

Australia Dossier by Robert Barwick

Fascist ASIO Bill Rammed Through

Prime Minister Howard has rewritten Australian law in line with the U.S. neo-conservatives' agenda.

The bitterly-fought Australian Security Intelligence Organization (ASIO) Terrorism bill finally passed the Australian Parliament, after more than a year of debates, on June 27, when the opposition Australian Labor Party (ALP) caved in to pressure from Prime Minister John Howard.

The most draconian bill ever presented to the Parliament, the new law transforms the spy agency ASIO into a full-fledged Australian secret police. It gives the ASIO powers to detain people as young as 16 for up to seven days (in some special cases, for indefinite periods); incommunicado, deprived of the right to remain silent—under threat of a five-year jail term—and with the onus of proof on the detainee to show he has no knowledge or material evidence related to terrorism.

The original form of the bill was watered down, thanks to a nationwide mobilization against it, led by Lyndon LaRouche's associates in the Citizens Electoral Council (CEC). Gone are the first draft's provisions to deny detainees access to a lawyer, and to apply the powers to children as young as ten. A three-year sunset clause (period after which the law expires) was added.

The ALP, which had been in a state of disarray and doing poorly in the opinion polls, likely caved in under a threat from Prime Minister Howard that if they didn't pass the bill, he would call an early election.

During the past year's fight over the ASIO bill and related police-state measures, introduced by the Howard government on the pretext of "fighting

terrorism" after Sept. 11, 2001, the B'nai B'rith Anti-Defamation Commission (sister organization to the organized crime-linked Anti-Defamation League in the United States) made a new attempt to silence the leadership of opposition to such dictatorial schemes, namely the CEC.

But LaRouche's associates in the CEC have won a victory on that count: On June 23, when the Australian Parliament's Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters tabled its report on the 2001 Federal Election, it rejected the ADC's October 2002 submission, which had called on Parliament to ban LaRouche's CEC from contesting Federal elections.

The ADC questioned the CEC's fundraising, noting that the CEC raised more money than all but the two biggest political parties, but that less than 15% of its donations were "declared"; i.e., itemized. That's because only that percentage of its donations exceeded the \$1,500 mark, while the balance of the CEC's roughly 17,000 transactions were smaller, undeclared amounts.

Indeed, the CEC is the fastest growing party in Australia, and the ADC's submission in October 2002 came just a few days after the CEC had sent political shock waves through the country by placing a full-page ad in *The Australian* newspaper—a call for a national bank, endorsed by over 600 Australian dignitaries. The ADC alleged in its submission, that the donations to the CEC were dodgy, and demanded the CEC's deregistration as a party able to contest elections.

Devoting three pages of its 350-

page report to the CEC question, the Committee bluntly rejected them, stating that the ADC's allegations "did not amount to evidence." In a footnote, it used the CEC's language, rather than the ADC's, to elaborate: "The Committee is not prepared to endorse the dangerous route of banning organizations from contesting democratic elections on the basis of the views attributed to them."

The ADC had avoided the word "ban," but packaged its demand as "deregistration." The CEC insisted that the ADC's submission was a demand for the CEC to be banned, in the context of other proposed Federal "anti-terror" laws allowing the banning of political organizations. Those laws were squashed due to the CEC's mobilization.

That the Committee chose to identify the ADC submission as an attempt at "banning" the CEC, undoubtedly irked the Deputy Chairman of the Committee, leading neo-conservative and longtime LaRouche foe Michael Danby, who had earlier called for a Federal investigation of the CEC. Of the five Federal politicians who spoke on the report in Parliament when it was tabled, none mentioned the small section on the CEC, except for the ever-obsessed Danby.

Formerly, Danby was editor of *The Review*, the media organ of the neo-conservative Australia/Israel and Jewish Affairs Council. In its June issue, *The Review* published a protest against the CEC's distribution of 30,000 copies of a special Australian edition of the LaRouche U.S. Presidential campaign pamphlet, *The Children of Satan: The "Ignoble Liars" Behind Bush's No-Exit War*, which exposed the neo-conservatives' push for a "clash of civilizations" and Howard's fascist laws. *The Review* confirmed they were "longtime bitter enemies of LaRouche and the CEC."