

Adlai Stevenson bombs in Illinois

by Marla Minnicino

No one envies Illinois gubernatorial candidate Adlai Stevenson III these days. The international press covers his feeble attempts to undo the results of the March 18 primary, which paired him with two LaRouche Democrats as running mates in the November election. Stevenson immediately denounced Mark Fairchild and Janice Hart—who won the Democratic primary for lieutenant governor and secretary of state—as “bizarre extremists,” and swore that he would never run on a ticket with them.

With every move, Stevenson commits another act of political hara-kiri. On April 3, the would-be governor met with party leaders in a joint session of the Illinois House-Senate Democratic caucus. Stevenson urged party leaders to back his effort to change state law so that he can run as an independent. He unveiled a new plan under which Democratic voters would be urged to split their ticket, punching the regular party-line lever for every Democratic nominee, then separate levers to vote for governor, lieutenant governor, and secretary of state.

This scheme is going over like a lead balloon. House Speaker Michael Madigan (D-Chicago) said that most Democrats in the legislature do not want Stevenson to force a change in election law permitting a later filing deadline for independent candidates. Stevenson's appeal for support was voted down 67-2 by members of the Democratic joint caucus of the legislature, despite the fact that state Democratic leaders had signed a statement just days before, saying that they would “wholeheartedly support” Stevenson's independent bid. A further problem is that Stevenson cannot even recruit two new running mates. The two candidates floated for the slots have, so far, refused to make a definite commitment.

Failing to win over his own party, Stevenson turned to Republican Gov. Jim Thompson to aid him in changing the election law. Addressing the Illinois Chamber of Commerce April 2, Stevenson urged Thompson to repudiate the LaRouche candidates. “I will not be associated with these candidates,” railed Stevenson. “Where does he [Thompson] stand on the apostles of hate and madness?”

The GOP's response

But Thompson had already made his reply, saying the LaRouche candidates are Adlai's problem. On April 1, the governor said he would not sign any bills designed to help

Stevenson rid himself of the two nominees. “If there is some change that needs to be made in the state election laws, it must be for the good of the state and for the good of the electoral process,” said Thompson. “The quandary that Mr. Stevenson has himself in is a quandary largely of his own making. It is not likely the legislature will rush to relieve one person from the fault of his own campaign.”

Republicans are now apparently setting their political sights on Illinois. A March 30 Evans and Novak column reported that key Illinois Republicans streamed into Washington March 27 for a “hush-hush” conference at national party headquarters, to discuss how Stevenson's embarrassment could be turned into a GOP victory. The strategy session was called by Republican National Committee (RNC) officials and attended by a key adviser to Governor Thompson. Even popular Democratic Sen. Alan Dixon is now considered beatable, and the GOP will pour “big bucks” into the campaign of his Republican opponent, Judy Koehler, a source reports.

There is even some question over whether the Democratic National Committee will come to Stevenson's aid. Stevenson's campaign manager Larry Hansen held emergency talks with DNC officials in Washington March 31, discussing “strategic and financial ideas.” Hansen tried to reassure party officials that the Illinois situation was not a “lost cause” and Stevenson was in the race to stay. DNC chairman Terry Michael was quoted saying it was too early in the year for the party to commit funds, though he agreed it was important for Stevenson to run a strong campaign to defeat Thompson.

Undaunted, Stevenson said he was counting on a federal court decision to nullify the state law requiring all independent candidacies to file by Dec. 5. If this bid fails, his only option would be to form a third party. Third parties can gather petitions until Aug. 4 to qualify for ballot position, but must file a full slate for the 10 statewide posts. Stevenson would then have to field rival candidates to the statewide party slate. Since the state Democratic leadership has made it clear that it won't dissolve the party and reconstitute it under a new name just to bail Stevenson out, the “independent” option—which hinges on overturning state election law—is his only hope for “purging” the LaRouche Democrats.

Of course, there is one other option: Stevenson could run with the LaRouche Democrats. Hart and Fairchild have repeatedly urged him to do so, rather than risk being “driven out of the party by the elite crowd of Gold Coast cocaine-sniffing liberals.” In an open letter to Stevenson, presented at a March 31 meeting of the DuPage County Democratic Committee, Fairchild suggested that Stevenson “start thinking about how to open up those steel mills and machine tool shops,” and “get behind our call for a Roosevelt-style mobilization of the economy by directing cheap credit into production and creating jobs for our citizens. Why don't you put your ego aside and join me and the rest of the LaRouche Democrats in uniting the Democratic Party behind real solutions to real problems? With LaRouche you can be a winner.”