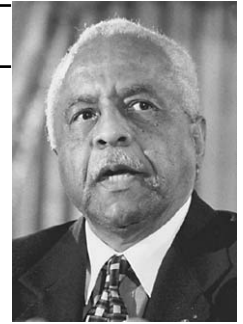


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## Interview: Ed Vaughn

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# ‘A Lot of Pain You Don’t See on the 6 O’clock News’

*Rep. Ed Vaughn (D-Detroit) served in the Michigan legislature in 1978-79, and again from 1994 to the present. He formerly chaired the Michigan Legislative Black Caucus, and is now its First Vice Chair. He is Vice Chairman of the Constitutional Law and Ethics Committee of the Michigan House; and also owner of America’s oldest black-owned bookstore, Vaughn’s Bookstore. He was interviewed on Sept. 28 by Paul Gallagher.*

**EIR:** There is a steady line that comes out every month, that the rate of inflation in the United States is something like 2-3%.

**Vaughn:** Well, here in Michigan, we just had a big demonstration yesterday, by the retired school teachers from all across the state of Michigan. Over 1,000 of them came to the capital, and they said that their prescription drugs costs had increased 500%. It has been a relatively short period, that their prescription drugs have increased, and they were wearing big buttons, that said, “Say no to prescription drug costs.” It had an Rx and a ban-line through it. They demonstrated outside the state capitol, and were inside; they came in buses to protest what is happening to them, in terms of prescription drugs. I mean, people simply cannot afford to pay these drug prices. And in Michigan, we’re getting drug stores jumping up like jackrabbits. Every corner in every part of every city, town, hamlet, in the boonies, everywhere—CVS Pharmacies, Rite-Aid, Walgreens, are building new drugstores. Obviously, something is driving this mad rush to build more and more drug stores, all of them with prescription counters in them. Obviously, there’s a lot of money in them—there drug stores, and a lot of pain for a lot of people who have to suffer with these kinds of costs.

**EIR:** And what were you doing inside the legislature?

**Vaughn:** I have a bill that I have introduced regarding HMOs [health maintenance organizations], to just eliminate them, and that then we move toward Hill-Burton [Act of 1952] standards in the country, so that we can have good, universal health care. I just received information today from a group based in Cleveland, Ohio, which is also fighting for universal health care. And we have a lot of signers onto that particular document, many of the legislators here, because there is a tremendous concern here, about what’s happening to people

as it relates to the role of HMOs, and what’s happened with prescription drugs, and with health care in general in this state and this country.

**EIR:** This bill is in the LaRouche-FDR PAC policy document?

**Vaughn:** Yes, the Mississippi legislation, the Alabama legislation, of course mine in Michigan: We are generally going in the same direction, in terms of the elimination of these HMOs and the movement toward providing health care for every person in this nation.

**EIR:** Do you have a co-sponsor on the Senate side? And what does the fight for this look like?

**Vaughn:** Well, I have a person on the Senate side who has tentatively agreed to become a co-sponsor: State Sen. Raymond Murphy, who is also holding a big health-care conference in Detroit this weekend. . . . There is a lot of movement here on this issue. We certainly appreciate the LaRouche organization, for giving us some direction in this area; it was quite appreciated.

**EIR:** What would you say to readers in Michigan, in particular, about this legislation?

**Vaughn:** Well, they can write their legislators—their senators or representatives—and let them know that they support the HMO bill that was introduced by State Rep. Ed Vaughn. All they would have to do is call their legislators and let them know the bill is introduced, and that they should contact me and become a co-sponsor of the bill. That’s what I would suggest they do.

**EIR:** And will you be speaking at public meetings, on this or other legislation?

**Vaughn:** Yes, we have a meeting this coming weekend in Detroit; the LaRouche organization is holding a meeting at the Northwest Activities Center, where I will be a speaker. We also have another group called Women of Action, at the Unitarian Church on the campus of Wayne State University, meeting this weekend on the same day, on Saturday. So I am at the Women of Action at 1 p.m., and then I go from there to the LaRouche organization meeting at 2 p.m. I will be speaking on this at both of them. In addition to that, on Oct. 12, 13,



*The shutdown of an industrial economy: a scene in Detroit. Now, blackouts and brownouts are hitting the city, as a result of the Mayor's attempt to privatize the Public Lighting Department.*

and 14, the Michigan Legislative Black Caucus is sponsoring a get-out-the-vote rally and workshops, and I will be there also, pushing for these kind of ideas in those areas.

The teachers are concerned about the prescription drug costs. . . . It's kind of sad that the seniors are suffering, not able to get the drugs that they need to maintain their health, simply because of this mad rush for profits. These people are on fixed incomes, and they just simply cannot afford it. I just got a letter today from an apartment building in my District. They are raising the rents there—they started out raising them by \$15; now they've gone to \$45, and the people simply cannot afford it. They're on fixed incomes. Their checks are not being raised; Social Security, disability payments are not being increased. There is a lot of pain out there, which we don't hear much about on the 6 and 11 p.m. news hours. People are really suffering, and something has to be done. I feel that my mission, as a state legislator, as a person who represents 85,000 people in my district, that it is my job to fight for them, to fight for their place in the sun, and that's what I do every day here in Lansing.

**EIR:** One other important thing that we've heard about your district, about Detroit: There have been repeated blackouts during the course of the past Summer; not only blackouts of the city as a whole for a few days, but then the schools being closed later, because electricity could not be provided to them.

