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Liberals of ADA Welcome Showdown, Will Lay Emphasis on 'Extremism'

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These are happy, proud, busy days for the earnest liberals of Americans for Democratic Action.

Senator Humphrey, ADA's favorite son, is the Democratic candidate for Vice President.

The Republicans have nominated Senator Goldwater, ADA's favorite enemy, for President.

And the G. O. P. is attacking ADA instead of ignoring it.

For an organization with only 50,000 members, yet claiming vast political influence, it would be difficult to imagine better circumstances.

A hard fight is the best possible amplifier for the views of a small but articulate political group.

A Special Campaign

ADA has formally endorsed the Democratic ticket, as it always does, and is waging an enthusiastic campaign.

It is a very special campaign to the ADA, which sees it as a showdown between liberals and conservatives.

"For years now the reactionaries have been demanding a confrontation with American liberalism," ADA told the Democratic Platform Commit-

tee, adding:

"Democrats should welcome this confrontation with open arms, and the convention must present a program as liberal and vital as the Republican program is reactionary and moribund."

ADA lays heavy emphasis on the "extremism" issue. The organization's latest statement of principles declares:

"With the resurgence and coalescing of extreme right wing organizations in the country and their support of the Republican nominee for the presidency, ADA has assumed a major responsibility in pointing out the dangers inherent in their ideology, which is based on a distorted view of history and which constitutes a threat to our basic democratic concepts."

G. O. P. Hits Back

Republicans are striking back on the extremism issue, using ADA as their main target. They have picked up the theme sounded by Senator Goldwater in 1962, when he said:

"The Americans for Democratic Action, who talk about peaceful coexistence, are in the White House close to the President (Kennedy). There are 31 members of the ADA there . . .

I am not worried about the extreme right wing in our country. They are not in the Government in Washington. I am worried about the extremists to the left who are in the Government."

ADA leaders note with satisfaction that Republican attacks on the organization have intensified since the G. O. P. convention.

On Saturday, for instance, Representative Miller of New York, the G. O. P. vice presidential candidate, called ADA "unquestionably the most influential organization in our Nation's Capital attempting to subvert and transform our government into a foreign socialist totalitarianism."

Objectives Viewed

"It's obvious that the Republicans have picked ADA as a campaign issue," a spokesman said, charging that they "are trying to take the heat off the Birchism issue by equating us with the John Birch Society."

ADA emphatically disassociates itself from the extreme left. Prospective members must

subscribe to the view that "all forms of totalitarianism, including communism, are incompatible" with the objectives of ADA liberals.

The organization "was born of the postwar split between the American non-Communist left and the Communists," according to the ADA statement of principles.

It was founded in 1947 "as a political vehicle for political leaders, trade union leaders and intellectuals who were liberal in national affairs, international in world outlook and anti-Communist by conviction."

Target of McCarthy

ADA leaders take pride in the organization's role in exposing Communist infiltration of Henry Wallace's Progressive Party in 1948.

The late Senator Joseph R. McCarthy attacked ADA as "anti-anti-Communist," after ADA had attacked him. More recently, critics generally have steered away from insinuations that ADA is soft on communism.

Rather, the critics picture

headed ultra-liberals with Socialist tendencies.

ADA defines its brand of liberalism as a philosophy "receptive to new ideas or proposals of reform."

For many years, Lyndon B. Johnson failed to measure up to ADA's standards of liberalism.

Scoring him on 13 Senate votes in 1959, ADA gave him a "liberal quotient" of only 58 per cent. All the other leading contenders for the 1960 Democratic presidential nomination scored 100 per cent.

Criticized Johnson

ADA assailed Mr. Johnson's performance as Democratic leader of the Senate, charging him with "surrendering" to President Eisenhower.

Early in 1960, ADA charged:

"Senator Johnson, by his record in the field of civil rights and labor legislation, by his faithful representation of monopoly interests in oil and gas and in other fields, has become a symbol of compromise and political opportunism, and therefore has no fair claim to be the standard-bearer of a liberal Democratic Party."

