
Michael Billington

American patriot and world citizen

Michael O'Mara Billington was born to Ruth and Joseph Alford Billington on July 8, 1945 at the U.S. Naval Base Hospital in Jacksonville, Florida. His father had been commissioned as an officer straight out of college in 1942, and was stationed in Jacksonville.

After the war, they returned to Cleveland where his parents had been after their marriage in 1939. There his older brother and he, and three subsequent siblings, grew up in the suburb of East Cleveland. His father was a manufacturer's representative, selling forgings and castings for industry and the military through his own company, Billington Metal Sales, Inc. His mother was a community and church activist, involved in civil rights issues, in particular, during the heyday of the civil rights movement.

The family lived in a large but modest house on a residential street, and the children attended the local public schools, and engaged in various community activities. His own included participation in several musical endeavors: school chorus and ensemble, school musicals, several Cleveland-wide choruses (*Handel's Messiah*, etc.), and a semi-professional musical comedy company. They all participated in school sports and student council activities. He graduated from Shaw High School in 1963.

Billington was offered several scholarships for college, and accepted the William G. Mather Scholarship to Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut, a scholarship offered yearly to a Cleveland area student. While his first year in a demanding academic situation was extremely difficult, he pulled together and achieved dean's list standards during his last three years. He majored in mathematics, with extensive minors in philosophy and music, earning a B.Sc. in Mathematics in 1967.

Upon graduation in 1967, he faced three alternatives: graduate school, military service, or alternate government service. He was not a pacifist, but was already disillusioned by the U.S. military role in Vietnam and did not believe he

could serve there militarily in good conscience. Because he was at the top of the "Draft Lottery," having drawn number 13, he was scheduled to be drafted if he did not go on to graduate school or find a deferrable position. As it happened, this was the one year in which graduate school was not an exemption from the draft.

Service in the Peace Corps

Billington had been offered a full scholarship as a Fellow in the Center for International Studies at Columbia University as part of the Columbia Business School Graduate Program. This was appealing in many regards, but he was morally torn over what he perceived as a disastrous U.S. policy in the Third World, but also his sense that the U.S. did have and must have a positive role to play in the underdeveloped countries, or face a world collapsing into chaos.

He thus applied to the Peace Corps for a position in Southeast Asia, thinking this might serve as the "bridge" between what he believed to be his responsibility to his country and to the world as a whole. He was instead accepted for a program in Guyana, South America, and decided to take that position anyway. Two years later he accepted a special position in Thailand for a second, two-year Peace Corps assignment.

In Guyana, he taught mathematics in a government secondary school—the first secondary school ever built in the province he lived in. He saw the hope and optimism of the children of this poor and backward nation, and confirmed his belief that reversing the economic backwardness of the Third World was entirely possible, and necessary.

After Guyana, before accepting the Peace Corps position in Thailand, he applied to the U.S. State Department for a position as a U.S. Agency for International Development officer in Vietnam, for reasons similar to his earlier decision to join the Peace Corps. He told the State Department that he was opposed to the war, but wished to help in other ways, and he was accepted for the U.S. AID position. A hiring freeze was on at the time, and he subsequently went to Thailand instead as a Peace Corps volunteer. When the U.S. AID position opened up a few months later, he decided to stay with his Peace Corps position in Thailand.

In Thailand Billington helped direct a Ministry of Education teacher-training program to introduce modern mathematics to the nation's secondary schools. Working with one other American and four Thais, they wrote teacher guides in the Thai language, ran teacher seminars, and visited the nation's secondary schools to provide on-site training and demonstrations. He also saw the U.S. military presence up close, and the pervasive effect of the drug trade on the soldiers and others stationed there.

