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WHAT HAPPENED TO THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY?

The question now most frequently asked by local Democrats is, "When there are so many fine people in the Democratic Party, how could we allow ourselves to be stuck with Mondale-Ferraro at the top?"

Political reality is that the national Democratic Party has allowed itself to become the captive of special-interest groups, each with its own radical agenda. These include the social-welfare professionals (who want high taxes and big budgets), the NEA-type educators (who want federal control of the schools), the radical feminists and homosexuals (who want abortion funding, gay rights, and government care of children), the freezeniks, and the environmentalists.

These well organized pressure groups are energetic and activist, have a professional lobbying apparatus operating with considerable taxpayer-funding, and they know how to utilize their resources in behalf of specific limited goals such as getting a party's nomination. They were able to force the nominations of Mondale and Ferraro plus a couple of dozen feminist candidates for the Senate and House; but they all lost on November 6.

These were the groups that forced the Democratic Party Platform Committee, chaired by Geraldine Ferraro, to write a very radical platform. It included higher taxes, more federal spending for every domestic and foreign giveaway project you can name (including even the World Bank), abortion funding, gay rights, affirmative action quotas, a nuclear freeze, and banning the B-1 bomber and prayer in schools.

Support of taxpayer funding for abortions may please some campaign workers and rev them up enough to stack a party convention and win the nomination, but it was a negative with the majority of voters on November 6. Large financial contributions from the National Organization for Women, the abortion PACs, and the gay-rights PACs may provide money to carry on a Congressional campaign, but they are an embarrassment on election day.

The question I hear most frequently among informed observers is, "How did lifetime-

politician Walter Mondale get boxed into the corner where he picked Geraldine Ferraro? Didn't he investigate her? Didn't he know about her financial and legal liabilities?"

That question will probably cause Democrats to shake their heads in bewilderment for many years (as Republicans still puzzle over the question, "Why didn't Richard Nixon burn those tapes that ultimately forced him to resign?"). Maybe someday Mondale will write his memoirs and tell all, but meanwhile anyone can speculate on the reason, so here goes.

In the days before the Democratic National Convention in San Francisco, Mondale realized that there was one way he could still lose the nomination: <u>if</u> Gary Hart called a news conference and announced, "I promise to select a woman as my Veep."

But didn't Mondale have a majority of Convention Delegates pledged to him? Yes, but under Democratic Party rules, 50% of Convention Delegates were women. With loyalty only to the radical feminist agenda (and secretly preferring the yuppie candidate with more hair), enough of them would have had no qualms about switching to a Hart-Ferraro ticket.

Mondale must have been overcome with a terrible urgency to beat Hart to the punch. But who? The top-ranking Democratic women (Governor Martha Layne Collins of Kentucky and Congresswoman Lindy Boggs) could not even be considered because they are anti-abortion.

Mondale wanted Mayor Dianne Feinstein of San Francisco, but party leaders deemed her unacceptable. Speaker Tip O'Neill insisted on his protege, Geraldine Ferraro, who had ingratiated herself with him by playing on his team in the House.

The clock was ticking in the race to beat Gary Hart to an announcement. Mondale's investigation of Zaccaro-Ferraro was reduced to about an hour of questions such as, "There isn't anything in your background that would disqualify you for the Vice Presidency is there?" The deal was made and Mondale was on the final plunge of his roller coaster ride.

Will Democratic candidates in 1986 and 1988 remain in hock to the radical fringe groups? Down under, in Australia, one candidate has given U.S. Democrats an example of political courage and common sense.

A member of the Australian Democrat's Senate team, Cliff Boyd, resigned from the ticket this fall because he believes control of his party has fallen into the hands of a "feminist power base" intent on tearing down the family structure. He chose to run as an independent candidate on a "put families before feminism" platform.

Right on, Mr. Boyd! Will American Democrats have the courage to do likewise?