

David Duke: point man for neo-Nazi "populists"

CHICAGO—Louisiana legislator David Duke's insistence that he is not a racist was undermined again earlier this month when he addressed a meeting of the Populist Party's national executive committee here. The Populist Party, a small white-supremacist group, had been Duke's 1988 presidential campaign vehicle, putting him on the ballot in 12 states.

The party's racist roots stem from its 1984 creation by the Liberty Lobby, a little-known but influential quasi-Nazi organization. The Liberty Lobby, founded in 1955 and still led by Willis Carto, is headquartered a few blocks from Capitol Hill. Its 32-page weekly tabloid, the *Spotlight*, has an estimated circulation of 165,000, higher than any other American right-wing publication.

The Liberty Lobby's guiding bible is *Imperium*, a tract written in 1948 by Francis P. Yockey, which frames the world as a conflict between powerful Jewish "culture distorters" and an authentic Aryan civilization. The book, praised by Carto in a long introduction, is dedicated to Adolph

Hitler.

Carto, through the Populist Party, hopes to meld the fractured white-supremacist movement into a powerful political force. Since its inception, the party has managed to attract like flies the violent, paramilitary Posse Comitatus, the paramilitary Christian-Patriots Defense League, the militantly racist and anti-Semitic National States Rights Party and sundry elements of the Ku Klux Klan.

Duke said that his speech to the Populist Party's governing board was a prior commitment he had to keep, and that now, as a loyal Republican, he is no longer associated with the party.

But those appear to be empty words. Duke's electioneering has followed the Populist Party's "tripartisan" strategy that advocates running as a Democrat, Republican or Populist in order to develop campaigns on Populist platform issues. Within the last year, Duke, with Populist Party support, has run under all three party banners, in the 1988 Democratic presidential primaries, in November as the Populist Party's presidential candidate and finally—and successfully—as a Republican in Louisiana.

On March 3, 2,000 students interrupted Howard's annual convocation ceremony to present their demands to school President James E. Cheek. Carrying signs that said, "Just Say No to Atwater" and chanting, "Students united can never be defeated," the protesters overran the ceremony, usurping the attention of the national media that was on hand to hear Bill Cosby's keynote address.

After meetings with Cheek, whom detractors describe as a closet Republican, failed to produce Atwater's dismissal, some 1,500 students seized the four-story "A [Administration] Building."



On March 7 the administration obtained a court order for their removal and called in Washington, D.C., riot police equipped with tear gas to help Howard security guards evict the students. This "SWAT" team broke through windows to unlock doors and landed helicopters on the roof while students huddled on the floors.

When Atwater saw the video of the conflict, he tendered his resignation, saying in a letter that he "could never forgive himself if someone was

hurt in one of these episodes." Even with Atwater out of the picture, students remained in A Building, fearing reprisals and holding out for their other demands. The 89-hour occupation ended when student leaders met with attorneys from the school and drafted a treaty in which all student demands were met except receipt of a written apology from Cheek.

The protest was successful largely because its leaders maintained discipline, kept their fortress secure and upheld their pledge of non-violence. Members of Black *Nia* Force acted as security guards and stood watch at doorways. Doors, locked and chained, were opened on the half hour, when streams of students emerged from teach-ins, while hundreds more waited to file in. No reporters were allowed in.

Students carried in sandwiches, fruit, hot chocolate, pillows and blankets. Bags of trash were piled outside the A Building. Every so often, a group of protesters appeared on the roof to raise their fists. Some students held the building, others rallied at the entrance to the building, while still others marched around the campus chanting, "Too Black, Too Strong!" "Black Power!" and "Whose School? Our School!"

Junior Ras Baraka, son of poet and political activist Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones), was the most outspoken student leader. At a rally on Wednesday, Baraka, founder of Black *Nia* Force, said, "We're letting them know there's a new leadership, a new uncompromising leadership. This is just the beginning... We are setting a precedent for other black colleges, in the black community and throughout the diaspora."

