

the leading employer. Most of these jobs provide zero benefits, are seasonal in nature, and employ low-skilled workers. As city officials noted, "Often if individuals lose work due to an illness, they are at risk of losing their home as well. Our population is experiencing health problems more than at any other time and they are increasingly unprepared for the job market in terms of skills."

Another major factor in the growth of hunger and homelessness, according to the studies, is the cutbacks in welfare and food stamps, implemented nationwide in the second half of the 1990s by the Conservative Revolutionar-dominated Congress with the help of the Dick Morris/Al Gore cabal in the Clinton administration.

In Phoenix, for example, more than 40,000 people have dropped off the Food Stamp rolls since 1995. Officials of the Association of Arizona Food Banks believe that this is because of changes in eligibility and misunderstandings about eligibility. In Salt Lake City, the limit of three months of Food Stamp eligibility for unemployed able-bodied adults without children has had a significant impact on the caseloads of several of the city's emergency food pantries.

In city after city, the Mayors' report found, food banks have drastically restricted availability of food packages, often to as little as three days per month, in order to deal with the growing crisis.

### The solution

HUD Secretary Cuomo is trying to solve the homeless crisis with his Continuum of Care initiative, developed when he was an Assistant Secretary at HUD. This program has helped more than 300,000 homeless people get housing and jobs. HUD is also the beneficiary of \$900 million in grants for the homeless, announced on Christmas Day by President Clinton, to help find housing, medical care, and jobs for the homeless. The grants are aimed at funding more than 2,000 projects in all 50 states.

But this is by no means a solution to this crisis, as well-intentioned as it may be. As the Mayors' report makes clear, the root cause of the growing homeless and hunger problem in America is the post-industrial, bubble economy, which favors speculation over real production, and profits over human beings. Until that is changed, and in the direction of the New Bretton Woods global financial reorganization to restart trade and production spelled out by Lyndon LaRouche's Presidential campaign, homelessness and hunger will continue to grow.

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### Interview: Mike Morosin

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## Fighting for the poor, homeless in Nebraska

*Mike Morosin is a homeless advocate and member of the Nebraska State Democratic Committee. The interview was conducted by Marianna Wertz on Dec. 23, 1999.*

**EIR:** Can you give our readers a sense of the fight you've been engaged in, in Lincoln, with respect to the privatized ambulance service?

**Morosin:** In 1993, a task force was formed to look into the issue of the emergency medical service. Then, eventually, it was allowed bidders. The Fire Department was one of the bidders, as was the private ambulance company, which was Eastern Ambulance then, soon to be Rural Metro. So, when the bids were opened, the Fire Department was found to be the lowest bidder, at \$271 per case. Eastern had bid \$470, a big disparity.

The Mayor at that time, now Governor [Mike] Johanns, said that the Fire Department would get the bid and would receive the ambulance service. Well, 48 hours later, a surprise bid appears out of the blue, \$1 under the Fire Department bid. The Mayor does a complete "180," and gives it to Eastern Ambulance. They were allowed to make a second bid, without the other bidder being allowed to bid, which is totally contrary

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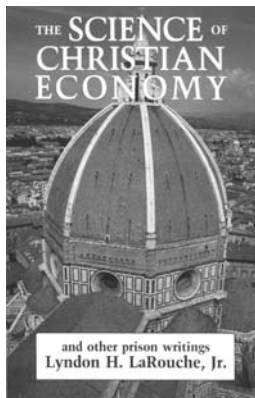
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to state law.

**EIR:** You've protested this many times at the City Council?

**Morosin:** I've presented the issue on paper, before the city council, county board, numerous county governmental bodies. I presented it to the newspaper. The newspaper has basically gone along with the cover-up. We're only a one-newspaper town (the *Lincoln Star Journal*). It's been controlled for many, many years. If you want to know anything about Lincoln, you read the Omaha paper! The city council sits there mute, and will not even answer my questions. I have given them a copy of my report, which the citizens of Lincoln asked me to do. My job was to represent my constituents in that area on the question. Here, other ambulance companies around us are charging maybe \$150-250 a ride. These guys are charging \$500-900.

