

Pennsylvania state Legislative Black Caucus, who organized the first state Democratic Party rally to defend the President against Starr's assault on the Presidency, at the State Capitol in Harrisburg.

It is not surprising that some major U.S. media, in the wake of the strong African-American turnout, began touting a Jesse Jackson Presidential bid in 2000 to further galvanize the traditional civil rights constituents. But, Jackson was missing in action throughout the McDade-Murtha fight during the Spring-Summer 1998, and his son, Rep. Jesse Jackson, Jr. (D-Ill.), was actually an impediment within the Congressional Black Caucus in the McDade-Murtha fight. Similarly, Jackson was of no help to Sen. Carol Moseley-Braun (D-Ill.), the only serious Democratic casualty in the mid-term election. Moseley-Braun, with help from the First Lady, made a dramatic comeback during the final days of the campaign, but fell short of victory.

But that kind of sabotage by the usual establishment media types and the self-destruct deviant Democrats will not blunt the reality of Election Day 1998: The FDR coalition of minorities, labor, small business, and farmers have reasserted their primacy within Democratic Party politics, and the Democratic National Committee, the Democratic Leadership Council, Vice President Al Gore, and anyone else stubborn enough to deny that reality will pay dearly, long before the year 2000 ballots are cast.

## Labor mobilized the 'Forgotten Man'

by Marianna Wertz

AFL-CIO President John Sweeney greeted the Nov. 3 election results as ushering in "a new era of people-powered politics, with union members turning out at record levels and making the difference in race after race, and with African-American and Latino participation way up." The AFL-CIO's dogged determination, since 1996, to change the *culture* of the union movement, in order to launch large-scale, grassroots organizing of what Franklin Roosevelt called "the forgotten man," laid the basis for an electoral win that shocked even Sweeney and his allies.

The union drive registered *half a million* new voters. An unprecedented 23% of voters in the election were members of union households, despite the fact that union households represent only 17% of the American voting-age population. This is up from 14% union household participation in 1994, the last mid-term election. This union share of the vote is higher than in the 1992 Presidential election, and nearly as high as the 1996 Presidential election, in which turnout is always much higher than in mid-term elections.

As with the large turnout of minorities, which was directly sparked by the LaRouche movement's fight to save the Presidency, thousands of labor leaders endorsed the call to save the Presidency circulated by the LaRouche movement in the weeks leading up to the election. In Harrisburg, Pennsylvania on Sept. 28, the first-in-the-nation Democratic Party-sponsored rally to support President Clinton, at which AFL-CIO Pennsylvania President Bill George brought Sweeney's greetings, was also addressed by the Schiller Institute's Phil Valenti, and helped spark the nationwide movement that reversed the Gingrichites' fortunes.

Indeed, the labor movement's turnout reflected a determination to fight for the better side of the Clinton Presidency—saving Social Security, passing the Patients' Bill of Rights, defending public education, defeating anti-union legislation, and raising the minimum wage. Yet, the AFL-CIO could have turned out thousands more union voters than they did, and potentially changed the balance of Congress, were it not for Clinton's and other leading Democrats' failings—particularly their insane support of free-trade policies. In the weeks before the election, as the Monica Lewinsky affair was dominating the national media, the AFL-CIO Executive Council met to decide whether to issue a statement in support of Clinton, as proposed by Sweeney. The council was so divided over Clinton, *mainly because of his support of free trade*, that no statement could be issued. As a result, many working class people sat out the election.

Despite this, the impact of the labor vote was decisive in many state and Federal elections, and makes clear the importance of organizing Americans around "bread and butter" issues.

### Re-engage 'ordinary Americans'

The change in the labor movement was instituted after the November 1996 elections, which, despite millions of dollars spent by the AFL-CIO, failed to defeat the Gingrichites' control over Congress. The AFL-CIO's glitzy, media-driven campaign in 1996 generally flopped, because it didn't engage the population. Since then, the labor federation has been mobilizing its 13 million members to organize, and to reach out to the unorganized, the unemployed, senior citizens, women, minorities—everyone who could potentially be organized to join a union and/or fight to elect pro-labor politicians. They defined the fight around issues, rather than individuals, and as a non-partisan question, rather than blanket support for Democrats—many of whom were abandoning their principles wholesale, to join what LaRouche has dubbed the "deviant Democrats."

The results were clear on Nov. 3. A jubilant Sweeney told the press the next day: "All of you who have been out and around the country during the election cycle, know how huge the union effort has been. And you know that our focus was on one-to-one contact with individual union members and their family members, reaching back to our roots, to make this the year of the worksite, and the doorstep and the telephone.

