

Inside Report . . . By Rowland Evans and Robert Novak

Democratic Dismay *For 1970*

"A NATIONAL Committee has no claim to existence if it abolishes voter registration. The very willingness to even suspend it for any period of time is appalling."

So reads a private memorandum from an Eastern Democratic political pro now being privately circulated in Washington. The memorandum reflects a rising concern among Democratic professional politicians that the party faces deep trouble in the fall elections.

Considering Mr. Johnson's record plurality in 1964 and the top-heavy Democratic majorities in Congress, this alarm may seem misplaced. But the confidential memorandum pinpoints a decline in vigor and inner strength of local Democratic organizations. This decline fully justifies the doleful forecast of possible heavy losses in congressional and state elections this fall.

A MAJOR reason for the decline is the revolutionary but almost unnoticed switch in Democratic fund-raising techniques — from a large number of small contributions to a small number of large contributors.

Fund-raising now is concentrated in the President's Club, instituted by President Kennedy and expanded by President Johnson. Composed of well-heeled business and industrial leaders (most of them not having the remotest connection with local Democratic organizations), the President's Club has minimized local fund-raising.

Consequently, the special favors that used to go to the local politicians, such as well-publicized White House



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dinners with the President, now go to the business fatcats. This costs local leaders prestige at home and reduces their stake in the Party's national fortunes.

But the fund-raising change is only one of many factors contributing to erosion of the Democratic Party's historic and basic strength: its local organizations.

Almost as important is President Johnson's politics of consensus. The President's consensus knows no Party lines.

In short, the President's strength depends today not on local Democratic Party organizations so much as it does on a wholly unique Johnson organization, cutting across Party lines. A Republican banker such as New York's David Rockefeller can get inside the White House easier today than a Democratic leader such as Brooklyn's Stanley Steingut. Local party leaders don't like it.

THE IDENTITY of the men who control national politics for President Johnson today illustrates how far he has moved Party control from its traditional power centers.

Democratic National

Chairman John W. Bailey, an experienced professional from Connecticut is a figurehead. Texan Clifton Carter, National Committee executive director, runs national headquarters on a day-to-day basis. But the controlling figure is White House aide W. Marvin Watson Jr., whose political experience was limited to the right-wing—the controlling faction, usually — of the highly factionalized Democratic Party in Texas.

Like Carter, Watson's knowledge of big-city industrial-state politics is scant. With Watson, non-Southern Democratic politicians have no sense of identification. Watson's world of politics has no relevance to the politics of Philadelphia, Chicago or Detroit.

This was shown in Watson's decision to cut the heart out of the National Committee's registration division last month (for economy reasons). The step infuriated not only local party leaders but also Democratic Congressmen.

BEYOND THIS, moreover, is the lack of new attractive Democratic candidates for major offices this fall—a lack explained perhaps by the dominance of the Kennedys and Lyndon Johnson the past five years.

In New York, Ohio, California and elsewhere the party is split by internal friction. Heap on top of this the decline of local organization and the urgency behind that confidential memo is apparent. It's no wonder worried Democrats hope the President himself will take notice of his party's disorder.

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