

Elephants & Donkeys by Kathleen Klenetsky

Who's the dumbest of them all?

That could well have been the theme of the first official debate of the Democratic presidential primaries, which took place in Houston, Texas July 2.

Broadcast on national public television, the event—which featured *National Review's* William Buckley and Democratic Party kingmaker Robert Strauss as interviewers—proved beyond any doubt that the candidates (at least those sanctioned by the party officialdom) truly deserve the label “the Seven Dwarfs.”

The “debate” consisted of little more than the participants—Sen. Joe Biden, Rep. Richard Gephardt, Sen. Paul Simon, Massachusetts Gov. Michael Dukakis, Jesse Jackson, Arizona Gov. Bruce Babbitt, and Sen. Al Gore—taking the expected pot shots at the Reagan administration, and talking endlessly of “leadership.” But of substantive solutions to the nation's major problems, this gaggle had little to say.

How to cure the country's economic ills? The standard response ranged from “balance the budget” to “cut defense spending.” How to deal with the AIDS epidemic? The candidates carefully skirted this political hot potato—leadership apparently doesn't extend that far.

In the discussion on the Strategic Defense Initiative, they vied with each other to come up with the strongest denunciation of the program. Gore, who has been endorsed by Soviet agent Armand Hammer, a long-time family friend, termed the SDI “profoundly mistaken.” Jesse Jackson said it was “conceptually flawed.” Dukakis said,

“We need star schools, not star wars.” Babbitt, the only Trilateral Commission member in the crew, declared that strategic defense is tantamount to pouring gasoline on the fire. Simon called the program a “disaster,” and Biden claimed it was “bankrupting our intellectual capital.”

So much for the Democrats' vaunted new “pro-defense” image.

Not surprisingly, the one candidate who has a program for dealing with AIDS, and who not only is the principal defender of the SDI in the United States, but one of its architects, was deliberately excluded from the event. Obviously, the contrast between Lyndon H. LaRouche and the dwarfs would have been too much.

And who won the debate? The pundits and columnists differ. Dukakis was given high marks—not for anything he said, but because he appeared “relaxed.” (Maybe he's borrowing his wife's diet pills.) Babbitt “lost,” again not because of anything he said, but because his head bobbed up and down continuously for the duration. What's eminently clear is that the real loser of the debate was the American electorate, which is once again being presented with fools, and told to select the “best.”

Bush linked to Contra drug-running

It was only a matter of time before George Bush's connections to Iran-gate caught up with him. They began to—with a vengeance—in late June, when a convicted cocaine trafficker told a Senate subcommittee that he had supplied \$10 million to the Contras from the notorious Colombian cocaine cartel, and disclosed that couriers for the dirty money were provided by Felix Rodriguez (a.k.a. Max Gomez).

Rodriguez, a longtime operative of former CIA Director of Operations Theodore Shackley, had frequent contact with another Shackley operative, Donald Gregg—Bush's main security adviser. The Rodriguez-Gregg connection has come up repeatedly during the course of the probe.

The cocaine trafficker, Ramon Milian-Rodriguez, told the committee that the purpose of the drug cartel's payoff to the Contras was to bribe the CIA and through it, the Drug Enforcement Administration, to go easy on drug runners. He said he acted on behalf of the Medellín Cartel, which controls roughly 75% of the cocaine entering the United States.

Should it turn out that Gregg knew of Felix Rodriguez's alleged role in the cocaine-Contra link, this could spell very bad trouble for his boss, who has been deeply involved in the Reagan administration's “war on drugs.” Not only did Gregg meet with Rodriguez on a regular basis, to discuss operations in Central America, but Bush himself met with Rodriguez several times, and has publicly declared him a “patriot.”

Gephardt: absolutely no mandatory AIDS testing

Democratic presidential hopeful Richard Gephardt seems to believe that courting the homosexual lobby, is more important than protecting the health of the American population.

During a July 6 visit to New York City—the AIDS capital of the United States—Gephardt denounced those who advocate mandatory AIDS testing, saying that energies should be directed toward research and education instead. “Testing diverts us from the real challenge of education and research,” the Missouri Congressman told Mayor Ed Koch.