

Recall Threatens Chaos In Largest U.S. State

by Harley Schlanger

The chaotic circus-scenario unleashed in California by actor Arnold Schwarzenegger's entry into the recall election, had blown up by Aug. 11 into a 200-candidate gubernatorial "ballot," which will further destabilize the economically devastated state and threaten the legitimacy of elected representative government there. The recall election ploy is a right-wing-funded appeal to populism at its most insane, into which some Democratic leaders are falling; but it is being counter-attacked by Lyndon LaRouche's Presidential campaign in California and his burgeoning LaRouche Youth Movement on the West Coast.

When Conan the gubernatorial candidate made the announcement that he would run for Governor, during an interview with Jay Leno on "The Tonight Show" on Aug. 4, he sounded the populist theme which has driven the recall campaign. Government isn't working, he said; it has been captured by special interests. I am running for the people, and will clean out all the politicians tied to special interests.

But one can wonder whether the Terminator includes the corrupt Enron and other pirate energy interests tied to Vice President Dick Cheney—which pushed through the electricity deregulation bill in 1999 and then looted California of \$8 billion in state funds and tens of billions in economic wealth—among the "special interests" he would take on. One leading Democrat asked, "Where was that pussy, Arnold, when Enron was looting the state?" Though a politically active Republican at the time, Schwarzenegger had nothing to say on that subject, when LaRouche and his forces denounced Enron in early 2001 and began the campaign which brought it down. Schwarzenegger remained silent even when Gov. Gray Davis and other leading officials began denouncing Enron, Reliant, and other pirates in late 2001, and demanding Federal regulatory action to rein them in. Arnie's campaign manager, former Gov. Pete Wilson, was a big supporter of the disastrous deregulation bill.

The recall targetting Davis was pushed by a group of neo-conservatives with ties to Grover Nordquist, the American Enterprise Institute, and the Cato Institute. The provision they used was initiated a century ago, drafted explicitly for removing elected officials who had engaged in corruption. As the present recall drive demonstrated, it is not difficult—if money is available—to get 1 million signatures on the basis of populist rage against the deep collapse of the state's economy.

The leaders of the recall campaign include Ted Costa, who was the third member of the "Jarvis/Gann" leadership which pushed through Proposition 13 in 1978, destroying California local governments' core tax-revenue base. The recall campaign will further undermine the authority of state and local elected officials, by threatening them with "democratic" rage if they act for the general welfare and posterity.

Governor Davis has been blamed for the deregulation fiasco, and for the budget deficit. While he shares some of the blame, he was not alone in pushing the policies which precipitated the current crisis. The real economic crisis is, in reality, a product of more than 30 years of post-industrial policies which have resulted in a collapse of productive employment—in industry, aerospace, and now finally in electronics and telecommunications—and a corresponding collapse in revenue. Davis has correctly identified those behind the recall as neo-conservative "revolutionaries" out to destroy government, and the health care and education system along with it, and has battled to resist the most severe cuts pushed by the Republicans in the legislature.

Governor Davis' strategy to defeat the recall was to have a unified Democratic Party call for a "No" vote on the recall election on Oct. 7. If more than 50% vote no, he remains in office. However, Lt. Gov. Cruz Bustamante—who has endorsed Iraq war-hawk Joe Lieberman for President—announced on Aug. 6 that he would run, breaking the unity of the party behind Davis.

The recall election has now become an out-of-control free-for-all. If Davis is recalled, a new Governor could be elected, on the second part of the same ballot, with as little as 15% of the statewide vote. Nearly 200 candidates will be on the Oct. 7 recall "ballot." State officials cautioned on Aug. 11 that the ballot will confuse voters and that ballot-counting could take many days.

Only One Way Davis Can Win

LaRouche has warned that the state will become ungovernable if the recall succeeds. He called on California voters "to vote for the man, not the machine—we need Gray Davis" (Schwarzenegger usually plays robots in his movies). Davis' team is said to be moving toward a twofold strategy to defeat recall: first, to hit the recall as an effort by neo-conservatives to destroy representative government in California; and second, to show that Davis is committed to the general welfare of the people of the state.

It remains to be seen how far Davis is willing to go on the latter point. To win, he must make it clear that the 30 years of national economic policies have been a mistake, whose worst devastation has fallen on California. He has to announce his firm opposition to the free trade, post-industrial policies of his opponents, along with his intention to pursue a "Rooseveltian" policy of re-regulation and major infrastructure investment. Were he to do so, LaRouche predicted he would not merely win the recall, but become a national hero.