

Maryland Town Meetings Take Up Urgent Issues

by Debra Hanania-Freeman

With the U.S. Presidential election just days away, the candidates of America's two political parties, Al Gore and George Bush, have had almost nothing of substance to say on the vital issues dominating the strategic arena. The Middle East peace process, which held such tremendous promise just a few short months ago, has disintegrated into an escalating pattern of brutal violence that threatens to become a full-scale religious war, as a result of Bill Clinton's failure to provide the economic framework for a just and lasting peace that economist and statesman Lyndon LaRouche outlined just prior to the ill-fated meetings between Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat that Clinton hosted at Camp David in July. At the same time, despite frantic efforts to postpone the inevitable until *after* Election Day, the entire global financial system is tumbling down. No wonder one French newspaper openly refers to the candidates as "the Cretin" and "the Stiff." No wonder pollsters are predicting the lowest voter turnout in history, as the traditional institutions seem unable to motivate Americans to come out to support whomever they perceive as "the lesser of two evils."

Indeed, it would seem that a tragedy for the United States and its people is almost inevitable. Except for the fact that, increasingly, in the days leading up to the elections, leaders of the traditional Democratic core constituency groups (i.e., the vast majority of Americans) that Gore and his "New Democrat" Wall Street backers declared irrelevant, are lining up with the movement led by Lyndon LaRouche, in emergency town meetings across the nation, to discuss how to steer the country safely through this time of grave crisis.

At one such meeting in Baltimore on Oct. 19, LaRouche's national spokeswoman, Debra Hanania-Freeman, posed the situation in stark terms. After presenting the full scope of the immediate danger, Freeman posed the paradox: "We face the worst crisis to confront civilization in 300 years. But, Lyndon LaRouche, who is the only person qualified to serve as President of the United States, especially in this crisis, will not appear on any ballot, despite his willingness to serve. Why?"

"Lyndon LaRouche's drive for the Democratic Presidential nomination provided a clear alternative to the Wall Street-dictated farce that today leaves us with a choice between two evil idiots. But, Americans didn't do enough to make sure that LaRouche could be elected. When LaRouche's message began to sink in, and he began to win delegates in key primary races, Al Gore's friends on the Democratic National Commit-

tee threw your votes in the trash. They said, 'Well, we're happy that you came out to vote, but unfortunately, you voted the wrong way, so your vote doesn't count.' And you let them do it."

LaRouche Defends the General Welfare

Freeman contrasted LaRouche's relentless drive to represent the general welfare of the American people, regardless of the opposition, to President Clinton's tragic refusal to confront the foreign intelligence operation that almost destroyed his Presidency and which did destroy the Middle East peace process. "Bill Clinton talked about the need for 'a new financial architecture.' It wasn't LaRouche's New Bretton Woods proposal, but it was a step in that direction, and it was enough to provoke the financial oligarchy to move against him. He won the fight against impeachment, but he lost his Presidency when he decided that, in order to protect himself and his family, he had to get Al Gore elected."

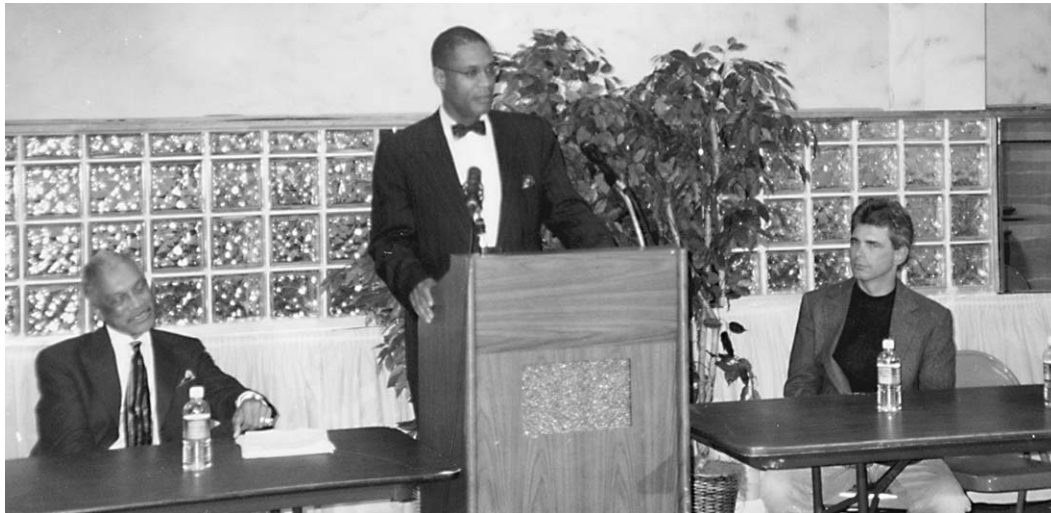
Freeman was joined by speakers who were in the forefront of LaRouche's drive to force the Democratic Party to at least adopt a national platform that would protect the general welfare. Dave Brode, the AFL-CIO Committee on Political Education director for Western Maryland, discussed his frustration when the Democratic Party leadership failed to respond to the reality facing America's working families, and his relief when he learned about LaRouche's effort to first convene, and then facilitate the circulation of the proceedings of the Ad Hoc Democratic Platform Committee prior to the Democratic National Convention.

