Where Do We Go from Here?
The Democratic Party

by Morris K. Udall

"I belong to the increasing body of Americans who cannot forget that parties are instruments." - Felix Frankfurter

"I belong to no organized political party, I'm a democrat." -Will Rogers

It is a mistake to think that grim news for the Republicans is good news for Democrats. I don't believe that Republican troubles *guarantee* Democrats the two-thirds congressional majority in 1974 needed to override vetoes, or a Democratic take-over of the White House in 1976. Unless the Democratic Party can get itself together, it will be no better able to pick up the political pieces than a man with a broken back and no hands.

As we turn the corner into 1974 we Democrats are getting along better than we did a year or two ago, but we're still arguing over party rules and assigning guilt for previous defeats. And meanwhile a gathering storm that threatens the stability of the nation goes almost unnoticed. Consider:

* The climax of an 18-month attack in the international market which left that worldwide symbol of value and stability -- the US dollar -- minus 30 percent of its purchasing power in foreign countries;

* A President who, glimpsing light at the end of the tunnel, released the economy from controls only to find, instead of light, another tunnel. Inflation is running amok; this year's price rise could by itself exceed that of the five-year period 1961-66;

* An administration that in the last five years has allowed us to stumble into an energy crisis that will close factories and schools and leave millions of homes unheated this winter -- and, in all likelihood, produce gas rationing, more inflation and further devaluations of the dollar in the months ahead;

* A new war in the Mideast that shook liberal (and now Nixon) theories of detente, at a time when worldwide shortages of basic materials raised serious concerns about future relations with our traditional allies;

* The possibility for the first time in our history that the two highest offices in the land could in close succession be vacated by incumbents under fire, resulting in the speaker of the House succeeding to the presidency. All that, plus near collapse of confidence at home in the honor and competence of the highest officers of our government -- a collapse that inevitably undermines the confidence of governments abroad in the leadership and stability of the United States. Buried in the debris of 1973 is a political system that has been corrupted by money, a bloated economy that has been tranquilized into a false sense of security by a drug named "growth," a high level of technology and leisure that has run out of cheap energy, and a foreign policy that still innocently assumes that Americans can impose conditions on other nations that we ourselves will not accept. I have no doubt of our national resilience. But it must be said that by the fall of 1973 the ingenuity and optimism that within three decades helped save the world from Hitler, rebuilt Europe, and opened the frontier of space are less visible than at any time since the Great Depression.

I don't claim to have the answers, but let me suggest, in necessarily sketchy fashion, the dimensions of a national dialogue that must begin immediately.

In 1972 about 45 percent of all eligible adults failed to turn up at the polls, the worst showing in 25 years. There were more eligible voters who failed to register an opinion than those who cast ballots for President

Nixon. To their ranks we must now add a new group: actively *cynical* voters turned off by the hypocrisy of the last decade and now repelled by Watergate and the Agnew scandal. These are educated, independent, opinion leaders; their votes have often determined the outcome of elections. If they bail out of the system and the indicators are more ominous than most politicians want to believe -- representative government will be in worse shape than it is today. At a minimum their cynicism could spell the end of the two-party system, opening the door to splinter parties and bitter ideological rifts. I seriously question whether America would be governable under such conditions.

The immediate Democratic response ought to be twofold. First, we ought to press the Congress for at least some modest public contribution to campaign financing, and we ought to limit the clout of private donors (labor as well as corporations), and put an end to election by television commercials. The failure of the Democratic leadership to seize this issue would be a historic blunder, but it hasn't grabbed it yet. Earlier this year the Senate put public finance on the back burner, while approving reforms in the current system that opponents claim favor incumbents. The House didn't even schedule hearings on the subject until late in the year, virtually ruling out floor action until sometime in 1974, when then-active candidates will drag out the old complaint that "you can't change the rules in the middle of the game." The cold fact is that if Congress does nothing substantial about campaign financing in this year of Watergate, we won't have substantial reform in this decade.

A very large number of election day "no shows" don't vote because they can't. They are victims of a weird maze of registration laws. We ought to have some kind of universal registration; government ought to *care* whether you vote or not and try to make it easy. Here again universal voter registration proposals are having tough sledding in the Congress.