Billington toured the Golden Triangle drug producing nexus with two French intelligence stringers who asked him to join them as an interpreter. They wanted to join the opium

'A just and decent citizen'

Mrs. Gail Billington has made available to EIR a letter sent by Florida attorney Alli B. Majeed to U.S. District Court Judge Albert V. Bryan in January, attesting to the remarkable moral dedication of Michael Billington—a quality which strikes everyone who meets him. The letter reads in part:

I am an Assistant State's Attorney in Melbourne, Brevard County, Florida. Prior to this I was an Assistant Public Defender in Orlando, Orange County, Florida. Before migrating to Florida, I engaged in a solo general practice in Philadelphia, for seven years.

I first met Mike in 1967, when I was a high school teacher in Guyana, South America. Mike was assigned to our village of Anna Regina, as a Peace Corps volunteer of mathematics. Between 1967 and 1969, Mike and I became very close friends, and I had ample opportunity to observe him at work, and in the community. . . .

The School Choir: Mike organized the first and last choir at our school. He got no help on this project from others, because none of us knew how to go about it. This was an undertaking that demanded many hours of patience, discipline, and dedication from Mike. The result was refreshingly wonderful. Lunch hours were cut in half, with the other half going into choir practice. School hours were extended, for more choir practice. At first we all laughed and joked, because of how terrible everyone sounded. Students began to stay away, embarrassed at their own disharmony, but Mike persisted.

Finally it all came together. The laughter and jokes stopped. The sounds of many students blended into melodious harmony. We had a choir. It was Mike's doing, but it was *our* choir. It became the joy and pride of the school, and the community. The Governor of Guyana came to our village of Anna Regina, and the choir sang. The minister

of education came to our school, and the choir sang. Headmasters from other school districts invited the choir, which went on tour to their schools, and was heavily applauded wherever it performed. . . .

The Coffee Shop: In Anna Regina it was customary for youths to spend their evenings on street corners, sitting on bridge rails, and drinking booze. He was singularly responsible for conceiving this idea. He arranged with the government authorities, to make a small room available, free of charge, and then put the concept into action. The coffee shop was slow in getting an encouraging response. But after a very shaky start, the youths started to respond. They left the street corners, and came to the coffee shop, to play dominoes, cards, ping pong, chess, checkers, and on rare occasions drank coffee. . . .

During the years I knew Mike in Guyana, and during the times we met during his LaRouche tenure, he has never evidenced selfish motives, or a desire for personal aggrandizement. Mike has consistently displayed a deep commitment to work diligently and industriously to improve the lot of others, believing firmly that Lyndon LaRouche was just the kind of leader who will:

- 1) Arrest the spread of the deadly AIDS epidemic.
- 2) Resolve the present severe deficit facing the American economy, and prevent the collapse of the international economic structure.
- 3) Implement a solid core curriculum in our schools, which will emphasize both an education in the natural sciences, and an appreciation of the fine arts.
- 4) Attack and remedy hunger and starvation among the Third World nations.

It is these aims, and these goals to which Mike has dedicated his ceaseless energies. There is no doubt that Mike and his colleagues are convinced by their enigmatic, charismatic, and articulate leader Lyndon LaRouche that theirs is a just, honorable and urgent cause, to which all decent citizens must dedicate themselves.

Mike is a just and decent citizen, who is now made to answer for his dedication.

caravan, which they knew traveled across Red China to Hong Kong via donkey train. They did meet up with the caravans, and toured the opium production areas, where the hill tribes lived in Stone Age conditions, producing the opium. Pictures from that trip were later used in the book *Dope, Inc.*, published by New Benjamin Franklin House.

Upon his return to the United States in 1971, Billington stayed for about six months with his parents in Cleveland, Ohio, doing substitute teaching in his old high school, Shaw

High, in East Cleveland. He then moved to Oakland, California, where his brother Joe was living; and spent the next two years substitute teaching in Berkeley and doing occasional escort/interpreter jobs for the U.S. State Department, helping government guests from Thailand on official tours of the United States.

During these years Billington became acquainted with the various political movements of the 1970s, from left to right. He first read Lyndon LaRouche's works in 1972.

