

LaRouche-Bevel slate kicks off in Memphis

by Marla Minnicino

Independent vice presidential candidate Rev. James Bevel began a campaign swing through the South on Aug. 17 with a well-attended press conference at the Lorraine Hotel in Memphis, Tennessee—where he was with Martin Luther King, Jr. when King was shot on April 4, 1968.

Bevel, who is running on the ticket with presidential candidate Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr., said that he was returning to a place of “a crucifixion and a resurrection.”

Known as the organizer of the Freedom Rides in the South during the early 1960s heroic era of civil rights, Bevel said that he was at this very spot in 1968. That was a dark event—the closing of one page of history and the opening of another: a fight for the dignity of man. LaRouche, he said, has added a new dimension to the fight of Dr. Martin Luther King, by providing the program for economic development that restores the dignity of man.

The flooding of jails, the crumbling of cities, the prevalence of drug addiction, show that it is necessary to get involved. Bevel said both parties have turned their backs on these issues and it is impossible to say which represents the lesser of two evils. Both parties are calling for capital punishment. “Either way, we will have murderers in office. Murderers cannot think,” he said.

The first question from the press was, “Would you say the Democrats have turned their backs on minorities?” “Yes,” Bevel replied. “I was at the convention where Clinton and the Democratic leadership refused to permit discussion on the death penalty. When such vital issues are not permitted to be discussed, the constitutional rights of the American people are being denied. Such issues are not being discussed by either party.”

To the next question, “How could LaRouche be running for office from prison?” Bevel replied that even when a man is in jail he can do right. LaRouche (framed up in 1988 on false “conspiracy” and “fraud” charges) hasn’t given up the fight, Bevel explained. The Declaration of Independence gives unlimited power for the people to do good. You serve and do right, and God and the Constitution will make sure that you are being heard. This is what King did and this is what LaRouche is doing—both inside and outside prison.

Another reporter asked, “Is it fair to say LaRouche is a political prisoner?” Bevel said that LaRouche was in prison precisely because the establishment doesn’t want him to be heard by the American people.

Mississippi

On Aug. 18, Bevel gave a press conference in Jackson, Mississippi, the capital of his native state. He said that less than 20% of the population had voted in the primary, because they had refused to accept the “lesser of two evils” that the Democrats and Republicans had to offer.

The first question from the press was “what is the solution to the racial violence and tension such as we saw in Los Angeles?” Reverend Bevel discussed how Jesus teaches that you must love your enemy. This is what we went through in the civil rights movement, he said. The family is the basis for developing strong citizens and for developing loving relationships in which people do not approach each other from an antagonistic standpoint.

He was asked, “Isn’t it difficult to be running for vice president when the head of your ticket is in jail?” Reverend Bevel responded eloquently: It’s as difficult as seeing Jesus on the cross or seeing King in an Alabama jail. He continued: It has been a long time since America has had a white man who is willing to sacrifice and fight for truth and justice. LaRouche is in jail because he is fighting for these principles. Bevel drew on the example of Miles Horton, a white man who trained blacks and other young people during the civil rights fight. Miles was a Christian, said Bevel. He trained Rosa Parks and others. When she refused to go to the back of the bus, that reflected some of his teaching.

Now here we have a man, Lyndon H. LaRouche, who brings Christian principles to economic policy. I went on the Freedom Rides, said Bevel. We didn’t know if we would get out alive. The question was to save the nation. In spite of the problems, this nation is still man’s best hope if we can make it work.

Supporters of the LaRouche-Bevel independent presidential ticket filed petitions with the secretary of state in Mississippi Aug. 12, with more than twice the total needed. By Aug. 20 the slate had also filed for the November presidential ballot in Alaska, Washington, New Jersey, Iowa, Washington, D.C., Utah, Tennessee, Wisconsin, Virginia, and Ohio.

SCLC polarized

Reverend Bevel’s presence at the annual conference of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) in Dayton, Ohio Aug. 9-12 polarized the meeting and led to a shutdown of the presidential panel which Bevel was to have addressed on behalf of the LaRouche-Bevel ticket. Ostensibly, it was dropped because Democratic candidate Bill Clinton, whose appearance had been heavily advertised, canceled at the last minute. However, informed sources said that Clinton did not want to be on a panel with a LaRouche spokesman—especially not a former SCLC leader and respected civil rights veteran. Bevel did address a labor-SCLC prayer breakfast of a few hundred people. He was also called up to the podium at an Issues Forum chaired by former D.C. Delegate Walter Fauntroy.