

Convention time: send in the clowns

"It's political party time going down, going down / And the celebrities all come out, coming down, coming down," sings David Byrne on a track from the new Talking Heads album. The song, entitled "The Democratic Circus," seems a pretty good description of events presently underway in Atlanta.

In the big-top atmosphere of a sweltering convention center, there is indeed a three-ring circus going on, complete with all the trimmings.

- We've got outdoor sideshows! On Sunday, Atlanta police cancelled parade permits for skinheads from the Nationalist Movement, a Ku Klux Klan style white supremacist organization, after a mob of anti-Klan demonstrators showed up looking hostile. Some fighting between the two groups broke out.

- We've got clowns! Special prosecutor John Walsh released his special report on former Attorney General Ed Meese Monday. Far from vindicating him, the report said that Meese had likely broken laws by failing to file and pay back income taxes, and that there had been a possible conflict of interest regarding Meese's ownership of AT&T stock while the company was being broken up by the Justice Department in 1985. While Walsh could not accumulate enough material evidence to take Meese to court, it seems likely that Meese will remain a favorite punching bag for the Democrats.

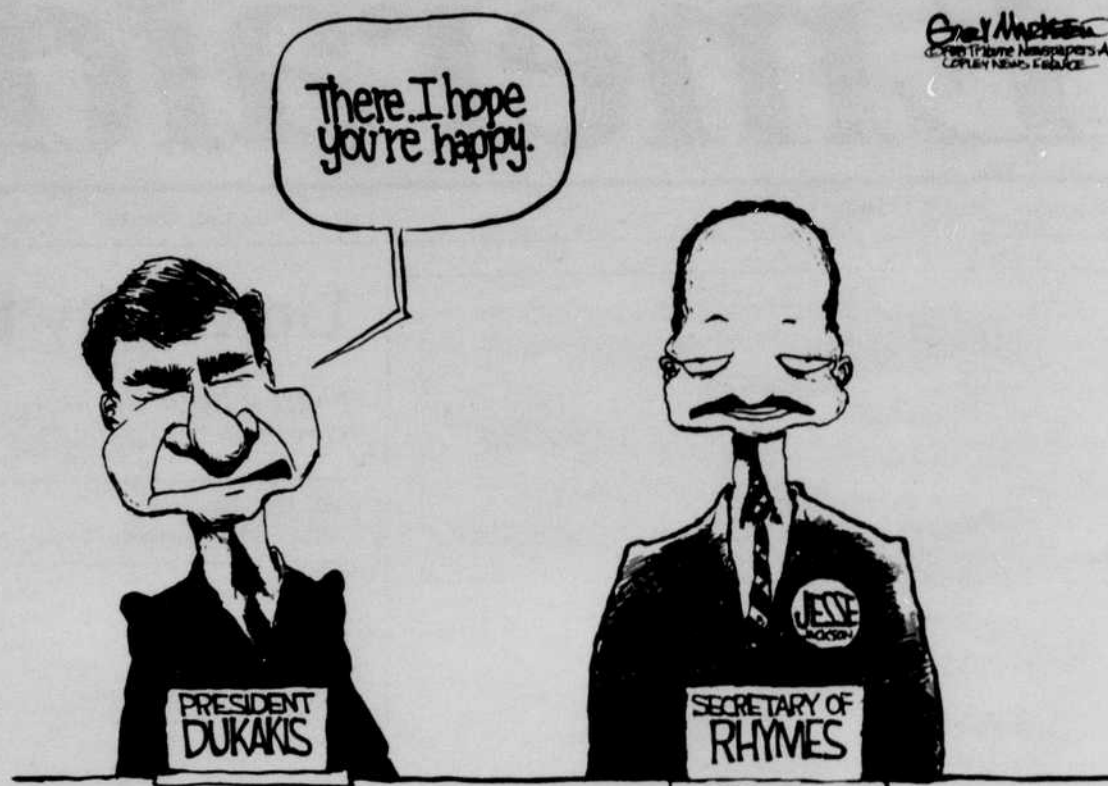
- The ringmaster of the circus is former president Jimmy Carter, who delivered Monday night's address. The event marks the political rehabilitation of a man who used to symbolize everything hopeless about the Democratic party. History and hindsight will be much kinder to this underrated president especially when compared to Ronald Reagan. "Carter got beaten on a couple of things: the deficit and a perceived lack of strength in foreign affairs," said California delegate John Emerson. "But the Reagan administration has run up an annual deficit greater than what Carter ran up in four years. And we have a president who also can't seem to deal with a hostage situation."

- See the magician perform an amazing miracle! In order to cover a budget deficit in his home state of Massachusetts, Dukakis had to enact an untimely cigarette levy, adding more ammunition to Republican charges that he is a "tax-and-spend" liberal.

