

The world-historic importance of LaRouche's presidential campaign

by Debra Hanania Freeman

Debra Hanania Freeman, Lyndon LaRouche's presidential campaign spokeswoman in the United States, gave this presentation to a conference of the International Caucus of Labor Committees in Kiedrich, Germany on May 2. The following is an edited transcript of her remarks.

I want to give all of you a picture of where we stand in the U.S. with Lyndon LaRouche's presidential campaign. And, I want to state from the outset that none of what we've accomplished would have been possible without the international mobilization we have successfully launched around LaRouche's drive for the White House.

From Australia to Latin America to Europe—on literally every continent on the face of this planet—prominent individuals, leaders in their own nations, have done what until now was unthinkable: They have intervened in the internal affairs of the U.S.; they have stepped forward and endorsed the LaRouche candidacy, and I cannot begin to tell you the impact that has had inside the U.S. It has given courage to the hundreds of would-be American endorsers—elected officials, labor leaders, civil rights leaders—all of them LaRouche supporters and all of them petrified by the American police-state apparatus.

As LaRouche's spokeswoman in the U.S., I have had, over the last months, the pleasure and the privilege of hosting numerous delegations from around the world, who have come to the U.S. to speak out on LaRouche's behalf, either because they support his bid for the presidency or simply because they wanted to lend their voices to the growing international outcry over his illegal incarceration. In every case, in meetings on Capitol Hill, the same question is ultimately posed (off the record) by congressmen: "What made you come? Why this fascination with LaRouche in Latin America, in eastern Europe, in Australia, etc.?" I will say more about this later, but I wanted to start with this idea. Because if we are to succeed, this international drive must not only continue—it must escalate! We need more endorsements; more delegations; all sending the unmistakable message that we will not stop—no matter what—until the murderous policies that have thrust this poor planet of ours into misery are overturned once and for all.

What the U.S. depression looks like

In order to understand the 1992 presidential campaign, you must begin by understanding conditions inside the United States. You've all heard this organization say that the U.S. is in the worst depression of the century. We have repeated it daily. Even so, I don't think you have any idea of what it is really like. I say this because I live in the U.S. and, because of my role in LaRouche's campaign, I organize all over the country, and I am continually shocked by what I find.

Just before I came here, I was in Alabama, where we will be running a primary election campaign. It's a state some of you are familiar with, because it is the home of Amelia Boynton Robinson, whom you know. It also is the birthplace of the American civil rights movement. It's located in the southern portion of the United States. It was, until a short time ago, the steelmaking and mining capital of the South. In the northern part of the state, in Huntsville, German rocket scientists joined their American counterparts to form one of the most formidable R&D capabilities in the world. In the southern part of the state, we have what is called the Black Belt. This refers not to the skin color of the inhabitants—a common error—but the color of some of America's most fertile farmland.

Today, Alabama enjoys the third highest rate of bankruptcies in the United States. Its infrastructure is in a state of utter collapse. The state has approximately 2,500 bridges. Sixteen hundred of them are in urgent need of repair; 250 have been deemed incapable of carrying the average load that passes over them on any given day. Safety inspectors agree that they should be condemned or repaired. Neither is scheduled to occur.

Of 4 million people in the state, 600,000 families receive food stamps and one in eight Alabamians is on welfare. Alabama has the highest infant mortality rate of any state in America—and the U.S. has the highest infant mortality rate of all the industrialized nations. I can easily tell you why: Seventy-one percent of the babies born in Alabama are *not* born in hospitals, because there are no hospitals. Outside of Birmingham—the state's largest city with a large, state-of-the-art medical center—the average Alabama citizen lives approximately 100-150 miles away from the nearest hospital.

Fifty-one percent of the population is totally illiterate. Yet those wanting to cut the budget claim that there are too many hospitals in the U.S., and that that is what is driving the costs of medical care sky-high!

It is true that Alabama is a very poor state—one might argue that it's not typical. So, let's move out of Alabama to the city of Baltimore. Now, I don't choose Baltimore because I live there—this really is not an early pitch for federal assistance in a LaRouche administration. I bring up Baltimore because, unlike New York or Philadelphia or Washington, D.C., Baltimore is not considered to be bankrupt—actually it has one of the highest bond ratings of any American city. It was also once one of the most productive cities in the nation.