“We went into this election season continuing the plan that we started in 1996: focussed on working family issues — pocketbook issues, like health care, education, Social Security and good jobs with good wages; educate our members about those issues, and where the candidates stand on those issues, and then get union members to turn out and hold candidates accountable around these everyday issues.

“If we could do this, we knew we’d do something that was not just spectacularly successful, but that was historic: begin to re-engage ordinary working Americans who had come to believe that politics had nothing to do with them, people who didn’t vote in 1994.

“The unions of the AFL-CIO put together a coordinated effort that registered half a million more union members and family members. We sent out nine and a half million pieces of mail to union households, made five and a half million personal telephone calls, created 511 separate pieces of work-site literature, to educate our members about issues and candidates’ records on the issues, and then got those leaflets out in hundreds of thousands of worksites, and had 392 labor ’98 coordinators working on contests for House, Senate, governor, as well as state and local races.”

### The Nevada example

At the press conference, Sweeney pointed to Nevada as the leading example of how the organizing was done. The report should remind *EIR* readers of the LaRouche movement’s model campaigns in the 1970s and ’80s, when hundreds of “citizen candidates” campaigned for every office from local school board to U.S. Senate.

Maggie Carlton, a member of Culinary Workers Local 226 and a waitress at Treasure Island Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas, addressed the press conference, describing what it was like for a working person to get into politics for the first time. She was recruited to run through the AFL-CIO candidate training program, and won her election to the state Senate by 58%. Carlton is the first union member to hold a Senate seat in the state’s history.

The Nevada mobilization was huge. Rank-and-file union members visited fellow unionists at home and had face-to-face talks with 39,000 union members, 90% of the registered union voters in the state. Seven hundred volunteers were on the streets on Election Day, and hundreds more took campaign literature to 21,000 targetted homes over the weekend before the election, according to Sweeney. In addition, a phone bank ran every day for two weeks leading up to the election. Every local union in the Nevada AFL-CIO had a program urging their members to register to vote.

The key issues around which the AFL-CIO conducted its mobilization were Social Security, health care, education, and the economy—fighting the growing drive by the Gingrich Congress for privatization in all sectors. According to national exit polling by Voter News Service, 67% of union voters said that *issues* are what mattered most to them in the election—

more than party politics and far more than the Lewinsky scandal.

Beginning in September, an escalating series of town hall meetings on key issues—Social Security, the Patients’ Bill of Rights, and the defeat of “fast track” trade legislation—mobilized several thousand activists to join in the electoral arena, to guarantee that the 106th Congress pass pro-labor legislation.

Labor leaders cite the June defeat of Proposition 226 in California, which would have forced labor into a time-consuming procedure in order to use membership dues for political causes, as the real spark that ignited the successful drive to Nov. 3. The “Paycheck Deception Act,” as the AFL-CIO dubbed it, was defeated in 27 states—everywhere it was tried—including on Election Day in Oregon.

An AFL-CIO-sponsored measure in Washington State on Nov. 3, where 4,000 volunteers collected 288,000 signatures to put Initiative 688 on the ballot, succeeded in raising Washington State’s minimum wage to \$6.50 an hour.

### New Bretton Woods

During the Nov. 4 press conference, a reporter for *EIR* asked Sweeney about “the faction fight now building between those people who want to bail out the banks, and those that want to save the people,” and, in the context of the global financial meltdown, what he thought of Lyndon LaRouche’s New Bretton Woods proposal.

Sweeney responded, first, that “the labor movement is supporting candidates in both parties who support working families, and who support the issues that our members are concerned about.” He then continued, “As far as the globalization issues and the possibility of convening a Bretton Woods conference, we have discussed, we constantly discuss, the global challenges and the problems that so many of the industries where we represent workers are going through. The steel industry is a good example of a union that, together with the industry, is working very closely to address the global market issues, in terms of their products.

“We have been very supportive of workers in the countries that have been most dramatically affected as a result of the financial crisis, especially in Asia, and are working with unions where there are unions, and working on behalf of workers where they do not have anybody to speak for them,” Sweeney said. He referred the reporter to the AFL-CIO’s recent Executive Council resolution calling for a “global New Deal” (see *EIR*, Nov. 6).

Six hundred union members ran for public office in the Nov. 3 election, backed by the AFL-CIO. The federation’s announced goal is to recruit and train a total of 2,000 trade union members to run for public office in the 2000 election—called the “2000 in 2000” campaign. The clear intent is to reverse the control of the U.S. Congress and many state houses in the millennial election, and give back the leadership of this nation to those who will remember the “forgotten man.”