

The citizen candidates' movement that took Washington by storm

by Marla Minnicino and Stephen Pepper

Members of the National Democratic Policy Committee converged on Washington five times during 1985 in extraordinary lobbying efforts—designated “Operation Wake-Up”—aimed at forcing Congress to take emergency action on crucial issues of national defense, industrial collapse, drugs, terrorism, and the growing public-health threat represented by the spread of AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome).

The 1985 lobbying campaign was the largest ever mounted by the NDPC—a political action committee formed in 1980 by Democrats associated with the policies of Lyndon H. LaRouche. “Waking up” members of the 99th Congress was viewed by the NDPC as a national priority to prevent the dismemberment of the Western Alliance and reverse the genocidal policies of the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Although 1985 was not a key election year in national politics, the NDPC backed over 500 candidates in municipal, school-board, and state legislative races, focusing on a strategy to “rebuild the cities” by directing long-term, low-interest credit to industrial, farm, construction, and infrastructural projects. They also demanded that President Reagan begin to wage a war on drugs, targeting the “citizens above suspicion” who launder billions of dollars in drug money.

NDPC candidates also urged an immediate crash program to implement the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), despite the attempts by Congress to sabotage this program, at a time when the Soviet Union is fully committed to a war mobilization. Emergency public-health measures to stop the spread of AIDS, through screening, testing, research, and health care, was included in the NDPC’s electoral program during 1985, when few other political candidates would touch the issues.

During January, and again in April, the NDPC co-sponsored demonstrations which brought thousands of citizens to Washington from all over the United States, in protest against IMF policies. Speakers, including civil-rights and labor leaders, charged that President Reagan’s foreign and economic policies, dictated by the IMF, were wiping out whole populations the Third World through starvation and disease. In the name of the “inalienable rights of man,” the demonstrators demanded that Reagan “Dump the IMF” and “Save Africa with American Technology!” Following the demonstra-

tions, delegations went to Congress to demand that Reagan break with the IMF.

In a statement welcoming NDPC lobbyists to Washington on May 23, NDPC Chairman Warren Hamerman said: “The United States Congress is on a course to commit treason against the nation and people of the United States. We are here to stop it. . . . Control over national policy has been turned over to the IMF, representing the interests of an international oligarchy, who are the historic and committed enemies of our Republic. . . . [while] the KGB-linked Democrats give aid and comfort to the enemy.”

The May lobbying effort drew 400 citizen-lobbyists who demanded from their congressmen full support for the SDI, opposition to the IMF, and support for an all-out war on drugs. Only six representatives agreed to meet personally with members of the NDPC delegation. The rest avoided meetings or threw their constituents out bodily.

In June, over 1,000 NDPC lobbyists re-doubled their efforts to convince Congress of the necessity for action. They came with four resolutions: 1) for emergency action to solve the U.S. banking crisis, 2) for a crash program to implement the President’s SDI, 3) for a declaration of global war on disease, and 4) for emergency food relief for Africa. Two hundred congressional offices were visited by the lobbyists, stressing the theme “We Will Not Be Russian Slaves!”

In July, 300 NDPC activists delivered the message to Congress that the traitorous Richard Burt must not be confirmed by the U.S. Senate as U.S. Ambassador to West Germany. At the same time, lobbyists presented each office with “NDPC report cards” rating each senator and congressman on critical national issues. Most flunked.

Following the lobbying days, the NDPC sponsored educational programs to prepare citizens to become candidates for office. Having seen first hand the moral ineptitude and callousness of most of the congressmen, many citizens were ready to run for Congress themselves.

As a result, the NDPC backed over 500 candidates in U.S. cities during 1985. With their call for an emergency public-health approach to AIDS, these candidates polled more than 300,000 votes in the fall elections. Two candidates endorsed by the NDPC won school board seats in California and three candidates polled more than 40% in Washington

state. In Houston, the NDPC's 11-candidate slate polled more than 90,000 votes. In New York, Mayor Edward Koch's challengers focused public attention on the AIDS issue, reflecting the influence of NDPC-backed candidate Judah P. Rubenstein, who had declared AIDS a public-health emergency.