He recalls that two things struck him about his work, drawing him into collaboration with LaRouche. First was LaRouche's passionate commitment to the development of the Third World; the right wing seemed to be unconcerned about the Third World, and the left wing seemed concerned only with "liberation from imperialism," and not the actual solutions to economic backwardness. Second, LaRouche's economic method was derived from the same current of philosophy and the physical sciences that Billington himself had come to adopt as his own during his college studies, thus surprisingly unifying his scientific worldview with his fundamental moral commitment to contributing to the development of our world.

Billington began informal collaboration with the National Caucus of Labor Committees (NCLC, the philosophical association founded by LaRouche) in 1972. By 1974, he had joined. He settled in New York, driving a cab part-time while organizing and writing with the NCLC. He worked on Asian and Middle East intelligence, doing research and writing articles for the newspaper, *New Solidarity*. He also became more involved in public political activity. In 1977 he ran for County Executive in Westchester County (north of New York City), and for U.S. Congress in 1978. Around 1979 he stopped driving a cab and began receiving a weekly stipend to support himself from Caucus Distributors, Inc. (CDI), the distributor of *New Solidarity* and other publications.

In 1981, he began full-time organizing and fundraising by telephone from the offices of CDI. He lived in New York or the vicinity (except for one year, 1983, spent in Boston), until spring 1985, when he moved to Leesburg, Virginia, when a number of companies run by LaRouche associates moved their national headquarters from New York City to Virginia.

In addition to the organizing work, Billington has been responsible for various aspects of the NCLC's work on performance and composition of great classical music. He received vocal training from Maestro José Briano of the Autonomous University of Mexico, who is an expert in the classical bel canto method of singing. Billington subsequently taught bel canto singing to hundreds of NCLC members and supporters in the course of developing choruses in New York, Boston, and Virginia. He has conducted several concert performances, and has performed several solo and vocal ensemble concerts as part of the political/cultural endeavors of the NCLC and the Schiller Institute.

In 1983, Billington met his wife Gail, who is also a member of the NCLC. They were married on Dec. 2, 1984. His father died of cancer in 1978. His mother, who worked as a librarian and teacher in a school for emotionally disabled children for about 10 years, retired in 1985. His brother Pete began working with his father in 1971 and took over Billington Metal Sales, Inc. about one year before his father died.

Cali Cartel's lawyer was cleared by DoJ

Michael Abbell, former director of the Office of International Affairs of the U.S. Department of Justice, and now an attorney and consultant to lawyers of Colombia's drug-pushing "Cali Cartel," says he was cleared of any conflict of interest by the Justice Department, giving him a green light to represent his controversial clients.

This adds a new wrinkle to a much-debated story in Washington, D.C. legal and law enforcement circles, highlighting what some have called a "fifth column" in President Bush's War on Drugs. The debate was sparked by a front-page piece in the Oct. 2 issue of the *Washington Post*, profiling the activities of the former DoJ official.

Abbell defends his work as an expert on extradition for lawyers of cocaine kingpin Gilberto Rodríguez Orejuela as "ethical." Gilberto and his brother Miguel, among other Cali Cartel heavies, recently made it onto Attorney General Richard Thornburgh's "Dirty Dozen" list of "most wanted" fugitives. "I have worked for people who are allegedly members of the cartel or their lawyers as a consultant," Abbell explains. "I headed the office at the Department of Justice which oversaw extradition matters. I went into private practice, 'of counsel' here [at the law firm of Kaplan Russin and Vecchi]. I was asked by representatives of Rodríguez Orejuela to serve as a consultant to a Spanish and Colombian lawyer in connection with an extradition case in Spain. I wrote to the Department of Justice to determine whether it perceived any conflict of interest in my taking on this role. . . . I received clearance."

Abbell's clearance was obtained back in 1985 from the Deputy Assistant Attorney General, then heading the Criminal Division.

Abbell has written several tomes on the constitutional aspects of extradition law and has advised and lobbied the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on pending extradition treaties. He argues that extradition laws have been improperly used against international drug pushers. "What you have is narco-McCarthyism," complains Abbell.