
Virginia

Loudoun County's Dems tear club apart

by D. Stephen Pepper

In the grip of political hysteria that resembled the worst witchhunting frenzy of the Joe McCarthy era, at its meeting on Jan. 15, the Loudoun County, Virginia Democratic Committee abandoned any pretense to liberal political principles and moved to expel the dozen or so members of the committee because they were associated with Lyndon LaRouche.

At the close of its meeting, under new business, a resolution was introduced to expel any committee member who professed public support for Democratic presidential candidate LaRouche or who was a member of any organization declared to be associated with him. Normally, such a resolution, if accepted, would be taken up for consideration at the next regularly scheduled meeting.

But to the amazement of several longstanding committee members, the majority, whipped into a frenzy by the vitriolic language used in the resolution, and goaded by the thuggish tactics of present committee chairman, failed Board of Supervisors candidate James DeFrancia, the 60-odd members remaining at the meeting voted by the bare two-thirds majority required to suspend its own rules and take up the resolution for immediate consideration.

Landmark decision

The resolution passed by this local club cannot be dismissed as an aberration in the area where the LaRouche movement has been headquartered and targeted most heavily. The resolution was almost certainly cooked up in Richmond, the state capital, if not at Democratic National Committee headquarters, as a test case for the country.

The reality is that, much as they may argue that LaRouche is "not a Democrat," they have never been able to enforce such a lie. In addition, the official Democrats are faced with the fact that the LaRouche current of the party has gained enormous credibility on the economy and other issues—to the point that LaRouche is the only national Democratic candidate addressing the real catastrophe. This fact is even more clear in Virginia, where the Democrats did not even challenge the Republican incumbent in the last senatorial election—while the LaRouche Democrats did. Although it will further destroy the party, the bureaucrats are desperate to

wipe out LaRouche.

In American terms of reference, the resolution passed harkened back to the McCarthy witchhunt era, going so far as to declare anyone "affiliating" with any organization that "supports" LaRouche as liable to being kicked out.

Defending the Constitution

Former chairman Donald Caruthers attempted to restore sanity to the meeting when he spoke against the suspension of rules. "In fighting a tyrant the trick is not to become one yourself. I'm afraid that we, in reacting to them, are becoming prone to sacrifice our own democratic principles. That is unnecessary and it is harmful to us," said Caruthers, a well-known attorney in northern Virginia. "This [resolution] flies in the face of the First Amendment. It says that anyone who expresses a political opinion that the majority of this committee does not approve of should be expelled from the committee for it."

Caruthers's sentiments were echoed by a handful of other members who expressed concern or outrage at the disregard for due process or any pretense of a deliberative process. "I think that we are setting up machinery if we accept this resolution, to destroy the Democratic Party in Loudoun County," said one member.

But their appeal to reason was to no avail in the environment that had been shaped by the club's executive. During the course of this meeting, the once liberally inclined members of the club had gleefully voted to refuse to consider a resolution on behalf of that poor soul, Herbert Bassette, who was awaiting execution on Jan. 23 in Virginia. They voted down any consideration of a resolution to assume responsibility for the education of Loudoun County voters as to the economic issues in the forthcoming presidential election. What "tainted" these resolutions—seemingly in keeping with liberal principles—in the view of the majority, was that they had been introduced by members associated with LaRouche.

Changes to by-laws proposed

At the start of the meeting, Chairman DeFrancia introduced proposals for changes to the by-laws of the club, including reducing the vote required to expel a member from two-thirds to a simply majority. The intent of the rules shift became perfectly clear by the end of the meeting, as the executive cajoled the club members to prepare for the illegal expulsion of those few members associated with LaRouche.

The next meeting in February is now set to complete the coup. To do this, the executive is quite prepared to drive a deeper wedge between the docile majority and the dozen or more members (in addition to the LaRouche supporters) who are outraged by these McCarthyite tactics. It is this clearly drawn difference between the two groups that will make the next meeting an exemplary confrontation between the LaRouche-led effort to revive the Democratic Party and the "mainstream" effort to keep it under control.