

Off Center

Sol Plafkin

1967

Bulldozers for all of Michigan? This was the fear of liberal delegates to the recent Democratic state convention in Grand Rapids as Patti Knox, wife of “Bulldozin’ Bob” Knox—Detroit Housing Director, was elected vice-chairman of the Michigan Democratic Party.

The Cavanagh “Irish Mafia” was in full evidence on behalf of the candidacy of Mrs. Knox as the “old guard” Democratic leadership of Staebler, Williams, and Scholle left open a big vacuum into which the well-oiled “Jerry-boys” could easily move.

The pot of white bigotry almost boiled over in Grand as Negro delegates saw a strong resolution in favor of the seating of Adam Clayton Powell and his return to his House Committee chairmanship sidetracked, not on its merits, but by tricky parliamentary maneuvering.

A newly-formed “Afro-American” caucus of Negro delegates was given impetus to expand its operation and demand a stronger role in party operations. While the term “black power” was not specifically used by the Negroes, there was a strong indication that they will be demanding a more equitable “quid pro quo” relationship from the Democrats in exchange for the maintenance of the traditional overwhelming Negro loyalty to that party.

An interesting and significant demand of the Afro-American caucus was that further funds be withheld from the State Civil Rights Commission until it proves itself to be more effective in the protection of Negro citizens.

In addition to the potential diminution of Negro support of the Democratic Party due to the Powell fiasco, further losses among liberals may be expected” as a result of convention failure to support a resolution calling for the unconditional cessation of bombing in Vietnam while peace initiatives are under way.

The “no-bombing” resolution was supported by the “inner-city” Detroit 1st and 13th Districts and the newly-liberalized 17th District of northwest Detroit. Open opposition to the resolution was voiced by William Marshall, vice-president of the Michigan AFL-CIO. He and other Democratic “hawks” urged successfully against “tying the hands” of L.B.J.

On the more positive side, the convention called for a thorough investigation of the involvement of the CIA in student organizations and other civilian groups.

Back in Detroit, the big cry lately has been for more Negro policemen who can more readily relate to the community in which so much police activity is concentrated.

However, if one looks at the case of Detroit Negro Patrolman Kenneth Johnson who dared to testify against a white officer in a police brutality case, the outlook for Negro officers doesn’t seem too encouraging.

Johnson has been the subject of continual harassment by his fellow white colleagues since he testified and, to top it all off, Police Commissioner Girardin deprived him of 15 leave days (worth about \$500) for alleged inconsistencies in his reporting of the matter.

If you’re white and female, you’d better be careful of your associations with Negro militant males. One young white lady discovered that an association of that sort was being listed by the Detroit Police Department in their report on her to a governmental agency which, up ‘til now, has denied employment to her.

A Negro mayor for Detroit? This prospect is somewhat increased as a result of Rep. John Conyers' narrow, but decisive, victory over the UAW for control of the First District Democratic Party. Rumors are about that the young congressman would love to be the first Negro chief executive of a major American city.

Of course, Mayor Cavanagh is not to be easily dismissed as a contender to succeed himself in 1969. Despite a lot of flubs and a super-abundant ego, he manages to warm many hearts by his constant jibes at LBJ and the war in Vietnam.

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