

PERIODICALS

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POLITICS & GOVERNMENT

R for Democrats

"Now What?" in *The New Republic* (Nov. 26, 1984), P.O. Box 955, Farmingdale, N.Y. 11737-9855.

President Reagan's re-election victory dealt the Democratic Party its fourth loss in the last five presidential elections and its third loss by landslide proportions. It was, according to the editors of the *New Republic*, who had endorsed Walter Mondale, a "shattering defeat."

Now what? The Democrats could blame the debacle on former Vice President Mondale's shortcomings as a campaigner or on President Reagan's considerable political skills—and thus invite another disaster. Or the party could "reconsider the way in which it addresses America's problems." Mondale and other top Democrats had promised such a reassessment after the party's 1980 setbacks, but economic recession handed Democrats some easy congressional gains in 1982 (26 new seats in the House of Representatives) and cut short the search for fresh ideas. Senator Gary Hart (D.-Colo.) was touted as the candidate of "new ideas" during the 1984 Democratic presidential primaries, but apart from his proposals for military reform and a "flat rate" income tax, "precious few were ever put into concrete form."

Walter Mondale articulated "the fundamental Democratic principles—justice, community, democracy—that the party must maintain regardless of the new ways it finds to express them." But he was also an unabashed advocate for the party's numerous special-interest groups, a political kiss of death, in the *New Republic's* view. Many top Democrats mistakenly believe that to represent the aspirations of minorities, blue-collar workers, women, and others in the rickety Democratic coalition, they must echo every specific demand voiced by the groups' *spokesmen*, real or self-appointed.

If Jesse Jackson emerges as the chief spokesman for blacks, the Democrats' problem could become acute. Blacks cast more than 25

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percent of all Democratic ballots in 1984 and are the party's largest single voting bloc. But Jackson's leftish Third World rhetoric tends to alienate other voters: The Mondale-Ferraro ticket claimed only 36 percent of whites' votes.

The *New Republic's* editors hope that black mayors and other black elected officials will contest Jackson's leadership. Similarly, they look to the 33 Democratic governors—who "have been dealing creatively with some of the nation's most difficult domestic problems and balancing budgets at the same time"—for the party's new agenda. In foreign policy, the editors argue that party leaders must stop insisting "that America is wrong in defending its interests abroad."

President Reagan is sitting in the Oval Office in part because he told the voters that America's best days were yet to come, and his opponent said it was not so. "The Democrats need to find leaders who believe it is so—and can make it so in reality, not just in television ads."

Who Wants to Be Vice President?

"Making the Most of the New Vice Presidency" by Paul C. Light, in *The Brookings Review* (Summer 1984), Brookings Institution, 1775 Massachusetts Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

"Hardly worth a pitcher of warm spit" was U.S. Vice President (1933–41) John Nance Garner's estimation of his job. Were Garner around today, he would probably take a kindlier view, suggests Light, a National Academy of Public Administration researcher. During the last 10 years, the Vice Presidency has become an office to be reckoned with.

The "new" Vice Presidency began to take shape when Gerald Ford succeeded Spiro Agnew as President Richard Nixon's Number Two man in 1973. Ford demanded and won more staff and independence in return for bolstering the troubled Nixon White House. Ford's Vice President, Nelson Rockefeller, gathered more perquisites and took the chairmanship of the White House Domestic Council, a top policy-making body. Walter Mondale, under the Carter administration, expanded and consolidated these gains.

Mondale's tenure "raised expectations about the role to be played by future Vice Presidents—and made it more difficult for future Presidents to turn back the clock," Light says. He became a member of President Jimmy Carter's "inner circle" of advisers, had regular private talks with his boss, gained complete access to high-level meetings and secret information, and got many of his allies appointed to important jobs in the administration. Conscious of the Washington motto, "Where you sit is where you stand," Mondale secured an office in the West Wing of the White House, just down the hall from the Oval Office. George Bush inherited it in 1981, suggesting that Mondale's innovation may become a tradition.

The Vice Presidency has also taken on impressive institutional trappings, Light reports. Vice President Bush has a staff of 70 and an office budget of \$2 million; in 1961, Lyndon Johnson had only 20 aides and