Election reform is not only desirable for its own sake but as the first step to the kind of tax reform and health insurance policies the working man is rightfully demanding. Despite the labor hall oratory of congressional and presidential candidates, neither program has gone anywhere precisely because the current system depends upon the largess of the one economic segment of our society that stands to lose by their adoption. The political necessity of such changes will be made apparent to both parties only when through a measure of public financing, campaign costs are underwritten by a broader base of small contributors.

Democrats don't have the answers to Mr. Nixon's economic dilemma -- not yet. But we know, or should, that the Democratic wisdom of the 1960s known as "the new economics" is largely "inoperative." Gone are the days when US products were unrivaled in the world market, when our supplies of basic materials seemed unlimited, when we thought wages and profits could soar while inflation remained under control and the dollar stable. No one likes to talk about this, but some fundamental changes lie immediately ahead.

It is easier to say what went wrong than how to right it. Some of the trouble is attributable to the ingenuity of our competitors, principally the Germans and Japanese, who rebounded from World War II with phenomenal economic and technological growth. But there were other things that were within our control. There was the assumption made somewhere along the line that it was America's duty to garrison the globe, with troops and bases in 100 countries. Our fear of the Soviet Union nourished an outsized military establishment. We got sucked deeper and deeper into the endless and costly Vietnam war. Intoxicated with success and seemingly unlimited profits and higher wages, American labor became less productive than their counterparts in other nations. Big business grew bigger, and we slipped into conglomerate arrangements that vitiated competition in vital industries and built unnecessary inflation into the economy. We degraded our environment, for which we are now paying, and we let a few shortsighted companies shape an energy policy that is now little short of a national disaster. A decade ago, how many of us thought we would live to see the time when the disclaimer "Made in Japan" lent prestige to products, and when in the international market the yen and mark were preferred to the dollar?

What is to be done? As a start we need to restore competition in the "big sector" of industry. We may have to move against some conglomerates and get a handle on largely ungoverned multinationals. Rather than looking for ways to protect companies like ITT, Congress and the next administration ought to take a hard look at mergers and anti-competitive practices.

Our next step should be to turn the American farmers loose. For three decades we've had farm surpluses and programs to depress production. And yet last year farmers exported $12 billion worth of products and our balance-of-payments situation would have been even more disastrous without them. Agriculture has long been the sick man of our economy; now it can help save us.

We ought to reorder federal priorities or stop using the cliche. If we can't have all our space and military programs and still provide ourselves with adequate education and health, we have to decide which comes first. We have got to rid ourselves of the kind of mixed-up economic policies that have given us $100 billion worth of federal deficits in four years, adding immeasurably to the pressures on the dollar. We may have to give the federal government new authority to enforce a reasonable income policy on major industries. Large price increases and wage settlements in the years ahead may have to be submitted to a bipartisan economic board that can jawbone, and delay if necessary, unwarranted profits and wages.

Perhaps most important, we must do more than we're doing to get labor and management back on the same team. Incentives *are* the cornerstone of our economy. We might do well to imitate the Japanese who have made the assembly line worker part of the "corporate family" through such devices as lifetime jobs, profit sharing, secure pensions and representation on corporate policy boards.

Finally, we are becoming a nation of liberal arts majors with too few skilled tradesmen and women -- carpenters, plumbers, electricians and so on. We want our children to have a better life, and since the 1950s the symbol of that life has been a college diploma. Too often we have assumed that a young man or woman enters a trade only because he or she is not smart enough to do anything else; trade education has been a symbol of failure. But by reducing the proportion of youth entering the trades, we pay a high economic price in terms of the strain on basic services, reduced competition, higher costs, and a decline in the quality of workmanship. Meanwhile the market for college graduates is glutted, portending an angry, overtrained generation. We must develop a post-secondary education scheme that puts the young blue-collar worker on a par with the potential college student.

No discussion of the economy of the 1970s makes sense without reference to the related problems of leaming to live lean. There are abundant warning signs that we are coming to the end of an era of cheap resources; we are running out of petroleum, land, minerals, water and raw materials. In a drive to fuel the engines of gross growth, we have in the past quarter century skimmed the cream of US resources. The environmentalists are right. An era of shortages (and, hopefully, of resource recycling) is at hand. The straight facts are these:

* We are six percent of the people on this planet but each year consume at least one-third of the energy and other resources in the world. We waste more energy than Japan annually consumes;

* This administration had pretended for two years that the energy crisis was not serious, thereby putting us in such a vulnerable position that the Arabs' "oil weapon" will have a devastating impact on our lives and our economy this winter. They would not go to the country with an old-fashioned policy of belt-tightening conservation until a cocked gun was already at our heads.

