

LaRouche wins delegate in Louisiana primary

by Debra Hanania-Freeman

The final tally of votes cast in the March 12 Louisiana Democratic Presidential primary, certified by the Louisiana secretary of state, confirms that Lyndon LaRouche did indeed receive over 15% of the vote in Louisiana's 6th Congressional District, which, according to the 1996 Delegate Selection Rules adopted by the Democratic National Committee, entitles him to one delegate and one alternate delegate to the Democratic National Convention.

Since the LaRouche campaign did not file a slate of delegate candidates prior to the March 12 primary, campaign officials have asked the state party to convene a special post-primary procedure, as mandated by the National Delegate Selection rules, so that the LaRouche delegate and alternate may be selected. As of this writing, however, the state party has been unable to confirm that it will administer the special post-primary procedure, even though March 30 was the date that had been set for the first round of House district caucuses to elect district-level delegates and alternates.

DNC's Fowler: 'Disregard LaRouche's vote'

What is at issue, is not whether LaRouche's vote entitles him to a pledged delegate and alternate. State party officials are not disputing LaRouche's vote. The problem is that the Louisiana Democratic State Central Committee is operating under a directive issued by Donald L. Fowler, the National Chair of the Democratic National Committee, on Jan. 5, 1996, which states that "state parties, in the implementation of their delegate selection plans, should disregard any votes that might be cast for Mr. LaRouche, should not allocate delegate positions to Mr. LaRouche, and should not recognize the selection of delegates pledged to him at any stage of the Delegate Selection Process." According to Fowler's directive, "This determination is based on Mr. LaRouche's expressed political beliefs, including beliefs which are explicitly racist and anti-Semitic. . . ." Chairman Fowler knows, as does the Louisiana Democratic State Central Committee, that these charges are scurrilous and flagrant lies.

If Louisiana Democratic Party officials comply with Fowler's demand, Lyndon LaRouche will be deprived of the delegate and alternate to which he is entitled, but, more significantly, 3,995 Democratic voters in Louisiana's 6th Congressional District will be completely and unlawfully disenfranchised, as the votes they cast for the candidate of their choice, are simply disregarded. And, while legal experts agree that such an act would almost certainly stand as a gross violation of the U.S. Constitution in and of itself, the issue becomes far more complicated when viewed in light of the U.S. Voting Rights Act. Although only 14% of the 6th District's total



Lyndon LaRouche speaks to journalists in Norfolk, Virginia, March 29, 1996. Donald Fowler, National Chair of the Democratic National Committee, is telling party officials around the country to "disregard any votes that might be cast for Mr. LaRouche."

population is African-American, it is estimated that more than 32% of the District's Democratic voters are African-American and, it is widely accepted that LaRouche's support is probably strongest among African-American voters.

Disenfranchising D.C. voters

The same question has presented itself in a far more egregious way in Washington, D.C., where the issue of voter disenfranchisement is a volatile one. Although the nation's capital has a population of over 570,000, some 67% of them African-American, it was not until the civil rights revolution of the 1960s that Washingtonians gained the right to vote in Presidential elections. In 1964, Washingtonians began to cast three electoral votes for President. In 1971, they finally got to elect a non-voting delegate to Congress; and, in 1974, they were granted home rule and could vote for a mayor and City Council. But, under Gingrich's Conservative Revolution, more than 20 years after Congress finally relinquished the control of the District which it had exercised over most of its history, out of distrust of the city's large black population, Gingrich's Republican majority turned control of the capital city's finances over to a federal financial control board, seriously curtailing the already limited home rule.

The Democratic National Committee, on the other hand, accords the District all the rights and privileges of a state. The central committee is referred to as the District of Columbia State Democratic Committee, the Democratic Mayor is accorded the status of a Governor, and the District delegation of 38 delegates and four alternates to the National Convention is larger than that of many states. Nevertheless, Don Fowler has ordered D.C. State Democratic Chairman William H. Simons to prevent any delegate candidate pledged to Lyndon LaRouche from obtaining the petitions necessary to qualify for the ballot. So far, Simons has complied with Fowler's order. But, the fact that many of those seeking to file as LaRouche delegates are prominent, longtime African-American Democratic activists, combined with Simons's failure to consult other members of the State Democratic Committee regarding his decision, has caused an open and heated controversy.

What is at issue, as in the Louisiana case, are not Lyndon LaRouche's rights; LaRouche has already been certified as the only Democratic Presidential candidate, besides President Clinton, whose name will appear on the May 7 primary ballot. What is at issue, however, are the hard-won rights of a majority African-American population, protected under the Voting Rights Act, to participate in the election and support the candidates of their own choosing, especially at a time when home rule itself is under serious attack.

The question that must be asked is, is DNC Chairman Don Fowler completely insensitive to such questions of racial injustice, respecting African-Americans? If the answer is perceived to be yes by African-Americans, Hispanic Americans, and others, the results could be disastrous for the Democratic Party in November.