

Food for Peace caravans converge on Washington

by Marla Minnicino

Thousands of people, arriving in buses, caravans, and tractorcades from around the United States, will demonstrate in Washington, D.C. on Jan. 16, the day which commemorates the birthday and leadership of Martin Luther King, Jr. Taking place as the nation's capital prepares for the inauguration of President George Bush on Jan. 20, the march's purpose is to demand economic and political justice in the United States and a pardon for former Democratic presidential candidate Lyndon LaRouche. Participants will include farmers, civil rights activists, ethnic groups, and others concerned about the Soviet-style erosion of constitutional rights.

Sponsored by the Schiller Institute and Food for Peace, the march is intended to show that the very injustices which Martin Luther King fought to eliminate, are now being directed against LaRouche and his supporters. LaRouche and six associates were framed up on bogus "conspiracy" charges and convicted by a rigged jury in Alexandria, Virginia on Dec. 16. Issuing a call for the march, veteran civil rights leader Amelia Robinson, an associate of Dr. King (and who testified on LaRouche's behalf at the trial), noted that although much has been gained since the first nationwide civil rights march held in Washington, D.C. in 1963, in the LaRouche case, "justice has been set aside, and these people's rights have been taken away from them."

To protest these KGB-style tactics, and to draw attention to the U.S. economic crisis, groups and individuals from at least 40 states are mobilizing for the march. Many are bringing with them signed petitions urging President Reagan to grant a full pardon to LaRouche and his six co-defendants. More than 10,000 signatures have been collected and will be presented to the White House following the march. The petition states: "As a nation, we have survived many blunders, but if we allow the perversion of our justice system to serve

political ends, this nation will quickly degenerate as a world force. If they are jailed, LaRouche and his associates will be vulnerable to the kind of fatal accidents in which the KGB specializes. Should this occur, this will go down in history as an intolerable blot on your administration."

March organizers had to wage a battle with the District police in order to receive a march permit for the political demonstration. Washington's bureaucracy attempted to deny the permit, on the pretext that the city budget would not permit funding to provide police manpower for the march. When march organizers pointed out that only a handful of policemen would be required to block steets briefly, the D.C. administration remained adamant. At this point, an international mobilization was launched by civil rights activists and others, outraged that the city would refuse to permit a march in the national's capital on the anniversary of Martin Luther King's birthday. Calls and telegrams went to Mayor Barry and Police Chief Turner from throughout the United States and from Europe as well. After nearly a week of stalling, the D.C bureaucrats finally granted a march permit down Constitution Avenue.

Grass-roots organizing drive

"Freedom Caravans" have been criss-crossing the country, organizing people to the march from churches, food banks, housing projects, and trade union halls. One tractorcade—a tractor mounted on a flatbed truck decorated with signs proclaiming "No Farm Foreclosures," "Stop the KGB Frame-up of LaRouche"—traversed Pennsylvania, gathering crowds in every county seat it visited from Scranton to Erie. The Pennsylvania Food for Peace tractorcade also made stops in Frederick County, Maryland, and Loudoun County, Virginia, where it was greeted by a rally of 50 supporters

singing "Va Pensiero" from Verdi's opera *Nabucco*, which celebrated Hebrew resistance to Babylonian tyranny. Arriving in Washington, D.C., the Food for Peace organizers, including LaRouche congressional candidate Donald Hadley, who won the April 1988 Democratic primary in Pennsylvania, delivered letters to Sen. Arlen Specter (R.-Pa.), a member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, and Attorney General Richard Thornburgh, urging them to investigate the jury-rigging that convicted LaRouche and his colleagues.

From California, a caravan set out across the country, planning to visit 8 states and 30 cities. One of the high points was a rally and press conference in Dallas at the John F. Kennedy Memorial, a block away from the site where President Kennedy was assassinated. The organizers held posters promoting the D.C. march and urging a pardon for LaRouche. The striking red and black posters showed pictures of Kennedy, Martin Luther King, and LaRouche and proclaimed: "Don't Let Them Kill Again!"

