

Cheney invasion of Iraq,” the head of a Tokyo think-tank associated with the Diet (parliament) wrote, in a fax to the DNC signed by several noted Tokyo peace activists. “We also doubt their ‘intelligence’ against North Korea. So I was shocked to read in your ‘Report of the 2004 Democratic National Convention Committee on Platform,’ that the DNC not only supports the occupation of Iraq, but even states that North Korea is a worse danger. . . .

“Many prominent U.S. Democrats have called for an Open Democratic Convention in Boston, because they want to debate against these Bush polices. But I am deeply disappointed by reports, that no debate on the platform policy will be permitted.

“I am further distressed by reports that the Democratic Convention may even be closed to ordinary U.S. citizens, on the excuse of ‘terrorist threats.’ We have heard that student activists of Democrat Lyndon LaRouche were labelled ‘undesirable’ and barred from the Convention. Is that Democratic?

“I request deeply from my heart to your party that you are always as Democratic as the name of your party, because the Democracy of the Democratic Party USA is a model and the hope for the people of the whole world. You should not forget this fact!

“I hope Mr. Kerry will win against Bush for Peace, Human Rights and Justice in the world. Therefore, the Democratic National Committee should be first of all democratic and open-minded. So, allow LaRouche’s youth campaigners and all peaceful Democrats to participate to the discussion.”

Japan’s Voters Punish Koizumi

by Kathy Wolfe

Japanese voters punished Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi in a national election on July 11, for endangering Japan’s peace constitution by his one-man decision to turn Japanese troops in Iraq over to the new multinational UN force there, and for what an *Asahi News* editorial called his “arrogance” in failing to explain his slashing of benefits for Japan’s large elderly population, and hikes in payments for pensions, under advice from the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

“Voters gave a severe verdict on the Koizumi Administration,” said both the *Asahi* and *Mainichi Shimbun*, opening their editorials with almost the same sentence. “Those who used to applaud his strong-armed policy management may have worried this time that he was running out of control,” *Asahi* editorialized.

The new opposition, the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), outdid Koizumi’s long-ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) in elections for the Upper House of the Diet—the na-

tional assembly—increasing from 38 seats to 50 geographically based seats, while the LDP fell from 50 to 49 geographical seats. The DPJ also gained sharply in nationwide “proportional” seats being contested, rising from 14 to 19, including new seats in Tokyo and other urban centers.

Koizumi, however, announced that he had not been hit hard enough to step down, because he rules in a coalition with three other parties, and that overall coalition retains a majority of 139 of the upper house’s 242 seats. “There will be no problem of responsibility, as we have a majority” he told national TV July 12. Koizumi said he will revamp his Cabinet and party leadership.

But the next shock could drive him out.

Opposition Lacks Vision

The real problem is that, as with the U.S. Democratic Party now being mismanaged by DNC chair Terry McAuliffe and John Kerry, the DPJ is a hodgepodge of groups from across the political spectrum, banded together, with no principles or new policies, for the sole purpose of trying to break the LDP’s almost 60-year hold on power.

Worrisome is the presence of former LDP boss Ichiro Ozawa, a pal of Henry Kissinger who in 2002 threatened to nuke China, and who was almost made DPJ chairman earlier this year when a pension scandal caused a shakeup.

The DPJ campaign was purely negative, failing to propose any positive solution for Iraq, other than pull out, or for the pension system or the collapsing economy.

“I think the public said ‘No’ to the pension issue and the Iraq war,” DPJ President Katsuya Okada said July 12. “We will make every effort to repeal the pension reform and call for the withdrawal of Japanese troops from Iraq,” and consider a no-confidence motion to try to topple Koizumi “whenever we have a chance.”

Also unfortunate is the election of Economics Minister Heizo Takenaka, the Harvard-trained author of a “surgery without anesthesia” IMF program to shut down chunks of Japan’s industry. Koizumi pushed Takenaka, an appointee, to run, to claim public support for his budget cuts. There was no such support, but somehow a vote for Takenaka was engineered.

“Now that the legend that Koizumi is immune to election losses has collapsed, he is sure to face difficulties,” *Nihon Keizai* concluded. “It is also uncertain whether he can stay in office until his tenure as LDP president expires in September 2006.”

But voters apparently don’t feel confident enough to let the DPJ run the country; apathy was high, and the turnout was little more than 55%. “In other words, the LDP does not appear to have a bright future ahead, and the DPJ’s future prospects are not necessarily promising either.”

“It’s not that the Democratic Party is good, but I decided not to vote for the LDP this time,” said one voter interviewed—Hiroshi Furuya, the 64-year-old owner of a construction company.