According to a new report by the Center for Democratic Renewal, an Atlanta-based group that monitors racist and anti-Semitic propaganda, "Klansmen and neo-Nazis across the country are hailing [Duke's] victory as their own." The report, titled "Ballot-Box Bigotry: David Duke and the Populist Party," predicts that Klansmen and neo-Nazis will now "gravitate to the Populist Party.

And, it seems, so are some Republicans. Former Arizona Gov. Evan Mecham was scheduled to join Duke at a Populist Party press conference, but was forced to cancel. Mecham's faction of the Arizona GOP recently wrested control of the party from more moderate elements. Arizona Republicans have since declared the U.S. a "Christian Republic."

Duke and his supporters say he "will be the first person since [George] Wallace to articulate the positions of the American white majority." To build that supposed majority, Duke plans to consolidate his base and expand his appeal by pushing anti-welfare legislation and property-tax relief for those earning under \$75,000 per year. He claims one of his proposals already has the support of every GOP legislator in Louisiana. —Russell Bellant

—Eric Gravley

women, minorities, environment, investment in South Africa, charitable giving, community outreach, nuclear power, animal testing, military contracts and social disclosure. For example, do you need vegetable juice? If so, choose V8, made by socially responsible Campbell Soup. The Libby brand is made by Nestlé, a company that ranks poorly in all 10 categories. What about ice cream? Buy from Ben & Jerry's, which gives 7.5 percent of its pre-tax earnings to charity rather than from Borden, a company whose chemical division has been fined \$2.2 million for violating the Clean Water Act. To order your copy call 1-800-U-CAN-HELP.

Military quarantine

Soldiers at Fort Hood, Texas, who test positive for the AIDS virus are kept in special barracks. Laurie Garrett reports in *New York Newsday* that although U.S. Defense Department regulations state that soldiers "shall not be separated on the basis of their HIV status," the 50 or so HIV-positive soldiers at Ft. Hood are separated from their units and put on the third floor of Building 21006—known on the base as the "HIV hotel" and the "leper colony." One quarantined resident has a different description for the barracks: "prison." Maj. James Small, head of infectious disease at Ft. Hood, does not think this segregation should be called "quarantine" since there is no quarantine in the Army. After all, the Army can do no wrong. Or as Lt. Col. Bruce Beals, head of public information for the base, explains, "Yes, we have a captive group that can be studied. We have a lot of checks and balances in our system that do not exist in the civilian world, and these ensure that the right thing is always done."

The rich get richer

President Bush's 1990 budget proposes cutting the long-term (one year) capital gains tax from 28 percent to 12 percent for people in the top tax bracket. According to the Washington, D.C.-based Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, Bush's proposed tax cut would further "widen the gap [that now stands at record levels] between the wealthy and the poor and the gap between the wealthy and the middle class." A 1988 study by the Congressional Budget Office found that the top 1 percent of taxpayers—those in the \$100,000-plus income bracket—receive on average 55 percent of the nation's long-term capital gains income, while the top 0.25 percent of taxpayers receive 42 percent. The White House responds to criticism that it is just helping the rich by saying that under the Bush plan the people with adjusted gross incomes of under \$20,000 (more than half of all taxpayers) would pay no tax on long-term capital gains. What the administration doesn't say is that these taxpayers receive only 8 percent of all capital gains income. Citizens for Tax Justice, a Washington, D.C., group, estimates that people who make more than \$200,000 per year would receive, on average, a \$25,000 tax cut under the Bush proposal. Further, the group projects that 90 percent of the tax benefits in this proposal will go to the richest 5 percent of the population. And what will this giveaway do to the federal deficit? The Congressional Budget Office estimates that in the long term the proposal will increase the deficit by at least several billion dollars a year. As the *Wall Street Journal* explains, Bush's tax proposals provide "billions of dollars in benefits [to] rich people and big corporations."

