

## Virginia Assembly slaps down 'Conservative Revolution'

by Marianna Wertz

A popular backlash is beginning to pick up speed against the budget-cutting and tax-reduction policies which the "Contract with America" insurgents are trying to impose on the 1995-96 federal and state budgets all over the United States. The most advanced case is the Commonwealth of Virginia, where Republican Gov. George Allen, who took office in January 1994 on a platform of budget austerity and tax cuts, has just been handed the most sweeping rejection of a gubernatorial budget in the state's history. What made the slap sting even more, was that the Democratic majority in the state legislature was joined by a sizeable number of Republicans.

A second harbinger of things to come, was the mini-revolt against New Jersey's Republican Gov. Christine Todd Whitman, who also took office in January 1994. On Feb. 2, Whitman faced a hostile crowd in middle-class Livingston, where she had earlier won a resounding victory, when she announced that the budget cuts she was proposing were going to affect programs in the schools their children attend.

On Feb. 2, representatives of the right-to-life movement, which is largely Republican in membership, called a Washington, D. C. press conference to announce their rejection of the anti-welfare provisions of the Republican Contract with America. Leaders of the National Right to Life Committee, the U.S. Catholic Conference, Catholic Charities, Feminists for Life, the Southern Baptist Convention Christian Life Commission and other pro-life organizations denounced the Contract's proposed cuts to welfare and benefits programs for unwed women and their children, because, they said, such cuts will increase the rate of abortions, as young women, cut off welfare, become desperate.

These defeats are especially significant: The right-to-life movement is a key constituency of the Republican Party; and

Governors Allen and Whitman are the two leading spokesmen for the Conservative Revolution among the nation's governors. Allen is head of the National Republican Governors Association, and Whitman was chosen by the Republican Party, because of her budget-cutting prowess, to deliver the Republican reply to President Clinton's Jan. 24 State of the Union address, a rare privilege for a governor.

### 'Thursday night massacre'

Gov. George Allen raged that the Feb. 2 defeat of virtually his entire \$403 million budget package by the Virginia General Assembly was the "Thursday Night Massacre." In fact, what Allen had proposed was itself a massacre—of every social service that the state provides its citizens—and was so perceived by those citizens.

The governor, and those who are advising him, brought about their own downfall, by proposing such a large-scale slash-and-burn of state services that they galvanized an opposition into action, which otherwise might not have existed. They might well have pondered the aphorism: "Pride goeth ever before the fall."

Only last September, George Allen, working under the tutelage of such George Bush henchmen as former U.S. Attorney General William Barr and former U.S. Attorney Henry Hudson, stage-managed the passage of a piece of fascist legislation called Proposal X, which eliminated parole in Virginia. Allen's followers orchestrated statewide hearings with carefully selected citizens demanding "vengeance" for their murdered loved ones. Proposal X is now being used by the Gingrich crowd in Washington as a model in their drive to "reform" criminal justice nationwide.

Allen's September victory was widely hailed as evidence of his popularity and his ability to get his way, even with a

legislature run by Democrats. Indeed, the General Assembly virtually rolled over and played dead in front of Allen's Proposal X steamroller.

Then came November and the Conservative Revolution victory in the U.S. Congress. Allen, heady with the power he thought was his, and touted in the press as a likely vice-presidential candidate, outlined a budget that cut deeply into every social service: agriculture extension, education, police protection, mental health, senior care, health care, welfare, to name just the most prominent. He motivated his proposals with ideological pabulum about "less government," invoking Thomas Jefferson and "states' rights" in speeches skirted on the edge of outright calls for secession. He combined the cuts with a proposed \$149 million income tax and business tax cut, and publicly dared the state's General Assembly, every member of whom is up for reelection in November 1995, to vote against it.

What Allen and his advisers didn't count on was the effect of *reality* on Virginia's population—and the effect of angry Virginians on their elected representatives. What they got was a torrent of protest, registered at public hearings statewide which were called by the legislature in January.

Since nobody expected much opposition to the supposedly popular Allen and his budget, these hearings were never stage-managed. As a result, in a series of five hearings, more than 2,000 normal citizens stood up to say, in effect, "I don't want a tax cut if it means you're going to deny my child a decent education and my parents their health." Many even said, "I don't want more prisons if you're going to destroy our youth before they even get a chance in life." At the final hearing, held Jan. 16 in the state capital of Richmond just after the legislature opened its 46-day session, more than 500 citizens turned out. The political shock wave rolled through the legislature, lending courage to those who had previously cowered in fear of their political lives.

### Education cuts key

Allen's proposed \$47.4 million in cuts to higher education (in a state whose funding level already ranks 43rd in the nation), was probably the straw that broke the camel's back, since it turned key Republicans in the business community against the governor's budget. To top off days of testimony by leading businessmen opposing Allen's budget, three former Virginia governors, including Mills Godwin, Jr., known as the "guru" of the conservative movement in Virginia, wrote Allen an open letter, which was read aloud during House and Senate floor sessions Feb. 1, the day before both bodies' finance panels considered the Allen proposals. In their letter, the former governors (Democrat-turned-Republican Godwin, Republican Linwood Holton, and Democrat Gerald L. Baliles) called on Allen to "make critical new investments in Virginia's future . . . by reaffirming public support for our unique system of higher education. . . . The economic progress we need will not happen if Virginia's

universities remain mired near the bottom in public support when compared to other states."

Education and human services were key considerations for those Republican legislators who voted against their own governor. In the Senate alone, Republicans introduced \$202.5 million in budget amendments, out of \$578.6 million submitted by the entire Senate, against Allen's budget. And it was a Republican, Sen. Malfourd W. Trumbo, who submitted the amendment that probably hurt Allen, personally, the most. Trumbo's amendment proposed to strip \$2.6 million in increases from the office budgets of Allen's own cabinet secretaries, the only increase proposed in the entire Allen budget, which had drawn nearly universal scorn for its hypocrisy.

### Opposition's Achilles' heel

The Achilles' heel of this opposition—the lack of any real economic policy alternative to the Conservative Revolution—is well illustrated in the battle over funding for the thousands of new prison beds required by the passage of Proposal X, which ended parole in Virginia effective Jan. 1, 1995. While the legislature stood fast against large-scale public funding for the 21 new prisons Allen's plan called for, they agreed to building 1,500 "private prison" beds in the state, because these don't require up-front public funds. So-called private prisons are constructed by such private contractors as Corrections Corp. of America, which recoup their costs by charging the state *per diem* for the prisoners they ultimately house.

It is just such "private prisons" that economist Lyndon LaRouche has identified as the beginning of Nazi-style concentration camps in America. Governor Allen's plan calls for a minimum of 10,000 private prison beds in Virginia, and he has invited private companies to view Virginia's burgeoning prison population as a "good investment." But nobody in the Assembly spoke out against this.

The fact that "free-enterprise" guru Lady Margaret Thatcher, former British Prime Minister and now Chancellor of William and Mary College in Virginia, was welcomed with a standing ovation to address a joint session of the Virginia General Assembly on Feb. 3—the day after the "Thursday Night Massacre"—is further evidence of the weakness of this victory. The "Iron Lady" was the first foreigner to make such an address since Winston Churchill did so in 1946 (see p. 86).

So the battle, even in Virginia, is just beginning. Governor Allen can veto the entire legislative budget in an April veto session, which would create an unprecedented political cauldron in the state. On top of that, the impending global financial blowout will wreak havoc with the best-laid plans, unless the citizens of Virginia, New Jersey, and everywhere there is opposition to the Conservative Revolution's agenda, are prepared to fight for the kind of economic reorganization policies which LaRouche and *EIR* have outlined.