**EIR:** So, many people who need ambulance service aren't getting it?

**Morosin:** They're basically saying, "I don't have enough money for food, so I'll turn the heat off." That type of thinking. "I should go in an ambulance, but I'll get there however I can get there." People are not taking the ride that they should be taking, and are jeopardizing their health in the process.

**EIR:** What about homeless people?

**Morosin:** Same thing. Homeless people numerous times will not go to the hospital. Then, if they do get picked up and taken to the hospital in the ambulance, this ambulance company is very rude to these people. The ambulance company talks about these people as, "They can't pay," "They're nothings." We're all human beings, and we should have the right to be picked up and transported, regardless of our monetary situation.

The neighborhood I'm in is an old, old neighborhood. My house is 100 years old. We have many low-income people. I'm also on the board of directors at a Day Watch, which is a daytime homeless shelter. So, I deal with this on both sides of the issue. Many times I'm the only person down at these governmental meetings, standing up and representing constituents. Right now, our fire department can get to your house in less than three minutes, anywhere in the city. The ambulance company says, "Well, we're just going to get there in eight minutes." As you know, after four minutes, without oxygen, we start having the problems of brain damage. So why should we relegate ourselves to an eight-minute response, when we can have a three-minute response?

**EIR:** Can you tell me something about the homeless shelter? Are you getting an increased flow of homeless people? Are they people who are working but not getting enough money?

**Morosin:** Yes. I let a number of these people sleep in my garage, which is my shop, because it's heated. If I see them out there, I let them come in and sleep. I've had them in my

house, in my car, in my shop, to get them out of the cold. Mayor Johanns, now Governor, said, "We'll help your homeless shelter by building some showers." Then, when it came time to put the rubber where it meets the road, he said, "Oh no, we're not going to give that amount of money, we're only going to give this amount." It was all talk. Then he said, we're not going to fund that at all.

So I went to bat, stood up in the arena, and embarrassed him a little bit. Because I called him on his bluff, I was able to get \$10,000 for the showers. I sit on a Community Development Taskforce. It hands out block grants, so the \$10,000 came through there. Now we have two showers.

This former mayor was preaching welfare to work, but then they were asking, "Why don't those people go to work?" I said, "Wait a minute. Would you go for a job interview without a shower? Without your hair shampooed? Without your teeth brushed? Some clean clothes. No, you wouldn't. But that's what you're telling these people to do. They're not going to get a job."

**EIR:** On the political side, are you supporting LaRouche for President?

**Morosin:** I support a lot of his ideas. I'm very supportive of his ideas. I haven't seen anybody from our Democratic Party—I'm not supporting the front-runner, our Vice President. I lean more toward what LaRouche has to say, because in LaRouche, I see a young me, in challenging things. I want to wish him well; if he ever decides to come to the state, [I want him] to let us know, and we can champion his cause. Because there's a lot of people in this state who are independent voters. It doesn't matter whether they're Republican, Reform, Democrat, whatever, there are independent voters here, and in Iowa—there's a lot of independent voters in this area. They're going to vote for the person who can deliver the bacon. I've crossed party lines many times, voting for the people that I think are going to carry the bacon.

**EIR:** Are you currently a state committeeman with the Democratic Party?

**Morosin:** Yes.

**EIR:** What do you think about what they're doing, with respect to your issues and with respect to LaRouche?

**Morosin:** They won't even touch the issues. In my day and age, we called them plastic people. We've got a bunch of plastic people. They talk the talk, but when it comes time to walk the walk, they don't come forward.

**EIR:** Have you raised with them the Voting Rights Act question with respect to LaRouche's Presidential campaign?

**Morosin:** I've started speaking to that issue with people. But people are starting to really take time to look. That's what I tell most of the people. Don't take my word for it. Do your homework. People are starting to do the homework.