

LaRouche Challenges Kerry To Show Some Guts

by Nancy Spannaus

On June 3, the senior Democratic members of eight committees of the House of Representatives sent an open letter to President George Bush, demanding his cooperation in getting information to hold a public House investigation of the Abu Ghraib torture scandal. The phalanx of ranking Democratic committee members said: If the House Republican leadership continues to block such hearings, the Democrats are determined to carry out an investigation themselves.

Democratic Presidential candidate Lyndon LaRouche immediately announced support for the House Democrats' move: "I demand that John Kerry support that complaint, openly. He must stop being wishy-washy. I challenge Kerry to have the guts to support these House Democrats."

LaRouche warned that the continued stonewalling by the Republican House leadership is a campaign issue for this Fall's general election. "If the Republicans continue to stonewall on this investigation, the elimination of certain relevant Republicans in the coming election campaign is going to be a big issue. This is Watergate stuff.

"No one is fit to run for Democratic nominee for President, unless he or she is willing to take leadership on this issue. This is a real, live issue, not a maybe-it-depends-on-how-you-interpret-it issue. We should not choose a new Presidential candidate until this is cleared up. The Republicans responsible for this, should be out of office! This should be a leading campaign issue for any candidate qualified to run for President."

LaRouche's challenge is currently being circulated in a mass leaflet for distribution in Washington, D.C. and around the country, in an initial publication of 250,000 copies.

A New Watergate Coverup

The ranking Democrats who issued the open letter to President Bush sit on the eight House committees which *should* be carrying out oversight over the abuses at Abu Ghraib, in Afghanistan, at Guantanamo, and elsewhere. They reported that they had each contacted the Republican chairs of their committees, to request committee hearings and investigations. The Democratic Minority Leader, Democratic Whip, and the Democratic Caucus are reported to have made the same request to House Speaker Dennis Hastert (R-III).

The ranking Democrats who signed the letter are: Henry A. Waxman, Committee on Government Reform; David R. Obey, Committee on Appropriations; Tom Lantos, Commit-

tee on International Relations; John Conyers, Jr., Committee on the Judiciary; Ike Skelton, Committee on Armed Services; Jane Harman, Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence; John Dingell, Energy and Commerce Committee; and Charles Rangel, Ways and Means Committee.

The Republicans who have *obstructed* the necessary investigation of the Abu Ghraib scandal are: House Speaker Dennis Hastert of Illinois, and Majority Leader Tom DeLay of Texas; Duncan Hunter of California, chair of the Armed Services Committee; James Sensenbrenner of Wisconsin, chair of the Judiciary Committee; Porter Goss of Florida, chair of the Intelligence Committee; Bill Young of Florida, chair of the Appropriations Committee; Henry Hyde of Illinois, chair of the International Relations Committee; W.J. "Billy" Tauzin of Louisiana, chair of the Energy and Commerce Committee; and William Thomas of California, chair of the Ways and Means Committee.

If these Republicans cannot be forced by popular political mobilization and constituents' pressure to stop the coverup, they should be out of office this year.

Why an Investigation Is Needed

The letter from the eight Democrats is tough and to the point. In summary, they report:

- It is a "dereliction of Congress's oversight responsibility" not to have a formal public investigation;
- "Members cannot adequately assess the deteriorating situation in Iraq or the prospects for the future of our endeavors there without a thorough understanding of the nature, extent, and ramifications of the prisoner abuse";
- "In order to reestablish U.S. credibility in the eyes of the world, Congress must conduct a full and transparent investigation. . . . A thorough and open investigation is also critical for the emergence of a stable and secure Iraq."

They conclude:

"To address these needs, we intend to investigate the prison abuses at Abu Ghraib and the allegations of prison abuses at other locations in Iraq and in Afghanistan and Guantanamo Bay.

"While we would prefer to participate in committee investigations with our respective chairs, we cannot allow the refusal of the Republican leadership and committee chairs to pursue these matters to obstruct Congress' access to essential information."

After listing 35 categories of documents required, the Congressmen ask that they be delivered on or before June 17, 2004. (The full text of the Democratic letter is reproduced below.)

