

Editorial

Town meetings and real politics

Russian President Boris Yeltsin's quip that it is the mass media which are the real disaster, was an occasion for merriment, but it was also the statement of a profound truth. The assertion that the press have subverted the American political process from top to bottom is by no means an overstatement.

It used to be that candidates for political office would take their case directly before the American people. Debate was fierce, sometimes even violent. Not so today! Increasingly, it occurs that self-styled communications specialists have taken control of political campaigns. As a result, the sound bite has come to replace reasoned debate, and candidates receive the same media-packaging as any commercial product being advertised.

It is for this reason that we especially welcome the CityVote. On Nov. 7, voters in 18 cities across the nation will have the opportunity to express their preference, before even the first Presidential primary. This will be an urban straw poll, organized by a private operation called the CityVote, which is in the process of sponsoring a series of town-meeting forums in these cities.

Twenty candidates, including Lyndon LaRouche, will be on the ballot. Unfortunately, these events have been opposed by both the Democratic and Republican National Committees, which obviously wish to keep the political process as much as possible within their own political control. So far, the "major" candidates have boycotted these events.

On Oct. 22, Cox cable television joined with CityVote to sponsor a debate in Spokane, Washington, which was moderated by former news anchorman Sander Vanocur. Over 300 people were in the audience, a testimony to the hunger of average citizens for serious political debate—although the format of the discussion was unfortunate, in that the six candidates who participated had only 45 minutes in all to present their views.

Besides Democrat LaRouche, Jesse Jackson participated by phone hookup, and there were Republicans Arthur Fletcher and Charles Collins, and Harry Browne representing the Libertarian Party, and John Hagelin

from the Natural Law Party. Notwithstanding the problems in formatting the event, and the lack of seriousness of some of the participants, the attendance on the panel of elected officials not only from Washington state but also nearby Moscow, Idaho created an environment in which serious ideas could be discussed.

Vanocur's first question to LaRouche went to the core of the vicious ideology now being preached by the fascist neo-conservatives, who are being rallied by Newt Gingrich and Phil Gramm. He asked: "Is it possible to get the government of Washington, D.C. out of our cities, or would that make them worse than they are now?"

LaRouche answered this provocative opener in depth, not only emphatically rejecting the idea that city-dwellers would gain from a removal of federal support, but explaining why such an incompetent proposal has political currency today. He told the audience, "The United States is much weaker today than most people know. We have physically about half the income per capita we had 25 years ago. . . ."

We are heading for the worst crisis, monetary and financial crisis, globally, in the 20th century, which is now in process. . . . The plight of the cities, in particular, is a reflection of this problem. And many of the problems that are now city problems are not caused by the cities, they are caused by the wrong federal policies—monetary and economic. The United States President has to know what to do; he has to respond to this crisis, and he has to have support in the Congress. He has got to have support from the American people who know what is going on."

It is precisely this kind of discussion of real politics, which is needed if we are to avert the devastating crisis which we otherwise face. Americans must demand the level of political discussion which LaRouche was able to bring to the CityVote process, in this upcoming election year. It is up to all of us to use the opportunity of this campaign year to break through the miasma of virtual reality. We can no longer afford to accept the degraded role of being merely passive consumers of the political spectacle.