CLARK comes across thoughtful, decent, and low-key (he is not, his supporters say, a "tub thumper" or "stem winder"). Supporters also claim to admire his mind ("subtle and deep"), his easy familiarity with foreign affairs ("the only presidential candidate who has passed the Foreign Service exam"), and his instinctual commitment to libertarian principles—"His impulses are right," says Roy Childs, editor of *The Libertarian Review*. "He's not just a person who has thought through the issues."

On the negative side, he's an unexciting speechmaker and he earns his living as corporate counsel to a big oil company. If he were actually to be elected president and had to preside over the dismantling of the empire, his abilities would be put to the test. "But obviously he's not going to be elected," says Milton Mueller, director of Students for a Libertarian Society. "His function is to put the party on the map, and for that he's an ideal candidate."

At party functions, Clark is sometimes introduced as "the eminently reasonable radical," by which his supporters mean to suggest that he has such an unparalleled talent for stating even quite radical propositions in such a reasonable, low-key way that even the most pious liberal or hide-bound conservative never thinks to take offense. His background, in fact, is quite traditional. He's a former naval officer, Harvard Law alumnus, and presently an anti-



BY PAUL CIOTTI

trust lawyer with Atlantic-Richfield.

He was a liberal Republican before he became a Libertarian, working on John Lindsay's mayoral campaign and writing \$25 checks to various Republican causes. Even then, he says, he wasn't crazy about the Republicans—he thought they were "by and large" wrong about Vietnam and "insensitive" on civil rights, but at least they came down on the side of free-market economics.

Then on August 15, 1971, a day that Clark still can't recall without an edge to his voice, he returned to a Dallas hotel room at the end of a long day, snapped on the TV, and, he says, "Richard Milhous Nixon came on and said, 'I've struck a great blow

for the free-enterprise system—I've imposed wage-and-price controls on every American.' "

At that point Clark turned off the Republicans forever. "And I got on the telephone and called my wife (who was visiting her relatives) in Mexico City and yelled at her for three-quarters of an hour, and I never yell at anyone, least of all my wife."

A few months later, Clark attended an educational conference at Columbia University, the subject of which was libertarianism. "And I said, 'My God. Where have these people been? I believe this. I've always been anti-war. I've always been pro-civil rights. I've always been for

a free-market economy and voluntary exchange.' I've been a libertarian ever since."

THE CLARK PROGRAM

If elected, Clark would immediately move to deflate some of the mystique surrounding the president. As a first step, he says, he'd move into the Blair House, not the White House (he calls it a "palace"). He'd eliminate entirely the 50-person staff for the president's wife (its only function, says Clark, is "to help her husband be reelected president"). He'd refuse to take a salary and would rather support his family on voluntary contributions from the American people. And finally, he'd sell Camp David and retire Air Force One.

Foreign policy. The single issue which seems to offend Clark more