
Interview: K.D. Sharma, Michael Billington

'My fight in court is for the rights of the citizens of the world'

Dr. K.D. Sharma is a member of the International Commission to Stop Soviet-Style Human Rights Violations in the United States. He is a citizen of India, an economist, and a Sanskrit scholar.

Michael Billington has been a co-thinker of Lyndon H. LaRouche for over 15 years, and is currently part of the sales and fundraising staff for organizations associated with Mr. LaRouche in Leesburg, Virginia.

This interview/discussion was conducted on March 10, 1987, in Leesburg.

Sharma: As a member of the International Commission to Stop Soviet-Style Human Rights Violations in the United States, I would like to ask you how long you have been associated with Mr. Lyndon LaRouche?

Billington: I first ran into Mr. LaRouche's publications when I was living in California in 1972, and almost immediately began a certain level of collaboration with him. I was teaching school in California in the public school system, and had already come up against the fact that it was virtually impossible to teach in a classroom in which half the children were smoking marijuana, and that the idea of trying to teach anything of substance was being replaced by the idea of a fun-and-games approach of keeping children entertained, a baby-sitting approach.

I had only recently come back from four years overseas, two years in South America, in Guyana, where I was teaching, and then two years in Thailand, where I taught and helped organize a government mathematics program for the secondary schools. I came back with the intent of pursuing a career in education, but I very rapidly found that it was nearly impossible in the conditions that were developing in the United States. I met LaRouche at that time.

Sharma: The reason I am interested in your interest in Mr. LaRouche, is because the kind of people now associated with Mr. LaRouche, and the number of people who support him, this kind of phenomenon cannot take place unless the man is

right and unless the issues he raises and the solutions he offers are also right. So what are these issues, and what are the solutions he offers which make some people very uncomfortable?

Billington: Probably the thing which has most captured the minds of the American population over the last seven or eight years, has been the fact that LaRouche and all of us collaborating with him began in the 1970s to go after the question of the drug epidemic. Very rapidly we found that the drug issue touched on everything that was going wrong in the world—the economy, the social collapse, the destruction of our Third World allies.

We published the book, *Dope, Inc.*, which immediately challenged every American and every person in the world to recognize that toleration of the drug epidemic would virtually guarantee that we would not have a civilization that could possibly deal with the crises facing mankind today, in part because of the actual destruction of millions of people who are taking the drugs, the destruction of their minds.

In the process of my organizing and fundraising for this organization, I began going directly after the question with everybody I talked with, that they personally could and must take on the drug issue, and if they did so, with us, without any qualms about naming the names, going after the people trying to legalize drugs or justify the international drug traffic, that this would indeed lead us right up against those people whose policies had brought us to the brink of this economic and social disaster. And, indeed, it has; which is why we've been so hated by those who have profited from and advocated a drug economy, rather than an economy based on human rights and the development of the creative powers of the minds of our citizens.

Sharma: In other words, these very people who became uncomfortable because of the issues raised by Mr. LaRouche, and in fact by the civilizing influence which Mr. LaRouche was exerting on the United States, these very people became the enemies of Mr. LaRouche.



NSIPS/Philip Ulanowsky
Indian economist K.D. Sharma (right) talks with Michael Billington about the politically motivated attacks against him and other American associates of Lyndon LaRouche.

Billington: Exactly.

Sharma: You have been arrested four times. Can you describe the various cases on which you were held and why?

Billington: I was arrested four times, on only three different charges. I was arrested twice on one charge. The first arrest was during the "Great Panty Raid" in Leesburg, on Oct. 6 of last year, when I was targeted along with several of the journalists for *EIR*. My indictment allegedly stemmed from my involvement in fundraising activity in Boston.

The subsequent charges, first from Missouri, which were all subsequently dropped, and then from Virginia, which led to the arrest on Feb. 17, along with many of my associates, stemmed from the attempt to classify the loans that have been taken by various organizations associated with LaRouche, not as political loans, as they are, and as everybody who has ever loaned money to these organizations knows they are, but as securities, as stocks and bonds.

Let me point out that the fact these cases emerged the way they did, was not a surprise to us. We know from documents we received through the Freedom of Information Act, that William Weld, the U.S. Attorney in Boston and now the head of the U.S. Justice Department Criminal Division, in February of 1986 had called a national meeting of people involved in his operation. He declared that they had been unable to get any kind of evidence to bring charges against us on a national conspiracy basis, and wanted to try to contrive some way of finding such charges. They encouraged other jurisdictions to find ways of shutting down our fundraising, particularly targeting loans. This was clearly instigated as an effort to find a way of prosecuting us, a clear case

of vindictive and selective prosecution.

When the case came down from Missouri, it was so outrageous, that it ultimately led to the complete dismissal of the case. They charged me with having traveled out to Missouri, a place I had never set foot in, in my entire life, four, five, six times, and meeting with a woman there, and getting her to give loans.

