

Labor in Focus by Marianna Wertz

Gramm-Rudman will hit the Dakotas

A leader of the sheet-metal workers union foresees another 20% loss of jobs in a hard-hit sector.

Dennis Murphy is the business representative of the Sheet Metal Workers Union (AFL-CIO) Local 14, North and South Dakota, located in Bismarck, North Dakota.

Murphy is not new to political campaigning; he ran for the state legislature in neighboring South Dakota in 1980. Although he lost the election, he polled about 40% of the votes in the precinct.

Now, he strongly considers himself a "LaRouche Democrat," speaking for the wing of the party which sees the Gramm-Rudman legislation recently passed in Washington as a disaster, to be overturned immediately.

We asked Mr. Murphy what effects he has seen in his state and local economy and on his union of the Gramm-Rudman bill, which imposes an arbitrary limit on the federal deficit to reduce it to zero by 1991, and forces budget cuts to comply with that limit. In fiscal 1986, Gramm-Rudman will cut a total of \$11.7 billion from the federal budget, with more than \$5 billion of that to be taken out of domestic programs.

There is no question that the deep cuts in the defense budget envisioned under the legislation will also hit the productive economy very hard—particularly in industrial sectors like the one Dennis Murphy represents. Murphy noted that "the effects that we can see immediately are mainly on the defense budget. We have three Air Force bases in our jurisdiction. The construction work on those sites that we have left will be hurt tremendously.

"Longer-term effects that we will be seeing will include effects on state and local governments and road construction, within the next year, canceling many projects that are planned. Any work upgrading schools that would mainly employ the building trades, will be drastically cut. We see it as very damaging to the state economy, which is already badly hurt by the farm budget."

EIR discussed with Murphy our estimates, based on calculations for the soon-to-be-issued fourth *EIR Quarterly Report* for 1985, that Gramm-Rudman will reduce American standards of living by 25% of the levels of 1975, and asked him if he could give an estimate of the expected effect of Gramm-Rudman cutbacks on sheet-metal jobs.

"If the defense projects are cut out, we're going to lose another 20% of our work, and we're already sitting at 40% unemployment in the sheet-metal trade in the two states. And unemployment is between 70% and 80% in the building trades as a whole," he explained.

As an example, he cited the fact that a building trades convention was being held during the third week of January, and OSHA (the Occupational Safety & Health Administration) was invited to come give a seminar on safety. "They called and said that because of Gramm-Rudman, they will not be able to attend."

What is the union doing about this? He noted that "nothing has come down yet from the International," about the Gramm-Rudman bill, "but at all of our

meetings, business agent meetings, building trades meetings, it's been discussed quite thoroughly, what the effects will be. It's always brought up when we're talking about a certain project: 'If, the big if, Gramm-Rudman doesn't cut the money out for it.'

"We were at a meeting not too long ago with the Army Corps of Engineers," he continued. "They were talking about projects that they had on line, and brought up Gramm-Rudman—that it might have a major impact on their construction outlays."

Part of the discussion with Dennis Murphy centered on the candidates movement launched through National Democratic Policy Committee, the political action committee supported by Lyndon LaRouche, who has declared his candidacy for the Democratic Party's 1988 presidential nomination.

Murphy said that while he himself is not a candidate, in both state offices of North Dakota, there are "LaRouche candidates" running for Congress and the Senate. The seats held by incumbents Sen. Mark Andrews, Republican, and Rep. Byron L. Dorgan, a Democrat and the state's only congressman, are up for vote in 1986.

As to the strength of the LaRouche campaign in the Dakotas, Murphy assessed that "right now, it's just taking off. Since the passage of Gramm-Rudman, since the publicity on AIDS, people are finally starting to listen. They're saying, 'You guys were right last time; LaRouche said this last year and now it's happening. What's going to happen next?'"

Murphy and other "LaRouche Democrats" plan to target the state legislature of South Dakota, which opens soon, for action against Gramm-Rudman. North Dakota's legislature meets only every two years, and will not convene in 1986.