- Of course, Dukakis is actually pretty moderate, but in the Circus House of Mirrors, even a conservative Texan like Lloyd Bentsen is supposed to look like a Democrat. Bentsen was a shrewd pick for VP by Dukakis; the Democrats could profit greatly by wrestling the South and its large electoral tally away from Republican candidate George Bush. But Bentsen differs from Duke on several foreign policy and defense matters; the Texan is in favor of SDI, aid to Nicaraguan Contras and additional arms purchases — all positions of the Republican party.

- See the incredible high-wire act! The Bentsen pick angered many supporters of Jesse Jackson's camp when Dukakis is already having a tough time handling the Chicago reverend. Jackson seemed a little put off by the Bentsen nod himself, and was promising a continuing fight on the convention floor over planks in the party's platform. We'd certainly like to see some of Jackson's better ideas put into Dukakis' vague and bland agenda. Duke's advisors were saying that the most important event of the convention will be whether their man can appear as a take-charge kind of guy, especially next to Jackson.

Of course at convention's end, we expect to see dancing girls astride bareback donkeys as hawkers promote that snake oil called Party Unity. The only thing this greatest show doesn't have is elephants; for that, we'll have to wait until the Republican convention.



Letters

Go for Howard

I am a University student who wishes to show support for the recent Students for Jesse Jackson in endorsing Jim Howard for Congress. Both Jesse Jackson and Jim Howard have shown strong commitments to fight drugs and promote education, especially for minority and underprivileged youth. I would like to point out that Howard received his doctorate for a thesis on education of underprivileged youth, and so is quite knowledgeable in this field.

Jim Howard is a qualified and caring individual who will devote himself towards promotion of his district's needs.

Ross Johnson
Political science

Pivotal point

As past director of the Gay and Lesbian Alliance, as an energetic supporter of Jesse Jackson's campaign, and as a student, I feel the need to speak out regarding recent comments by Ken Sprague, coordinator of Students for Jackson.

I think I speak for the majority of lesbian and gay voters in this state when I say that we do not support the candidacy of Republican Jim Howard in his race against Peter DeFazio. While there are hard feelings over DeFazio's high-handed treatment of Jackson's campaign, endorsing Howard is not a reasonable response.

Aside from the many differences between Howard and DeFazio over progressive issues, a pivotal point between the two candidates for the lesbian and gay community is this:

Which candidate supports Gov. Goldschmidt's executive order banning discrimination against tax-paying, law-abiding gay citizens within the state system of hiring, firing and distribution of services? Which candidate supports our civil rights by campaigning for a state law banning discrimination against lesbians and gays in

housing and employment?

The answer of record is DeFazio. Howard has stated on more than one occasion that the executive order offers "special privileges" to lesbian and gay citizens. This identical argument has been used against every civil rights struggle in history. We are tired of being treated as second-class citizens, and will not support any politician who is bigoted in any way.

It was inappropriate for Sprague to represent any supporter of the Jackson campaign in this reactionary, vindictive manner. Ultimately, it is not what Jesse would have done.

Tim Hughes
Eugene

Spiteful

I voted for Jesse Jackson in Oregon's primary. Did I vote for him because he's black, because I like the way he speaks, or because he has become a cult-like hero for some fan-club mentalities?

No! I voted for him so his socially-oriented philosophies would have a significant effect over the drafting of the Democratic platform.

That is why I was shocked to read about the spiteful stunt pulled by Ken Sprague and the Students for Jackson organization (ODE, July 12). By supporting Republican Jim Howard for the 4th Congressional District seat over incumbent Democrat Peter DeFazio in the November election, they are rejecting the very essence and principles of what Jackson stands for.

They are promoting the reduction of the political process to its basest and most repulsive qualities — those of "personality contests" and "petty favoritism" with an abhorrent disregard and naivety toward the power and effects that politicians have over the shaping of our society.

Sprague claims he can no longer "trust" DeFazio, and now some of the candidates' "hidden issues" have revealed

themselves.

If Sprague or the supporters of his organization had done their homework, they would know what an excellent and active advocate DeFazio has been for the Democratic principles at the very heart of Jackson's campaign.

By supporting Howard in the November election, the Students for Jackson organization is truly throwing the baby out with the bathwater and supporting the non-socially oriented regime that has dominated this country for far too long.

Franz Goebel
Architecture

We heard

Dukakis picked Bentsen as vice-president because women, minorities and all the other non-rich supporters of Jackson have no power.

They'll support the party no matter what. They have no choice. Their continued fear of Republicanism will have them frantically waving Dukakis/Bentsen banners in two months at the outside. They will do as they're told. They understand when the party is acting in their own best interests.

I can see the show next November quite clearly. The announcers will be animated, the crowds hushed: "And here they come, ladies and gentlemen! It's Dukakis and Bush on the outside and Bush and Dukakis inside! They're neck and neck turning on to the home stretch! It's a race to the finish, ladies and gentlemen, and what an exciting race it is!"

For any woman, minority or anyone else who knows that there is a personal application of the word 'budget,' a vote for Dukakis in '88 is a stamp of approval for our political removal.

Jesse Jackson said, "I am somebody." And you know what, Mr. Dukakis? Some of us heard.

Nicole Rensenbrink
Eugene

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