Baltimore is the farthest inland port on the East Coast. Until the 1970s, it boasted one of the largest steelmaking and shipbuilding capacities in the world. Today, the shipyards no longer exist. The problem is not that they are lying idle: They've been turned into condos, amusement parks, or yacht clubs. The steel plants have suffered much the same fate. Today, 25% of all the jobs in the city are on the lowest rung of the service sector: the fast-food emporiums and hotels that are the backdrop to what has been hailed as an urban renaissance. Forty-one percent of the industrial properties are condemned. Affordable housing is totally nonexistent. The federal government defines "affordable" as costing no more than 30% of the total gross income of the household. The typical renter in Baltimore, however, spends 68% of combined household income on housing, leaving little for other living expenses. The result is mass homelessness and hunger: Thirty-seven percent of Baltimore's families have incomes equal to or below the federal poverty level. Out of a population of approximately 720,000, some 32,000 are documented to be homeless, but a very large additional grouping is less than *one* paycheck away from homelessness. Even worse, at the end of each month, families have nothing left to buy food, and go hungry. Baltimore is known as the "city that reads," yet 30% of Baltimore's adult population cannot read and 56% of her youth drop out of high school.

But the real tragedy is evident in the condition of the city's children. Baltimore is experiencing epidemics of two vaccine-preventable illnesses—measles and mumps—among children under 5. Only 49% of the children entering school are immunized. Twenty-five percent of our pre-school children suffer from lead poisoning (causing permanent brain damage, including effects on memory, learning, problem solving). City children consistently score 30-40% lower on standardized tests than their counterparts around the state, due to uncorrected hearing and vision problems. Among those with *diagnosed* hearing problems, only 36% are resolved and only 15% of the children with known vision problems ever receive eyeglasses. All these problems are compounded by an extremely high teen birth rate. Seventy-three percent of the children born in Baltimore are born to unwed mothers under the age of 17. Sixty percent of these girls do

not see a doctor until the day they give birth.

I could continue with statistics on drug use, tuberculosis, hepatitis, venereal disease—even the federal Centers for Disease Control admits that there are over 1 million Americans with AIDS and that AIDS is now the leading killer of young Americans, now overtaking the number one cause death, homicide.

Establishment runs the candidates

In the midst of this total collapse, which is not only an economic collapse, but also a collapse of the social fiber and the institutions of the nation, America is conducting this presidential campaign. The anointed candidates: the establishment candidate George Bush, who has just announced he is sending Desert Storm veterans into the city of Los Angeles; the establishment's Democratic alternative Bill Clinton—different hair style, same policy; the establishment's anti-establishment candidate, that man of the people, multibillionaire Ross Perot—who, I might add, sat on the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board (PFIAB) with Henry Kissinger when that august body demanded that action be taken to stop LaRouche. A couple of years later, when we called him to brief him on the dastardly deeds of Mr. Kissinger, he responded by calling the FBI! So much for the anti-establishment candidates.

This is obviously a gross oversimplification. The reality is actually worse. There is mounting evidence that the Democratic front-runner, Clinton, is in reality a George Bush Trojan Horse inside the Democratic Party. Clinton allowed Arkansas to be a drug depot for the Iran-Contra apparatus, and could be destroyed for this by the Bush campaign at any time.

In addition, the candidacy of Perot could cause a constitutional crisis by preventing anyone from getting a majority in the Electoral College. But for all these scenarios, what has erupted in the U.S. over the past 48 hours [with the riots in Los Angeles] is an uncontrollable process, and all scenarios could go out of the window.

The population has responded thus far by simply refusing to vote! You may read that Bill Clinton is receiving 51% of the Democratic vote. Let me explain to you what that means. In the U.S., approximately half of those who are eligible to vote are actually registered to vote. Of those who are registered, only 15-20% are turning out to vote in the primaries. Figure that half of them are Democrats and, half of those Democrats reportedly vote for Clinton. That amounts to about 1.5% of the voting population. Bush's vote is similar.

