

Editorial

'We Have To Represent Ourselves'

"Our Congressional delegation is missing in action." Aroused by these words, hundreds of Washington, D.C. residents marched on Congressional offices on March 8, in the midst of weeks of continuous and growing protests against the closing of D.C. General Hospital—protests, now joined by delegations from other cities, which are igniting a new American civil rights and economic rights movement. Its "issue" is nothing less than the U.S. Constitutional principle of the General Welfare: raised again to a principle by Franklin Delano Roosevelt during the Great Depression; torn to shreds by "shareholder values" in recent decades to set off a new, greater depression. That principle of the General Welfare has been raised again by Lyndon LaRouche and his movement, as the only path to stop a U.S. slide through economic collapse into fascism.

January's "lost" battle over the Bush nomination of the extreme right-wing John Ashcroft as Attorney General, showed that most Congressional Democrats were completely unprepared to put themselves on the line for that principle—and that there was not *yet* a movement capable of making them do it. Although the LaRouche forces led a drive which got 42 Senators to vote against Ashcroft, the Democratic leadership refused to filibuster. Now, as a result of not fighting, the Congressional Democrats are being crushed by Bush, Lott, DeLay, and company in the first weeks of the new Congressional session.

The D.C. General Hospital fight has shown the *corruption* of Democrats who have spent years agreeing to Al Gore's favorite brands of deregulation, NAFTA free-trade, and economic Darwinism—while claiming to be for "human rights" and civil rights. But in this fight, there is a movement arising with, as LaRouche put it, "more bite."

The U.S. Congress, directly, and through the Control Board it appointed, ordered the closing of D.C. General, and eliminated its funding after April 1, even though it is one of the top-rated full-service hospitals in the region. Many Congressmen will not even discuss the closing with the growing groups of protesters, unless

D.C.'s Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton were to take the lead. But Representative Norton has been paid a very well-targetted \$1,000 to her campaign committee—and perhaps more in other ways—by the head of the shady Arizona company slated to take over and close down D.C. General. Norton has been strangely silent and unresponsive to the rising voice of her constituents. One group of protesters was told on March 8, by the chief aide of a New York Congressman, that Norton had "made a deal to close the hospital" with the Republican head of the D.C. oversight committee. And worse, this New York Representative's aide shamelessly *defended* Norton's sellout of the only full-service hospital in Southeast Washington. He bragged that the New York Congressman had done the same thing in his district, agreeing to the shutdown of two hospitals to "save" a third!

But there is good news here, too. The movement which has arisen to "draw the line" at D.C. General, having seen the worst revealed about the Democratic representatives they elected, and the bloody determination of the Republican leadership to save money by spilling lives, has not turned back, but has grown in numbers and audacity. Their principle is the principle of the General Welfare, and they are not fighting just to save themselves or to push their own personal grievance, but for the health and welfare of millions. At one of their mass meetings on March 7, they were reminded by a Camden, New Jersey City Councilman who had travelled to join them: The real power of government lies with the people, and the people have to act as if to govern for the General Welfare, and force their corrupted representatives to come along to that principle.

This was the principle on which LaRouche marked out the battle over D.C. General, as one to be fought "as an issue of national and international importance." This was the principle on which Martin Luther King organized a movement not for any one group or race of people, but to save the whole nation. Now, in the midst of economic collapse, what is at stake in Washington is the world.