

Clinton in new peace drive in Korea

by Kathy Wolfe

Three Clinton administration spokesmen acted on May 28 to announce a new U.S. policy of positive economic aid for North Korea, and to combat the British policy of bashing North Korea as a surrogate for China. The statements, by Rep. Bill Richardson (D-N.M.), U.S. Ambassador to South Korea James Laney, and a Pentagon official, are in the context of President William Clinton's strategy for the improvement of U.S. relations with China, and to stop British plans to break up China. The new White House policy follows close on the heels of the trip by the wife of Presidential candidate Lyndon H. LaRouche, Helga Zepp LaRouche, to Beijing.

Representative Richardson, who traveled to North Korea on May 26-28 for the President, told a press conference in Seoul on May 29 that there should be rapid food aid to alleviate the North Korean famine, without which peace talk is an empty gesture. Richardson said that he had gone to Pyongyang to "stress the importance of the four-party talks" among the United States, China, and the two Koreas, as proposed by President Clinton in April. Pyongyang was "non-committal," he said, "but I am hopeful this might lead to acceptance in the future."

The North, he said, for its part, "stressed the importance of food aid. That was their top priority. . . . This food problem now is of such overwhelming importance to North Korean officials that I was left with the impression they would find it difficult, if not impossible, to focus on other issues until they have found a way to deal with this crisis. Frankly, I was struck by the evidence of the seriousness of their situation and their sincere desire for help in dealing with it."

Richardson noted that the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies also appealed in Beijing on May 29 for \$5.25 million in aid for North Korea to avert famine and assist 130,000 victims of flooding.

The Laney initiative

Ambassador Laney, a personal friend of President Clinton who is not from the State Department rats' nest, flew to Washington to tell the National Press Club on May 28, that the United States and South Korea need a complete shift in policy toward North Korea.

Laney announced that it is hostile posturing from certain quarters in Washington and Seoul which is driving Pyong-

yang into a corner, and that this must now stop. "If the [peace] process is to succeed," Laney said, "we in the R.O.K. [South Korea] and the U.S., will need to rethink the approach that we have historically taken to the D.P.R.K. [North Korea]. This includes toning down our rhetoric and lurid language we use to characterize the North." North Korea, he said, is "driven by insecurity. . . . For our part, we don't need to act strong, because we are strong." Policy options, he said, should be judged "not on the basis of whether they're tough or soft, the conventional cliches, but whether they're smart or dumb."

The United States, Laney said, should make clear that Washington recognizes North Korea's right to exist. "We should focus our efforts on helping North Korea to understand that there is a better alternative. We should foster its confidence that it can survive, compete, and possibly even prosper, if it picks up the [peace conference] offer now on the table. We should demonstrate that we have no desire to invade, or destroy, the D.P.R.K."

Laney called for a new policy of "positive inducements," such as food aid for Pyongyang. Asked about the famine in North Korea, Laney replied, "The humanitarian situation that you spoke of so eloquently, exists. The food problem and the deprivation of the people is aggravating the problem. . . . In a couple of days, there will be a report from the World Food Program, a rather conclusive report, which will bring us up to date. And therefore, the United States has now under review, what our response should be, in terms of humanitarian aid."

In response to charges by Thatcher-Bush Republicans, such as Bob Dole and Gerald Ford, that Clinton is "coddling" North Korea, Ambassador Laney said: "It's so easy and, politically, in the short term, even popular to beat up on North Korea. They're probably the best punching bag around. But that's a very dangerous game. . . . Korea is too important" to be used as a political football.

Pentagon dismisses war threat

Meanwhile, on May 28, Pentagon spokesman Kenneth Bacon dismissed press reports, based on the defection on May 23 of a North Korean pilot, that North Korea is about to invade the South. "It looks to us as though the North Korean army is probably less well prepared for a major military action now than it has been in recent years," he said.

North Korean Air Force pilot Li Chol-su flew his aging Soviet MiG-19 and defected to Seoul May 23. He told a May 28 press conference that Pyongyang has massed 500 warplanes on the border, and is about to invade South Korea.

"Pilot Li's information differs from what we have picked up and the South Koreans have picked up from our observation over the last year," Bacon said. "We have not seen signs of active military training in the last 6 to 12 months. In fact, quite the opposite—military training has been considerably less than normal," due to lack of supplies.