

Interview: Nancy Spannaus



How my campaign helped finish off Mary Sue Terry

Nancy Spannaus, the editor of the *New Federalist* newspaper and an international leader of the political movement associated with jailed U.S. statesman Lyndon LaRouche, ran for governor of Virginia in the Nov. 2 election. Spannaus ran a high-profile independent campaign around the theme of "Virginia Is for Mothers," which included a declaration of war against New Age education reforms called outcome-based education (OBE), and agitation for a return to industrial progress and integrity in the criminal justice system.

The unofficial results show Spannaus having gotten only 1% of the vote, about 15,000 total, with the victory going to Republican George Allen. Spannaus's targeted opponent, former Virginia Attorney General Mary Sue Terry, was humiliated with only 41% to Allen's 58%.

But the vote totals do not reflect the actual dynamic of this election. Spannaus's presence in the race shaped its overall character, both through the mass propaganda which the campaign put out on outcome-based education (OBE), and through the impact which it had on Mary Sue Terry herself. The fact that the campaign's spread of these themes was not reflected in a vote for Spannaus, was largely due to the nearly complete blackout in major television and newspaper markets of Spannaus's presence on the ballot. This blackout crossed political party lines, and seems to have reflected the fear of party elites that the election could have had an Illinois 1986-style result—with a Spannaus victory or near-victory—if Spannaus had received regular coverage as a contender. The *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, the state's second largest paper, didn't even cover Spannaus in its voters' guide; the *Washington Post* ran no more than two articles in the entire campaign, and never mentioned Spannaus in coverage of Allen and Terry.

Spannaus ran with a slate of 17 candidates for the Virginia House of Delegates. The votes for those candidates ranged from 1 to 15%.

Spannaus was interviewed on Nov. 9 by Lonnie Wolfe.

EIR: What is your assessment of the election results? What do you think the voters were saying?

Spannaus: I believe that this election was a massive repudiation of Mary Sue Terry by the traditional Democratic elec-

torate—the labor movement, the civil rights movement, and ordinary working people. This was demonstrated in a couple of extraordinary facts: first, the decline in voter turnout in traditional Democratic strongholds; and second, the extraordinary victories for the Republican Party in areas which have been diehard, or "yellow dog" Democrat, for decades.

The situation in Southwest Virginia is the one which I am most familiar with. This is an area where I had a campaign office from early September on, and which I was assured would go Democratic, no matter how much the miners, who dominate the area, hated Mary Sue. But the turnout was quite low, and George Allen took all the coal counties! This occurred despite the fact that the miners' union, at the last moment, decided to declare for Mary Sue.

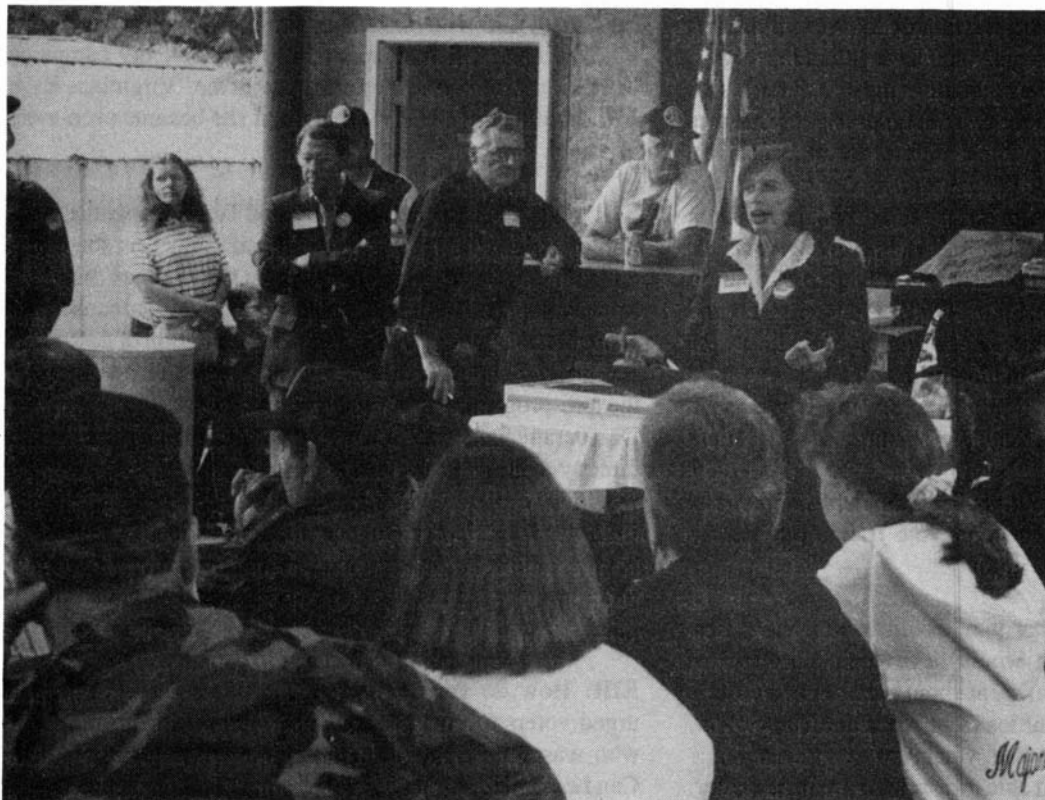
Now, why was this the result? First and foremost, because I was in the race—and therefore, someone was exposing Mary Sue's venality on the issues. The working class and civil rights milieu were responsive to our exposés, because they hate Mary Sue's New Age barbarism—which ranged from her support for perversion in the schools, to injustice in the courts.

