

Bush Blitzkrieg Rolls Over Congress

by Anita Gallagher

The Bush Administration has run roughshod over the Democratic opposition in the U.S. Congress, with blitzkrieg victories on the bankruptcy bill, ergonomics regulations — undone in 36 hours in both Houses — and, on March 8, the Bush tax-cut plan, the centerpiece of Bush's economics program, passed the U.S. House of Representatives 230-198.

On March 6, Rep. Jay Inslee (D-Wash.) and 25 other Representatives, including Duncan Hunter (R-Calif.), released an open letter to President Bush, asking Bush and his energy task force to meet on the Western states' urgent energy crisis. Three weeks earlier, Bush had displayed his arrogance by personally telling Inslee to talk to Vice-President Cheney — who then refused to take his calls.

On March 7, a shell-shocked House Minority Leader Dick Gephardt (D-Mo.), looking at Democratic troops who had rolled over in the face of rapid-fire, successful Republican drives to drastically reduce bankruptcy protection for individuals, annul workplace ergonomics safety regulations which had been worked on for ten years, and give nearly \$1 trillion in tax cuts over the next decade to mainly the wealthiest Americans, told the press that bipartisanship was ended. He said the White House was no longer demonstrating a desire to work together with Democrats. May as well say, the wolf was no longer demonstrating a desire to be Little Red Riding Hood's grandmother! Poor, cooperative Dick Gephardt! He should have listened to Lyndon LaRouche, and fought against Ashcroft.

This should now remind thinking Congressmen, and others, of Hitler's rapid expansion of his powers after he was narrowly installed in the Chancellorship of Germany on Jan. 30, 1933, as a minority figure in a government coalition. Using the pretext of the Feb. 28, 1933 Reichstag fire, Hitler vastly increased his powers through emergency decrees enacted in March 1933, which allowed him to eliminate all opposition. LaRouche warned the Congress of such a rapid consolidation of power by Bush in his January 3, 2001 webcast. He urged the Democrats to fight while they still had the power, against the nomination of John Ashcroft for U.S. Attorney General, which he called "a deliberate provocation." Congress had to "jam up the works on this," to force Bush to withdraw the nomination. Through the mobilization of LaRouche Democrats, 42 Senate votes — enough for a filibuster — were cast against Ashcroft, but the Democratic leadership, engaging in "bipartisanship," quit the field without a fight.

The Way It Is

An ominous sign of the new realities in the House was the first major piece of legislation it passed on March 1: a bill pushed relentlessly by the credit-card industry, to make it harder for consumers to wipe out their debts and get a fresh start by declaring personal bankruptcy. Although Republicans have only a five-seat advantage in the House, the bill passed by a whopping 306-108 vote, and included "yes" votes from 93 Democrats. Some 1.2 million Americans filed for personal bankruptcy last year — victims of Loser Al Gore's "endless prosperity."

The bankruptcy bill is now expected to pass the Senate, and President Bush has indicated he will sign it. President Clinton vetoed almost identical legislation last year. Political contributions by credit-card companies doubled from the 1996 election to that of 2000 — increasing to a whopping \$9.2 million. In fact, the biggest single contributor to Bush's campaign was MBNA, the largest credit-card issuer in the United States. Citigroup and Morgan Stanley Dean Witter, the number-2 and -3 largest card issuers, also number among Bush's top ten contributors.

On March 6, another cooperative Democrat, Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle (D-S.D.) (who said on national television that he would not support a filibuster against Ashcroft), was ambushed by Republicans, who rammed through a vote striking down the new ergonomics regulations which Clinton had signed as one of his last acts in office. The Republicans met daily in House Majority Whip Tom DeLay's office, plotting to use an obscure rule to ram this through the Senate and the House. It passed the 100-member Senate, divided 50-50 between Democrats and Republicans, with 56 votes — six Democrats defected to vote for it.

The next day, after only one hour of debate, the House voted 223-206 to kill the regulations, aimed to stop on-the-job repetitive motion injuries. The law of the U.S. was changed in a mere 36 hours. Gephardt seemed to be struck dumb: "This takes your breath away — that they would come in here in one week, in two days, and rip this thing [ergonomics] out that took ten years to do the scientific work to find out what ought to be done." The *Washington Post* chortled: "[T]he balance of power has shifted dramatically in Washington. . . . So for groups such as business, there is new incentive to try what might have been impossible only a few months ago."

On March 8, one day after its ergonomics triumph, the Bush blitzkrieg rammed its "crown jewel" legislation through the House, with a 230-198 vote in favor of the tax reductions for the rich.

As the coda to this debacle, House Speaker Dennis Hastert (R-Ill.) took center stage and proclaimed, "Who among us can say that the economy doesn't need a little encouragement? [Cutting taxes] will give consumers more money to pay off credit-card bills. It will give families more money to pay off high energy bills." As Hastert's soul-sister Marie Antoinette famously said, "Let them eat cake."