

Kerry Wins the Debate, So Far

by Nancy Spannaus

Despite insane restrictions on any real dialogue and confrontation, imposed by the will of President Bush's handlers in pre-debate discussions, the first debate of the 2004 Presidential election series resulted in a clear victory for Democratic nominee Sen. John Kerry. What the longer-term impact of this victory will mean for the outcome of the election, remains to be seen.

For the most part, everybody followed the rules in this encounter, which occurred at the University of Miami at Coral Gables. Moderator Jim Lehrer of the Public Broadcasting Service, declared his intention to enforce them, and he followed through on this declaration, keeping the candidates

within the absurd time limits of two minutes, a minute and a half, and 30 seconds, and limiting extended exploration of any particular topic.

The only significant break from the prescribed protocol for the news media—which said that journalists were not to photograph reactions from the other candidate, or the audience, when either Senator Kerry or President Bush were speaking—occurred with CNN (and perhaps others), who chose to show the candidates side by side on the screen. This visual aid spoke volumes to the viewership, which was able to see President Bush go through facial contortions, scowls, and other signs of obvious distress while Senator Kerry was speaking.

Bush didn't crack up—in part since the rules prevented Senator Kerry from directly confronting him, in part since the Senator “lightened up” at the end, and didn't go in for the kill. But Bush's “body language” will draw increased attention to the question of his mental health, the issue which former Democratic Presidential candidate Lyndon LaRouche has defined as *the* major issue in the countdown to the election on Nov. 2. Over the course of the next three debates, two more between Bush and Kerry, and one between the Vice-Presidential candidates, the prominence of the mental health issue is likely to grow.

Starting two days before the debate, LaRouche movement activists had begun a mass distribution of LaRouche's statement (see below), particularly in the swing state of



At the Presidential debate on Sept. 30, Senator Kerry was confident and hard-hitting, with a Presidential demeanor; while President Bush grimaced and scowled like an enraged adolescent.

Ohio, but also on the University of Miami campus in Florida where the debate was scheduled to be held, in Washington, D.C., and in other population centers around the country. Half a million copies are currently going out, and the impact of LaRouche's charges on Bush's insanity as a strategic issue will become even greater with the former candidate's international webcast, which will be held Oct. 6 in Washington, D.C.

The Issue of Iraq

The agenda of the first debate was military and security policy, and therefore it was lawful that the questioning would focus primarily on the Iraq War. Following up on the pathway he took with his Sept. 20 breakthrough speech at New York University, Senator Kerry took command of the issue right away, and replied to each question by setting forth specific policies, as well as by effectively skewering the Bush Administration for its incompetence, if not outright lies.

President Bush could barely maintain his composure as Senator Kerry quoted to him a section of the book written by his father, in which George H. W. Bush argued that the United States should not march on to Baghdad (in 1991) because we would be perceived as occupiers, and subject our troops to disaster. G.W. was outright testy in responding to Senator Kerry's claim that the President had to be pushed by his father, and former National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft, into taking the Iraq issue to the United Nations in 2002.

In addition to attacks, Senator Kerry was able to put forward some of his concrete policy proposals, despite the time constraints. These included his proposal to hold a conference of Iraq's neighbors, as part of the plan to stabilize the area and reach out to the Muslim world, as well as his statement that the United States must declare its intention not to stay in Iraq permanently. Citing stories about Bush Administration plans for 14 permanent bases in the area, and about the priority that the invading army gave to protecting the Oil Ministry and facilities, above other vital concerns, Kerry said the United States must show that it has no long-term designs on Iraq.

There were no surprises in President Bush's responses to questions on the Iraq issue, as he just kept repeating that he had made "the difficult decisions," done "hard work," and had the "will" to win, against some one who had said that the Iraq War was the "wrong war at the wrong place at the wrong time."

While the Sept. 30 debate gave a clear indication of Senator Kerry's Iraq policy, it is the strategic issues posed by the presently accelerating global monetary-financial crisis, which will be decisive in the election, and the next Presidency. His views on these matters have yet to be laid out.

In fact, a lack of full clarity on crucial issues such as these is likely to last through the election itself, while Senator Kerry concentrates on seeking to reach out to the broader layer of eligible voters, in order to try to guarantee his vote. He wants to attract votes first, and define policy later.

Economics itself will not be the subject of debate between

Senator Kerry and the President until Oct. 13, by which time the political environment around the issue of the physical economy will have been heated up more intensively by the LaRouche political movement. In between, the two will meet in St. Louis on Oct. 8 for a "town hall" format debate, which may be slightly harder for the Bush crowd to control. Not that they're not trying. The protocol signed by the two campaigns even calls for the moderator to cut off a questioner from the (pre-screened) "public," if the questioner deviates significantly from the text which he wrote on his card.

One close political observer had told the LaRouche campaign that he was advising the Kerry campaign to call for a suspension of the rules, because of the seriousness of the crisis which the nation faces—a crisis that calls for an attention span of more than two minutes on any particular topic. Such a move would call the President's bluff, and potentially shatter his composure. On the other hand, just a continuous confrontation with the reality of the economy, which he insists on denying, might lead to the visible crackup of our insane President, a crackup of which we only saw the harbingers during the first debate.

Statement From LaRouche

Bush's Mental Illness The Number One Issue

On Sept. 27, with just two days to go before the first of three Presidential debates between President George W. Bush and Sen. John Kerry, Lyndon LaRouche, the former candidate for the 2004 Democratic Party Presidential nomination, issued the following statement—titled "LaRouche: 'The Number One Issue in the Presidential Debates Is George W. Bush's Mental Illness'"—through the LaRouche Political Action Committee:

The as-yet unspoken, but pivotal issue to be taken up in the upcoming Presidential campaign debates between George W. Bush and John Kerry is the mental illnesses from which President Bush suffers. The most concise and frank, yet compassionate account of George W. Bush's multiple mental disorders can be found in the 2004 book-length study by Dr. Justin Frank, *Bush on the Couch: Inside the Mind of the President* (New York: HarperCollins, 2004). Dr. Frank is a leading psychoanalyst who teaches at George Washington University Medical Center. His professional credentials are impressive, and his in-depth study of the President, based on massive amounts of public documentation—autobiographical and biographical accounts, countless hours of video footage of