

Saving D.C. Hospital Is Watershed Issue for Congress

by Nancy Spannaus

The stakes were raised again April 27 in the nationally supported and internationally watched battle to save Washington, D.C.'s public hospital, D.C. General Hospital, from closing. The embattled Washington City Council, backed by mobilized representatives of the city's churches, unions, and neighborhood councils, unanimously overrode Mayor Anthony Williams's veto of their unanimous April 18 vote to fund the hospital. They then called on the U.S. Congress to support them in keeping the hospital open, against the fascist austerity of the D.C. Financial Control Board (the extra-governmental body that Newt Gingrich's Congress imposed on the District's elected government in 1995).

Democratic Presidential pre-candidate Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr. said that if the Congress of the United States capitulates to *Washington Post* owner KKK-Katie Graham on D.C. General Hospital, then they will have reduced themselves to the same status as the German Reichstag after the famous fire used by Hitler to impose his dictatorship.

At this point, the decision on the fate of the capital's only public hospital is directly in Congress's hands. In the appropriations bills of 2001, the Congress, as well as the D.C. Financial Control Board, mandated that the District's public health system be "restructured," meaning privatization and the shutdown of D.C. General Hospital. Thanks to the mobilization by a broad coalition to save the hospital, under the leadership of associates of LaRouche, the D.C. City Council has decided to resist this diktat. By rare 13-0 and 12-0 votes, they funded the hospital and then reinstated the funding over the veto of the Mayor; he is acting as a toady of Katharine Graham's secretive financial elite grouping known as the Federal City Council, which has slated the hospital's land for real estate "redevelopment." Thus the Council affirmed again its judgment that the hospital should continue to be a fully funded, full-service public facility.

Ask Congress To Intervene

At a press conference on April 27, City Council Chairman Linda Cropp pointed to the hope that the U.S. Congress, which established the Financial Control Board, and could block the board's actions, would intervene to support the Council's action. If the Congress is not forced by citizen pressure to do so, the Financial Control Board plans to simply *impose* the murderous privatization/closing plan on the city. A simple case of bankers' dictatorship.

The stakes in this battle have been made excruciatingly clear to the Congress, residents of the District, and millions of citizens internationally, by the LaRouche movement. Behind the decision to close D.C. General is the Nazi economic policy of the financial elite, led by Graham's Invisible Empire (see *EIR*, April 27, 2001), including the leading bankers and real estate developers and devoted absolutely to *depopulation*, getting rid of those it considers "useless eaters." Such a Nazi policy directly violates the General Welfare commitment of the U.S. Constitution, which every Congressman, and Administration official, has sworn to uphold. But if the mobilized citizenry of these United States can *reverse* this policy, that would be a blow to reverse the global onslaught by international fascist financiers, now entering a genocidal frenzy due to the dramatic collapse of the utterly bankrupt world financial system. The Nietzschean proclivities of the Bush Administration would hit a roadblock of the only sort they understand: political power.

Challenging KKK-Katie's Kontrol Board

Tension has been building in this by-no-means local battle. A more than eight-hour "public roundtable" sponsored by the D.C. City Council on April 27, reflected the fact that the battle is coming to a head.

Most extraordinary was the combativeness of the City



The Washington City Council on April 18, announcing the first of its unanimous votes to keep D.C. General Hospital open and full-funded as a public hospital. The D.C. Financial Control Board, acting for financiers led by Post owner KKK-Katie Graham, is acting to overturn the council and publicly destroy Washington, D.C. "Home Rule."

Council members holding the hearing. Chair Sandra Allen opened up by excoriating Mayor Williams for being “missing in action,” and she was followed up by other Council members, who exposed in great detail the fact that the current contract which the Control Board and Mayor want to sign, in order to sell off D.C. General, will *dramatically reduce* health-care services for D.C. residents, particularly the working poor. The Council members were equally outraged about the threats which they have received from the Mayor and the Financial Control Board, that they must agree to the hospital deal, or “jeopardize home rule.” “What kind of home rule is it, to do what you’re told to do, with a hammer over your head?” asked Republican City Councilman Carol Schwartz. “This is insane and inane.”

The financial establishment is obviously feeling the heat. For the first time in its existence, the Control Board—which calls itself “the Authority”—sent one of its members to appear before the City Council. If the Control Board thought Eugene Kinlow, an elderly African-American who has personal friendships with several Councilmembers, would be able to cajole them into line, it was totally wrong. After more than an hour and a half of blistering questioning, Kinlow left the Council chambers in tears. And city officials who stayed behind felt the further heat of the Council and the new popular movement behind it. Typical was the attitude of Councilman David Catania (R-At Large), who bluntly refused to ask the Mayor’s health representative, Dr. Ivan Walks, any questions, because “there is no truth here, just lies.”

Reflective of the support for the Council’s opposition to diktat, was the showing of both prominent and ordinary citi-

zens who came to testify for saving the hospital. Former U.S. Surgeon General Joycelyn Elders, who served in the Clinton Administration, and Michigan State Delegate Lamar Lemmons (D) both gave the Council their support. Lemmons reported that he was working hard to deliver the Michigan Congressional delegation to support keeping the hospital open. Michigan is a crucial battleground state, as leading Democratic institutions, such as the Detroit City Council and the Michigan Black Caucus, have passed resolutions supporting the hospital, while the chairman of the D.C. Appropriations Committee, Republican Rep. Joe Knollenberg, is also from Michigan.