Remember, the state AFL-CIO didn't dare endorse Mary Sue in this race, and an endorsement by African-American groups was quite belated.

To sum up, this election confirmed for Virginia Democrats the same thing that the Reagan election in 1980 confirmed for the national Democratic Party—the leadership has abandoned the base. It was not a victory for the Republicans or their program—but a repudiation of the New Age Democrats.

EIR: You campaigned hard against New Age educational reforms and for the LaRouche program of economic recovery. Do you think that people understood your message?

Spannaus: To the extent that we were able to reach people, I think we got a very positive response—both from Democrats and Republicans. The movement against the New Age educational reforms is going to build with the incoming legislature, I think, and this will have everything to do with our efforts, because unfortunately, the Christian Coalition group in the Republican Party has been too easily satisfied by the



Nancy Spannaus addresses a Vietnam Veterans picnic in Grundy, Virginia. "As I told the voters before the election, we need an independent movement around the principles LaRouche's movement represents. I think more and more people will realize that as the crisis deepens."

Wilder administration's promise to eliminate outcome-based education.

The declining economy was the major thing on the electorate's mind, however. But outside the opposition to the North American Free Trade Agreement, which certainly grew during the course of the campaign, people tended to be very pessimistic about doing anything about the job loss. They agreed with me on the need to turn away from the post-industrial, criminalized economy, but were not ready to fight on this issue.

EIR: How do you explain your vote total? Certainly it was lower than what you would have wanted.

Spannaus: Although some of the media got tired of hearing it, the truth is that the press and media blackout dramatically crippled my campaign. Even when I got feature coverage, this did not, and could not, compensate for the fact that I was omitted from all the "regular" campaign coverage, and therefore was not seen as a contender in the battle between Allen and Terry.

So the campaign really didn't experience a "breakout" mode until the half-hour television spots began to air the Thursday before the election. The response to those spots, which were seen by more than 211,000 people throughout the state, was very encouraging and exciting to me. "Where have you been?" person after person would ask. Well, the reality is that I had been there all along, but the media had

succeeded in preventing people from knowing the content of my campaign.

I am positive that the lateness of this "breakout" hurt my vote a great deal. People who had just found out about the alternative of economic growth and morality which I offered, felt I was too "new" to vote for. Most of them probably didn't go to the polls at all, because of their disgust with the two major candidates.

There were some selected areas where my vote reflected our work, however. I averaged 2% in the coal counties, but reached over 4% in Buchanan County, and into the double digits in some precincts. In some precincts in downtown Norfolk, including the area where we had held loud protests against OBE, I averaged over 4%, and there were precincts in [the cities of] Newport News and Suffolk where I did very well. These are places where we had been able to mobilize our own political machine, and had had consistent exposure to the electorate, unlike most places in the state.

EIR: Do you think there was vote fraud, that your votes were stolen?

Spannaus: There are some areas where I think this is quite possible, but it's hard to tell. Take Martinsville, for example. That's a labor town where I had been endorsed by two Du Pont worker union officials, and had gotten consistent press coverage over the last two weeks before the election. I have personally met a dozen people who voted for me, yet the

announced total for my campaign is only 37 votes. I think it likely the Democratic Party may well have stolen my votes.

