

Lakesha Rogers' Campaign Revives The Democrats' Hopes in Texas

by Harley Schlanger

On the first leg of her tour of the state of Texas last week, LaRouche Youth Movement leader Lakesha Rogers injected some youthful vigor into the state's near-moribund Democratic Party. In discussions with labor leaders at the state AFL-CIO convention the week of May 1 in Irving, she brought to life her campaign slogan, "Out of the Bushes and Into the Future," elaborating how Lyndon LaRouche's emergency legislation to save the auto sector would not only reverse the collapse of the U.S. economy, but produce a Democratic landslide at the polls this November.

Rogers is a candidate for Chairman of the Texas Democratic Party, one of four running for the position, which will be voted on by delegates to the state convention in Fort Worth, June 8-9. Rogers provoked quite a stir when she announced her candidacy, declaring that she would not be running against the other candidates, but rather, her campaign would be dedicated to reviving the tradition of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt within the party.

"Through my campaigning," she said, "I am opening the party to younger voters. We have seen, in the LYM, that young people will act, when the call to action is based on profound ideas, such as those presented by Lyndon LaRouche. Virtually every young person I meet knows they have no future, under present circumstances. But, if challenged, many will respond—and I am challenging them to take an active role in shaping their own future, through mastering principles of physical science, as they apply to economics."

She added that organizing to retool the auto sector, by reintroducing the principles of the American System of political-economy—as FDR did, to get the United States out of the Coolidge-Hoover Depression—offers an immediate, concrete task for those who otherwise belong to a no-future generation heading into a New Dark Age.

How Texas Fell Into the Bushes

The response from delegates at the AFL-CIO convention, and from labor leaders in Tyler, where Rogers and a team of LYM organizers stopped on May 11, indicates that it is not

only young people who are hungry for a change. The LaRouche Youth engaged in extensive discussions with unionists; many agreed to contact elected officials in support of LaRouche's emergency auto legislation (see *EIR*, May 12), as they acknowledged that the economy is worsening rapidly, and that the Bush-Cheney Administration is committed to policies which threaten further collapse in the living standards of those in the lower 80% of family-income brackets.

Labor has been on the decline in Texas for two decades, battered by the combined effects of the takeover of the state by right-wing Republicans, and the overall decline of the state's physical economy. The loss of manufacturing jobs has been accelerated by so-called free-trade policies, through NAFTA and globalization, which are also devastating family farms and ranches in the state.

In the period after World War II, these constituencies, as well as the African-American and Hispanic populations, were well represented by New Deal Democrats, who acted to protect them from free-trade ideologues tied to Wall Street. A perfect example of this was Sen. Ralph Yarborough, who defeated George H.W. Bush in the Senate campaign in 1964. Yarborough, who exposed Bush as a Connecticut Yankee working for Wall Street, not Main Street, was a champion of the working man, a strong proponent of FDR-style regulation of the economy, and one of the few Southern Democrats to vote for the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

Yarborough was defeated in 1970 in the primary election by a Democrat, Lloyd Bentsen, who represented the "conservative" side of the party. The bitter campaign between Yarborough and Bentsen in 1970 was a harbinger of the future course the Democrats in Texas would take. Some "New Dealers" remained, such as former Speaker of the House Jim Wright, who fought to defend the Texas Savings and Loans and commercial banks from the onslaught of Wall Street, following the deregulation of banking, and who was ultimately driven out of the Congress by a dirty campaign of vilification led by Newt Gingrich; and Rep. Henry B. Gonzalez, who warned, repeatedly, of the damage being done by Sen. Phil Gramm, and his wife, Wendy "Enron"



EIRNS/Debra Jambor

Kesha Rogers, seen here at her campaign headquarters in Houston, is bringing new life to the Texas Democratic Party, by showing how LaRouche's policies can produce a Democratic landslide in November.

Gramm, with their successful efforts to deregulate futures' trading.

The current, pending implosion of the financial system, triggered by the unregulated trading of all varieties of derivatives, and the popping of the housing bubble, is largely due to the successful efforts of Gramm, Gingrich, and their Wall Street allies to defeat the FDR Democrats, such as Wright and Gonzalez.

But the Gramms and Gingriches could have never succeeded in undermining the FDR tradition among Texas Democrats without the internal subversion of so-called conservative, or "pragmatic" Democrats, such as Bentsen. Some loyal Texas Democrats may take offense at this charge against Bentsen, who is still viewed as a good, true-blue partisan. However, Bentsen was among the leaders in the party who pushed for free trade, siding with the "New Democrats" of the Democratic Leadership Council (DLC), in bringing the Clinton Administration into active support of NAFTA and deregulation. There were few voices raised in Texas, outside of those of the LaRouche Democrats, against this Wall Street takeover of the party in the 1980s and '90s.

The failure by Democrats, until now, to respond to LaRouche's leadership, and instead, to go along with Wall Street, by offering what many characterize as "Bush-lite" candidates, has turned Texas into a Republican bastion. Every single statewide office today is held by a Republican,

while Bush-Cheney apologists, Kay Bailey Hutchison and John Cornyn, hold the two Senate seats, and the leading voice from Texas in the House of Representatives—until, mercifully, just recently—was the master of corrupt politics, Tom DeLay.

What the Rogers Campaign Can Do

Unfortunately, there are still leading Texas Democrats who argue that there is no alternative to the post-industrial, free-trade policies that are plunging our nation into a new economic depression. Chris Bell, the Democratic nominee for Governor, has continued, thus far, to pronounce his adherence to this disastrous ideological nonsense, adding only that he would do more to lessen the pain caused by the dislocations.

As a result, he has been unable to inspire more than a blip in the polls. Despite the continued incompetence of incumbent Republican Gov. Rick Perry, Bell is far behind Perry in the polls, running neck-and-neck with two independent candidates, Controller (and Republican) Carole Keeton Strayhorn and libertarian entertainer Kinky Friedman, each of them at less than 20%.

This is why Lakesha Rogers' candidacy for Democratic State Chair, and the overall deployment nationally of the LYM, is so critical. To win in Texas, Democrats must bring back into the fold those constituencies who have left the party; they must also activate the millions of voters who, out of demoralization, no longer bother going to the polls to cast their ballots. In 2002, only 29% of those potentially eligible to vote in Texas did so. In the 2006 primaries, less than 15% of registered voters cast ballots, despite the obvious disintegration of the nation taking place under the Bush-Cheney regime!

This seeming complacency is only partly due to the successful efforts of Karl Rove and his team of dirty tricksters to suppress the vote, whether "legally" or illegally. It is also the result of the role of top Wall Street operatives such as Felix Rohatyn and his DLC in stifling opposition within the Democratic Party, so that voters see no way out of the devastation wrought by the post-industrial, free-trade policies of the last 25 years.

The Rogers campaign, centered on the fight for LaRouche's FDR-style emergency legislation to save the auto sector, and to put the collapsing financial system through bankruptcy reorganization, represents a clear alternative. By the time delegates arrive in Fort Worth for the state convention, many of them will have become aware that such an option exists for the Texas Democratic Party.

For the first time in a generation, there will be an opportunity for a geological shift in national politics to come out of Texas, to spearhead nationally the fight for a revival of the best tradition in the Democratic Party. This is an opportunity which Texas Democrats must seize.