

ERIC  
MARGOLIS



## Mondale's misery

Poor Walter Mondale. First there was the nasty surprise of Gary Hart. What was supposed to have been a dignified, triumphant march to the Democratic nomination turned into a near-fatal and bloody ambush. Now, with the nomination almost certainly won, Mondale finds himself caught in the middle of the nastiest situation to hit the Democrats for decades.

The problem is, of course, Rev. Jesse Jackson and his supporters. Jackson has fired up normally apathetic black voters. In the U.S., 85% of the black vote always goes to the Democrats; but rarely do more than 25% of blacks vote. In the Democratic primaries, however, black voter turnouts ran as high as 76%. This means, in simple terms, that there are going to be a lot of blacks voting in the November election — and maybe the way Jesse Jackson says.

Jackson has done a superb job in promoting himself into a viable candidate and galvanizing the black vote. Lacking in money, the lubricant of U.S. politics, Jackson grandstanded himself into prime time by his trips to Syria and Cuba, a sort of Black Pimpernel rescuing American prisoners.

Democrat chieftains, long accustomed to a dependable, docile black vote, do not much care for the roving reverend. Most alarming to them, Jackson has managed to insert himself as a middleman into the traditional process of patronage. Where before the Democrats controlled the black vote by dishing out millions for welfare and training programs, now Jackson appears to have seized control of this process.

### Condemned by Islamic groups

Enter Louis Farrakhan, former calypso singer, now grand panjandrum of the 100,000 Black Muslims. Farrakhan is an important supporter of Jackson and a figure of note in the black community. The Black Muslims are not really Muslims at all — they have been roundly condemned by all orthodox Islamic groups — but a black cult with Mideast trappings. They believe that all whites are devils; blacks must struggle through years of white oppression before finally becoming the dominant race.

The Black Muslims, in spite of their beliefs, are much respected among blacks for their programs of self-help, economic and moral improvement, and puritanical lifestyle. In a refreshing change, they eschew government handouts, insisting blacks must pull themselves up under their own power.

Blacks are an important component of the Democratic party, which is really a disparate composite of special-interest groups. But Jews are even more important; though few in number, Jews provide a major portion of party funding and command decisive voting power in key electoral states. And, as we have lately seen, the Jewish Democrats are hopping mad at Jesse Jackson and his friend, Farrakhan.

First there was Jackson's support for the Palestinians. Photos of Jackson kissing the PLO's Yasser Arafat produced apoplexy among Jewish Democrats. The result was a "get Jackson" campaign by the extremist Jewish Defence League and media exposes of Arab funding of some Jackson-run charities. Jackson retorted that Israel was running the U.S. and referred to Jews as "hymies."

Then Farrakhan called Judaism a "gutter religion" and Israel an "outlaw state." A firestorm of Jewish outrage ensued: Jackson was pressured to disavow Farrakhan, which he refused to do. Mondale suddenly found himself smack in the middle of a major Jewish-black commotion.

This ugly train of events threatens to sunder the Democratic party. In spite of honeyed words to the contrary, there is little love lost between blacks and Jews. Many blacks believe themselves to have been exploited by Jews and then bought off by pittance handouts; Jews are outraged by black lack of appreciation for all the help given during the struggle for civil rights.

Blacks are angry at the "hymies;" Jews are furious at the "schwartzes." Behind this cloud of invective is emerging another divisive issue. A growing number of American blacks, championed by Jackson, resent enormous U.S. aid to Israel. They feel the \$3 billion a year going to Israel — which they call a Jewish charity — should be flowing to blacks. This suggestion is not received warmly by Jewish supporters of Israel.

### Issue could divide party

Democrats only speak in muted whispers about this explosive issue but it could become an important and divisive matter within the party. Mondale has somehow to paper over this dispute lest he see blacks or Jews bolt the party in November. Outraged Jews might well vote for Reagan, the most pro-Israeli U.S. president since Harry Truman. Blacks just might not vote at all; there is even the remote possibility that Jackson could still quit the party and run as an independent, thus assuring a Democratic loss.

The Democrats must have the Jewish vote to carry New York, New Jersey, Illinois, Florida and California. Black votes are essential to carry the southern states, Texas, and the north-east. To lose either group means doom for the Democrats. So Mondale has no choice but to try to settle the black-Jewish fight before November. He is trying hard; so are many black and Jewish leaders. But hot emotions on both sides keep causing the issue to break out into the open.

Besides calming down blacks and Jews, Mondale is trying to cope with assaulting legions of enraged feminists who are demanding a female vice-president. Unfortunately for Mondale, there is no female with the least qualifications for the job but this fact does nothing to deter the party's Amazons. Now there are rumors that the blacks are fighting the feminists over who will get the vice-presidency. If I were Mondale, I would have Jackson undergo a sex-change operation and convert to Judaism. But then there are the labor unions, Hispanics, teachers, bureaucrats, handicapped, lesbians . . .