

# High Tea For Scoundrels

*It is raining donkeys and elephants*

*by Shekhar Deshpande*

The news about Jack Kervokian's two recent attempts in ending the lives of his suffering patients was sandwiched (pardon the pun) between two political conventions.

As we go to press, the Democratic convention is about to begin in Chicago, with the added media romance of the memories of 1968 convention. The infamous doctor is trying to end the suffering in sick bodies, while the pillars of political power are painting a rosy picture of the suffering people so that they can prolong their agony at least for another four years.

The hypocrisy, pretentiousness, slick handling of real human problems and the sheer shamelessness of the major political parties achieved a new, historic high with the Republican convention in San Diego. The convention was the most successful exercise in ignoring the real issues that bring pain and suffering to the lives of millions.

True, the great "infomercial" as many in the media called it, did not say much on anything — on abortion, immigration and affirmative action. Instead, what we got was a lot of talk about how Bob Dole was polishing his geriatric image by taking a merely 12-



year-younger running mate, about how he wanted us to see No. 15 everywhere in the universe. (In a uniquely superficial but perfect electioneering gimmick, the man who would be president told us that Kemp played pro-football with No. 15 and that he has four children and eleven grandchildren which makes for 15 seats at a Dole family picnic table, with the spouses ignored in the search for lucky numbers. These same Republican geniuses had the wisdom to poke fun at Farrakhan's numerology last year).

Four days of smooth-talk, slick image-making glossed over the injustices built into the Republican platform. Along with a strong nod against affirmative action, they foretold the followers of Lincoln that children born to illegal aliens will not be given U.S. citizenship. So we get the point. The best way to stop illegal immigration is to impose sexual abstinence or contraceptive warning on the libidinal pleasures of these "criminals" or to take away the rights of children before they are born.

What are they thinking of? Does this sound very much like the old, unwritten policy of not giving the rights of legitimacy to the children born to slave women from their lustful owners. All the pleasures and no pain?

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Bob Dole tried to separate himself from the platform of his own party in a speech to the Association of Black Journalists. But that is good for him too. By putting down some selective planks and "extreme" elements of his own party, just like Clinton, he moves toward the perennial center, where everyone wants to be now. What is he offering instead? The policy of Republicans, including Dole, is to beat up on immigrants.

Dole, whose namesake company emblazons "Dole" on the fruits of migrant farm workers, was for Proposition 187 in California and has given his full support to the welfare bill that takes away medical benefits from legal immigrants as well.

The package for the final assault on immigrants is being prepared. Consider the 15 (magical) percent tax cut along with the abolition of welfare "as we know it." The gimmick of 15 percent will succeed the same way Gov. Chris Whitman succeeded in New Jersey with her 30 percent tax cut. The real burden of taxes will be shifted to the state and local level.

The federal programs, which guarded the principle (bad practice, but good principle nevertheless) of protecting and aiding the little and the poor people will be abolished. There will be a nauseating prediction that the private sector will "pick up the slack." In the meantime, the poor and the immigrants (and poor immigrants especially) who have pride will lose the protection of the state, will be beaten by the whims of the local unprincipled electorate and will find private sector too eager to buy their pride and bind their work to self-appointed moral principles.

The welfare bill which Clinton signed a few days ago denies medical benefits to legal immigrants, one of the insistent master-strokes of the new Republican Congress. Clinton in his campaign wisdom, does not like the provision. So, he says he will try to repeal it and yet sign the entire bill.

Now, we immigrants have a dilemma. We re-elect Clinton so that he

restores this loss to us or we choose not to vote for him because he is an unprincipled opportunist, who says the right thing at the right time for the right reward.

The career achievement of Clinton will be this year's Democratic convention. He has managed to move the party so much to the Right, at the expense of African-Americans, immigrants, gays and the poor, that for the first time the Democratic convention will be indistinguishable from the Republican show. To his credit he has simplified all the political problems to a single proposition: "If you think I am so bad, just look at these guys." And, the vampire-charm of Newt Gingrich has helped Clinton maintain his campaign pitch at that pedestrian level.

Meanwhile, we have added another five million to the list of people who do not have health insurance (and as a result, are not affected by the new "health care" bill), making that suffering population 41 million strong. Hillary is selling books on how it takes a village to raise a child; Bob Dole thinks it takes only a family for that simple job; Elizabeth Dole is training successfully for Oprah's job; and Jack Kemp is selling his integrity for the No. 2 spot on the ticket and we will all know very soon that it is "another morning in America" and that we need to re-elect Bill Clinton.

No matter who gets elected, the real problems will not figure in this campaign. If immigrants need to address the situation collectively, we should do better than raise funds for these traitors, better than organize political action committees on their behalf. There has to be some way to make our resistance a real threat.

Two solutions seem necessary. First, find and articulate a collective voice for all immigrants, legal or otherwise. Second, we must speak in the language of economics and act in the social field, which is how the mainstream has succeeded so far.

While we ponder that, let us not encourage either of these scoundrels.



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