

## Economy whacks Bush in New Hampshire

by Kathleen Klenetsky

In his Jan. 28 State of the Union address, George Bush, in a Nietzschean fit of "triumph of the will" lunacy, declared that what he referred to as the U.S. recession "will not stand."

But with the results of the New Hampshire primary, it looks like it will be George Bush who will not stand, primarily because of the deepening depression which he at first ignored, and then attempted to deal with through such idiotic measures as proposing to trigger a new round of real estate speculation.

In the first primary of the 1992 election season, Bush came head-to-head with reality, in the form of the country's economic collapse, and reality won. New Hampshire gave Bush such a bloody nose that his political survival has been thrown into doubt.

While Bush was the nominal victor Feb. 18, receiving approximately 53% of the vote to Republican challenger Pat Buchanan's 37%, the primary outcome nevertheless represented a stunning upset for the President. Until election day, Bush strategists had been confidently predicting that their man would come out of New Hampshire with a comfortable 2-1 margin over Buchanan, a result which they believed would knock Buchanan out of the campaign and cement the Republican nomination for the President.

But neither the fact of Bush's incumbency, nor the streams of federal money he poured into the state during the last few months, nor the strength of his top-heavy political machine, proved sufficient to stem the hemorrhage of those Republican and independent voters who had given him a 67% victory over Michael Dukakis in the 1988 general elections.

Bush's win in New Hampshire was even weaker than the vote tallies indicate, Democratic presidential candidate Lyndon LaRouche pointed out in a Feb. 20 campaign statement. Traditionally, New Hampshire has survived economically by selling itself during the presidential primaries, in

exchange for business contracts and other forms of federal government payouts, said LaRouche. "Therefore, when you are looking at a New Hampshire primary, you cannot count the vote as if it were simply a spontaneous response of the voters to the candidates. You have to look at this factor, the fact that the state is sold every four years.

"Therefore," L. Rouche continued, "when George is reported as having approximately 58%, that doesn't mean that 58% of the Republican balloters actually prefer George Bush. What this represents is the fact that George needed to get 70% or more of the vote to put beyond question his candidacy, and the full force of the Bush administration and his supporters was obviously not able to buy that additional 10% or more of the vote. That is what the problem is; that is the nature of the situation."

In fact, so strong was voters' disgust with Bush that half of Buchanan's supporters said they would actually vote against Bush in November, if he were the Republican presidential nominee.

### Voters 'send a message'

By any measure, the New Hampshire results represent a thunderous repudiation of Bush's policies and leadership, especially in the realm of the economy.

New Hampshire has been among the states hardest hit so far by the Bush depression. Over the last few years, its economic boom, founded on the shifting sands of real estate speculation, went bust, throwing hundreds of thousands of people out of their jobs and, in many cases, out of their homes.

Despite the growing misery in New Hampshire and elsewhere in the country, Bush steadfastly insisted that there was no recession, and then, when that no longer worked, claimed that the recession would be only a temporary phenomenon.

This combination of callousness and incompetence infuriated New Hampshireites, many of whom said they felt Bush didn't care about their problems, and had abandoned them.

Buchanan was able to do as well as he did because of the intensity of the anti-Bush backlash. Relatively few voters cast their ballots for Buchanan in the belief that he represented a viable alternative to Bush's policies—after all, a program based on tax cuts and an end to U.S. foreign aid will hardly revive the corpse of the U.S. economy.

Instead, Buchanan capitalized on voters' intense anger at Bush over his mishandling of the economy. Bush's renegeing on his "no new taxes" pledge, which Buchanan hit upon constantly, became emblematic. Exit polls showed that half of Buchanan's supporters said they voted for him "to send a message," rather than because he "would make the best President." Moreover, about half of those who voted for Buchanan said they wanted a new candidate to enter the contest.

No matter how much the White House "spin doctors" claim victory for the President, the New Hampshire primary was a major defeat for George "Herbert Hoover" Bush. "It's a sock in the mouth—this is no wake-up call, it's Big Ben falling on your head," said William Bennett, the former education secretary and a Bush supporter.

