

Glass-Steagall Push Intersects Growing Mass-Strike Ferment

by Nancy Spannaus

May 20—It's not like August 2009, yet, but the mass-strike ferment among Americans is coming back, stronger than ever. Between the overt threat of mass murder of senior citizens through proposed Federal cuts in Medicare, and the devastating cuts in life-saving city services such as fire-fighting and police protection, a large portion of the U.S. population is again feeling the impulse to act, and they are beginning to show up at Congressional town meetings, as well as on the streets of cities like New York and Madison, Wisc.

It is becoming increasingly clear that, after more than two-and-a-half years, and trillions of dollars in bailouts, and billions of dollars of budget cuts, that the only beneficiaries of these Bush and Obama policies have been the Wall Street and City of London swindlers in the financial sector, who created the deepening crisis. This recognition is fueling both the anger, and the sense that "something must be done," which is drawing larger crowds to local events.

Imagine the surprise of the Congressmen, who decided to hold town meetings during their mid-May recess, and found upwards of 500 local citizens cramming into the halls. This is what happened to Rep. Brad Sherman (D-Calif.) and Rep. Jamie Herrera (R-Wash.) this week—and that's only a small sample of the activity around the country. For the most part, these citizens were enraged—and they let their Congressman know it.

But the decisive element of any mass strike, as stu-

dents of history know, lies not in the numbers, or intensity, of popular action, but in the quality of the leadership. In this respect, the crucial element of this new wave of popular upsurge is the expanding presence of members and supporters of the LaRouche Political Action Committee (LPAC), with their uncompromising demand that the citizens "burn the tailfeathers" of their Congressmen until they act to ram through the Glass-Steagall bill (H.R. 1489) now before Congress.

In the most successful interventions, the LPAC organizers have effectively shifted the agenda to the urgent requirement for passing Glass-Steagall, which is, in fact, the only measure which would end the budget cuts, by removing trillions of bankers' bad debts from the Federal books—and freeing up funds for saving the cities and states. "The only budget item that should be slashed is the bailout," is the message that LPAC spokesmen, notably its six Congressional candidates, are delivering to the protesting crowds.

Neither Left nor Right: Glass-Steagall!

Washington State's Third Congressional District is a large sprawling one in the southwestern corner of the state, abutting Oregon across the Columbia River. Republican Congresswoman Jamie Herrera Buetler won her first Congressional election for an open seat in 2010, beating out Democrat Danny Heck, who had campaigned in favor of restoring Glass-Steagall. Herrera is



United Federation of Teachers

A new phase of the mass strike that began in Summer 2009 has erupted against draconian budget cuts: More and more, citizens are recognizing that the solution is Glass-Steagall. Here, New York City public employees protest on May 12 against the bank bailout.

known as a Tea Party Republican, and she defended her vote for budget-hacker Paul Ryan's (R-Wisc.) budget before a crowd of about 500 angry people in a high school auditorium in Vancouver on May 16.

A team of LPAC organizers distributed leaflets on Glass-Steagall to the crowd as they arrived at the meeting. The atmosphere was very tense, with crusty old leftists holding signs attacking budget cuts, and many a shouting match between them and conservatives who supported the cuts. But what became clear, is that both "sides," once engaged by the LPAC organizers, were in support of Glass-Steagall.

For example: One veteran, observing the LaRouche organizers, decided to put aside his own sign, and organize around Glass-Steagall. He got a good opportunity when a woman came by, took an LPAC leaflet, and then decided to give it back once she saw LaRouche's name. The veteran accosted her: "No! You should take that leaflet; they're talking about Glass-Steagall; it's important!" The woman turned around and took the leaflet. A similar process occurred with a leftist who started off defending Obama from the LPAC organizer who charged that Obama would privatize Social Security; once he heard LPAC talking about Glass-Steagall, he joined the organizing crew, and urged others to take the literature.

At a followup meeting of 150-200 in Centralia, Wash.

on May 18, the atmosphere was similarly charged. During the question period a wide swath of people, not just leftists, appealed for an end to budget cuts for health care. When LaRouche Congressional candidate Dave Christie addressed the crowd, he began by saying he was with LaRouche. There were general groans from the audience—only to have them turn to general applause when Christie went on to talk about stopping the bailout with Glass-Steagall.