**Vaughn:** We've had brownouts, blackouts, as a result of our Public Lighting Department. What it is—and I wrote a letter regarding this to the newspapers—is that the Mayor

is trying to privatize the system, the Public Lighting Department; he's trying to give it away to Detroit Edison Corp. And as a result of that, we believe that the lights are being deliberately shut off and knocked out—of course, some of it certainly is legitimate shutdowns, but we think that a lot of it is being done because there is no proper running of the Public Lighting Department. I think that what they really want to show to the people of the city, is that the city can't run a good lighting department—therefore, it makes sense to privatize it.

The Mayor has already given all of our street lights, all of our overhead lines, to Detroit Edison. I thought it was 80%, but I talked to a Public Lighting official two days ago, and he told me it was 100%. So, they own all of the overhead lines. In addition to that, we have a power plant in the Delray section of Detroit, called Masturski, which has the capability of powering the entire city. With deregulation on the way—there are bills in the legislature now for electricity deregulation—Detroit would be foolish to give up its power-generating capacity in order to privatize. It just doesn't make sense. We saw what happened in California when they deregulated, and cities sold off their power capacity. Light bills were quadrupled in San Diego and that whole area, but in Los Angeles, we saw the maintenance of a fairly good system, simply because they did not sell off their lighting department.

So the Democrats, as I wrote in my letter to the press, should know better than anyone. They were able to see at their convention. Had they been in San Diego, they might not have been able to see a darn thing—of course, we aren't sure how much they saw even with the lights on in Los

Angeles, but that's another story.

**EIR:** You're saying this is a kind of creeping deregulation?

**Vaughn:** Certainly it is. That's Detroit. And then, as we speak right now, I just received a note from one of the correspondents here, that we just had an explosion at our main library in the City of Detroit, which is just across a street from my district—Detroit Public Library Main Branch, which is on the campus of Wayne State University. I understand that there has just been an electrical explosion. . . . Once again, the power to the library is supplied by the Public Lighting Department. The Mayor is not maintaining the Department; he wishes to give it away; and it's really sad for the people of the City of Detroit, because we are going to be hurt by having to pay more and more money for power, when in fact we could generate power, and sell it ourselves, and reduce the heavy tax burden on our citizens.

**EIR:** You're saying that the Mayor's policy here, echoes his policy earlier, about the schools, when essentially the same thing was done?

**Vaughn:** Same thing. And see, much of it has to do with not running the Department properly, not funding the Department as it should be funded. All of these things, I feel, were deliberately done; and so, there's a lot of discontent in the Public Lighting Department; workers have been told, at the power plant and other places, that they should try to find new employment. It's simply a sad day; and I talked to a high official in the Department, and he said that there is a great deal of discontent. It's shameful that we have such a great capacity to generate power in Detroit, and we're giving it all away, literally, for nothing; and it's only going to hurt citizens of our city.

**EIR:** What response are you getting from your constituents on these actions that you're taking?

**Vaughn:** My constituents support it. They support me on these kinds of things. I get letters of support, I get calls; I haven't had any opposition from my district. My letter appeared in the *Michigan Chronicle* this week.

**EIR:** Your letter to the press about electricity deregulation?

**Vaughn:** Yes, about the brownouts. It appeared in last week's *Michigan Chronicle*. It is just shameful what is happening with our capacity to generate power in the city. We are just losing everything, all in the name of privatization and profits.

**EIR:** Have you circulated the special issue of *EIR* on deregulation, from about a month ago?

**Vaughn:** Oh, yes, I circulated that to some of my constituents, and also to some of my colleagues in the House, and also gave them copies of the Democratic Platform, the Ad Hoc Hearings, that we had. I passed out about 15 or 20 copies

yesterday of the little brochure that Mr. LaRouche recently put out [An Emergency Democratic Policy for October].

**EIR:** What response did you get from your colleagues?

**Vaughn:** Well, you know, you get the response: "Okay, I'll read it, it sounds good." And then, you also get the other response, "I don't want to hear nothing he has to say." That's the kind of responses you get. But you keep giving them information, and they eventually come around, especially when the truth comes to light.

**EIR:** Is there resistance to the deregulation in the legislature?

**Vaughn:** Right now, it's all on hold. They don't know which way to go. There have been many, many meetings. But I don't think anyone here wants to do anything about it until after the elections.

There's a tremendous fight here over who will control the House. My party, the Democrats, are trying to take the House back, and, of course, the Governor and the Republicans are resisting that. There is quite a political fight going on here.

**EIR:** But your fight over the legislation to ban HMOs: that comes up before the election?

**Vaughn:** That's before the election, and no one likes HMOs; I just don't know if I can get enough votes quickly to move this bill forward.

**EIR:** What are you telling them about the Hill-Burton approach, which you mentioned earlier?

**Vaughn:** I believe that we should have universal health care. We must have it, and it should be paid for by the people of the nation, meaning through the Federal government. I believe that the Constitution is right: "Provide for the Common Defense, and promote the General Welfare." We don't have much problem providing for the common defense. We have a hell of a problem with promoting the general welfare. And, of course, health care is a promotion of the general welfare. And everyone in this nation is entitled to good health care. That is a human right, and this nation is not living up to what its Constitution speaks of, and that is to promote the general welfare. And so, those of us who believe in the Constitution and what it means, we have to fight for what it means; and, of course, that's what we're trying to do against the oppressive HMOs, that believe in health for profit and not for people.

**EIR:** Once again, the meeting at which you are on the agenda to fight for this?

**Vaughn:** That's Oct. 13 and 14, at Wayne County Community College, Downtown Branch. The Michigan Legislative Black Caucus is holding what we call our Y2K get-out-the-vote rally. There will be workshops on this issue; it's especially targeted to precinct delegates from around the city of Detroit. I'm holding the workshop. And so that will give us an opportunity to talk more about these issues.