

LaRouche Wild Card in Australian Election

by Allen Douglas

One of the most memorable campaign events in recent Australian political history took place in Maitland, New South Wales on March 1. There, in the historic town hall, longtime LaRouche activist and Citizens Electoral Council (CEC) State Secretary Ann Lawler officially launched her campaign for the March 22 state parliament election, before an enthusiastic audience of 130. Lawler's campaign in the rural electorate northwest of Sydney has already shaken up local and state politics, and, depending on the March 22 poll results, may shake up Federal politics as well. Maitland is a crucial "swing electorate," which has gone back and forth between the two "major" parties, Labor and the Liberals. In that context, Lawler's campaign is an incalculable wild card in a race which has been the subject of intense scrutiny and campaigning by state and national political leaders.

The March 1 campaign launch followed upon several months of intense campaigning by 15 full-time CEC organizers, seven of them youths. Lawler's campaign is by far the most visible among those of the five main candidates, with her campaign organizers and their distinctive "Go With LaRouche" tee shirts seemingly omnipresent.

There were three featured speakers at the event. Lawler gave a 15-minute *tour d'horizon* of the global economic and financial collapse, featuring the role of U.S. 2004 Presidential pre-candidate Lyndon LaRouche in providing the way out, and the unique chance provided by her campaign to change the course of Australian history. International LaRouche Youth Movement leader Colin Campbell, just back from three weeks in the United States including two weeks in California and lobbying on Capitol Hill, gave a ten-minute presentation on the extraordinary impact of the several hundred youth organizers worldwide, including the seven who have spearheaded Lawler's campaign. Featured speaker Prof. Lance Endersbee, a legendary veteran of Australia's world-famous Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Scheme, gave a one-hour address on the global freshwater deficit, including in China, India, and in the Middle East, and on a series of inspiring projects required to tackle the problem, including the Mekong Basin Project in Indo-China, and several national water development projects for Australia.

Endersbee concluded that there is absolutely no other political party or candidate in the country addressing these and related economic development crises, except for Ann Lawler,

LaRouche's Australian co-thinkers in the Citizens Electoral Council, and LaRouche himself.

A Unique Campaign

The atmosphere in the hall is perhaps best captured by a report filed by one of the LaRouche Youth Movement organizers.

"The meeting started at 1 p.m. and there were still people at the hall at 5:30 p.m. We had a photo board set up, but most importantly a literature table. The level of excitement in the hall is impossible to explain. There was a mixture of core supporters, members, and people that had never heard of us before. The question and answer period went for at least an hour. The level of questions was amazing. Here you had people seeking the fine details as to how we build a ring railroad around the nation and drought-proof the country, in an electorate where the other candidates only talk about smaller class sizes and more police! Questions were asked on how we deal with the world problems, and how things managed to get so bad in the first place. At the end of each of Ann's answers there was huge applause; a few times we weren't sure as to whether it would stop. When Prof. Endersbee finished his presentation on the water developments and rail projects worldwide, there was a standing ovation.

"A large contingent of the room was comprised of Baby Boomers who were completely moved by the youth presentation. There were comments on the fact that we are doing something with our lives and actually believe in what we do. There were even reports of a few people teary-eyed throughout the launch. To say the least, this was a profound event.

"The newcomers to the meeting were shocked that we had an entire panel on infrastructure projects—they were expecting typical politics. The caretaker of the hall was extremely excited from the minute we started to set up. The youth and the ideas we spoke about shocked him. He stayed for the entire meeting and at the end joined as a member himself. He commented, 'I have seen many political meetings take place in this building and this is the first one that has ever spoken about developing the nation as a whole; and you didn't just mention it, you guys have an entire plan as to how we make this happen.'"

While the local newspaper, the *Maitland Mercury*, had blacked out Lawler's campaign until recently, her campaign is by far the dominant presence in the electorate: almost-hourly ads on the three major local radio stations; dozens of campaign volunteers coming through her office on a daily basis, including volunteers from all over Australia; hundreds of signs up on lawns everywhere and in many of the businesses of Maitland and the surrounding small towns, many of whose owners are among the 500 new CEC members who have joined since December 2002 (giving the CEC more members by far than both the "major" parties, Labor and the Liberals, combined) along with thousands of pieces of literature circulating, in addition to Lawler's weekly cam-



Ann Lawler campaigns for the state parliament in Maitland, Australia. The Citizens Electoral Council has raised the banner of Lyndon LaRouche's fight for global economic development, and the intervention by members of the LaRouche Youth Movement has created an explosive organizing situation.

paigned newsletter, the *Maitland Maelstrom*.

One of the most striking features of the campaign is the intensity of discussion about LaRouche, whose name and ideas Lawler has featured in many of her 30-second radio spots, and in all of her literature. On Feb. 1, for instance, she held a meeting to play LaRouche's Jan. 28 "State of the Union" webcast, to which 40 supporters showed up and listened to the entire two-and-a-half hour speech, with much impassioned discussion afterwards. Most of those present had never heard or seen LaRouche speak before.

The Establishment Is Nervous

Australia's establishment is terrified of LaRouche, as reflected in the open admission by *Mercury* managing editor Graham Storer on Jan. 23 to Lawler's campaign organizers who were protesting the paper's blackout. "Anything with 'LaRouche' in it, I delete," he bragged. And, when Lawler filed a protest with the Australian Press Council, Storer, as justification for his blackout, sent the Council a lying "briefing paper" by the notorious Anti-Defamation Commission of B'nai B'rith, which has recently filed a submission with the Federal Parliament, outrageously demanding that the CEC be banned from Federal politics. However, Lawler's supporters launched an aggressive campaign through some 20,000 leaflets detailing the reason (LaRouche) for the blackout, and through radio ads as well, inducing *Mercury* boss Storer to

whine about the "defamation campaign," and to finally grant some semblance of coverage to Lawler.

The intensity of the campaign was otherwise reflected in a prominent article on March 5 in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, one of the nation's largest newspapers, which led with extensive coverage of Lawler and her campaign for a New Bretton Woods international monetary system and the Eurasian Land-Bridge. Observed the *Herald*, "It's all in the [CEC] book inspired by United States hopeful Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr. Don't laugh. The voters aren't. . . . The other candidates aren't laughing, either. Everywhere they go in the electorate, they hear her advertisements on radios and see her supporters in shirts bearing the slogan 'Go LaRouche.' Liberal candidate Bob Geoghegan says, 'I was in Maitland markets the other day, and the CEC had supporters up from Tasmania.' "

Two more "minor party" candidates who do not even live in the district have just jumped into the race, in an obvious attempt to dilute Lawler's vote. Local observers expect her vote to surpass the 8.9% scored in an urban Melbourne electorate by the CEC's Andre Kozlowski in November state elections in Victoria. By Australian standards, anything for a "minor party" or independent candidate in the high single digits, let alone double digits, is considered a huge vote. Many in Australia's political establishment are biting their fingernails, waiting for the returns on the evening of March 22.