They then attempted to extradite me to Missouri. We put together a very, very powerful case, showing that in fact I'd never set foot in Missouri, and could not have carried out the crime I was being accused of. Just two days before we were to present this case in court, we received an affidavit from the woman who was the supposed victim of these crimes, who admitted that I had not been in the state on any of those days when we received the loans. In other words, the entire thing was put together without a witness, for the purpose of creating a national press campaign. Indeed, it was a front-page story in virtually every newspaper in the country, that there was some sort of fraud going on, criminality, that the funds being raised were based on illegalities, securities violations, and so forth, with pictures of me being arrested in handcuffs, and led away.

I was arrested from my home at midnight, dragged out of my bed and put in chains. There were pictures of this spread throughout the nation.

After a month of a mobilization of citizens throughout the world protesting this travesty, and the absolute refusal even to grant me bail for nearly a month, in a case which ultimately was completely dropped, these people were forced to admit that the case was a fraud from the beginning.

The other cases before us in Virginia and in Boston, I'm

not at total liberty to discuss, because the charges are still pending.

Sharma: These arrests at midnight and people being held without bail, are the conditions which we normally associate with the Soviet Union. I am shocked that the citizens of the United States would be subjected to this kind of treatment. When we learn of the U.S. in India, we learn that the United States is a country where life, liberty, freedom, and fundamental human rights are absolutely secure. They are sacred; nobody can touch them; they are inalienable.

When you give me this account of your experience with justice in the United States, I am horrified. I am sure there are many people like me, who would really be horrified and seriously disappointed with this situation.

Would you like to describe the conditions you experienced in jail. How did you use your time in jail?

Billington: There are two things I'd like to say on that. In the first arrest in October, all of us who were arrested were taken to the Fairfax, Virginia jail, a jail near Washington, D.C., which receives many of the people arrested in the Washington downtown area. We were subjected to what was a totally shocking experience for me, where for three days, people in that jail were thrown into a tiny 6 x 6 foot cell, with nothing but four cement walls. The lights are kept on for 24 hours a day. You lose all sense of time, in a row of such cells, where a majority of the people being brought in are there because they are on serious drugs.

It became immediately apparent to me that the jail system today is in a certain real sense a substitute for what in previous days would have been considered an insane asylum. So many of our youth have been literally turned psychotic, through use of mind-destroying drugs, that they are brought in, uncontrollable, because of their state of intoxication, and are put in these cells where they literally go crazy. People are screaming and yelling virtually 24 hours a day. We were subjected to over two days of listening to these pathetic souls screaming, with no response coming from anybody. There was no bed, nothing to sleep on but hard cement floors. Finally we were taken to a different part of the jail which had more basic amenities.

I learned subsequently that many federal cases are based on subjecting people arrested to such hideous conditions, that they can be forced into making a deal. Most of the cases never come to trial. It's absolutely the case that they expected to be able to get some of our people to "break," like they do most of the people they're going after, because they figure those in jail have all kinds of things they're trying to hide, and they can be manipulated and broken. What our enemies are finding about us, is that we are not so easily corrupted, that we're not going to lie simply to save our skins, in a situation in which we're being subjected to this kind of tyranny.

I was finally released on bail after three days, though my associates were not. It took us nearly three months of a battle

to get them released on bail.

My subsequent arrest and incarceration for a month in Loudoun County jail, did not have such severe conditions, and I was allowed a private cell, with the necessary reading material. I must say that I took the greatest possible advantage of a 3½ week period, in which, not able to do the work required of all of us to help save this country on a day-to-day basis, I thrust myself into the kind of intense and most joyful study of things that I'd been wanting to work on for years and years, and hadn't had the chance to do. I read all of Schiller's writings that I could get my hands on. Through inspiration from that and a great deal of John Milton's poems, finally, at the age of 41, I started writing poetry, and I'm extremely proud of the fact that I took the inspiration of tyranny and the freedom of our souls, which cannot be imprisoned, to finally turn my thoughts to poetry.

Sharma: The issue at stake is not your personal relief, but the more important and vital issue of culture, which Mr. LaRouche stands for. One thing which really bothers me, after hearing of your experience, is that nowhere in the world are loans to a political organization considered as securities. Secondly, and more important, is that the people who support LaRouche, and donate their money, have a right to do so. If anybody is trying to prevent political donations or loans for political purposes, they are infringing on the rights of the people who are making these loans and donations. This, in my view, is a very serious matter, and the human rights of not only the people arrested and held without bail on trumped-up charges have been violated, but the human rights of those people who are supporting the organization and its causes have been violated.

I would like to ask you if the strain you have gone through has affected your morale in any way?

Billington: No, I'm actually in a certain sense proud of the fact that I've been targeted by the enemies of our nation, to be subjected to these police-state tactics. I'm proud in the sense that it demonstrates that I obviously have been doing something right! I'm also glad that I'm in a position where I can fight to represent the principles that we have to stand and fight for if our nation is going to survive.

There is no question but that every American who believes that we must rid this nation of drugs; that we cannot tolerate the spread of this hideous disease AIDS without immediately fighting to implement the necessary measures to stop this disease from wiping out the human race; who will not tolerate the destruction of our economy and of our allies' economies; that these people who want to fight for these issues, see in us, people who will fight with no holds barred. They have no way of expressing their own commitment to that fight except to support our efforts. In that sense, I know very well that I went to jail for those peoples' rights, not just for myself. I know my fight in court is not just for myself, but for the rights of the citizens of the world, which are on trial here.