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Anti-New Politics Liberals

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A BROAD-BASED organization of anti-New Politics liberal Democrats, privately conceived during last summer's McGovernite orgy at Miami Beach and secretly nurtured ever since, is surfacing as a cutting edge in the struggle for the soul of the Democratic Party.

The hard-nosed thrust of the new group, the Coalition for a Democratic Majority (CDM), is revealed in an unsigned manifesto (titled "Come Home, Democrats") mailed out in a solicitation for membership. Its authors typify liberal intellectuals appalled by McGovernite New Politics: Norman Podhoretz, editor of Commentary, and his wife, writer-editor Midge Decter, author of "The New Chastity," a pungent argument against women's liberation.

"We believe that in repudiating the Democratic 'New Politics' presidential candidacy in this election," says the Podhoretz-Decter manifesto, "the voters were speaking with precision and sophistication. What they said was that American society should continue on in that very Democratic tradition which, abandoned by the forces temporarily in control of the National Democratic Party in 1972, was usurped in some

measure by the Republicans."

This joins the ideological struggle for the post-McGovern future. Beyond that, it fills a long-felt need to show that internationalism and law-and-order are perfectly compatible with liberalism. In this sense, the CDM mirrors the founders of the Americans for Democratic Action (ADA) a generation ago seeking a refuge for anti-Communist liberals.

IN CONVERSATIONS last summer the CDM was conceived as a new version of ADA, which long ago abandoned international anti-Communism and went over to the New Politics. Involved in those discussions with Podhoretz and Miss Decter were author Ben F. Wattenberg, adviser to Sen. Henry M. Jackson, and Richard Shifter, a Maryland political leader and supporter of Sen. Hubert Humphrey.

They kept their conversations secret to avoid accusations of undercutting McGovern's campaign. While most unenthusiastic about McGovern, they rigorously shunned any hint of apostasy that would have made them John Connallys in liberal clothing. But they quietly recruited a formidable cadre of anti-McGovern liberals.

Many are from the academic community, including Prof. Nathan Glazer of Harvard, who wrote a pallid endorsement of McGovern for Podhoretz's Commentary. Most CDM charter members sat out 1972. That includes Prof. John Roche of Brandeis, LBJ-era White House aide and former ADA national chairman. Other CDM academics are Seymour Martin Lipset of Harvard, Jeanne Kirkpatrick of Georgetown and Joseph Bishop of Yale Law School.

From outside academia come Patricia Harris, the 1972 Democratic credentials chairman; longtime Humphrey lieutenants Max Kampelman and William Connell; New York real estate executive Richard Ravitch, a fundraiser for Sen. Edmund S. Muskie; campaign consultant Robert Keefe, who is close to organized labor, and black leader Bayard Rustin.

Only two members of Congress, liberal Reps. Richard Bolling of Missouri and Thomas Foley of Washington, were signed up before the election. Others, as well as labor leaders, will follow.

THE QUESTION is whether any of the party's big guns—such as Humphrey himself—will join. An early ADA

leader, Humphrey personally subscribes to CDM's principles, specifically including a strong national defense. Whether he publicly embraces CDM may tell much about his willingness to challenge the McGovernite wing of the party.

The Podhoretz-Decter manifesto leave no doubt about those principles. It attacks "the claim of an elite faction that it knows what is best for others" and "a politics new in its contempt for the very people and institutions on which the Democratic Party has built its electoral strength."

The manifesto underwrites strong national security, civil rights, and this liberal formulation of law-and-order: "The belief that order is essential to justice has been diluted by an attitude of cavalier disregard for the tens of millions of Americans who are genuinely concerned about public safety and respect for law."

In meetings forming CDM, Rep. Foley commented that the only intellectual pressure on Capitol Hill was the dogma of the New Politics that culminated in the McGovern debacle. Whatever else it accomplishes, CDM will try to crack that monopoly.

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