

Al Gore, Democratic Party Commit Suicide in Arkansas

by Harley Schlanger

If the examples of Michigan and Virginia, where Democratic Party state officials had already acted with vicious stupidity in overturning the will of the voters, were not enough to demonstrate the suicidal intentions of the party leadership, the actions of the Arkansas Democratic Party in Hot Springs on June 24 offered conclusive evidence. In a kangaroo court run by the Credentials Committee, delegates pledged to Democratic Presidential pre-candidate Lyndon LaRouche were denied seats at the special state convention held to select delegates to the National Convention in Los Angeles on Aug. 14-17.

LaRouche received 53,181 votes in the Arkansas Democratic primary on May 23. That total was 22% of the votes cast, which entitled LaRouche to at least seven delegates to the National Convention. While candidate LaRouche stated that he was not surprised by the vote, Arkansas Democratic officials were in a state of shock. In commenting on the vote, the head of the Gore campaign in Arkansas, Attorney General Mark Pryor, told the state's leading newspaper, the *Democrat Gazette* of Little Rock, that he had been unaware "of any sort of presence LaRouche had in the state."

He and other party officials were made fully aware of that support on June 9, when LaRouche supporters Rev. Robert L. Aycok and Erma Jennings filed a slate of delegates at party headquarters in Little Rock, in compliance with party rules. In their press statements, they made clear that they and the other LaRouche delegates expected the party to abide by its rules and bylaws, and seat the delegates.

Democrats Violate Their Own Rules

Under the Arkansas Election Code, each party is required to hold a binding preferential primary election. The code specifies that delegates to the National Convention "shall be apportioned according to the votes cast for each candidate." This

rule was reinforced in the Arkansas Delegate Selection Plan, which was approved by the Democratic National Committee (DNC). The plan states that the primary shall be governed by the election laws of the State of Arkansas. Prior to the May 23 primary vote, there had been no opposition raised against this plan.

Thus, under state code and state and national Democratic Party guidelines, the 22% vote for LaRouche meant that delegates pledged to him should be official delegates to the National Convention.

However, on June 15, the LaRouche delegates received a letter from Arkansas Democratic Party Chairman Vaughn McQuary, informing them that they would not be seated at the special State Convention on June 24, nor credentialed to attend the National Convention as delegates. Instead, the delegates for LaRouche, elected by more than 53,000 voters, were being given to Al Gore. In making this ruling, McQuary cited the series of slanderous and lying letters from DNC Chairman Joe Andrew. In his first letter of Jan. 18, Andrew had ordered state party chairs to "disregard any votes that might be cast for Mr. LaRouche."

The action by McQuary led to a showdown in the Circuit Court of Pulaski County, Arkansas Third Division, in Little Rock on June 20. Attorney John Wesley Hall, representing LaRouche and his delegates—and, in fact, the more than 53,000 voters whose votes were being thrown out by Andrew—argued that the ruling by Andrew was in violation of Arkansas state law. In response, Arkansas state party lawyer Robin Carroll argued that the party had the right to exclusion, citing the decision by the U.S. Supreme Court in *LaRouche v. Fowler*. (Former DNC Chairman Donald Fowler had excluded LaRouche's delegates from the National Convention in the 1996 Presidential campaign.) Carroll's argument means that the Democratic Party has chosen to hide behind the robes

of the judicial fascists William Rehnquist, Antonin Scalia, and Clarence Thomas, whose vote in the LaRouche case was aimed at nullifying the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

During the hearing, Carroll brought up Andrew's characterization of LaRouche as "racist and anti-Semitic." Hall objected to this, saying that the LaRouche slate includes both African-Americans and Jews. In a highly provocative manner, demonstrating that it is the DNC members and their hired guns such as Carroll who are the racists, Carroll said, with a glance at Reverend Aycock, who is African-American, that just because a black man joins the Ku Klux Klan doesn't mean that it is not a racist organization!

On June 23, after a hearing in which Judge John Ward stated that this case requires serious thought, he ruled in favor of the Democratic Party, echoing the previous rulings in *LaRouche v. Fowler*, that the First Amendment right of association gives the party the right of exclusion.