Now, however, ADA supports President Johnson enthusiastically. The indorsement resolution declared:

"Lyndon B. Johnson has superbly carried forward the ideals of John F. Kennedy and has demonstrated his full commitment to the liberal traditions of the Democratic Party and the American people. He has also moved boldly to initiate policies of his own, initiatives which indicate that the Johnson administration . . . will chart its own course toward the vision of the 'Great Society.'"

Changes Are Seen

ADA leaders explain that they now like Mr. Johnson because he has changed. They credit him with pushing a strong civil rights bill and tax reduction through Congress, and still have hope for medicare.

"He now is President of all the American people, not the Senator from Texas," a spokesman said.

ADA also accepts as evidence of Mr. Johnson's liberalism his selection of Senator Humphrey as his runningmate. Senator Humphrey was a founder and until recently, a vice chairman of ADA. For years he has been one of its most active members.

After the election, if the Democrats win, ADA expects to

criticisms are planned to help President Johnson. ADA is strongest in metropolitan areas of the Northeast, notably Philadelphia, Boston and Washington. The strength of the New York chapter is somewhat diluted by the Liberal Party there. Outside the Northeast, there are strong chapters in Chicago and parts of California.

Dilemma Expressed

Samuel H. Beer, then ADA's national chairman, expressed the organization's dilemma thus:

"Our commitment to practical politics means we must try to build strength for such an administration. On the other hand, the fact we have our own program—that we are an independent organization—means that we cannot simply become a political arm of the administration."

In criticizing the Kennedy administration, Mr. Beer warned, ADA must "avoid piling our own criticism on top of the antagonism generated by the forces of conservatism."

An ADA spokesman said Mr. Kennedy and President Johnson have welcomed ADA pressure as a counter-force to pressure from the right.

Many politicians ridicule ADA, calling it a noisy, inept group without important power or influence.

ADA leaders admit—really boast—that their organization is small and never will grow large. But they claim it has influence out of proportion to its size because of the membership's dedication and the quality of the leadership.

There are, indeed, highly placed individuals in ADA. Past and present officers include the late Eleanor Roosevelt; Democratic Senators Clark of Pennsylvania, Douglas of Illinois and Maurine Neuberger of Oregon; David Dubinsky, Walter Reuther, Joseph A. Beirne and other union leaders; such scholars as James MacGregor Burns, Arthur M. Schlesinger, jr., and Hans J. Morgenthau; Joseph and Stewart Alsop, Barry Bingham, Hodding Carter, Elmer Davis and other journalists; and such religious leaders as Reinhold Neibuhr and G. Bromley Oxnam.

ADA counts on such opinion leaders to disseminate its views. In addition, ADA distributes literature, conducts forums and engages in other "educational" activities.

Strongest in East

Lobbying is a major function. So is direct political action. ADA members have been important in Citizens for Stevenson and Citizens for Kennedy

claims a big share of the credit for enactment of this year's law.

Local chapters also are active on civil rights. The Washington chapter, for example, joined last spring with the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) in threatening a school boycott here.

Joseph L. Rauh, jr., of Washington is national leader of ADA's civil rights campaign.

Upholding its claim to influence, ADA notes that many of its members hold public office in Federal, State and local governments.

Gains Are Noted

Leaders of the organization also point proudly to the many "way-out" policies it has espoused through the years, which now are widely accepted.

On this list are the nuclear test ban treaty, the war on poverty, the Peace Corps, food for peace, the Marshall Plan and, above all civil rights.

"Ten years from now, much of our present program will be in the Republican platform," a spokesman predicted, declaring that the ADA's role is to propose creative solutions to problems before they are widely recognized by public opinion.

ADA tries, this source said, to bring issues into the political arena and to create a "climate" favorable to liberal solutions.

ADA's dominant concern now is the presidential election. Chapters are busy with State and local elections.

Aside from that, the organization now is concentrating on such issues as "reform" of congressional rules and procedures, civil rights and disarmament.

Civil rights always has been a key issue for ADA, which