



John Bruce/Daily Nebraska

The Times They Are A Changin' Political Primer



John Bruce/Daily Nebraska

The differences between the 1988 Democratic Convention in Atlanta and the recently adjourned Party Conference in Moscow seem to have escaped some political analysts.

Charles Lieurance



True, lines that were once stridently drawn between the good old American Democratic process — with its hooplah and party hats — and the stern

totalitarianism of the Soviet old guard — with its tight lips and zombified dogma — have become blurred, but there are still some indigenous characteristics that keep them from being erased altogether.

The acute observer can see through the glasnost to those subtle nuances that keep the Russian Bear from ever caucusing like only donkeys can caucus.

Here's a beginners guide to sorting the two shabangs:

1. "Hrumph"-ing. First of all, Hrumphing is an art form. It's a time-saving device by which politicians and racketeers can simultaneously digest their last meal and express displeasure over the way the pro-

ceedings are going. Still, the Democratic convention hrumph and the Soviet hrumph are two very different things. Both hrumphs stir up the gastric fluids, but the Soviet hrumph has an edge to it. It's a hrumph that says, "In the old days, there were camps for upstarts like you . . ." The Soviet hrumph replaces all verbiage and is the very antithesis of "windbag." On the other hand, the Democratic convention hrumph is usually the prelude to a very long, meandering speech about the "purpose here today . . ."

2. Girls. At the Democratic Convention Center, after a long, hard day in the caucus, you can get girls sent up to your room. In fact, you can get just about anything sent up to your room

— champagne, shrimp cocktails, little boys. At the Soviet conference, you can get slide shows of Democratic party stalwarts wearing bedsheets and riding each other around their hotel rooms sent up to your room. And vodka. But that goes without saying.

3. Entertainment. The Democrats invited a whole slew of entertainers to perform for the weary delegates. Many of these delegates, being from some dank geographical recess where nothing grows but various species of foot algae, have never seen a Las Vegas lounge show. At last count, however, the Democrats had booked a high school band and a "party donkey." This could cause a rather delicate situation for, say, the Arkansas

delegation who had waited all year to watch Mitzi Gaynor sing "This Land is Your Land" while can-canning with the entire cast of "L.A. Law."

At the Soviet conference, they are there to work, not waste their time on petty entertainment. But a classical pianist plays in the evening. As he is banging out Bach on his black lacquer Steinway, he wishes he were watching Mitzi Gaynor sing Woody Guthrie tunes. He wishes he were dressed in a bedsheet and riding a "party donkey" around in the lobby of some big American hotel.

4. Bugs. The Democrats have been suitably paranoid about listening devices ever since Watergate. A

See **CONVENTION** on 5

'Boston-Austin' connection rekindles unpopular nostalgia

Michael Dukakis wants us to look fondly back to 1960, when another Massachusetts politician joined with a Texas politician to win the White House for the Democrats.

The idea is that our hearts will go pitty-pat and our eyes will grow moist as we recall the olden and golden days of John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson.

Mike Royko



And when we are swept up by this wave of nostalgia, we'll look at Dukakis and his Texan, Lloyd Bentsen, and burst into a chorus or two of "Camelot."

This has become an instant campaign theme for Dukakis and Bentsen, with both of them chirping about a new "Boston-Austin" axis.

But I'm not sure how smart that is. There might be a few voters out there who, when they think back to the original "Boston-Austin" axis, might be more inclined to burst into a cold sweat than into a chorus of "Camelot."

Not everyone's memory is limited to television fragments of Kennedy striking heroic poses and making ringing speeches. Or of the national wake when he was killed.

There might be those who look back to 1960 and remember that there were only a handful of American military advisers in a distant place called Vietnam.

But under the Kennedy administration, the figure grew to almost 17,000 by the end of 1963. And from the time Johnson succeeded Kennedy until he left office, our military presence swelled to 536,000.

During those eight years, about 31,000 troops were killed in Vietnam. The nation's economy went berserk with inflation and riots became a routine part of urban life.

So maybe Dukakis and Bentsen might want to give a second thought

to rekindling memories of those Democratic glory years. It's not exactly unanimous that they were glorious.

True, they were years that included major victories for the cause of civil rights. But the "Boston-Austin" connection doesn't deserve as much credit as the ordinary civil rights workers who confronted the hard-core bigots and racist institutions.

If anything, the Kennedy administration had to be dragged into the civil rights battle. The Kennedys and their best and brightest advisers would have preferred that the marchers didn't march and sit in. All those sit-ins and hymn-singings caused distasteful political problems.

It wasn't until they realized the conflict wasn't going away and they'd have bigger political problems if they didn't get into the act, that they hurriedly developed the now-legendary Kennedy social conscience.

To his credit, Johnson's administration created massive social reform programs, some of which even

worked. But he made the mistake of thinking he could finance these vote-getting programs while also paying for a disastrous war. Nobody can balance those kinds of books.

So while you can get some heart-plinking film footage out of 1960 to 1968, those weren't years that most of us would want to relive. When the best and brightest are mentioned now, a lot of historians are asking: "Best at what and brighter than who?"

True, I voted for John F. Kennedy. However, I used only one hand, since the other was occupied with holding my nose.

As far as I could tell, Kennedy had only one thing going for him: he wasn't Richard Nixon. Other than that, his main public accomplishments were being rich and good-looking.

As it turned out, being rich, good-looking and not Richard Nixon was enough to get him elected president. That, plus his willingness to overcome his disdain for Lyndon Johnson and Johnson's willingness to overlook his loathing for Kennedy.

Had almost anyone else run against

Kennedy, I would have voted for anyone else. But I was one of many voters who thought Nixon was a sneak. Why not? Even President Eisenhower didn't care much for him, and I figured that Ike, one of my heroes, was a good judge of character.

Looking back, I realize that it was a bleak choice. When he later got his chance, Nixon proved he was a sneak. But when Kennedy got his chance, he let gangster Sam Giancana fix him up with a leftover bimbo. You won't find Giancana in the original script of "Camelot."

And in 1964, I voted for Lyndon Johnson. That's because he convinced me and the majority of Americans that Barry Goldwater would get us into a big war. Johnson, a sly one, didn't tell us that he was planning a big war of his own.

So Dukakis and Bentsen can spare me any further reminders of the old "Boston-Austin" connection. I've never been able to get nostalgic about body bags and tear gas.

©1988 By The Chicago Tribune

Distributed by

Tribune Media Services, Inc.