See no evil, hear no evil

How is President Bush able to get away with his kinder and gentler sleight of hand without the national media exposing his hypocrisy? One answer is that the administration already has in place a smoothly working propaganda apparatus, or, as it is called these days, a "public diplomacy program." The Society of Professional Journalists' annual *Freedom of Information Report* quotes Lou Cannon of the *Washington Post* as saying, "Bush is restricting the access for the press severely and is starting out where it took Reagan several years to get to." And Helen Thomas, United Press International's veteran correspondent, says she fears "Bush will tear all of the pages from Reagan's book, and it will be total news management." What both Cannon and Thomas seem to forget is that it takes two to manage the news.

News clips, memos, press releases, reports, anecdotes, raw gossip—send them all to "In Short," c/o *In These Times*, 1300 West Belmont, Chicago, Ill. 60657. Please include your address and phone number.

By Salim Muwakkil

CHICAGO

ALTHOUGH HE'S SPENT THE LAST FEW weeks dodging the political karma of his racist "Willie Horton strategy," GOP chief Lee Atwater's quest for more black Republicans continues.

The protests by Howard University students demanding his removal from the school's board of trustees may have forced Atwater's resignation from that institution (see story on page 5), but did little to halt the Republican National Committee (RNC) chairman's campaign to attract African-Americans. Nor has he been dissuaded by the recent election of David Duke, a former grand wizard of the Ku Klux Klan, to a Republican seat in the Louisiana House.

Atwater's strategy was outlined in a speech following his selection as RNC chairman last January. He said the Republican Party had a unique chance to gain the black support it needed to truly become the majority party, and he pledged to take advantage of the opportunity.

"Those very sectors which have historically given their votes to the other party are now beginning to realize for the first time that they have won very little in return for their allegiance," he said. Atwater's speech may have been heavy with euphemisms, but his meaning was clear: Republicans have much to gain by exploiting African-Americans' growing disaffection with the Democratic Party.

Blacks for Vrdolyak? As if following instructions directly from the RNC chairman's playbook, Edward Vrdolyak, a Chicago Democrat-turned-Republican, has struck an unlikely vein of black support by exploiting the political divisions in the city's African-American community that followed the sudden November 1987 death of Mayor Harold Washington. In his former incarnation as chairman of the Cook County Democratic Party, Vrdolyak opposed Washington's reform agenda at every turn and was the man most black Chicagoans loved to hate.

"I've supported the Democratic Party, the

An alternative strain

The Republican National Committee (RNC) is still developing the specific features of its initiative to lure black voters into the party, but a general plan already has been designed. Thelma Duggin, a black business consultant who coordinated minority affairs in various posts within the Reagan administration, is in charge of the new thrust.

According to RNC officials, the party is focusing its outreach efforts on the growing numbers of well-educated, upwardly mobile young blacks who pollsters say are much more likely to vote Republican than their elders.

Since this target group's interests closely coincide with the concerns of the party's core constituency, RNC officials see no need to tailor a special message. "The main issues we stress are peace and prosperity," says RNC Chief of Staff Mary Matalin. "And that's an American agenda, not a race agenda." Instead, the party seeks to create an alternative strain of black leadership through job appointments in the Bush administration and senior positions in the party structure. —S.M.



GOP Chairman Lee Atwater: playing the blues for blacks.

GOP courting black votes for the white reasons

black nationalist movement and the independent Harold Washington movement," says Marion Stamps, a widely respected organizer who works with residents of the city's public housing projects. "But I've had enough. I'm wholeheartedly supporting Vrdolyak. None of those other groups have ever really addressed the real problems of the poor women and children that I live among, the folks they've labeled the 'underclass.'" Stamps' disaffection is exhibit A in Atwater's argument for aggressive outreach.

Jack Kemp, the former presidential candidate and idealistic HUD secretary, is a valuable ally in Atwater's push for a darker GOP. A rhapsodic capitalist whose faith in the entrepreneurial spirit knows no bounds, Kemp adds a kind of movement fervor to the outreach campaign. "I like a lot of what Kemp is saying," says Stamps. "He's the first head of HUD to treat us like we're capable of being self-sufficient instead of patronizing us with promises of more welfare."

