

More Could Die of Flu Than From 9/11 Attack

This leaflet was issued by LaRouche PAC on Oct. 18, under the title “LaRouche: Bush/Cheney Could Cause More Americans To Die of the Flu Than Were Killed in the 9/11 Attack.”

The newspapers are featuring pictures of bewildered and despairing elder citizens, waiting in queues in supermarkets, for flu-vaccine doses that are simply not there. President Bush’s gloating expression during the late [Oct. 13] Presidential debate, when the subject of flu vaccine was taken up, must be seen as that President’s cruel, gloating expression flaunted in the face of the senior and other citizens waiting in those queues.

So, Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr. issued the warning today, that, “More people could unnecessarily die of the flu this year, than were killed in the 9/11 terrorist attack,” given how the Bush Administration is threatening the health of the United States. LaRouche cited the Administration’s refusal to act to mitigate the current crisis, its years-long record of negligence in vaccine procurement, and President Bush’s personal display of inhumanity.

LaRouche pointed in particular to Bush’s remarks during the Oct. 13 debate, when the President said, “I’m not getting a flu shot this year,” as an excuse for his Administration’s refusing to work with states and localities to direct scarce supplies to priority recipients, and make other contingency arrangements.

Secondly, LaRouche pointed out how Bush’s follow-on remark in the debate—that his health officials would likely obtain more vaccine from Canada—was a deception. Even as late as Oct. 14, Tommy Thompson, Secretary of Health and Human Services, in charge of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), fell back on the standing Federal line that, due to “drug safety” issues, probably no Canadian vaccines would be procured; Thompson said the FDA has not licensed the factories in advance. In Vancouver, some 1.5 million shots are potentially available to the U.S. for high-risk persons.

In reality, the Bush/Cheney campaign does not want to risk the adverse publicity that would ensue from allowing Canadian-manufactured drugs into the United States—which they’re on record as opposing! “Bush’s lies are more important to him than human life,” was LaRouche’s comment.

An estimated 36,000 people die in the United States yearly because of influenza, with 200,000 hospitalizations, accord-

ing to national health statistics for recent years. *Some 5,000 to 10,000 more deaths at the least, could occur during the 2004-05 influenza season, as a consequence of Bush Administration negligence.* Bush is a killer.

Negligence in Face of Crisis

The announcement came Oct. 5, that 48 million flu vaccine shots—half the anticipated total supply of 100 million for this influenza season—would not be available, because British health authorities de-licensed the vaccine factory in Liverpool from which the U.S. shipments were to come, through its owner, the California-based Chiron Corp.

Immediately, the response of Federal authorities should have been to intervene to assay the location of the other 50 million-plus doses going out to U.S. channels from the remaining supplier, France-based Aventis Pasteur, and redirect what among those lots, could go to those most in need—elderly; targetted pediatric age-groups; chronically ill; front-line health workers, and related groups.

In fact, the Bush Administration health officials had forewarning of problems at Chiron’s British plant in August 2004, when contamination was found in some lots of Chiron vaccine, and they did nothing. The British government then acted to line up back-up sources; but the Bush Administration did nothing.

The leading Bush Administration officials responsible for dealing with the crisis are sticking to “voluntary redistribution,” and honoring pre-existing contracts. Since an estimated 85% of flu vaccine is ordered privately (doctors’ offices, nursing homes, supermarket suppliers, etc.), and 15% is ordered publicly (county health departments, Federal agencies, the VA system), the Bush Administration’s hands-off policy guarantees chaos.

On Oct. 18, the American College of Emergency Physicians, an organization of 22,000 doctors, meeting in San Francisco, issued a plea for Federal action and resources to be able to handle the coming wave of patients. The drastically eroded U.S. hospital base—public and Veterans Affairs facilities—cannot cope with a patient surge, without Federal contingency preparation. The Bush Administration has ignored this.

Malfeasance in Procurement

The Kerry/Edwards campaign ad released on Oct. 16 rightly stated, “Three years ago, medical experts warned George Bush that a dangerous shortage loomed. Instead of fixing the problem, production was sent to a factory overseas—the vaccines were contaminated.” A simple timeline documents the record of malfeasance in procurement by the Bush Administration, leading up to the fact that for the 2004-05 flu season, approval was given for *reliance on only two suppliers for 100 million doses of vaccine, half of which was to come from an offshore facility, known to be risky!*

This, from an Administration which says it is doing everything possible for “homeland security”!

2001

During the 2001 flu season, the 74 million flu shots available were inadequate. In May, the U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) supplied a report, "Flu Vaccine; Supply Problems Heighten Need to Ensure Access for High-Risk People," stating that delays in flu vaccine over 2000-01 showed that "The government and the pharmaceutical industry are unprepared for a flu pandemic or vaccine shortages" and that, in the event of shortages, "Currently, there is no system to ensure that high-risk people have priority when the supply of vaccine is short."

In November, the Council of the Institutes of Medicine called for creation of a national Vaccine Authority to coordinate action to deal with unreliable vaccine supplies, and pending crises.

By the end of the year, Monarch, a significant vaccine producer, announced it was exiting the industry. This followed the 2000 exit by Pfizer, the giant drug-maker, and by 2003, both Wyeth and Merck had exited the injectable-flu-vaccine industry, leaving only two companies remaining.

The Bush Administration did nothing!

2002

In September, the GAO issued another report, focussing on ways the FDA could "help address the unmet need of a stable and sufficient vaccine supply." *These recommendations were ignored.*

2003

In March, the Institutes of Medicine issued its 400-page, ten-year study, *Microbial Threats to Health; Emergence, Detection, and Response*, stating that vaccine manufacturers could hardly meet demand in 2001 and 2002; the "public health infrastructure is inadequate," it found, and the U.S. and other countries were unprepared, in particular, for the risk of pandemic.

In June, an FDA team was deployed to Liverpool, England, to inspect a vaccine facility—at which they found contamination problems; but nevertheless, they subsequently gave the okay to the prospective plant purchaser, Chiron Corp. of California, to operate the plant to supply the United States with 46-48 million flu shots—half the intended 2004-05 supply. This approval occurred *despite* the fact that the plant had had a succession of owners and underinvestment; and in 2000,



An emergency room patient waits in a hallway for treatment. The American College of Emergency Physicians has issued a call for urgent Federal action and resources to handle the expected wave of flu patients, which will inundate existing ER capabilities.

when owned by Celltech, had been shut down for tainted polio vaccine.

2004

In August, Chiron announced that as many as several million flu vaccination doses might have been contaminated. But only after the Oct. 5 shutdown of the Liverpool plant by British regulatory officials, did the FDA send investigators, and find for themselves the manufacturing problems. The FDA has not made available its June 2003 inspection report.

LaRouche: Crash Program To Deal With the Crisis; Reverse the Policies That Created It

On Oct. 6, at an international webcast in Washington, D.C., LaRouche described the need for a crash program to deal with the crisis, and to roll back the policies that created it in the first place. On the vaccine shortages: "Treat it like a military emergency. You have all the relevant institutions tasked to come up with an approach to this and, whatever it takes, do the job."

Second, undertake a "restructuring of the implementation of our health-care policy." Restore hospitals—the frontline defense against infectious disease. "Look what we've done since 1973, since the HMO law was put in. We have *destroyed* essential parts of the medical defense system of the United States. And we're killing people by that!" We have taken down medical reserves of all kinds.

"To put the human race at risk in this way, was a mistake! We have to adopt a policy of correcting that mistake, by reversing the policies which led to that mistake. . . . Do whatever it takes."