P.S. to **the NEWS**

by PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY

Box 618, Alton, Illinois 62002
Phone: 618-462-5415

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THREE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES?

Three Congressmen are making noises this month that have started the political pundits speculating about presidential nominations in 1980. These Congressmen are all young, handsome, articulate, ambitious, and in fighting condition for a long race.

Of course they are long shots. But that's what makes politics so fascinating, especially when it culminates in the high drama of the National Nominating Conventions. Jimmy Carter is the classic reminder that no candidate is too improbable to luck out as the winner.

Any challenger who seeks his party's presidential nomination in 1980 starts out far behind the front runners. In the Democratic Party, an incumbent President (no matter how low in the public opinion polls) has overwhelming advantages against any upstart, as President Harry Truman proved in 1948. In the Republican Party, a combination of inertia and incumbencies is coalescing to push a replay of the Ford Reagan battle of 1976 instead of inviting new blood.

In the left corner, coming out punching with adviser George Meany at his side is Senator Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.). In two right corners are Congressmen Philip M. Crane (R-Ill.) and Jack Kemp (R-N.Y.). Each has adopted what he thinks is a special program that will be identified with his name and catch the fancy of the voters.

Beyond those initial similarities, there is a fundamental difference among the three Congressmen. Kennedy is promoting an idea whose time has come and gone and for which there is no demand except in his own press releases. Crane and Kemp are riding the tax revolt of Proposition 13, which could become a tidal wave as it rolls across the country.

Senator Kennedy has chosen national health insurance as his special vehicle with which to seize the leadership of the Democratic Party. He is pushing the tired old line of cradle-to-grave paternalism provided by ever-increasing taxes

doled out by an ever-growing army of bureaucrats. Crane and Kemp are preaching the refreshing new concept that the best thing the government can do for the individual is to let us spend our own money.

Kennedy wants a bigger and more expensive system of socialized medicine even than President Carter's plan, which is such a boondoggle that it has little chance of passage. The reason Kennedy broke with Carter and scheduled a bombshell press conference a few hours earlier than Carter's was that Carter refused to include a provision in his plan which would prevent costs from getting out of hand.

There is no public demand for national health care. Most Americans are already covered by some kind of prepaid health insurance, and the tide is running strongly against turning over new problems to the Washington bureaucrats.

Crane and Kemp, on the other hand, are preaching a new line: cut taxes, reduce federal control, and let Americans spend their own money. They directly confront the problem best summarized on a currently popular piece of play money that can be torn on the dotted lines into three sections: (1) the 42¢ of every dollar you earn that goes to taxes, (2) the 26¢ of what's left that is eaten up by inflation, and (3} the 32¢ the bureaucrats allow you to keep.

Crane has introduced a constitutional amendment to prohibit the federal govern ment from imposing taxes exceeding 33.3 percent of the average national income, except in national emergency or war. This year's expenditures are $12 billion over this limit. The rate of acceleration is even more ominous than the dollar amount.

Kemp is pushing the Kemp-Roth bill, which would bring about a major federal tax reduction but which, Kemp assures us, would not reduce government revenues because it would spur enough economic growth to create new tax bases to replace revenues lost in the initial cut.

The 1980 National Nominating Conventions are just two years away and the race has begun. The way the winds are blowing this election year, it looks as though Ted Kennedy is beating a dead horse and Crane and Kemp are surfing on the wave of the future.

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