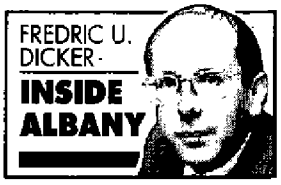
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NEW YORK POST, MONDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2001

Dems talk of Carl-Andy dream team



NEWLY named state Democratic Chairman Herman "Denny" Farrell is secretly trying to forge a united Carl McCall-Andrew Cuomo ticket against Gov. Pataki.

That's the hot rumor in state political circles, where a McCall-Cuomo ticket against Republican Pataki and little-known Lt. Gov. Mary Donohue was widely described as formidable and, possibly, even unbeatable.

"I've been told that Denny is trying to put McCall and Cuomo together and, frankly, I think it would change the dynamics overnight and help the Democrats greatly," one of the state's best-known politicians told The Post yesterday.

Farrell was said to be facing enormous difficulty trying to convince one of the two well-known Democrats — who are fighting for their party's gubernatorial nomination — to accept the second spot on the ticket, for the all-but-powerless post of lieutenant governor.

Farrell insisted in an interview with The Post that he wasn't seeking to broker a McCall-Cuomo deal — but added, "If they chose to run as a ticket, I wouldn't oppose it."

Farrell conceded the toughest problem in putting together such a ticket would be in getting one of the contenders to accept the second spot.

Key state Democrats believe a unified ticket would be the most potent their party could field, although they doubt either would agree to play second fiddle to the other. McCall, 66, is a longtime political figure who unsuccessfully sought to run for lieutenant governor 20 years ago, while Cuomo is the former U.S. housing secretary and son of former Gov. Mario Cuomo.

Spokesmen for McCall and Cuomo have publicly insisted that neither one is interested in the lieutenant governor's post.

State Democrats fear a primary battle next year between Comptroller McCall, the first African-American to win statewide office, and Cuomo will be as racially divisive as the recent Mark Green-Fernando Ferrer mayoral primary battle.

Farrell, who is black, owes his job in part to the belief by Democrats that he is well suited to head off any potential racial clash between McCall and Cuomo supporters.

■

Farrell's restrained reaction to U.S. Rep. Charles Rangel's recent attack on Andrew Cuomo has raised eyebrows among close advisers to the Rev. Al Sharpton, whose credentials as a loyal Democrat have been challenged by Farrell.

"Isn't it strange that Sharpton has never said he would support Pataki, never met with [Republican] Mike Bloomberg before the mayor's election the way Charlie did, yet he gets criticized by Denny and Charles doesn't?" asked a Sharpton adviser.

"You don't have to be a genius to see a double standard there."

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State AFL-CIO President Denis Hughes — normally a backer of Democrats — says Pataki "seems to become more popular with our people each day."

Hughes, who played a key role in arranging Pataki's triumphant appearance via satellite last week at the national AFL-CIO convention in Las Vegas, said it was possible that his organization would back the governor for re-election next year.

"None of the candidates — the governor, Carl McCall or Andrew Cuomo — yet have the super-majority that is needed to win our backing, but Pataki is gaining," said Hughes, who held a fund-raising event for Pataki's re-election campaign earlier this year.

Pataki won praise at the convention for signing a first-of-its-kind "card check" legislation, making it easier for workers to join a union.

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