More than a dozen other citizens, some of them from the hospital and some from the LaRouche movement and coalition, also presented testimony ripping the Control Board plan to shreds.

Fascists Plan To Go Ahead

The D.C. General Hospital battle pits citizens directly against the genocidal policy of the top financial powers in Washington, the nation, and the world. It is the Wall Street financial establishment to which KKK-Katie Graham, her Federal City Council, and former Federal Reserve Governor Alice Rivlin’s Control Board itself answer; and they are maniacally determined to exert power. Thus, Rivlin made it known that the Control Board intended to override the City Council by May 1, to implement the deal to privatize and close D.C. General.

In an April 23 conversation with a local journalist, Glenn Dixon, the spokesman for the D.C. Financial Control Board,

expressed confidence that Congress would do absolutely nothing to impede the Board's plan to shut down the hospital. The Control Board, he said, "is authorized to act in lieu of the Council if it so decides. We are fully empowered to execute and begin the process of implementation of the contract." He confirmed that May 1 is the "planned start date for the contract," but added that it wasn't "an unequivocal, *drop dead* date."

As to the role of Congress, Dixon arrogantly noted that the Board would notify the relevant Congressional committees "of our intent to go forward," as the enabling legislation requires, but added that the Control Board was confident that Congress would not get in their way. "The likelihood that they [Congress] will do anything more, than simply accept our notification and indicate their acknowledgment of our intention, is unlikely — it's not impossible, but it's *highly* unlikely."

A spokesman for the FDR-PAC, the political action committee associated with Lyndon LaRouche that has been directing a nationwide mobilization to force the Congress to stop the hospital's closing, as part of Congress's sworn obligation to defend the General Welfare, responded to Dixon's remarks. "We don't think the Control Board's arrogant confidence is necessarily grounded in reality. Based on the intensity of the national opposition to the shutdown of D.C. General, we have every reason to expect that Congress will stand up to Wall Street's Katharine Graham—actually, we call her, appropriately, KKK-Katie Graham—and the attempt to dictatorially implement a Nazi 'Negro Removal' policy in the nation's capital. If they don't, it will immediately result in the deaths of many people, who will be denied the speedy quality care that D.C. General now provides to anyone who comes through its doors, whether they are rich or poor, black or white, insured or uninsured. But, even more important, if Congress were to fail to act, that failure would constitute a conscious choice to allow the imposition of a fascist policy by KKK-Katie Graham's and Wall Street's Financial Control Board, *against the fundamental intent of U.S. law, and of the legally elected government of the region.* If the Congress were to submit to that, they might as well pour into the streets of Washington, D.C. and publicly commit self-castration."

As of this writing, it is clear that the Control Board is feeling the heat. The Board has called a public meeting for 2 p.m. on April 30, in the same building and at the same time that the Council hearing was held. The stated purpose of the meeting is to consider: 1) actions regarding the provision of health-care services for indigent residents of the District; 2) the future role of the Public Benefit Corp. (which operates D.C. General) in the provision of those services; and 3) the recent supplemental appropriations bill enacted by the D.C. Council, which provided \$21 million to keep the hospital operating. A Board spokesman said it is unlikely that the Control Board would take any action to execute the contract before the meeting.

Dr. Abdul Alim Muhammad

'A Movement Based On Love'

The following remarks were made at a rally of the Coalition to Save D.C. General Hospital, at Union Temple Baptist Church, in Washington, D.C., on April 18. Dr. Abdul Alim Muhammad, one of the founders and leaders of the Coalition to Save D.C. General Hospital, introduced the historic meeting.

Let me just say that this is the tenth town meeting, the 11th town meeting, and you all are to be commended for sticking in on something that is going much longer than I, certainly, thought it would go. But this is becoming a movement. And we are noticing all over the city that the spirit of this movement is spreading among the people, far and wide. Some of you have been here from the very beginning. How many of you were at the very first town meeting, 11 weeks ago? Okay, and you're here now. And haven't you learned a lot? Because the format that we use for these town meetings, was the format that was developed in the Civil Rights movement and in the anti-war movement, because the government was putting out a lot of propaganda. They were suppressing information. They knew that this is a government of, by, and for the people, but they know that the people are no better than the information that they have at their disposal. You can't stand up and be a citizen if you're in the dark, if you don't know what's going on. If it's a shell game, and you can't see where the action is. And so, back in the '60s, they developed this technique called a "teach-in," where people would come, and just ordinary citizens, people like you and me, who had done a little research here, a little research there, we would put our two cents in, and by the time you added up all of those two cents's, then you really started having something of value. And before it was all over, ordinary men, ordinary women, ordinary citizens of this country became the experts on civil rights, became the experts on voting rights, became the experts on human rights, became the experts on the War in Vietnam, because they had done their homework. . . .

Now, this is a movement that is based on love. There's nothing hateful about anything that is being said or done in this place. This is a house of God. Mr. Omer's [Mayor Williams' chief-of-staff, recently dismissed-ed.] opinion notwithstanding. What kind of love-movement is this? Well, first of all, we love God. We love God. And this movement is composed of people of all faiths. Some are Muslims, some are Christians, some are Jewish, some are of other faiths. All the denominations. Everybody is here, because we understand one thing: the only way that we can show our love for God is to demonstrate it to one another. The only way that we can serve a God who is above need, is to serve our fellow man. And so that's