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## Background

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# Virginia debates no-parole policy

by Marianna Wertz

At a special session of the state legislature set to begin Sept. 19, the Commonwealth of Virginia will decide whether or not to adopt what is being called "Proposal X," a plan to abolish parole for felons and adopt mandatory minimum sentences for violent offenders. Proposal X, which is still being drafted, is the brainchild of the Governor's Commission on Parole Abolition and Sentencing Reform, established early in 1994 by the newly elected Gov. George Allen (R), to carry out one of his prime election promises.

Co-chairing the governor's commission are Richard Cullen, former U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia under George Bush's administration; and William Barr, Bush's last attorney general and the author of a plan to eliminate parole in every state in the nation. Barr was attorney general under Bush beginning in October 1991, and, as such, ensured that economist and statesman Lyndon LaRouche, who was imprisoned with six associates under Bush in 1989, stayed imprisoned while Bush held the presidency, in the face of overwhelming evidence showing the innocence of LaRouche and his associates.

Also on the commission is Henry Hudson, another former U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, in which capacity he led the fraudulent 1988-89 legal prosecution of LaRouche and his co-defendants. It was Hudson who conducted the involuntary bankruptcy of several publishing companies associated with LaRouche, which was subsequently thrown out of court for having been conducted in "objective bad faith," and as a "constructive fraud on the court" by federal Judge Martin V.B. Bostetter.

One of those prosecuted in the federal case with LaRouche, Michael Billington, is currently in a Virginia state prison serving an obscene 77-year sentence. Four other LaRouche associates—innocent, like Billington—are also serving lengthy sentences in the Virginia system, as a result of the political witchhunt against the LaRouche movement: Anita Gallagher, 39 years; Paul Gallagher, 34 years; Laurence Hecht, 33 years; and Donald Phau, 25 years.

### Careful orchestration

The governor's commission recently completed a series of four so-called town meetings, in which a facade of public

input to Proposal X was put up, while in fact, carefully chosen "victim" witnesses and law enforcement agents gave emotionally charged testimony calling for police-state measures to deal with crime in the state. Those who opposed the removal of parole were either ridiculed by the governor and members of the commission, or simply not allowed to speak.

Now, Proposal X must pass legislative review, in order to become law. The problem that its proponents face is not only that the proposal is actually unpopular, but that its cost will be unworkable, as it will require the construction of dozens of new state prisons in a shrinking state and national economy. Indeed, as spokesmen for the commission have publicly admitted, there has been no discussion yet as to how to finance Proposal X.

### Opponents speak out

There is a second governor's commission, established by former Gov. Douglas Wilder (D) in 1992, to come up with proposals to deal with the state's rising crime problem. This Legislative Commission on Sentencing and Parole Reform held a hearing on July 21, to discuss and be briefed on Proposal X, at which Richard Cullen testified. He met with a blast of frosty air, as the accompanying interview with the NAACP's Salim Khalfani indicates.

Also speaking out against Proposal X at the July 21 hearing was legislative commission member Sen. Joseph V. Gartlan, Jr. (D-Fairfax County), who warned, "I really don't feel that, personally, I can buy into the elements which are in Proposal X," according to the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*. "If there was ever a subject for which it is accurate to say the devil is in the details, it's this one," Senator Gartlan commented.

Former Democratic state delegate J. Samuel Glasscock, another member of the legislative panel, said he thought Governor Allen's proposal would be "shot down" when it comes up for legislative approval in September, because the cost is "going to be out of sight." Glasscock said that spending millions of dollars on prisons to reduce some crime isn't justified, when spending the same amount on education might produce the same results.

In the interview with Salim Khalfani, reference is made to studies released late in 1993 which attempt to introduce eugenics into the debate around violent crime. Virginia was one of the centers of the racist eugenics movement in the 1930s, and the fact that these new studies were heavily publicized in the state's principal Republican-owned newspaper of record, the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, indicates the thinking of those who control Governor Allen. The four-part series in question, titled "The Roots of Violent Behavior," also appeared in the *Chicago Tribune* and other major press in December 1993, and attempted to prove that raising youth in a violent environment can alter their "brain chemistry," rendering them "genetically" violent, and therefore, incapable of rehabilitation.