

# Fight emerges over LaRouche's role in Va. Democratic Party

by Nancy Spannaus

In February 1990, during a Virginia Democratic Party Central Committee meeting in Richmond, arrogant party chairman Paul Goldman announced that there was no qualified Democrat available to run for office against incumbent Republican Sen. John Warner. When I stood up and said, "That's a lie," the cowardly Goldman called the police and had me removed from the room, as many of the assembled Democrats jeered me. No one publicly objected to Goldman's actions.

What a contrast was the scene at the Democratic Central Committee meeting held on June 13, 1998. At the conclusion of that meeting, state party chairman Ken Plum announced that, at a May 2 meeting, the party's Steering Committee had voted to uphold the Loudoun County Democratic Committee's (LCDC) denial of membership to associates of Lyndon LaRouche. A longtime Democratic activist from the 8th Congressional District (whom I had never even met), stood up to demand that the vote be reconsidered by the full Central Committee, and overturned. After a short debate, the full committee, without any dissent, agreed to debate the matter at its next meeting in September.

The contrast between those two meetings highlights some of what has changed in the Democratic Party over the last eight years. Having lost all statewide races since 1994, the Virginia Democrats are now an embattled organization, fighting for a pathway to regain political support. Leading Democrats, including Democratic National Committee member and Virginia AFL-CIO head Danny LeBlanc, are flirting with the Republicans, thus threatening even greater losses for the party. Under these conditions, for the first time, some party leaders have decided that they have to stand up publicly against those forces in the party who have attempted to exclude, and destroy, Lyndon LaRouche and his associates.

In fact, those forces who orchestrated the 11-10 Steering Committee vote supporting the LCDC's removal of LaRouche associates, including this author, are the same as those who organized the 1990 expulsion. They are friends of the same Paul Goldman, who still puts himself forward as the architect of the "successful" era of the party, and has made bids since the 1997 gubernatorial loss, to put his own people into control of the party. Among them are Larry Framme, mid-1980s chair of the party; Abbi Easter, longtime treasurer of the party; and Danny LeBlanc, the AFL-CIO head who has

played a major role in bankrolling the party, but consistently endorses candidates and strategies which compromise labor's vital interests. (LeBlanc also distinguished himself in 1990 by threatening to have me arrested, when I visited his office to obtain a candidate's questionnaire.)

## What's at stake

What lies ahead is a nearly three-month political battle over the role of LaRouche Democrats in the party. The result of this battle will go a long way to deciding if the Virginia party will revive.

The LCDC position against LaRouche is based upon the body of lies and slanders which have been circulated by the public-private concert of action that persecuted and prosecuted the LaRouche movement from at least 1982 on. The grouping, which I have dubbed the "Loudoun loonies," argues that LaRouche and his associates are "not Democrats" because, number one, LaRouche opposed those "turncoat" Democrats who worked with the Republicans to put LaRouche in prison; and, number two, LaRouche is described by his enemies in the organized-crime linked Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith and pro-drug-legalization circles, among other places, as "anti-Semitic" and "racist."

While many Virginia Democrats might have been susceptible to the LCDC argument years ago, things began to change substantially in 1994, when LaRouche Democrats, led by this author's Defeat That Son-of-a-Bush Committee, played a decisive role in derailing Oliver North's GOP bid for a seat in the U.S. Senate. Since that time, LaRouche Democrats have maintained a strong attack on the Pat Robertson circles around North, which also happen to be the major base for the assault on the Presidency, and for the anti-human policies of Virginia's Republican Governors George Allen and Jim Gilmore.

The potential for LaRouche Democrats helping to turn around the party's decline was greatly damaged in 1996, when national party chairman Donald Fowler successfully ordered the Virginia leadership to invalidate two duly-elected LaRouche delegates to the Democratic National Convention. This led to a court case, which is still before the Federal court of appeals, in which LaRouche argued that the party was violating the Voting Rights Act.

As in 1990, many longtime party activists, particularly in the pro-civil rights regions of the state, knew that Fowler was wrong. They also are fully aware that the prosecutions against LaRouche, and his Virginia associates who are still in jail, were political injustices. The first signs of moves against the anti-LaRouche witch-hunt came when the 10th District Democratic Committee unanimously overturned Loudoun's expulsion, in February 1998. Now the fight has escalated, to involving the full statewide Central Committee.

As I said in my letter to the full party leadership, "Democrats must begin to represent the principles of FDR and JFK again — and that requires including LaRouche." There is now hope that this will occur.