Then there was the Shenandoah Valley, a Republican stronghold, but the area where the official polling companies reported that I was getting 2-5% before the election. My result ended up at the same 1% average as elsewhere in the state, so I wouldn't be surprised if there had been some Republican tampering with the vote in this area. After all, despite the great friendliness of many Christian Coalition members to my campaign against OBE, Pat Robertson and the guys at the top blacked me out as thoroughly as the Democrats did. The Christian Coalition wouldn't even send me their questionnaire, and didn't include my existence in their voters' guide. This creates the conditions where fraud is quite possible.

Unfortunately, we do not yet have the depth of political machine to catch, and prosecute, vote fraud. But I think that's coming.

EIR: Is there anything that you would have done differently? For example, what would have been the effect of spending more money? You spent about a quarter of a million dollars, compared to the millions that Allen and Terry spent. In comparison to everyone else, you spent next to nothing.

Spannaus: If we had been able to purchase TV time earlier, it would have helped a great deal, and I wish we'd been able to do so. It's amazing how much impact TV advertising has on the political environment.

Of course, there would still have been major roadblocks. The TV stations in the Washington, D.C. area and the Lynchburg area, for example, refused to offer us any time—except for the 1:30-2 a.m. spot. Therefore, we never did get to break into those areas in the same way we did in the Tidewater, Southwest Virginia, and Richmond areas. While those were our targeted areas, they necessarily eliminated the major concentration of Democratic voters, northeastern Virginia.

EIR: That brings me to the question of your effect on the campaign. You were unrelenting in your attacks on Terry, and she seemed shaken by them. It seems that you set the tone for the campaign.

Spannaus: I think the fact that I was criss-crossing the state and had a major propaganda presence, fed her paranoia about facing the public. Mary Sue ran a terrible campaign, as everyone says. She constantly snubbed old political associates by just not showing up, and appeared totally arrogant. In many cases, I think this was due to her fear of meeting me, or another LaRouche associate, at that event.

This was underscored by the result of the NAACP conference, where she was scheduled to be on the podium with me. The prospect so rattled her that she held up the event for half an hour, while issuing demands that the format be changed. Although the NAACP eventually acceded, I think this hurt

her a great deal with that constituency.

When she did start appearing in public, my campaign workers confronted her frequently with the "Virginians Have a Right to Know" flier. At that point she became even more paranoid.

EIR: Was the issue between you and Terry simply the question of your being an associate of LaRouche, as she maintained? She placed you pretty high on her enemies' list.

Spannaus: The issue was not just Terry's guilty conscience about the corruption involved in the prosecution of LaRouche and his associates. It was also precisely because I represent the pro-progress social and economic policies which the Democratic Party base is looking for, and which she has gone directly against. If she had been on a podium with me, this would have been obvious to everyone.

Otherwise, Terry wanted to have it both ways. She bragged about the prosecution of LaRouche in her campaign literature, but did not want to be confronted on the issue in a public forum.

EIR: How do you see the new administration? You had urged voters to vote for someone who could run the state, who was competent—you. They voted for George Allen. Can he do the job? What should we be looking for as key to assessing his performance?

Spannaus: I am very hopeful that George Allen will move on the mandate which he has against perversion in the schools, and that he will also eliminate the corruption in the attorney general's office, which has led to the targeting of political enemies by the state.

Unfortunately, I think the governor-elect will be less positive in his approach to the economy and to the criminal justice system as a whole. The economic crisis is going to intensify, and that will simply underscore the bankruptcy of the [Texas Sen.] Phil Gramm approach to economic collapse.

As I told the voters before the election, we need an independent movement around the principles LaRouche's movement represents. I think more and more people will realize that as the crisis deepens.

EIR: What do you see as your role, now that the election is over? You have said that you will continue to lead the fight for issues that you have raised in the campaign. How will you do that?

Spannaus: I would like a positive role in rebuilding the state Democratic Party, now that Terry is gone. As the governor said, she wasn't a Democrat in her policy on labor, social issues, and the like. I may disagree with the governor on the precise nature of pro-labor policies which have to be fought for, but the party sorely needs to hammer out a platform that addresses the interests of the majority of the people in the state—working people and unemployed of all ethnic backgrounds.