

Chicago Democrat asks 'LaRouche alert'

by Patricia Salisbury

With the Democratic Party primary on Feb. 26 taking place in the context of total national attention to the Mideast war, the current hysteria among the leadership of the Chicago Democratic Party is a testament to the fragility of the "consensus" aura around the war which the Bush administration has tried to convey. The Democratic Party hierarchy felt it had to make public its fears that a slate of LaRouche supporters would once again stand national politics on its head, as they did in the 1986 Illinois primary. This danger looms as a particular nightmare to the establishment, since Lyndon LaRouche has announced from federal prison that he is running for President in 1992.

In a statement released on Feb. 8 at a press conference called expressly to stop LaRouche, Gary J. LaPaille, the Democratic Party chairman of Cook County, declared a "LaRouche Alert." The subject of the alert is the campaign of LaRouche supporter Sheila Jones for mayor of Chicago, and that of her running mates Charles Knox for city clerk and Mark Fairchild for city treasurer.

It is indeed a slate to be reckoned with. Knox is a well-known human rights activist, and Fairchild was on the LaRouche slate which won the Democratic Party nomination for lieutenant governor in the 1986 Illinois state primaries. Jones, a civil rights leader and classical musician who has become known throughout Chicago for her aggressive campaigns, is vying for the Democratic Party nomination in a four-way race against current Mayor Richard Daley, former Mayor Jane Byrne, and black "consensus candidate" Danny Davis.

Electoral 'terrorism'

LaPaille termed the LaRouche supporters, who have been campaigning on a program for ending the Mideast War and for the economic reconstruction of Chicago, "electoral terrorists." His only substantiation of this claim was to link the candidates with imprisoned U.S. statesman Lyndon LaRouche. In a reference to the 1986 election victory for LaRouche supporters, LaPaille stated, "These extremists were quietly able to deceive the voters of this state once before. I am here today to state that I will not allow that to happen again." In 1991, as in 1986, the LaRouche supporters have been entirely open about their reliance upon LaRouche's policies and ideas, and had named their slate "The LaRouche Mayoral" slate.

LaPaille announced that he will cover all the bases in reaching the hack political machine and the biased Chicago media with his alert. He set the following into motion:

- 1) A letter to every candidate for mayor, city clerk, and city treasurer asking them to "expose" the LaRouche candidates; 2) a letter to aldermanic candidates warning that some of their opponents may be LaRouche "followers" and urging them to warn their voters; 3) a letter to ward committeemen asking them to have their precinct workers tell people about the LaRouche slate; 4) calls to newspapers, television, and radio stations asking them to put out editorials and news articles on "the extremists"; and 5) radio advertisements in the final days of the campaign.

Why so nervous?

One reason for the Democratic Party tantrum, according to political observers, is that in late January, the gossip columns in the Chicago media covered the fact that Sheila Jones was outpolling former two-term mayor Jane Byrne in various straw polls. The race further opened up when Danny Davis, who had been promised the black vote, was stabbed in the back by various black ministers and Jesse Jackson's Operation PUSH, who came out endorsing Richard Daley—after they urged Davis to run for mayor. Jones is known to have a substantial following among Chicago's black community.

The Jones campaign and those of her slate members have spent hardly a penny on campaigning, but campaign supporters have been active in organizing campus forums on the war and ward meetings on the war and the economy, and can be found talking to individual voters throughout the city. Jones has issued a very detailed platform for the economic reconstruction of Chicago, which would place a tax on transactions on the speculative and profiteering activity on the Chicago Board of Trade in order to reopen Chicago hospitals and other services, rebuild the city's infrastructure, and house the homeless.

In response to the flap created by LaPaille, Sheila Jones told the press that the chairman's recognition of her slate's strength is "somewhat flattering," but pointed out that he otherwise appears "a bit disoriented and off-center of the issue facing the Democratic voters in Chicago." Jones made it clear that for her part she will continue to run her campaign on the issues she has defined, and extended to chairman LaPaille the opportunity to discuss what can still be done to avert what appears to be an imminent thermonuclear conflict in the Persian Gulf.

Jones also noted that the Democratic Party must initiate a discussion of the reality that the Cold War is not over, given that the Soviet Union's Red Army has returned to a position of power, while Europe is completely defenseless. She called on the Cook County Democratic Party to refrain from falling "victim to the same blind arrogance as George Bush, and to join in an effort to organize a movement for an immediate cease-fire, and for the impeachment of President Bush."