* We will encounter similar scarcities in paper, copper, zinc, even water. Of the 13 basic minerals, the US is currently totally dependent on foreign supplies for four, and that could be up to 10 in the foreseeable future.

During the last 30 years the American economy was a golden-egg-laying goose. The magic word was "growth" and the slogan, particularly of the Democratic Party, was "more!" And why not? Growth meant an ever bigger pie, more for labor, more for management, for everyone. Bigger and faster (cars, SSTs, etc.) were better. This joyride was fun while it lasted, but we're coming to the end of grosser and grosser GNP expansion. That doesn't mean an end to "progress," but waste will have to be eliminated, and efficiency and conservation must become the national creed. We need leaders who promise *less*, who discourage wasteful throwaway products, big gas-guzzling cars and electrical gadgets, energy-eating office buildings and poorly insulated homes, neon lights and other extravagances with no redeeming social value, a one-person-one-auto transportation system that has destroyed our sense of community, advertising that promotes energy overuse.

At the same time we need a crash national effort, more ambitious than the space program of the 1960s, to develop promising new alternative energy sources such as solar, geothermal, coal gasification and liquefaction

for the 21st century. The President's breast beating notwithstanding, such a program might already be underway but for the shortsightedness of his administration, as evidenced as late as this June by official testimony before my subcommittee in stern opposition to a "Project Independence" program.

As we begin to feel the impact of shortages, I hope the Democratic Party will avoid two errors, the hint of which pervaded the belated Nixon energy appeal. First is the misplaced faith that technology will bail us out, somehow, just before disaster. We risk catastrophe if a blind confidence in technology lulls us into procrastinating. We are foolish to believe any longer that technological tricks can relieve us of our need to husband our nonrenewable resources.

The second error is to retreat from our commitment to clean water and air, to go ahead damming wild rivers and desecrating wilderness and national parks. Some short-term trade-offs may be required, but when the tough decisions come, it would be folly to abandon environmental reforms. If we are sensible, we can balance our resource budget and remain respectful of nature's laws.

The problem of scarcity leads me to some final suggestions about our role in a shrinking world. Fortunately we are leaving behind us a foreign policy that for the last 25 years has been based on ideological confrontation -- though the withdrawal symptoms are still with us as indicated by the ordering of a worldwide nuclear alert in response to vague reports of possible Soviet moves in the Middle East. As the result of our unhappy Vietnam experience, it is good politics to talk about letting other nations fend for themselves. That line, carried too far, is as dangerous as the overambitious globalism of the '60s.

Although proclaimed as a break with a past of overinvolvement in the affairs of other nations, the Nixon Doctrine -- far from shedding the burden of costly military aid programs -- has resulted in huge arms subsidies for undemocratic governments and military tyrants. Abroad, particularly in the third world, we are perceived as having abandoned any pretext of exercising moral force in the conduct of our foreign policy. And we must remember that in the decade ahead our fate will be tied more than ever to the judgments of that world community, because of the scarcity of natural resources if for no other reason.

"Growth" or "the good life" has been possible for Americans only while much of the rest of the world was underfed and underdeveloped. But expectations are rising everywhere. European economies are booming, and new forces in Japan and the Common Market mean an end to the days when the United States dominated international trade. The rest of the world will no longer be indifferent to Americans consuming, as we do each year, 55 percent of all the gasoline in the world!

I suspect that Mr. Nixon's foreign policy, like his presidency, is transitional. The Nixon-Kissinger globetrotting summitry has produced solid achievements, and Democrats should admit it, but perhaps not as uncritically as some do. The costs of a foreign policy triumph are not often immediately apparent to the startled citizenry -- as we are now made ruefully aware in the case of the Russian wheat deal and in Vietnam where the January "peace settlement" has brought no peace and still costs us over $10 billion annually.

