

**Londrigan:** No, coal. We have coal. And the main utility in Louisville, Louisville Gas and Electric, which is owned by the German conglomerate E.On, is planning a large power plant in Trimble County, Kentucky, a \$2.5 billion facility. A new coal-burning facility. The rest of them—you know, we have power plants all over the state, primarily because of the abundance of coal in the state. So we do have quite a bit of energy production here. A lot of it is now being wheeled and shipped out of the state, because we probably have overcapacity here.

**EIR:** Other infrastructure?

**Londrigan:** Education. Our education system here is kind of sliding backward. There were some major efforts since 1956, to really put a focus on improving the education system. And now, because of budgetary constraints brought on by Federal budgetary constraints, and state budgetary constraints, there's less emphasis on funding education. And there are education increases in tuition throughout the state—I believe it was a 20% increase in Western Kentucky University. I'd have to verify that, but there are several universities that are doing double-digit tuition increases. So that is not a good sign.

**EIR:** If you were in a mode, for retooling auto and related machine tool capacity to convert industry to start meeting infrastructure-building needs—this is the LaRouche approach, and the point of Clark's resolution—what kind of

skills training should be geared up? Do you have a training program?

**Londrigan:** We don't have one directly through our Federation, but our unions do. And you know, the UAW does. And of course, all the building trades have the apprenticeship programs and such. So, you know, we've got a ready supply of workers to do the construction. And there is a pretty well established, and pretty effective group of schools through the Kentucky college and technical system, that sometimes partners with different unions and employers for providing folks to do certain jobs.

We've got lots of machinists in our state, and a great number of millwrights who do a lot of the installation of conveyors and different industrial equipment. So we have the capabilities of doing the work, and doing the training at the same time, when that's called for. And if something changed and we were able to get back into things, and have the economy grow, our folks are ready to do the work.

**EIR:** What is the current unemployment level in your state?

**Londrigan:** It's just in the paper today. It's gone up. It is 5.6% in April, up from 5.3% in March—that's the official statistics. Of course, that gets us into the whole question of discouraged workers, and undercounting, and such. I would say that there is massive undercounting, and there always has been. There are parts of the state where there is well over double-digit unemployment, and there has been long-term structural unemployment in lots of counties.

## Wilbur Ross Cartel Dumps Mineworkers' Health Care

On Oct. 1, 2004, then-bankrupt Horizon Natural Resources, the coal company based in Kentucky, West Virginia, and Illinois, was acquired by corporate scavenger Wilbur Ross's firm, WL Ross & Co. LLC, to form the International Coal Group. A day earlier, U.S. District Court Judge Henry R. Wilmot had lifted a stay on a decision by Horizon Natural Resources to terminate health-care benefits for nearly 5,000 Horizon retired and active miners. This cleared the way for a takeover by Ross, who acquired the principal operations of Horizon, while shedding an estimated \$1.47 billion in predecessor liabilities, especially all of the so-called "legacy" obligations (health-care and other benefits), a practice which Ross had already applied to the bankrupted U.S. steel industry.

At the time of Ross's Horizon takeover, business commentators proclaimed that the acquisition was a move by

Ross to do for coal what he did for steel. Since 2000, Ross had created the International Steel Group by selectively buying up bankrupt iron and steel companies for pennies on the dollar, stripping retirees of health-care benefits, virtually eliminating work rules, passing the cost of pensions on to the Federal government, and, finally in April this year, making a killing by selling off ISG altogether, to Mittal Steel, the British-based wing of the international commodity cartels.

On March 31, 2005, Ross's ICG Inc. announced plans to buy a controlling interest in two West Virginia-based coal companies, Anker Coal Group Inc. and CoalQuest Development LLC. The Ross press release on the acquisitions made reference to forming a company "essentially free of legacy liabilities" (health and pension benefits).

Wilbur Ross himself is an inside part of the Rothschild financial grouping, formerly serving in New York as top official for Rothschild's American operations. Now Kirk Kerkorian is circling over the U.S. auto sector, hoping to do what Ross has done to steel and coal.

—Patricia Salisbury