For the moment, at least in that courtroom and among the Arkansas Democratic Party Executive, Jim Crow lives again!

Battle in Hot Springs

For the LaRouche delegates, the argument by the Democratic Party in favor of their exclusion was not a defeat. Instead, it proved that the backers of Al Gore among the DNC are willing to destroy the party in order to assure that his nomination occurs smoothly, with no dissenting voices, and that they, therefore, must escalate in order to save the nation from a George W. Bush Presidency. At a public meeting in Little Rock that night, and in numerous newspaper and radio interviews, LaRouche spokesmen Debra Hanania-Freeman and Harley Schlanger stressed that this is a suicidal course which Democratic Party leaders nationally, and in Arkansas, have adopted.

At the special State Convention on June 24, Schlanger appeared with four LaRouche delegates to present their case before the Credentials Committee, which was presided over by McQuary, who asked why they were appearing before the committee. After handing him papers requesting that the delegates be seated, Schlanger told McQuary and his two colleagues that they know that the court ruling was neither right nor just.

"To throw out votes cast by more than 53,000 voters is a disgrace," said Schlanger. "Instead of mobilizing the historic constituencies of the Democratic Party, you are rejecting them. This is suicidal. Your actions in disenfranchising 53,000 Democratic voters will put George W. Bush in the White House."

McQuary responded: "Your quarrel isn't with me, the court has ruled. This policy was decided by *Fowler* in 1996 and has been upheld in the courts."

"The courts are wrong, and you know it," replied Schlanger, who reminded him that the courts upheld segregation for many years, before the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education*, when the Supreme Court ruled it unconstitutional.

At this point, Reverend Aycock, a Vietnam War veteran,

argued eloquently for justice, which requires his inclusion as a delegate. "I remember 1957 in Little Rock," he said, alluding to the desegregation of the city's schools under Federal orders, and enforced under the protection of Federal troops. "At that time, the government fought on the side of the disenfranchised. That made a very big impression upon me as a young boy, which I never forgot. . . . Now, in the year 2000, as someone over 50 years old, I see actions being taken to disenfranchise [voters] by those who are supposed to represent them. This frightens me."

Aycock was seconded by Frank Bostick, another LaRouche delegate. Bostick, a rancher and a contractor, said, "I'm one of the unwashed. I went to war in World War II and served my country to preserve democracy. Now, as a veteran, look at how I'm being treated." He looked at the three members of the committee straight in the eye and said, firmly, "You know this is wrong."

With no discussion, the committee then voted 3-0 to uphold the exclusion. The session concluded with Schlanger reiterating to the committee that this kind of blind obedience to the lying Chairman Andrew will destroy the party. "You may have a legal loophole, but you don't have justice on your side. We will keep fighting, because we will not let you put George W. Bush in the White House."

On to Los Angeles

The Credentials Committee hearing was observed by a reporter from the *Economist* magazine of London, which had covered the LaRouche case in Arkansas, after the May 22 primary. Taking copious notes, she later acknowledged to LaRouche delegates that she could hardly believe what she had just seen. "And they call themselves democratic?" she asked, sardonically.

LaRouche activists held a rally outside the Convention Center, to inform the delegates of their exclusion. LaRouche's call for Andrew's resignation (see *EIR*, June 23, p. 82) was handed to those delegates who would stop to talk. While some feigned disinterest, many others expressed shock and concern. One Gore delegate agreed that it is wrong to throw out the votes. "Why would Gore do that?" he asked. A state legislator asked for a copy of Judge Ward's ruling, as he said it sounds too shocking to be true.

Reporters from the Hot Springs newspaper and Associated Press took pictures and interviewed the LaRouche delegates.

In his statements to the press, Reverend Aycock affirmed his intention to attend the National Convention in Los Angeles. Just like the Mississippi Freedom Democrats in 1964, he said, we have to take this fight all the way to the convention. This is not "just our fight," he said, referring to the LaRouche delegates. "We are fighting for the 53,000 who voted for LaRouche, and the tens of thousands more who would have voted for him, if they would have known the truth about him, and the truth about Gore. When they find out, they will be glad we kept on fighting."