

LaRouche Aids Mayors' Infrastructure Push

by Paul Gallagher

American mayors and county and other local officials came out strongly for large new economic infrastructure investments to reverse the physical economic collapse, in press conferences in the midst of the Presidential debates in early October. The "Mayors '04 Metro Agenda" was immediately backed by economist and Democratic leader Lyndon LaRouche, who is organizing for an "FDR-style" infrastructure recovery program and a John Kerry landslide victory. "The mayors and elected officials who held a press conference in Cleveland, Ohio Oct. 4, are right," said LaRouche in a statement released by LaRouche PAC on Oct. 9. "The Presidential debates must address the real problems the American people face, starting with infrastructure and physical economy."

LaRouche PAC and the LaRouche Youth Movement are highlighting this necessity in campaigning in Ohio and nationwide, with a mass-circulation pamphlet entitled *It's the Physical Economy, Stupid!* LaRouche urged the mayors to take the initiative to the Presidential debates then remaining—as they subsequently did.

The bipartisan coalition of local officials had stressed new transportation systems, housing and schools construction, health care, "hometown security" (stopping cuts in police and fire services), and of course, productive jobs. They represent the National Mayors Conference, the National Association of Counties and the National League of Cities—and at their level, the physical economic depression collapse is keenly felt across the nation.

'21st-Century Transportation System'

Akron Mayor Don Plusquellic, president of the U.S. Conference of Mayors, said in Cleveland: "What's relevant is, how are we going to address the job loss? How are we going to rebuild our economic base, especially in the urban centers? How are we going to address reinvestment in our infrastructure? Those are the issues that are on the agenda . . . to force the candidates to talk about them in real terms." Added Steve Burkeholder, Republican mayor of Lakewood, Colorado, "During the past 15 months, we've heard much about the Federal investment in rebuilding the infrastructure overseas, yet we haven't heard an honest discussion about what the candidates are prepared to do to rebuild our own aging infrastructure."

Mayors '04 Metro Agenda then set a second press confer-

ence for Oct. 12 in Tempe, Arizona, on the eve of the final Kerry-Bush debate there, and drafted questions for debate moderator Bob Schieffer of CBS News. Schieffer asked the question about how the new President would afford quality health care to the 45 million (and rising) Americans who now have no health insurance. Their question on transportation infrastructure was crucial: "It seems that just getting from point A to point B is a major challenge throughout the country and the congestion problems are getting worse. What is your vision for a 21st-Century transportation system? Do you have some new ideas? What will you do to ensure that our aging transportation infrastructure gets the fundamental improvement it needs?"

The mayors clearly are looking for large-scale investment in a new, high-technology and high-speed transportation system, such as promised by magnetic-levitation rail.

At their Oct. 12 press conference at the debate site at Arizona State University at Tempe, National League of Cities President Charles Lyons declared, "After three debates, we are still not getting answers to the profoundly important issues facing our communities—what are the candidates planning to do to improve the job market?" The ten mayors at the podium pulled no punches in charging that both Kerry and Bush were ignoring the devastated condition of infrastructure in the country. Mayor Plusquellic reported on the devastating loss of jobs in Ohio; Amtrak Rail passenger service has just been cancelled to his city, Akron; other mayors stressed the death toll from lack of maintenance of roads, highways, and bridges around the country.

Historic Debate Among Democrats

LaRouche Youth Movement (LYM) leader Sky Shields from California, present at the press conference with other LYM organizers, recognized the nonpartisan nature of Mayors '04 Metro Agenda but described the faction fight of historical importance under way in the Democratic Party and the Kerry campaign. One faction, led by LaRouche, intends to move John Kerry to adopt the kind of massive infrastructure program that the mayors are making clear is needed. Shields stressed that while the adoption of such a program is possible under a Kerry Administration, Bush and Cheney explicitly oppose any such policy.

Plusquellic responded that he wanted to read and discuss the LaRouche *Physical Economy* pamphlet and believed the other mayors did as well. He said they had to effectively take on opponents in both parties who call such programs "big spending"; and that they could not go along with the policy of giving out big tax cuts while infrastructure collapsed, clearly referring to the Cheney-Bush ideology. After the press conference, the LaRouche Youth organizers discussed with the mayors their own organizing, in the "swing states," for such needed "great projects" of infrastructure as the North American Water and Power Alliance, and a maglev national rail system.