

Point of View

Election '86: What It All Means

by Norman Hill

With year's pivotal Senate and House elections now over, it is time to assess their political significance.

Perhaps the most noteworthy aspect of the Democratic takeover of the Senate was the crucial impact of the black vote in four keys races. Black voters provided the margin of victory in three Southern states -- Alabama, North Carolina and Louisiana -- and in California. Another important development was the election of three more blacks to the House, two from Southern states. Mike Espy's election in Mississippi made him the first black elected to the House from his state since Reconstruction. In Louisiana's 8th Congressional District, Faye Williams lost by a mere 4,000 votes.

These results point to the traditional overwhelming black support for the Democratic Party and the growing success of voter-participation and get-out-the-vote efforts by the black-labor alliance and other community-based groups.

But what does the new Senate alignment and increased representation in the House mean for blacks,

workers, the elderly and others who have been so badly hurt by Reagan social and economic policies? What message were the voters sending to the Administration and why?

Despite oft-repeated claims by political pundits that this year's elections were long on televised name-calling and short on national issues, the Senate results clearly indicate discontent, albeit regionalized, with the Administration's market-place economics. So while there may not have been a national focus on a major economic issue like, say, the deficit, the impact of "Reaganomics" on several key states helped turn the tide for the Democrats. Reagan trade policies were an important issue in North Carolina, where resentment over textile imports and their impact on jobs helped the Democrats. In the Dakotas, Reagan farm policies were a decisive factor. In Florida and other Southern states, voters feared cuts in social security and other social programs. Even in states where Republicans managed to win or keep their seats, candidates distanced themselves from the Administration. In Pennsylvania, where manufacturing industries

To Be Equal

The Constitution According To Ed Meese

by John E. Jacob

Attorney General Ed Meese has a knack for controversy. Ordinarily that's a good thing, but the trouble is that Mr. Meese is the Attorney General of the United States and his duty is to enforce the law, not to undermine the authority of the courts.

That's what the latest Meese salvo did. In a speech at Tulane University, the Attorney General said that Supreme Court decisions bind "the parties and also the executive branch for whatever enforcement is necessary. But such enforcement is not binding on all persons and

have been decimated, Arlen Specter ran against the President's policies, as did Al D'Amato in New York, who had substantial labor support.

Middle and working class voters returned to the Democratic fold largely because they have begun to feel the sting of an economic philosophy that has led to a budget deficit of over \$200 billion for three of the last four years, a huge trade deficit, no growth in real income, the lowest per capita savings rate of any industrialized nation, and deflationary policies that have destroyed domestic industries and millions of jobs. The message voters were sending was that they were increasingly nervous about the future. The message from black voters, hardest hit by "Reaganomics" and strident cutbacks in social program, was loud and clear. Americans demonstrated that they were jittery with a strictly market-place approach, and favored renewed government involvement if government addressed the issues of economic survival.

Yet, for several reasons, the turn-around in the Senate should be met with cautious optimism rather than

parts of government, henceforth and forever more."

The last rhetorical flourish, "henceforth and forever more" just means that the Court's decision can be changed -- by constitutional amendment, or by the Court itself at some future date.

But take away that phrase and you get the real message he was sending his audience and the nation: "If you don't like a decision, ignore it."



John E. Jacob

Justice Department spokesmen tried to downplay that message when it stirred up angry protests, but what

unbridled euphoria. For one thing, the national Democratic Party still lacks coherent, mainstream social and economic agenda to counter Reaganism. And while there is a reason to believe that the new Senate will be more sympathetic to a black-labor agenda, the Democrats must come up with a platform that capitalizes on the growing groundswell of opposition to the Administration's policies. If the election showed anything, it demonstrated that the concerns of the coalition of labor, black, women, middle and working class voters -- a coalition that some Democratic strategists sought to dismiss as a liability after the Mondale debacle -- still have popular appeal. Moreover, it was the campaign efforts of this

are we to make of the Attorney General's further comment that "the executive and legislative branches should follow their own views of the Constitution rather than always bowing to the Courts."

That comes dangerously close to suggesting that if Mr. Meese disagrees with the Court's stand on affirmative action, his Department is free to follow its own line.

Or that if Congress doesn't like a Supreme Court decision, it can simply go

worse when he chooses to single out for special criticism a 1958 Court ruling that grew out of the attempt to desegregate Little Rock, Arkansas' schools.

In that decision all nine Justices said that all state officials were bound to follow its desegregation orders. The reason for such an extraordinary move by the judges was never mentioned by the Attorney-General: it was aimed at state officials throughout the South who were openly refusing to abide by lawful desegregation

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right ahead and counter it with a law similar to one that the Court has already decided violates constitutional guarantees.

It is bad enough for the man responsible for enforcing the law, including decisions of the Supreme Court, to make such statements. But it is even

coalition on the grass-roots level, and not the efforts of the national Democratic organization, that led to the dramatic Democratic Senate victories. It's time now for Democrats to reassert themselves as a clear alternative to Reagan conservatism, and to recommit themselves to the constituents that they were all too prepared to write off.

The Democrats must once again define the issues in such a way that they appeal to a broad spectrum of Americans victimized, to one degree or another, by Reagan policies. Regaining control of Senate may embolden the party to stop trying to behave like Republicans. If they fail to do so before 1988, their victory may be short-lived.

See HILL, Page 7

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Words of Marcus Garvey

By Kofi Tyus

"...for the least of us to think that we were created only to be what we are and not what we can make ourselves, is to imput an improper motive the Creator for creating us."