

Stopping Ashcroft Is Key to Sane U.S. Economic Policy

by Edward Spannaus

The mobilization led by the LaRouche movement to stop the confirmation of former U.S. Senator John Ashcroft as Attorney General of the United States is bearing fruit, as the U.S. Senate has been forced to postpone its scheduled confirmation vote twice, while momentum is clearly building against his confirmation.

But only Lyndon LaRouche has made the most crucial argument against the nomination: That stopping Ashcroft is key to preventing the emergence of a brutal dictatorial regime in the United States, using the pretext of “crisis-management” methods to deal with the onrushing financial and economic collapse. The choice facing the Bush Administration, and the nation, will very quickly boil down to either using Franklin Roosevelt-style dirigist methods to protect the general welfare, or moving into a bureaucratic fascism reminiscent of the Nazi regime in Germany after 1933. There will be no middle way.

The issue is most obvious in the case of the intensifying California energy crisis. Without a solution, the California crisis can very quickly cascade throughout the United States and global financial system. And there can no solution without an immediate re-regulation of energy — both on the state and national level. But this is precisely the sort of measure which Ashcroft could be expected to block, were he in a position to do so as U.S. Attorney General.

As a rough parallel, recall the role that the reactionary U.S. Supreme Court played in blocking many of Franklin Roosevelt’s emergency economic measures during his first term in office, relenting only after FDR took his case against the obstructionist court directly to the people in early 1937.

The combination of Ashcroft as Attorney General, and the Scalia-Rehnquist domination of the U.S. Supreme Court, would guarantee that the United States would move in a fas-

cist, not FDR, direction, under conditions of economic crisis and panic.

Bush Tries To Ram Nomination Through

Realizing the intensity of the crisis, the incoming Bush team had hoped to ram through Ashcroft’s confirmation vote on the afternoon of the Presidential inauguration, Jan. 20; seven other nominees were approved in a special session of the U.S. Senate shortly after George W. Bush took the oath of office. But the previous day, the Senate Judiciary Committee had been compelled to delay the scheduled vote on the Senate floor until Wednesday, Jan. 24. Then on Tuesday, Jan. 23, Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.), the ranking member on the Judiciary Committee, requested a week’s delay in the vote, so that Ashcroft could answer hundreds of written questions submitted to him by Judiciary Committee members.

At a session of the Committee the next day, Leahy expressed what is becoming a common sentiment, saying that Ashcroft’s “two days of testimony so contradicted his past 35 years of positions, I just want to know which is which.”

The Democratic leader of the Senate, Tom Daschle of South Dakota, continues to declare his open opposition to a filibuster to stop Ashcroft’s confirmation — despite the fact that the filibuster tactic was repeatedly used by Ashcroft and other right-wing Republicans to block many of President Clinton’s nominees. However, in a press conference on Jan. 25, Daschle acknowledged that he might not be able to prevent a filibuster, if one were undertaken by Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.) or other Democrats. Although it would take 51 votes to defeat the Ashcroft confirmation in a straight up-and-down vote, under the rules of the Senate, only 41 votes are needed to defeat a nomination through the tactic of extended debate, known as filibuster. Daschle himself has come under



A banner at a demonstration by supporters of Lyndon LaRouche makes the key point: A filibuster is needed to stop John Ashcroft's nomination to Attorney General.

heavy political pressure from LaRouche activists and other opponents of Ashcroft in South Dakota.

As of this writing, only between nine and sixteen Senators have indicated outright that they will vote against Ashcroft's confirmation, although many sources, put the actual number of Senators opposing Ashcroft at around 40. Thus, it is clear that the basis exists in the Senate to block Ashcroft's confirmation, if a group of Democrats exerts decisive leadership on the issue.

Growing Momentum against Ashcroft

A broad array of organizations have jumped into the fight against Ashcroft—including civil rights and labor groups, and many "single-issue" organizations concerned with women's issues, abortion, gun control, and other issues. Many of these organizations have mobilized opposition to Ashcroft, with telephone calls and petitions to Senators, and many have made compelling arguments concerning Ashcroft's prior record in Missouri, and in the U.S. Senate, and on his clearly false testimony given during his confirmation hearings.

During the week of Jan. 21, the focus of news media coverage of the opposition to Ashcroft began to shift, from questions of his policies and record per se, to the realization that Ashcroft had lied repeatedly and flagrantly, during his testimony in the confirmation hearings. Areas in which Ashcroft's false testimony under oath have been highlighted include those of his statements about his opposition to racial desegregation of schools in St. Louis, his scuttling of the 1998 nomination of Missouri Supreme Court Justice Ronnie White

for a Federal judgeship, and his reasons for opposing the Ambassadorial appointment of an open homosexual, James Hormel. The liberal advocacy group People for the American Way is reportedly planning to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on newspaper ads that ask: "Should a man who misrepresents the facts under oath be our Attorney General?"

Directly to the point, were a number of major newspaper editorials which opposed Ashcroft on the grounds that his record and his testimony show that he will not use his office to protect the constitutional and civil rights of citizens who need and deserve such protection.

City Council Resolutions

Reflecting the mobilization catalyzed by the LaRouche movement, at least three major city councils have adopted resolutions opposing Ashcroft. These are:

- Cleveland, Ohio City Council, which passed a resolution on Jan. 22 stating that the Council "strongly urges the Democratic members of the United States Senate to oppose the confirmation" of Ashcroft.
- Baltimore, Maryland City Council, which passed a resolution on Jan. 22 declaring Ashcroft "unfit to serve" as U.S. Attorney General, and describing him as "the darling of the far right."
- Camden, New Jersey City Council, which passed a resolution on Jan. 25 calling for a filibuster in the U.S. Senate to stop the Ashcroft nomination, emphasizing Ashcroft's opposition to civil rights, and his calls for draconian law-enforcement measures.