

## Eye on Washington by Nicholas F. Benton

### League of Cities lacks a program

In one of the more telling symptoms of the bankruptcy of ideas among political leaders that is accompanying the bankruptcy of the economy, the collection of big city mayors constituting the "Election 1988" workshop at the National League of Cities convention here discovered midway through its discussion of plans to lobby all the potential presidential candidates that it hasn't figured out what to say to them.

Not that any mayor could not recite from the horrible litany of collapsed jobs, education, welfare, sanitation, transportation, and health services in urban America. But none of the mayors on the task force, created to push an agenda for the cities into the presidential race, had any idea of what kind of remedies to propose.

Particularly embarrassing for these mayors was the workshop headed by Mayor Charles Royer of Seattle, and including such heavy hitters as Henry Cisneros of San Antonio and George Voinovich of Cleveland. It was Washington's mayor, Marion Barry, who had the distinct lack of tact to press the issue. "How can we talk to the candidates," he suggested, "before we've even figured out what we want from them?"

The mayors could study what Peru's Alan García and, now, Brazil are doing about this kind of problem before making any presidential commitments.

Another wise starting point is to wage war on the deregulation mania that started in the Nixon years, and

crossed the political spectrum from Ted Kennedy Democrats to radical "free market" conservatives aiming to "deregulate" everything from trucking, airlines, and banking to, ultimately, schools and health care.

It is a policy of legalized piracy that is leading us to the point where there will be five airlines and five banks in the nation, and all property and related assets will belong to these giants. As farms collapse, independent farmers revert to sharecropping. As the noose tightens around the "home equity loan" boom, contributing to the record \$10 trillion private-debt bubble domestically, the population will revert to its pre-World War II status as a nation of renters, rather than home owners.

A high-priced Washington, D.C. consultant to the airlines industry told me, at a recent reception thrown at the French embassy to plug the upcoming annual Paris Air Show, "to be thankful you don't live in the Dakotas," because, he said, "for all intents and purposes, air service there is going to cease, altogether, very soon." He said that industry analysts are watching the behavior of Northwest Orient and Republic airlines very carefully, as they are the only two large carriers still servicing this market.

When they pull out, it is all over, except for very small, very expensive commuter routes that can't handle large cargo.

"The economy of those states [farming] just can't command a response from Congress," he said. "One reason is because the high turnover of congressmen from the area has left them with no senior lawmakers with clout, and the other reason is that their economy is not matching the competition from overseas." Where the "law of the jungle" (i.e. free market) governs even essential conveyor-belt services, this is what results.

### Iowa: presidential issues are urban

The same problems, exactly, plague Iowa, the site of the first serious test for the 1988 presidential race next January.

Iowa is one of a half-dozen states that stands far above the rest in its annual gross profits from agriculture (California, Illinois, Nebraska, and Kansas are the others), so every presidential hopeful already stalking the state is talking about little else but the plight of the family farm.

However, as Robert Harpster, executive director of the League of Iowa Municipalities reminded me, there are 956 cities in Iowa—not all of them particularly large, but all of them facing the same issues as any other city (drugs, crime, education, health services, welfare).

And, ironically enough, the first debate between presidential candidates in Iowa will take place in Davenport at the end of September, sponsored not by any farm organization, but by Iowa's League of Municipalities!

It is already guaranteed that if the organizers of the debate demand concrete answers from the candidates on what to do to rebuild the cities (and the farms, for that matter), they will find all the presidential candidates as bereft of any serious programs as the red-faced leaders of the National League of Cities were at their convention this past week.

All except Lyndon LaRouche, the first declared Democratic presidential candidate, which is why all the other candidates will undoubtedly do everything in their power to keep him out of the proceedings. The only question is, will the people of Iowa, whose survival demands answers to these questions, tolerate such a tyranny of the have-nots?