

Editorial

Educating tomorrow's astronauts

On May 15, while addressing a citizens' group in Hackensack, New Jersey, presidential candidate Lyndon LaRouche was asked what he was going to do about the U.S. education system. The question is so much on the minds of all thinking citizens, that we believe a synopsis of Mr. LaRouche's answer is in order.

The answer begins with LaRouche's national ABC television broadcast of a couple of months back, called "The Woman on Mars." A significant number of the responses to that show came from children under 9—children who wanted to register as astronauts for the program of establishing a permanent colony on Mars 40-50 years from now.

Forty years is about the point of maturity of a leader of that kind of colonization, born right now. One graduates from a university at about the age of 22-25, and retires 40 years later. Forty years is about two generations. The question is therefore really, what are we doing now that will positively affect the lives of our grandchildren?

And how long has it been since we heard of a U.S. government that could get a policy that will even last for one year? Yet, we must think ahead—or our government serves no purpose.

The first thing to get across in education is that you have to have a child in the classroom who wishes to master knowledge. The President, the government of the United States above all, must stand up and address the children, and say, "The United States government has prepared a meaningful life for you 20 and 40 years from now. These are your opportunities—all you have to do is qualify for it."

This message has to be taken to the children throughout our society—particularly, into places that look like bombed-out ghettos in World War II, where they fight for existence with cockroaches and rats. These children must be promised that they *may* become astronauts.

Then, we have to recognize that a qualified teacher cannot be trained on the kind of salary we're putting up

now. A qualified elementary school teacher requires six to eight years of higher education to do the job right. One must present valid concepts to the children in children's terms, but from an advanced standpoint.

Similarly, no one should work for 10 years in the secondary school system without having the equivalent of a doctorate in education.

That costs money. It requires dedication. We must provide the salaries that are needed to those who are qualified to teach, and rid ourselves of unqualified teachers.

We have to provide more schools. We must increase the number of teachers per pupil, or conversely, reduce the number of pupils per teacher ratio in the educational systems.

Then, we have to reverse the structure by which teachers' preparation time has been cut down to "save costs." Nowadays, a teacher does not even have enough preparation time to competently test students. When a student has written an essay, it takes a long time for a teacher to assess that essay, from a standpoint that is more than just the grade. This has to do with how the student's development must be steered, based on what can be seen in the essay.

Thus, not only do we have to increase the teacher to pupil ratio, but we must increase the preparation time to classroom time ratio, so that on the secondary level, preparation time will be approximately half of the teaching time. That, too, will cost money.

We must make these changes if we are committed to the result. The policy has been, "You have to give this kid a diploma to get him out of the house and get him a job. Let someone hire him and they can take responsibility for him." But if we want an astronaut, and we don't want a bunch of flying junk coming down on earth instead of space ships going up, then we have to say we are committed to educating these children to be qualified for this job.

We'll go back to what they said in the 1950s: "We won't let anything stand in our way."