LaRouche's recovery program

And, of course, we have LaRouche's campaign. He walks into this mess: a horrible depression; three candidates who bear a striking resemblance to the Three Stooges, who have "positions" but no policies. Some of these candidates are walking Kama Sutrás. And here LaRouche is—with a 20-year record on questions of economic and strategic policy,

and with a broad reindustrialization program:

- federalizing the Federal Reserve, creating \$600 billion in new, low-interest credit to rebuild America's infrastructure;
- 6 million new, high-paying jobs—3 million in the public sector, 3 million in the private industries who supply them—with an increase in tax base throughput of some \$200 billion;
- hard infrastructural projects to rebuild the energy grid,

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the transportation grid, the resumption of water projects;

- soft infrastructural renovation, such as the restoration of the Hill Burton Act of 1946 as the cornerstone of a health care program;
- educational reform designed to create a labor force capable of manning the most advanced technologies in this reindustrialization drive;
- and, more, a science driver in the form of a Moon-Mars colonization mission within our lifetime.

What do you think the response to this is, among labor, minorities, the growing ranks of the unemployed?

I can tell you that among labor leaders, there is *no debate*. For the first time in all the campaigns LaRouche has run, the LaRouche program is *the* accepted program—the only pathway out of the depression. Now, early in the campaign, AFL-CIO chief Lane Kirkland pledged that labor would not endorse any candidate who supported North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)—and all, with the exception of LaRouche, do. Without any official endorsement at top, for the first time since World War II, labor leaders were free to endorse whomever they choose, and scores responded publicly endorsing LaRouche: leaders of the steel workers, UAW, Teamsters, public sector workers, and so on. Many more who were still too afraid to endorse him publicly engaged in an unprecedented process of education. All over the country, there have been meetings of five and six hours' duration on LaRouche's program with labor bureaucrats.

Amidst a growing fear that LaRouche was capturing the labor movement, Kirkland did a complete about-face and, two weeks ago, came out and endorsed Bill Clinton—even though Clinton had not budged one inch on his support for

NAFTA. But not one of the leaders who endorsed LaRouche has called in to retract their endorsements.

For civil rights layers, for those who remained loyal to the principles of Martin Luther King—what Amelia Robinson said last year, that LaRouche is the continuation of Martin Luther King—is now repeated everywhere, not only with words of endorsement, but with action. As you know, Amelia Robinson has been touring the nation virtually non-stop for almost a year. Rev. James Bevel, King's field coordinator, Cora McHaney, the leader of the Montgomery, Alabama bus boycott that transformed the civil rights movement into a true mass movement, Reverend Boon, a man the FBI threw in jail for three years, just hours after Martin Luther King's murder—all of them now are out there working for LaRouche.

Last weekend, I addressed the Alabama New South Coalition—200-300 elected officials, the vast majority of whom are black. These are the people whose names I've read about in the histories of the civil rights movement—leaders of the Free Democratic Party, of the Black Panthers. The support for LaRouche was so overwhelming that only a series of last-minute rules changes perpetrated by a gaggle of former Communist Party members stopped us from walking away with that group's endorsement.

How to win when the game is rigged

Now, one might respond by saying "Yes, you almost walked away with the endorsement. But, ultimately, you didn't. The game is rigged and you cannot win."

Is it rigged? Of course. LaRouche is on the ballot in 32 of the 38 states that hold primaries, and in almost every state, it was a total fight. In many cases, it was only after the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) went into federal court on LaRouche's behalf—in itself an extraordinary development—that he was placed on the ballot. The other candidates get hundreds of hours of free publicity from the same media that black LaRouche out.

We began purchasing half-hour national prime time television spots. After the first spot, on Feb. 1, we got over 1,000 letters. When George Bush goes on all three networks *simultaneously*, he doesn't get more than 400-500 letters! The second spot aired on March 8 with a similar response. We were beginning to build up quite a head of steam. The enemy responded by refusing to sell us time. During the entirety of March and April, we were limited to regional broadcasts. It is only as a result of a lawsuit that we will go back on national television on May 30—in time for the June 2 round of primaries.

Yes, it's true we've had to fight for every inch and the enemy keeps their artillery barrage firing. My God, they have kept LaRouche in jail now for over three years! But in spite of it all, they have been unable to contain this movement.

We are not supposed to be here. They clearly thought jailing LaRouche would be the end of the matter. Every "scenario" said that we would no longer exist—but instead,

we have expanded our work. We are in more places, with more people, than we were before. It would be totally dishonest idiocy to say that jailing LaRouche didn't hurt us—obviously it did. But it had penalties for them, too.