Taking Initiative

Another measure of the increasing mass-strike ferment has come from the self-activation of LPAC supporters, and the responsiveness of individuals who have not been political before, to engage in political meetings and activity.

The latter was shown at two significant events over the past week. The first, in Paterson, N.J., brought out 27 people, to hear an in-depth discussion of the Hamiltonian tradition, by LaRouche Congressional candidate Diane Sare and LPAC organizer Bob Wesser. Eight of those attending had never been at a LaRouche-connected meeting before, and the response was not only positive, but oriented toward action. LPAC supporters in New Jersey, along with Sare, have already been very active in pushing Glass-Steagall resolutions in city councils throughout the state.

The second LaRouche-sponsored event which reflected the mass-strike dynamic was in Salt Lake City, where LaRouche's Western States spokesman Harley Schlanger flew in to address more than 50 people. Many people came to the meeting simply from having heard a LaRouche spokesman on the radio, and one brought three friends. The discussion itself tended to move toward demands for advice on how to organize both neighbors and members of Congress to ram through Glass-Steagall.

Equally indicative, has been the fact that many LPAC supporters who have previously been afraid to speak publicly in favor of Glass-Steagall, are now mobilizing themselves to address their city councils and fellow citizens. All of a sudden, the fear of standing up

and defying popular opinion, both through distributing LPAC literature, and addressing larger groups, is being overcome.

These citizens report that they find themselves having to take on the small-mindedness of their neighbors, who tend to spend all their time discussing such burning issues as the need for more city pooper-scoopers, and, instead, forcing onto the agenda the larger reality of the global economic collapse, and the danger of a new Dark Age, if Glass-Steagall is not rammed through immediately.

Mass Action Needed

At present, the concrete results from this growing mobilization for Glass-Steagall seem small indeed (see LPAC Glass-Steagall page at www.larouhepac.com). H.R. 1489, introduced by Democrat Marcy Kaptur of Ohio, has only six co-sponsors (although a number of other Congressmen swear they have signed on, and their names just aren't registered yet). Only small numbers of city councils, national institutions such as labor unions, and state legislators have signed on, and taken action.

The most significant and active force for Glass-Steagall, other than LPAC, is the International Association of Machinists (IAM), one of the largest industrial unions in the United States, which campaigned for Glass-Steagall during its national lobby days on May 10-11 (see below).

Other unionists are active as well. On May 9, an LPAC supporter got the Columbia Pacific Building Trades Council to unanimously endorse LPAC's resolution for Glass-Steagall. Two days later, the Northwest Oregon Labor Council did the same.

Also very promising was the fact that, on May 12, the Democratic Party of Multnomah County, Ore., where Portland is located, passed a resolution calling for the immediate reinstatement of Glass-Steagall. The individual who organized this action—and is following up by organizing a blast of pressure on Oregon's Congressmen and Senators—prepared for this development by careful study of the LaRouchePAC website, and by leading a study group of fellow Democrats, to educate them on history and economics.

Under the current conditions of breakdown crisis, and in light of the fact that mass layoffs are sending tens of thousands of people into the streets, this kind of slow, methodical preparation is not the pathway to victory. Rather, the natural leaders of the population are called

upon to take extraordinary action, as in war, to mobilize around the Glass-Steagall banner. It is intolerable to submit to the "parliamentary process," where Glass-Steagall is, first, slowly pushed through Committee, then brought to the floor, then prepared for a vote. Hundreds of lawmakers must be pressured, relentlessly, to sign on to H.R. 1489 *now*—with the demand that it be implemented with no further delay.

If more than 300 Congressmen can be impelled to sign on to Rep. Ron Paul's (R-Texas) penny-ante bill for auditing the Federal Reserve (as was done in 2010), surely that same number, or more, can be "motivated" to sign on to the one measure which can actually free the country of debt-slavery, and start a recovery: Glass-Steagall.

You say it can't be done? The mass strike—with the proper leadership—says it can.