

LaRouche: Impeach Pennsylvania's Gov. Ridge for 'Nazi-like' policies

by Mel Klenetsky

Democratic Presidential candidate Lyndon H. LaRouche has set his political sights on Gov. Tom Ridge of Pennsylvania, calling for his impeachment. A draft resolution to impeach Ridge was released on May 21 by LaRouche's state campaign staff, five days after Ridge signed into law S.B. 1441, a "so-called" welfare reform bill which eliminates medical assistance for 220,000 poor, disabled, and needy Pennsylvanians. LaRouche condemned the Nazi-like qualities of Ridge's bill.

In March, Ridge had attempted to push through a similar welfare reform bill that would have eliminated a quarter-million people from medical assistance. At the time, LaRouche and his supporters, campaigning for the April 23 Presidential primary, quickly and successfully took up the cause of defeating it. LaRouche has calculated that thousands of lives would be lost in the first six months after S.B. 1441 became law. LaRouche explained in a radio interview with "EIR Talks" on May 29: "This bill, as calculated, fairly would result in the early deaths of about 3,000 or more persons. . . . Therefore, if Governor Ridge pushes this bill through . . . this marks him as a candidate for Nuremberg war criminal proceedings." Back in March, he said, "we showed him, and others, that this bill would place those who legislated such a policy in the position of those convicted as Nazi criminals, that is, for crimes against humanity."

He explained: "The standard of justice at the Nuremberg trials was, as given by Justice Robert Jackson of the United States, who represented us in those trials, was that the person either 'knew or should have known,' in the capacity of a public official or a member of certain professions, that what he was doing, in terms of enacting policy, not by his hand, but by enacting policy, would result, necessarily, in the death, increased death rates or other suffering, among targeted groups of people. By that standard, Ridge was a candidate to be considered as a Nazi-style criminal."

LaRouche, a leading anti-Conservative Revolution force in the Democratic Party, intends to make such Nazi-like behavior a major issue of his campaign between now and the August national party conventions. "Now, Ridge is a particularly egregious case." But, he continued, Massachusetts Gov. William Weld "is also equally guilty, in this matter. So is [Gov. Pete] Wilson of California, and a number of other cases. . . . We have people in Contract with America, of which Ridge

is typical, who are *all* guilty of the same thing. Now, this is going to have to be a hard election campaign. Going through the summer, into the fall, the general election, these guys, starting with Ridge . . . who are, by the Jackson standard of 'knew or should have known,' who push this kind of policy . . . have to be hit hard, and called what they are: Nazi-style Nuremberg criminals. And, they should be impeached, and repudiated, at every level. We can not allow Nazism in this form, or its echoes, in our state or federal governments."

Resolution prepared

The Draft Impeachment Resolution, prepared by LaRouche's Pennsylvania staff, is based on the Charter of the International Military Tribunal and Allied Control Council Law No. 10, under which Nazi officials were tried for crimes against humanity in Nuremberg after World War II, and which constitute international law binding upon Americans today. Ridge's violations are an impeachable "infamous crime" under Article VI, Section 7 of the Pennsylvania Constitution. S.B. 1441 tears up the program, which provides "safety net" coverage to needy people with no health insurance—such as part-time and minimum-wage workers, or unemployed people between jobs—who otherwise do not qualify for federal aid. Ridge's bill eliminates all coverage for so-called "able-bodied" adults between 21 and 59 years of age, with no dependent children, and who work less than 100 hours a month. Ridge's plan also excludes workers who earn over \$425 a month, and those who earn minimum wage.

Democratic State Rep. Harold James of Philadelphia, chairman of the Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus, has been one of the leading opponents to S.B. 1441. James has endorsed the Draft Resolution call to impeach Governor Ridge. In his May 15 speech before the Pennsylvania Legislature, James minced no words: "Mr. Speaker, when Pennsylvanians begin to die as a result of the governor signing this report, I foresee—upon proper complaint—the U.S. Attorney General's office considering an indictment against Mr. Ridge, possibly for homicide. Furthermore, those legislators in both chambers of the General Assembly who vote for this conference committee report for Senate Bill 1441 should be indicted for conspiracy."

James described how the bill constitutes a death sentence

for the uninsured, working poor. "Many Pennsylvanians are only one illness away from a serious health crisis. A recent survey shows: Pennsylvania has the highest death rate for female breast cancer. At 52.3%, Pennsylvania ranks first in the number of adult men with high blood pressure. (And I am one of them.) Pennsylvania has the second highest death rate for colon and rectum cancer, for cancer of the uterus, and it has the second highest rate of new cases in both categories. Pennsylvania has the third highest death rate for diseases of the heart. Pennsylvania has the fifth highest death rate for diabetes. (And I am one of them.) Mr. Speaker, Senate Bill 1441 is part of the disease. It represents a bacteria growing under some conservative politicians who repeatedly demonstrate that they are mean-spirited toward the working populace; heartless toward the poor; indifferent to the elderly; and neglectful toward children."