In Atlanta, Georgia, 16 candidates collectively known as the "LaRouche slate" and campaigning against turning Atlanta into a "new international dope city" polled 25% of the total votes on Oct. 8, despite a hate campaign conducted by the *Atlanta Constitution*. In Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, the NDPC-backed candidate for Allegheny County sheriff, Constance Brown, made major inroads into black and working-class districts with her call to lock up the "citizens above suspicion" behind drugs, clean up the Justice Department and the FBI and implement emergency measures against AIDS. It was Brown's campaign which led to the passage of an anti-AIDS initiative in the Clairton, Pennsylvania, City Council.

The NDPC's "Save Detroit Industries" (SDI) slate in Michigan won close to 100,000 votes, stressing the fight to reverse Detroit's economic decline and revitalize its industrial strength through the production of MX missiles in Detroit's idled auto factories. In Buffalo, New York and Quincy, Massachusetts, the call by NDPC-backed mayoral candidates to restore the country's defense capability by retooling vacant industrial plants influenced city officials to the point where the NDPC program was being discussed in local governing bodies.

The NDPC's campaign against AIDS forced public officials to confront the disease—not as a civil-rights issue, but as a deadly pandemic, whose unchecked spread could wipe out the entire country. As a result, AIDS became the number-one political issue in many 1985 municipal elections, and, as 1988 presidential candidate Lyndon LaRouche predicted, will also dominate the 1986 election.

NDPC to take over Congress

As 1985 drew to a close, the NDPC set plans for the most ambitious political initiative in this nation since at least the days of Abraham Lincoln's presidential campaign, namely, to contest every seat in the 1986 congressional elections, as well as numerous state and party positions, and to win control of the 100th Congress.

The NDPC's decision was occasioned by the dismal record of the 99th Congress, culminating in the passage of the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings amendment to the debt-ceiling act of 1985. This abdication of responsibility by the Congress, by its own admission, was the straw that broke the camel's back.

The NDPC networks were immediately put on alert that a crash program was to be initiated to recruit a full slate that could win in 1986. Warren Hamerman, chairman of the

NDPC, issued a statement on Dec. 19 calling on patriotic American leaders "to join the ranks of candidates already announced from the membership of the NDPC to run for Congress in 1986, so that a slate can be prepared to contest the 435 House seats, and for the 33 Senate seats up for election."

Hamerman drew attention to Lyndon H. LaRouche's Oct. 4 announcement to contest the Democratic Party nomination for President in 1988: "The opportunity to change the direction of politics in the coming year is greatly increased because Lyndon H. LaRouche has already announced his candidacy for President in 1988. LaRouche provides the program and the strong, national leadership around which we can rally in the fight to change the Congress."

At that time, the NDPC had already announced approximately 90 candidates for congressional elections in 1986. Among the leading contests already initiated are Jerry Belsky for Senate in Georgia, for the seat now held by Matt Mattingly (R). In the Democratic primary, Belsky will face Hamilton Jordan, among others, and will have the opportunity to drag out the sorry record of the Carter administration. George Gentry, an Oklahoma farmer, is contesting the Senate seat of Sen. Don Nickles (R). In the primary, Gentry will face Rep. Jim Jones, former chairman of the House Budget Committee, who will have to defend his role in the growing insolvency of the U.S.A. In North Dakota, Anna Belle Bourgeois, will face Sen. Mark Andrews (R); here the issue will be U.S. agricultural policy and the collapse of the U.S. farm sector.

But the task of building the NDPC slates has just begun. In late December, NDPC representatives were fanning out across the states to interview potential candidates. In the Southeast, at least five former congressmen had been contacted to join the NDPC campaign. In each case, the former legislators expressed great interest in the opportunity to run with the NDPC on the program articulated by Mr. LaRouche in *A Program for America*. The same initiatives were under way in Wisconsin and Ohio.

At the same time, the NDPC was mapping plans to involve the networks of its contacts in farm and military circles. These networks have been developed over months and in some cases years of joint work, and now represent a leadership capable of directing the political fight. Plans call for the farm network leadership to take responsibility for organizing the nine farm Plains States that lie west of the Mississippi. These states have 45 seats in the House, of which about 12 have already been assigned. There are about 100 additional seats in the remaining predominantly rural states, and it is here where the NDPC expects to make its biggest gains.

In addition to the farm sector, there are about 40 former military officers with ranks of major or higher who are being approached to run. The issue of national security is one in which both parties are vulnerable, since each has betrayed the country by putting the deficit before defense.