One of the key witnesses at those hearings, Dr. Abdul Alim Muhammad, director of the Abundant Life Clinic in Washington, D.C. and a national leader in Minister Louis Farrakhan's Nation of Islam, spoke next. He issued an urgent call for the immediate declaration of a national health care emergency, motivated by a chilling account of the state of America's health. He insisted that it was time to put an end to corporate health care-for-profit, and, referring to LaRouche's emphasis on man as being made "in the image of God," identified that the relationship between the physician and the patient cannot be balanced on an accountant's ledger.

Dr. Muhammad also addressed the state of the nation's moral health. "If we are a government for, by, and of the people, as the Constitution promises, and if the government is not functioning in the interest of the people, then the government has to be changed. But," he emphasized, "if the people are also corrupted, if the people lack the courage and the will to change the government for the better, then all of civilization is in trouble."

A 'National Health Emergency'

When Dr. Muhammad finished his presentation, Freeman, exercising the prerogative of the chair, called for a motion from the floor for a resolution in support of Muhammad's call for a declaration of a National Health Emergency. The



Dr. Abdul Alim Muhammad (speaking), former South Carolina State Senator Theo Mitchell (left), and AFL-CIO COPE director for Western Maryland Dave Brode, at a town meeting in Baltimore on Oct. 19.

motion, along with an urgent call on other groups to do the same thing, was made, seconded, and unanimously passed. Others addressing the Baltimore gathering included Bill Dickens, president of the Teamsters' Port Division and United Container/Rail Haulers of America, and Dr. Carl Washington, president of the Baltimore Baptist Ministers' Alliance, and former South Carolina State Senator Theo W. Mitchell, both of whom had endorsed LaRouche's bid for the Democratic Presidential nomination.

The following night, Mitchell, who also served as one of LaRouche's attorneys in his battle to defend the Voting Rights Act from the Democratic National Committee's efforts to have it declared null and void, joined Freeman in a similar meeting in Prince George's County, Maryland, a densely populated Washington, D.C. suburb. At both events, Mitchell issued a firm call to action, telling those gathered that "it is time for us to organize!" With a passion that clearly left the audiences moved, the longtime leader located his comments in a historical perspective.

"Brothers and sisters, it is hard to accept, but we are losing ground. The progress won in the 1950s and '60s in civil rights, economic justice, and voting rights is being targetted for destruction.

"The racists inside the DNC have moved for nullification of the Voting Rights Act and the Supreme Court jumped at the opportunity to back them up," Mitchell said. Citing the Justice Department's illegal targetting of African-American public and elected officials known as Operation Fruehmenchen, Mitchell described what he called a "glass ceiling" erected against people of color. He said that LaRouche was given the same treatment. "My friend Lyndon is not an African-American, but he has never hesitated to stand up for the rights of African-Americans, sometimes more so than African-Americans were willing to stand up for themselves. As a result, Lyndon LaRouche was given the same treatment."

Minister Shawn Muhammad, a leader of the Prince

George's County branch of the Nation of Islam, challenged those who had gathered in his community, "Why is it, that with all the information Mr. LaRouche has made available to you, you still allowed this crisis to occur. What are you waiting for? What do you really want out of this life? How do you define success? Surely you seek more than just money? Are you willing to stand up and fight for all of that?"

The meetings drew representatives of organized labor, including the United Auto Workers, the Sheetmetal Workers, Teamsters, Railroad Workers, and the Communications Workers of America, along with farm leaders, senior citizen activists, members of the clergy, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Prison Ministry, several local elected officials, and scores of citizen activists. The meetings provoked intense dialogue and debate, and although the specific details differed at each of the two meetings, the point common to both was the recognition that world is careening toward disaster, that President Clinton has virtually relinquished his Presidency, that the two ostensible choices to replace him are unacceptable, and that the last best hope for this nation and for the world lies in a drive to put Lyndon LaRouche into a position of power to change the direction of our nation.

Freeman summed it up in her answer to a college student, who asked, "How can we make LaRouche President if he isn't even on the ballot?" She conceded that the task would have been far easier had more people stood up to fight for LaRouche during the primary elections, saying, "In the worst case, it may be that Gore or Bush gain sufficient votes on Nov. 7 to claim the White House. If that terrible event were to occur, if one of them were to succeed in occupying the White House, we had better make sure that we have mobilized sufficient forces behind LaRouche to keep them there under virtual house arrest, too frightened of what they would unleash if they attempted to stop LaRouche's policies to save the nation from being adopted."