

Sports \$ Speculators Eye D.C. Hospital Land

by Edward Spannaus

Just as Presidential pre-candidate Lyndon LaRouche and *EIR* warned last year, private business interests in the District of Columbia are now visibly conspiring with local officials to grab the real estate around the former D.C. General Hospital for the development of sports facilities and other commercial uses.

Legislative measures are now being taken to transfer jurisdiction over the land-use from the Federal government to the District of Columbia, for use in promoting the 2012 Olympics bid, and the likely relocation of a major-league baseball team to the nation's capital.

In a webcast held on March 21 of last year, Lyndon LaRouche pointed to exactly this process. Addressing the question of D.C. General, LaRouche identified the culprits as "a bunch of people, tied to Katharine Graham, the publisher of the *Washington Post*, and her crowd, who run Washington, D.C., like a private dictatorship—a private plantation.

"Now, Katie Graham's crowd, came up some years ago, with a number of packages to beautify Washington. Which means, essentially, get the African-Americans out! Or, most of them. Keep a few, for show. How will they do that? Well, you take that riverside, down there, where D.C. General Hospital is located now, with the jail and RFK Stadium. Now, go down, and look at the maps: Look at the plans that have been made by Katie Graham's friends. Look at the organization that was created around that, and around the idea of the 2012 Summer Olympics, between here, Washington, and Baltimore."

LaRouche said that, if this were to go through, it would mean "Negro Removal" from the District, real estate development in place of the necessary full-service hospital, and "no health care, for the greater part of the population of Washington, D.C.; in a period in which epidemic disease is becoming a greater danger."

Land Transfer Proposed

EIR documented the plans to develop the riverfront area around D.C. General for the 2012 Olympics, including a proposal to renovate and expand RFK Stadium adjacent to the hospital campus. And, *EIR* showed how, in the longer run, the National Capital Planning Commission is proposing to turn the entire area into a complex of high-rise buildings, parks, and even a boat marina on the nearby Anacostia River. (See *EIR* March 30, and April 27, 2001.)

On Jan. 15, the D.C. City Council hearing considered

legislation proposed by Mayor Anthony Williams, which would transfer the land from Federal to District jurisdiction, and give District officials the authority to develop the property for "any municipal purpose." At that hearing, members of the LaRouche-initiated Coalition to Save D.C. General Hospital, as well as others, called for the restoration of a public hospital on the site (the 1000-bed, take-all-comers facility had been closed last May), and accused the city of plotting to use the property for Major League baseball or the 2012 Olympics bid. City officials at the hearing denied any such plans.

However, by the next day, Mayor Williams was admitting that the D.C. General campus would be "a component of our Olympic bid" and that any new use would "complement" the District's bid for the 2012 games. Washington is now one of four finalists seeking the 2012 Olympics. At the same time, Williams claimed that some sort of health-care facility would be kept on the site; all that is left there now, is a pathetic "urgent care"-type clinic which has no capacity to deal with trauma patients.

The Coalition has documented 70 unnecessary deaths that have occurred during the past nine months as a result of the shutdown of D.C. General's top-flight trauma center.

Then, on Jan. 17, the Washington area was named by Major League Baseball Commissioner Bud Selig, "the prime candidate" among U.S. cities, for a relocated baseball team, possibly in 2003. Under a two-year deal reached by the D.C. Sports and Entertainment Commission and the Washington Baseball Club—an investment group led by Frederic Malek, a former co-owner of the Texas Rangers—RFK Stadium in Washington is to be leased by such a new team, until a new stadium is built. Possible locations for the now-projected \$400 million, 44,000-seat ballpark include the present RFK site, Mt. Vernon Square, Southeast Federal Center, and Buzard Point. The latter two sites would fit right in to the "redevelopment," i.e., gentrification, plans for the Anacostia waterfront area.

A public meeting was then held by city officials at the D.C. Armory on Jan. 23 to discuss plans for the D.C. General campus. Despite the efforts of those running the meeting to declare the issue of D.C. General Hospital off the agenda, all of the 30 or so community representatives who spoke, raised the issue of D.C. General and the need for a "full-service hospital" on the site. A LaRouche representative held up a pamphlet on "KKKatie Graham" and D.C. General Hospital, which was widely circulated by the LaRouche campaign last summer; it contains a detailed exposé of the real-estate scams planned for the area, including those around the Olympics, and the "Anacostia Waterfront Initiative."

Meanwhile, a group of D.C. Council members, led by David Catania, is intending to try to force the Mayor to put a new hospital and trauma center on the site. "The junta is gone," Catania says. "There's no Control Board to protect the Mayor now." The Financial Control Board closed D.C. General Hospital in 2001, annulling the Council's unanimous vote to keep it open and fund it.