

EIR Special Report

The Real Democrats Hold Ad Hoc Platform Hearings

A panel of 11 Democratic State Legislators, joined by former U.S. Senator Eugene McCarthy, met in Washington, D.C. on June 22, to preside over Ad Hoc Democratic Party Platform hearings. Under the chairmanship of State Rep. Erik Fleming of Mississippi, the panel did what the current Democratic Party leadership has refused to do: give a voice to those “forgotten Americans” who comprise the lower 80% of income brackets in the United States.

The all-day event began with remarks by Debra Hanania-Freeman, the national spokesperson for Democratic Presidential pre-candidate Lyndon LaRouche, excerpted below. She introduced the panel: Sen. Eugene McCarthy (ret., Minn.), State Sen. Carlos Cisneros (N.M.), State Sen. Joe Neal (Nev.), State Rep. Perry Clark (Ky.), State Rep. Erik Fleming (Miss.), State Rep. John Hilliard (Ala.), State Rep. Thomas Jackson (Ala.), State Rep. Harold James (Pa.), State Rep. Ernest Newton (Conn.), State Rep. Coy Pugh (Ill.), State Rep. Ed Vaughn (Mich.), and State Rep. LeAnna Washington (Pa.).

The day of testimony, by distinguished experts from around the nation, was divided into three panels. The first, on the economic crisis, was addressed by LaRouche by videotape. After this came health care, then constitutional law and justice. We publish here a selection of the testimony. The full proceedings of the event will be released shortly.

Debra Hanania-Freeman

My name is Debra Freeman. I serve as the national spokeswoman for Presidential candidate Lyndon LaRouche. . . . In welcoming the committee, I'd like to just briefly explain how today's event came about.

For those of us who have been active on the political scene for a number of years, it is traditional during the month of June, in Presidential election years, that Democrats hold platform hearings. It is normally the tradition that during June, platform hearings occur in major cities across the United

States. Those hearings usually go into a second round of hearings in July, prior to the National Convention, which are more of a regional nature. This year, as of yet, no such hearings have been scheduled. We are told by the party leaders, that at some point, hearings will take place. But at the same time, we're told that, basically, the only thing that will be in order at those hearings, will be comments on the past platform; the platform that was adopted four years ago. And the reasoning for this, we are told, is that, indeed, the fundamentals are sound.

For those of you who read the *New York Times* on Sunday . . . you will have seen commentary, that the only real issue in this year's Presidential campaign, the thing that makes this campaign different from previous Presidential campaigns, is that both the candidate of the Democratic Party, and the candidate of the Republican Party, will have to deal with what the *Times* calls a “crisis of abundance.”

Well, ladies and gentlemen, you only have to walk a couple of blocks to the east, or to the west, of this hotel, to know that the crisis that we face, here in Washington, D.C., in Baltimore, Maryland, in Birmingham, Alabama, in Detroit, Michigan, in Los Angeles, California, in any city that you name in the United States, in any rural area that you name in the United States, the crisis that we face is *not* a crisis of abundance.

I would also submit to you, that in a period when we cannot find the money to adequately feed our hungry, to house our homeless, and to educate our children, when the vast majority of the American people have no access to quality health care, when, in fact, we as a nation rank 37th among nations in the health of our people—I would submit to you that the fundamentals are *not* sound.

I can't really speak for the leadership of our party, as to why they insist on maintaining this absurd posture. What I do know, is that there has been a tremendous concern, concern since Newt Gingrich led what he called his Conservative Revolution. . . . I have to admit, I never thought of it as much of a revolution; I found it rather revolting, but I didn't find it to be a revolution. But, what occurred shortly after the Gingrich



Participants in the hearings, left to right: Melvin Muhammad, state president, AFSCME, Nebraska; E. Martin Jewell, chairman, Virginia Coalition on Housing; Terri Bishop, director, Community for Creative Non-Violence, Washington, D.C.; Robert Cebina, vice president, UAW Local 723 Monroe, Mich., CAP Council representative; Louis Whitehead, president, Portsmouth, Virginia Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO.

revolution, is that some “wise” people inside the Democratic Party said that the Democratic Party had to change, that we no longer had to worry about the traditional base of the party. That labor, African-Americans, Hispanics, farmers, people who had traditionally made up the vast sea of support that the party always enjoyed, that those folks had nowhere else to go. And that the new era would be defined by whether or not our party could appeal to soccer moms, and Wall Street yuppies.

Well, you know, we are, after all, the party of inclusion, and I think there’s room in the party for soccer moms. But, I also know that in our country, 80% of our population lives in the lower income brackets. And a Democratic victory has always depended specifically on our ability to mobilize that base of the Democratic Party. The idea that those people have nowhere else to go, is a cynical statement, and I believe that it’s a violation of everything that our nation stands for. And in fact, it is during the course of platform hearings, that that 80% has its voice.

This year, that voice is silent. It was our feeling, and it’s the feeling of Democrats all over the United States, that those voices have to be heard. And the men and women who sit before you today, have come together for that purpose. They’ve all left extremely busy schedules in legislatures that are sitting around the United States, many of them in emergency session to deal with this so-called crisis of abundance. But they came here, because they recognize that they have a responsibility, a responsibility to their constituents, a responsibility to see to it that the general welfare of the vast majority of the American people, is represented. It is a courageous move by each of them. It is a selfless move. And it is our hope that what goes on here today, will constitute a crucial intervention into this Presidential campaign, and will give a

voice to those 80% of the American people, whose voices will otherwise not be heard.

So, ladies and gentlemen, you have, I suppose, a very solemn task today. Because in fact, you must be the eyes and the ears, and ultimately, the voice, of that 80%.

We have tried to solicit witnesses in areas that represent the crucial areas, the areas of crisis, that face the American people. I am more than happy to admit to you, that for every witness who is here today, there are probably ten other witnesses who should be here. But we simply do not have the resources—this is an ad hoc committee, and it is something that we hope will spark a much greater dialogue and debate, but it is also the case that it cannot substitute for what in fact, should be going on far more broadly on a national scale.

What I would like to do now is to turn the proceedings over to our chairman, the distinguished Representative from the State of Mississippi—because we wanted everybody to know that there is a lot more to the State of Mississippi than Trent Lott. Representative Erik Fleming.

Rep. Erik Fleming

Thank you, Dr. Freeman. Before I go into the ground rules of where we are with the hearing, I did want to remark on a comment that Debbie made, as far as being courageous. Most of us here don’t look at what we’re doing today as being courageous, but a matter of conscience, and that the only thing that is considered a soft pillow to members of the legislature, is a clear conscience.

So, we’re well rested, with clear consciences, and we’re ready to get started with our hearing.