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## The Glue of In-ism

By WILLIAM SAFIRE

Boston &mdash; If anything can concentrate the mind of Democratic partisans, it is four interminable years suffering Republican leadership in the House, Senate and White House - the political equivalent of service in the Siberian gulag.

As a result, Democrats are assembling in Beantown for their most argument-free out-of-power convention in memory. Deeply rooted policy differences and personality clashes that provided all the excitement of lusty, newsworthy Democratic conventions past - and that surely exist today - have been submerged in the fervent desire of the Outs to Get Back In. The driving ideology is In-ism.

That's why we see business executives strolling across the Commons arm in arm with the trial lawyers who are driving them out of business. And why Deaniacs are silently swallowing the new Kerry deference toward the principle of pre-emptive war. And why Clinton welfare reformers are willing to abandon hope of a Hillary Restoration next time around.

All the traditional, internal party anger - evoking derision as "a firing squad lined up in a circle" - is now redirected outward. The party-unifying target is That Man in the White House and his coldblooded coterie of warmongering neocon homophobic tax cutters.

Unaccountably, the only Democratic group left out in the cold by the Shrumbums (the affectionate sobriquet that Toots Shor would have applied to acolytes of Kerry's eloquence grise, Robert Shrum) is the tree-hugging set. Can you imagine a Democratic platform document without a single mention of global warming?

I'm told that there was quite a struggle over that litmus-test phrase, but the smokestack set won out. That hands Ralph Nader an opening to exploit here in Boston. He will surely find the pragma-greens angry at him for being the skunk at the garden party and will use global warming to embarrass them, which is precisely what he needs to stir up a modicum of news-making controversy in this frozen sea of tranquillity.

The legion of thumbsuckers who far outnumber delegates is certain that come the day after election - no matter who wins - the familiar intraparty scraps among slightly left, far left and whoopi left will break out again. That's a fair bet, but expect counterpressure to conform from