The primary outcome is an augury for Bush's political future. Of the four incumbent Presidents who have been challenged from within their own party in New Hampshire, two withdrew from the race and two were defeated in the general election. In 1968, for instance, President Lyndon Johnson won the primary over Eugene McCarthy, but McCarthy's 42% vote was sufficient to force LBJ to end his re-election bid.

Bush has given no sign of giving up—yet. But if he continues to do poorly in the next group of early- and mid-March primaries, pressure on him to pull out is likely to blossom. At that point, it can be expected that Dan Quayle, or such other Republicans with presidential ambitions as Jack Kemp, James Baker, or even Massachusetts Gov. William Weld, might make their move.

### **Panic, and a drive for war?**

Publicly, Bush strategists are trying to put the best face on the New Hampshire outcome, claiming that it was a fluke which will not be repeated in the upcoming contests. But that view is not widely held. Thomas Rath, a former New Hampshire state attorney general and a key Bush adviser during the primary campaign, told the Feb. 19 *New York Times* that "the anger expressed by our electorate is contagious, and it will travel. New Hampshire provides the context for what comes next."

Panic has gripped the White House, and the battered Bush team is holding meetings round-the-clock to try to come up with a gimmick to shore up the President. Reportedly, Bush will begin to campaign much more aggressively, trying to blame Congress for all of the country's problems, and lashing

out more directly at Buchanan. In a campaign stop in Knoxville, Tennessee, the day after New Hampshire, Bush declared, "I'll still be kind, but now I'm debating how gentle I'll be."

On the issue which nearly destroyed him in New Hampshire, the economy, Bush's team says the President has no intention of making any significant policy changes. In fact, Bush's campaign manager, Robert Teeter, said Feb. 19, "I'm convinced and the President is convinced that the economy is going to get better in the fall."

There is a far more dangerous prospect, however, of the extremes Bush may go to keep himself in power. Given that he made a public vow two months ago, in an interview with David Frost, to do whatever was necessary to win in November, Bush's New Hampshire defeat makes it far more likely that he will look toward some manufactured foreign crisis to save his rear. A U.S. military attack on Libya, or possibly even Haiti, looms as a much stronger possibility than it did before the New Hampshire election.

### **Dissatisfied Democrats**

On the Democratic side, Sen. Paul Tsongas (Mass.) managed to eke out a 35-26% lead over Arkansas Gov. Bill Clinton, who nevertheless declared himself the "comeback kid," after having been hit with a series of scandals in the month leading up to the election. Sens. Bob Kerrey (Neb.), and Tom Harkin (Iowa), and former California governor Jerry Brown trailed with 12%, 10%, and 9%, respectively.

Neither Tsongas nor Clinton's showing could be called conclusive by any stretch of the imagination, which means that the search for a viable Democratic candidate is still wide open.

The failure of any of the officially sanctioned Democratic candidates to secure a conclusive win reveals voters' deep dissatisfaction with them, too. Not one of these candidates, not even the purportedly "pro-business" Tsongas, has offered a workable program for getting the United States out of the depression. Perhaps this is why none of the so-called "first string" Democrats—Rep. Richard Gephardt (Mo.), Sen. Lloyd Bentsen (Tex.), or New York's Mario Cuomo—has jumped into the race yet, despite all the back-room discussions and negotiations which they have been carrying out. Indeed, Cuomo suffered a setback in New Hampshire, when a widely publicized write-in campaign produced only 3% of the vote.

The only candidate who has put forth a program that could lick the depression is George Bush's political prisoner, Lyndon LaRouche. LaRouche is preparing a second nationwide TV broadcast, to be aired March 8 on NBC (7 p.m. Eastern and Pacific times; 6 p.m. Central and Mountain), which will detail his proposals for the industrial recovery of America. His first national TV address, Feb. 1, drew a tremendous response, with his campaign headquarters receiving, so far, over 1,000 letters condemning his incarceration and asserting that he should be President.