Condemnations have also come from Philadelphia Mayor Ed Rendell, who called the bill "ridiculous, cruel, inhumane"; Cardinal Anthony Bevilacqua of Philadelphia, called the cuts "unconscionable," and attacked Ridge and the legislators for "balanc[ing] the state budget by abandoning the poor."

Jobs lost, hospitals closed

Newspapers have provided graphic instances of the deadly consequences of Ridge's plan. The *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, March 18, 1996, in "Imperiling of Benefits Puts Scare into Couple," quoted a 56-year-old housewife saying that the cuts are "'a form of euthanasia. . . . If we lose that benefit, and my husband's cancer of the larynx recurs in the next two years, we won't be able to afford to pay the medical bills. No one will take him as a patient then. He could die. . . .'" The mother of 10 "described the downward economic spiral she and her husband have been in since the steel mills near their Vanport home closed in 1982."

The *McKeesport Daily News* of March 24, 1996, reported: "Local hospitals are faced with some harrowing economic difficulties in light of Gov. Tom Ridge's welfare cut proposal—so much so that Braddock Medical Center is threatening to shut down after 90 years of operation and lay off its 700 workers." State Sen. Albert Belan told the daily: "The closing of Braddock Hospital would be devastating, socially and economically. . . . It would cut the lifeline of individuals in certain income categories between Pittsburgh and McKeesport."

Rep. Harold James testified that a report by the Delaware Valley Hospital Council indicated that hospitals could lose \$50 million in the first year of the governor's cuts in medical assistance. These cuts would amount to \$514 million in the suburban Philadelphia counties of Bucks, Chester, Delaware, and Montgomery, and \$1 billion for Philadelphia by the year 2000.

James noted that the cuts translate into a \$116.3 million loss in revenue that would threaten the jobs of many of the

more than 45,000 health care professionals working in hospitals throughout Philadelphia. "Health care," James said, "is one of the largest employers in Philadelphia, providing more than 14% of the jobs in the region. In fact, one in every seven Pennsylvanians is employed in health care—an industry that generates \$15 billion a year."

Further, he said, according to the Urban Coalition of Pennsylvania, in Philadelphia alone, hospitals provide more than \$166 million in uncompensated health care. This figure grew to \$470 million, for the state, in free care, to uninsured patients last year. Should Ridge's cuts go through, James noted, the additional loss of revenue to hospitals could be the final straw that would force many hospitals to shut their doors permanently.

What the death toll would be

The *New England Journal of Medicine*, Vol. 311, No. 7 (Aug. 16, 1984), pp. 480-484, reported the results of a study of 186 medically indigent adults, who were among 270,000 persons disqualified from state medical assistance in California in 1982. A comparison group of 109 patients, whose benefits were not discontinued, was also enrolled in the study. Both groups were evaluated just before benefits were terminated for the first group, and again six months later. Five people from the group that was disqualified died, with no other explanation for their deaths than being removed from assistance. LaRouche used this figure, of 5 out of 186, or 1.61%, to determine that of the 220,000 people cut from medical assistance by Ridge's proposals, 1.61%, or 3,542 people would die in the first six months of the legislation going into effect.

The relevant findings and conclusions from the *New England Journal of Medicine* study found that there were no significant differences in sex, ethnic group, income, access to care, or satisfaction with care between the two groups, on initial evaluation. Furthermore, five patients in the medically indigent group died during the study period, while there were no deaths in the comparison group. Investigations into the circumstances of five deaths revealed that in every case, the individuals died for lack of assistance. One medically indigent patient, who died from a presumed myocardial infarction, had collapsed at home after having prolonged chest pain: He had run out of his heart medications, digoxin and nitroglycerin, and had been unable to afford more.

In 1992, Democrat Harris Wofford, in a come-from-behind Senate campaign, defeated the heavily favored Republican Richard Thornburgh, with health care as one of the leading issues of the Wofford campaign. As the full implications of Ridge's bill touch more and more of the population, the governor may find himself in political difficulty. On May 23, Bill Anderson, a popular radio talk show host, endorsed the draft resolution to impeach Ridge and opened the air waves for discussion. The population's anger at Ridge's bill was evident in the response.