In the same vein, we should not be too sure that multipolar, big-power diplomacy is desirable no matter how skillfully played. Given the serious potential of the growing Soviet-Chinese conflict, how much do we really want to be involved? And was it such a great accomplishment for Richard Nixon to end a war only after having doubled its length or cost, or to reestablish relations with China after having helped prevent them for two decades?

Big-power, showboat diplomacy may lead us to ignore less exotic but equally pressing problems at home. And there is evidence to suggest the Nixon spectaculars have diverted attention from a whole range of imperatives that will control our international relations throughout the next two decades. I would like to suggest five changes that are on the horizon:

First, it is necessary and desirable that policy decisions no longer be geared to a reactive crisis orientation. It is the kind of bad management that under the strain of one crisis spawns others because of neglect -- one is driven from our consciousness without the first having been resolved. The pollution crisis is overtaken by the energy crisis, the Watergate tapes crisis by the Middle East crisis, and so on, *ad infinitum*.

Second, as stated, the energy binge is over. With the advent of worldwide shortages, we cannot expect to retain friendly relations with traditional allies -- already on the decline -- or avoid costly and dangerous trade wars if we don't get over our self-indulgence. We must increase productivity, control inflation, and cut the fat from our natural resource budget. Our reward will be a stabilized dollar, competitive exports, lower prices and friendlier neighbors.

A requirement of such a policy is, thirdly, that we begin to get a hold on the military behemoth created during the Cold War. Most Americans no longer see much sense in 400 overseas bases and half a million troops and dependents in Europe, in a single submarine that costs a billion dollars, or in a military airplane that ends up costing 30 to 50 percent more than the contractor promised. They wonder when the time will ever be "right" for the military to tighten its belt on weapon systems that double and redouble our unquestioned ability to incinerate the planet. Yet most politicians seem to shrink from reasonable cuts, as the fall of each even-numbered year approaches. For this procrastination we will pay an unacceptable price in energy lost to the rest of society and dollars lost for needed programs like national health insurance.

Fourth, we must put our manic-depressive relations with other superpowers in perspective. Detente is our goal, but we must understand the two levels of negotiation that are involved. First is the effort to avoid holocausts slow the mad arms race, and avoid confrontation. On that level, we should be prepared to negotiate with the devil. The second level has to do with aid, trade, communication and ultimately interdependence -- the detente which the Nixon administration is currently preaching. At this level we must decide if it is proper, and I believe it is, to seek basic humanitarian concessions from governments whose disregard for human rights is contrary to our deepest beliefs.

Finally, we have to, reestablish our moral credentials. Our position in bargaining for human rights is greatly weakened by our treatment of our own minorities. For this state of affairs, history will deal harshly with Richard Nixon and with Congress whose contribution to racial equality during the last five years has been to dump the problem back on the branch least able to deal with it, the courts. The good news here is that there are still millions of black and white Americans who believe in an integrated society and are willing to make reasonable sacrifices and adjustments. Progress will require a measure of courage on their part and on the part of those representing them in Congress; it will also require that civil rights leaders turn away from the courts as their only salvation and busing orders as their chief weapon. The Democratic Party once led the country toward integration and racial harmony; it can begin to do so again by advancing initiatives that transcend the lost debate over busing and by devising multifaceted methods tailored to the needs of each community.

Those same polls that reflect Republican misfortune tell us that the country does not look upon a Democratic government as the obvious, desired alternative. Many elements of the old labor-ethic-Southem blocs who left the party in 1968 and 1972 have not yet "come home." Even when they were together Democrats did not fare well in presidential politics. Since 1944 our so-called "majority" party hasn't had more than 50 percent of the vote, except in the Johnson landslide year, while Republicans reached majority status three times. We have lost four of the last seven presidential contests!

Admiring as I am of the job Chairman Strauss has done in refereeing the current intraparty power struggle, 1 can't help wondering if this does not appear to the country like Nero fiddling. Attention to party rules and procedures will have an impact on who is selected for the Democratic nomination, but programs and policies will decide that nomination's worth. Within the ranks of the Democratic Party are many of the country's best minds, and we should call them to the front. We need emergency task forces on the economy, environment, foreign policy, racial problems, campaign and governmental reform. We need responsible, consensus policies in all of these areas that our congressmen, governors and mayors can support. Such policies are the beginning of a new unity, rather than the product of it.

MORRIS K. UDALL is the US representative from the second District of Arizona.