

Strauss reveals fascist agenda

by William Jones

Robert Strauss, co-chairman of the National Economic Commission, might have inadvertently damaged the plot to introduce fascist austerity into the United States, at a press conference held at a conference on global economic issues in Washington on Sept. 20. The commission, comprising such luminaries as Lazard Frères banker "Mad" Felix Rohatyn, the butcher of New York City, Sen. Daniel Moynihan (D-N.Y.), and Chrysler wage-gouger Lee Iacocca, was established by the Congress and the White House to work out a program for eliminating the budget deficit in the next administration. From the beginning, it was obvious that the commission would have the primary task of marketing a package of cuts in Social Security, Medicare, and defense, to an unsuspecting public and to a not-so-malleable Congress.

The 'stealth' principle

Since the commission was bipartisan in nature, its members thought that they would have a say in the economic policy of the next administration, regardless of whether it was a Bush or a Dukakis administration. The idea was to operate as much as possible behind the scenes until the election in November, after which a major media hype would be conducted to push the austerity program. It was obvious to all involved that if this program were brought up during the election, none of the candidates would be able to express support for it, regardless of their inclinations, as it would be tantamount to political suicide. "Stealth" was the key to success.

Now, it seems as if Bob Strauss, former chairman of the Democratic National Committee, whatever his reasons, has exposed a little too much of the nature of the operation, an exposure which could send the whole thing down the tubes. He announced quite openly at the press conference which areas would have to be gutted in a deficit-reduction plan. "We have to go to Social Security; we have to go to Medicare—entitlements generally—and we have to go to defense," because those programs are "where the money is." He said that he had developed \$68.5 billion in proposed spending cuts, primarily in those areas, for inclusion in a plan to eliminate the federal budget deficit in the next four years. He indicated that the commission would be meeting steadily, with open hearings, from Nov. 9 until the end of the year. "I think we're going to make it," said Strauss. "I believe we'll sell it."

The reaction to Strauss's comments, however, indicates that his program might be more difficult to sell than he thinks.

The day after Strauss's press conference, the *Wall Street Journal*, which earlier this month had characterized the commission as a tool of the "Washington elites," carried an editorial entitled, "Bob Strauss's Coup d'Etat." The editorial called the commission "a body established by Congress and the rest of Washington's elite to depose, under the rubric of 'deficit cutting,' a newly elected President even before he's inaugurated." The editorial described how the commission avoided violating the "Sunshine Act" (which requires all meetings of presidential commissions to be open to the public), by getting together in smaller groups to discuss the issues rather than in a larger group that could technically be characterized as a "meeting." Stealth was necessary during the election campaign. "The voters might object," comments the *Journal*, "the politicians would have to object, and before you know it democracy might make Bob Strauss and the National Economic Commission irrelevant."

Strauss commented at the press conference that he believed that George Bush, although claiming that he would never accept the recommendations of the commission if they called for raising taxes, would nevertheless accept the program of the commission. "I know George Bush," said Strauss, "and I think he knows better. . . . I hope after Nov. 8 he will take a calmer look at it. Certainly Jim Baker knows you have to do something about the deficit."

Said the *Journal*, "We don't know what Mr. Bush thinks of all this, but we do recall that Machiavelli advised that princes aren't likely to reign successfully if they let courtiers plot coups with impunity. Perhaps Mr. Bush should remind Mr. Strauss whose lips the voters are supposed to read."

Thus, Strauss's clever move seemed to backfire almost immediately. Both candidates distanced themselves from the Strauss proposals. Stephen Hart, press secretary for Vice President Bush, commented, "The Social Security fund is sacrosanct," adding that Bush had "laid out a workable plan for reducing the deficit without touching the Social Security fund or raising taxes." The Dukakis campaign, which had earlier indicated that they would take the recommendations of the commission into serious consideration, issued a statement saying that if the commission recommends cuts in Social Security, "they won't get to first base in a Dukakis-Bentsen administration."

Even commission members started to get nervous. Lane Kirkland, president of the AFL-CIO and a commission member, said he would "strenuously oppose any such misguided and self-defeating approach to the problem." Even commission member Moynihan vowed to fight any Social Security reduction as "wrong-headed and totally unacceptable."

Strauss could prove to have done serious damage by alerting the citizenry to the mad schemes of the Eastern Establishment. The election campaign could become a referendum to stop them.