

The "Big Three"

Jesse Jackson: a Change in Party Politics

"From the Outhouse
to the Courthouse
to the Statehouse..."

By Lawton R. Jackson

Possibly the most controversial and charismatic of this year's Democratic presidential contenders is the Reverend Jesse Louis Jackson. Jackson began with a narrowly defined campaign, but has since broadened it into his "rainbow coalition." While he appears to be a longshot for the Democratic nomination, he could be in a position to force a fundamental redefinition of national party strategies in the future.

Jackson's major contention has been that the interests of blacks would be served best by a black presidential candidate, rather than through the endorsement of the white liberal most likely to win. Jackson's candidacy has caused a split among black leadership. Prominent blacks such as Benjamin Hooks of the NAACP and Atlanta Mayor Andrew Young have refused to endorse Jackson, while less well known, but powerful, figures as Georgia State Senators Julian Bond and Davis Scott, have supported the Jackson campaign from the beginning.

Jackson and his Operation PUSH (People United to Save Humanity) have been at the forefront of registering blacks to vote. Presently, blacks make up approximately twenty percent of the eligible national electorate, and some black leaders estimate that a black presidential candidate could attract some twelve million voters to the polls — twelve million voters who are not likely to cast their ballots for the incum-



rent. Jackson has done fairly well this primary season (he won the Virginia caucuses and has consistently finished in the top three in most states), considering that most critics gave the campaign little chance for success.

Jackson will certainly be a force to be reckoned with at this year's Democratic convention in San Francisco. While he most likely will not receive the nomination, his supporters will certainly be in a position to influence the platform. His candidacy represents a growing dissatisfaction with past party practices. The Democratic leadership will have to do more than make vague promises on social issues; they will have to give blacks and other minorities a greater voice within the Democratic party.

Jackson at a Glance

Profession:	Minister & Executive Director of Operation PUSH (People United to Save Humanity)
Born:	October 8, 1941-Greeneville, N.C.
Home State:	Illinois
Education:	N.C. Agricultural & Technical College, B.A., Chicago Theological Seminary, D.D. (Hon.),
Previous Offices:	None
Family:	Wife, Jacqueline Lavinia Brown, Four children
Religion:	Baptist