Stamps joins several prominent black Chicagoans—including Alderwoman Anna Langford, American Postal Workers President Tommy Briscoe and two former Washington aides—in her support for Republican Vrdolyak. While some of Vrdolyak's black support is born of spite, much of it is genuine.

Kemp's bootstrap boosterism strikes a responsive chord among many African-Americans. There is a natural connection between black cultural conservatism and the conservative movement within the Republican

Party. Many of black America's largest organizations—Booker T. Washington's National Negro Business League, Marcus Gar-

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vey's United Negro Improvement Association, Elijah Muhammad's Nation of Islam—chant the conservative mantra of hard work, self-reliance and moral discipline.

This cultural connection was obscured by the anti-civil rights posture the Republicans

Some analysts say Atwater's strategy is a ruse to make Dems cover their core.

have assumed over the last quarter century, but the Bush people think it's time to renew those philosophical links.

Bush, you're no Reagan: "Chicago is really a unique case," says Linda Williams, associate director of research for the Joint Center for Political Studies (JCPS), a Washington, D.C.-based think tank that specializes in African-American affairs. "I don't see a national trend that corresponds with what's happening in the black community there. But there certainly is a window of opportunity in the black community for Republicans."

Williams credits Bush, rather than Atwater, for the new opening. "Bush is highly regarded

in the black community because of his history," she adds. "And since his election he's been sending the right symbolic signals."

Whether the Republican Party uses the opportunity depends on what deeds back up Bush's symbols. But, Williams notes, the president gains black support simply by not being Ronald Reagan.

"I agree that the Democrats' shoddy treatment of African-Americans may have opened a new opportunity for the Republicans to seek black defections," says Ronald Walters, professor of political science at Howard University. "But unlike Linda [Williams] at the center, I don't see any evidence that African-Americans are disposed to join the party of Reagan. We are more likely to start building an independent party," Walters adds.

Indeed, black dissatisfaction with the listless campaign of Democrat Michael Dukakis manifested itself as a drop in electoral participation, rather than in support for Bush. "We had an average drop-off of about 11 percent in African-American vote totals from 1984 to 1988," Walters explains. "When the black community doesn't like a Democratic candidate, they simply refuse to go to the polls." The Atwater strategy seeks to mobilize those disillusioned Democrats for the GOP.

Hey, not so fast: Atwater vigorously opposed the election of ex-Klansman Duke to the Louisiana legislature. He urged the RNC to approve a resolution declaring that Duke "had no place in the Republican Party," and would receive no assistance from the national party apparatus.

But Atwater's fervid denunciations of the former Klansman have perplexed many Republicans who see little difference between Duke's priorities and the party platform (see *In These Times*, Feb. 15 and March 1). Moreover, they argue, racial polarization has been a boon to the GOP, so why tamper with success?

Some analysts suggest that Atwater may be pulling a fast one. Atlanta-based pollster Clairbourne Darden contends that the GOP would suffer a net deficit if the outreach campaign were successful. The party's gain in black support would be offset by its loss of white support, he argues.

"Republicans appear to be the only ones who can save the Democratic Party in the South," Darden says. "The only thing that can save the Democrats from becoming the 'black' party is if Republicans succeed in winning more blacks."

In view of this, Darden and others wonder if Atwater, who is known for his hardball tactics, is actually seeking other constituencies with his rhetoric of black outreach. They contend his strategy may be a ruse to trick Democrats into spending resources on firming up their own base, while the Republicans go after the voters they really want: Hispanics, Asians and moderate whites who are attracted to promises of inclusion.

"This technique has been around a long, long time," Darden told the *Congressional Quarterly*. "Undeniably, it is smart to do, because the battle for politics is in the middle."

But most experts conclude that the Atwater initiative is a serious and wily attempt to harness the spirit of the times to transform the GOP into the majority party. And since black dissatisfaction with the Democratic Party is rising—despite their unprecedented influence in party affairs—Atwater may be on to something. □