For one thing, it totally exposed the United States as a police state. And, make no mistake about it, the U.S. is a police state. We have the highest rate of incarceration in the entire world. Twenty-five percent of the nation's young black men are in prison. This is between four and five times the rate of imprisonment in South Africa. In Washington, D.C. that number jumps to almost 50%. While the rest of the civilized world moves away from the death penalty, America is increasing the categories of crimes for which one can be sentenced to die. The U.S. Supreme Court is limiting the appeal rights of death row prisoners. You all know that Bill Clinton interrupted his campaign in New Hampshire to preside over the execution of a lobotomized black prisoner. Last week, the U.S. Supreme Court intervened in a case in California and forbade the lower court from granting any future stays so an execution could proceed on schedule. The entire nation got minute by minute reports of the execution and although the tape has not yet been released, the entire execution was videotaped.

You cannot understand what happened in Los Angeles without understanding that the execution of Robert Harris in California, the first execution there in 25 years, was a public event. The whole thing was televised for days, and even the moment when he was strapped in the gas chamber, and then pulled out again by a court-ordered reprieve, was shown. This went on until the U.S. Supreme court intervened—to demand that the execution go forward!

Construction of prisons is the biggest business in the United States. The Patriot missiles used in the Gulf war were built, not by the defense industry, but by prisoners.

Earlier, I mentioned the New South Coalition meeting: I would say half the participants in that conference had served time in prison. The vast majority of our supporters have relatives in prison.

By locking LaRouche up, they increased his credibility. The population knows—in some cases almost intuitively—that Bush is responsible for LaRouche's incarceration. We have put it on every poster. It has dignified LaRouche as the true anti-establishment candidate.

In the wake of our international drive for LaRouche's freedom—the U.N. developments, the chaos caused by the parliamentary delegations from Ibero-America and eastern Europe—the government has been forced to change its line on LaRouche's incarceration. They still won't admit that he is a political prisoner; they don't even acknowledge the existence of such a category. But, now they tell these parliamentarians: "Yes, it's true that there were gross irregularities in the LaRouche case, but don't pass judgment on our entire legal system because of one case!" Even this, for the U.S. government, was an incredible admission.

Building a mass movement

They have not been able to stop the growing endorsements and the growing vote. Thousands of votes in Texas and in Maryland, where in some inner city precincts LaRouche's vote hit 10%; and in Pennsylvania, 20,000 votes—five times as many as 1988 and with a much lower voter turnout. Also, in direct correspondence with our newspaper distribution networks. No one disputes the fact that LaRouche has the largest volunteer apparatus of any candidate. We now have over 1,000 people who regularly distribute paid circulation of the newspaper *New Federalist*. So, the movement is growing at a very steady pace. Is it a mass movement? *No*. And that is what it must become. But how?

I spend a good deal of my time with people like Amelia Robinson, people who have built mass movements in the past, and I always ask them how they did it, how it worked—trying to figure out if there is something we should be doing that we are not doing, maybe something that was done by the civil rights movement.

This past week, J.L. Chestnut told me something and I've been thinking about it ever since. (J.L. Chestnut is a famous civil rights lawyer. He was one of the first blacks admitted to the bar in Alabama in the early 1960s. When he started to practice law, Amelia's husband [S.W. Boynton] gave him a desk in their insurance office. He is also the author of an excellent account of the civil rights movement called *Black in Selma*.) He told me that in the early days, he would hold weekly meetings at a church in Selma. And, every week, 10 people came. He said he would give the best briefing he could, always trying to innovate. They would lay out tasks, etc. He said it went on like that for a couple of years. J.L. told me that he has to admit that he never believed that those 10 people would build a movement, but he didn't know what else to do, so he just kept on. He said he thought the 10 would turn into 20, then 50, then 100, and that they would just inch their way up. But it didn't happen that way. Overnight, the meetings went from 10 to 1,000. He said that, to this day, he still doesn't really know precisely what precipitated it. But, he told me, "That's the way it works. You're doing the right thing. It doesn't mean you shouldn't look for new flanks. Obviously you have to, but you have to maintain your commitment to the process. Don't lose confidence or your faith in the correctness of your method."

We know what we are doing is right. Sure, we have to keep expanding it, building on it. We need more endorsements, more delegations. It changes all the rules. And all we really need is one breakout, one state where LaRouche's vote hits 15%—something like that—and then all the rules of the game change.

Yes, we are in a race against time. The stakes are extremely high and the lives of millions of people hang in the balance. And, while we have no guarantees, I am quite confident that we can win.