A caravan from Texas is headed by a recently retired Army sergeant and two retired workers. The California caravan is made up of a former Democratic central committee member and his wife and two children.

On the East Coast, another tractorcade made up of a flatbed truck with a tractor, one pick-up truck, and two cars, departed from Brunswick County in the southern part of Virginia, with stops in Lawrenceville, Fredericksburg, and Richmond. In Richmond, they targeted state Attorney General Mary Sue Terry for her role in the political frame-up of LaRouche and his associates.

The caravans and tractorcades have played a key role in breaking the national press blackout on what's behind the LaRouche frame-up. In regions of the country hard hit by the economic collapse, the demonstrators' programmatic demands struck a responsive chord. Their presence in rural areas and small industrial towns commanded the attention of both media and public officials at almost every stop. Prominent articles on the Pennsylvania tractorcade have appeared in the *Scranton Tribune*, the *Delaware Daily Times*, the *Pottstown Mercury*, and the *Johnstown Tribune-Democrat*.

The *Scranton Tribune* quoted Food for Peace activist and former congressional candidate George Eddleston, asserting that "Opposition from LaRouche is why the [international grain] cartel wants to see him put away." The article also quoted Donald Hadley, the candidate who won the 5th District congressional primary, contending that the jury was "slanted" against LaRouche and stacked with government workers. The Jan. 7 *Houston Post* covered a rally outside the Port of Houston led by Harris County Democratic County chairman Claude Jones, under the headline, "Protestors Seek LaRouche Pardon, End of Food Shipments to Soviets." In Illinois, a tour of the Quad Cities area by Midwest Food for Peace organizers drew an article in the *Sterling Gazette*, which reported on the composition of the delegation (an Iowa farmer, a Republican precinct captain, a missionary, and a

"captive nations" leader) and their meeting with an aide to Illinois Congresswoman Lynn Martin. It quoted spokesman Rob Hart saying, "If LaRouche is sent to prison, it is doubtful he will be around in a 60-90 day period to offer advice to solve the pressing issues facing the Bush administration. In effect, President Bush will face the same challenges as the captain of the Titanic just as it was about to hit the iceberg." In Dallas, the tractorcade was met by four reporters when they staged a rally at the John F. Kennedy Memorial.

Meanwhile, in other areas, rally organizers have been drawing together coalitions among people usually divided in the normal course of pragmatic American politics, under the slogan, "Farmers and Eaters Unite." To explain why producers and consumers must join forces to promote increased food production, parity prices for farmers, and an end to the genocidal policies imposed on the Third World by agencies like the International Monetary Fund, farmers are speaking at inner-city churches, food banks, black churches, and soup kitchens. They are stressing that food shortages are the conscious policy of the Soviet-allied grain cartels and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Two black activists and a Baptist minister toured a cattle-raising area near Frederick, Maryland to urge farmers devastated by the drought and the latest farm foreclosures to join the march.

International support

Prominent voices have been raised in Europe and Ibero-America, denouncing the conviction of LaRouche and his associates as a KGB-style railroad by factions in the U.S. government to eliminate their political enemies. Petitions are being circulated in West Germany, France, Italy, Scandinavia, and Mexico, demanding a presidential pardon for LaRouche, who is known and respected worldwide as a statesman and policy-maker.

As part of this international mobilization, the Paris-based Commission to Investigate Human Rights Violations is organizing a Martin Luther King Tribunal in Rome, Italy, to be held Jan. 19-20, just after the Washington march. The Tribunal will try those responsible for crimes against humanity, and has designated as one of those crimes the LaRouche frame-up.

In Europe and Latin America, rallies are taking place outside U.S. embassies, and telegrams are going to President Reagan demanding that he pardon LaRouche as one of his last acts before leaving office. European leaders have stressed, "There is an overriding security interest to the United States in preserving Mr. LaRouche's life, and his availability to carry on national missions of importance." They note that LaRouche's commitment to the defense of NATO and his push for the Strategic Defense Initiative have "made him the spokesman for those who fear the United States will lack the determination to decisively counter Soviet aggression" and point out that this is why the Soviets have targeted LaRouche as "public enemy number one."