On the Spot

The ball is now in the President's court—but not only his. The challenge has also been put before the Democratic Party, and its would-be standard bearer. Presumptive Democratic nominee John Kerry is now on the spot to support the House Democrats' demand.

The leading Senate Democrats have already moved aggressively on the Abu Ghraib scandal, *in cooperation with Senate Republicans* who have been outraged by the behavior of the neo-conservatives. Extensive hearings are expected to continue in the Senate, in order to pin down the *systemic* nature of the abuse, as senior Republicans such as navy veteran Sen. John Warner of Virginia, ignore the objections of House Republican leaders and the Pentagon, in order to get to the bottom of the crisis.

But not even the Democratic Senators have received support from Kerry. LaRouche, who is the only Democratic Presidential candidate who has so far shown himself qualified to end the war and deal with the depression, has worked closely with military and intelligence circles to help fuel the investigations. Now he is sending a challenge to Senator Kerry.

On June 7, LaRouche issued his mass leaflet laying down his demand that Kerry come out and back the House Democrats. LaRouche organizers have discovered that even Democratic insiders in places such as Los Angeles, California, were unaware of the fight which had been launched, and the fact that they should be mobilizing support for the Democratic insurgents, against the Republican Stonewall effort.

As of this writing, there has been no indication that Senator Kerry has taken up the fight on the Abu Ghraib issue which his colleagues in the House of Representatives have raised. The Senator has stuck with the “me, too” posture which has characterized his campaign since the Super Tuesday results made him the “frontrunner.”

The Open Convention fight

Kerry’s disastrously lack-luster performance has led an increasing number of Democrats to look for an opportunity to bust open the Democratic Convention. Lyndon LaRouche has insisted that without Kerry releasing his delegates, and throwing the situation wide open, the Democratic campaign will very likely lose in November.

Over the course of this week, two prominent state Democrats, Rep. Perry Clark of Kentucky and Rep. Juanita Walton of Missouri, have come forward to endorse LaRouche’s call for an open Convention. Clark put it most pithily: “We need to have a deep, no-holds-barred debate on candidates and direction. Let the chips fall where they may, let the healthy policy debate begin. Naysayers say: don’t rock the boat. I say the boat has struck an iceberg. It is time to repair the damage, before this nation sinks under the weight of fear-induced denial and apathy. We should not fear debate, but welcome it. I urge Sen. Kerry to release his delegates, and open the convention.”

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House Democrats’ Letter To the President

This is the letter sent, by ranking U.S. Democratic Congressmen, to President G.W. Bush on June 3, 2004, requesting his assistance in obtaining 35 key documents, for purposes of investigating the prisoner abuse scandal.

The President
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing to inform you of our determination to investigate the prison abuses at Abu Ghraib and elsewhere and to request your assistance in obtaining key documents.

Over the past few weeks, we have each contacted our committee chairs to request committee hearings and investigations into the prison abuses. The Democratic Leader, the Democratic Whip, and the Democratic Caucus Chair have made a similar request to the House Speaker, expressing their grave concern over the lack of investigations by House committees.

Unfortunately, with the exception of the closed sessions of the Intelligence Committee and a single Armed Services Committee hearing, these requests have been rebuffed. Despite the magnitude of the Abu Ghraib and other detainee abuses and their enormous ramifications for our effort in Iraq and U.S. foreign policy, no House committees are currently undertaking a formal public investigation. This is a dereliction of Congress’ oversight responsibility that ill serves our nation and our troops.

There are multiple reasons why a formal public investigation is essential. Members cannot adequately assess the deteriorating situation in Iraq or the prospects for the future of our endeavors there without a thorough understanding of the nature, extent, and ramifications of the prisoner abuse. Nor can members address our constituents’ many concerns about these matters—and the progress of our efforts to combat terrorism—without more information.

Moreover, in order to reestablish U.S. credibility in the eyes of the world, Congress must conduct a full and transparent investigation. Such an investigation would demonstrate our commitment to accountability and to ensuring that these abuses cannot recur. A thorough and open investigation is also critical for the emergence of a stable and secure Iraq. It is hard to see how we can win the hearts and minds of the Iraqi people if we neglect our constitutional oversight responsibilities.

To address these needs, we intend to investigate the prison