

A Courageous Democrat In the Mold of FDR

by Nina Ogden

Oct. 21—Much can be said about the long, full life of former Senator and Presidential candidate George McGovern, who died on Sunday morning at the age of 90. But, we must emphasize that, fundamental to Senator McGovern's view of what he thought the country, and his Democratic Party, should stand for, was his understanding of President Franklin Roosevelt's leadership.

In his autobiography *Grassroots*, McGovern described his reaction upon hearing of Roosevelt's death in April 1945, when he was a bomber pilot stationed in Italy. McGovern wrote, "Most of us had never really known the United States except with FDR as President. We did not think of him as a politician. He was that magnificent voice of the fireside chat who inspired all those who stood for freedom and decency in the war. What would the United States be like without him?"

In an interview with *EIR* (Sept. 9, 2005), following Hurricane Katrina, McGovern contrasted the Bush Administration's reaction to the emergency, with what Roosevelt had done after the Crash of 1929. He said, "President Roosevelt acted to save the nation and the common good. He even closed the banks and then opened them up again, fit to serve the people and the nation. He passed regulations against the crime of speculation. He gave people hope against their worst fears."

A South Dakota native, McGovern ran for President against the incumbent Richard Nixon, on an anti-Viet-

nam War platform in 1972, after serving in the U.S. House of Representatives (1957-61) and the U.S. Senate (1963-81). He lost his Presidential bid overwhelmingly, winning only the state of Massachusetts and the District of Columbia, but he often joked, in numerous conversations with this author, that "even Dick Nixon would have been happier if I had won."

He was critical of the lack of backbone among his fellow Democrats. In 2008, he published an op-ed in the *Washington Post* calling for the impeachment of

President George W. Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney, emphasizing that they were far more guilty of high crimes than even Richard Nixon. Impeachment is "unlikely," he wrote, not only because of the Republican opposition, but because of "a lack of courage and statesmanship on the part of too many Democratic politicians." "Impeachment," he noted, is "quite simply, the procedure written into the Constitution to deal with Presidents who violate the Constitution and the laws of the land."

McGovern was appointed by President John F. Kennedy as the first director of the U.S. Food for Peace program in 1961. President Bill Clinton, who had been McGovern's

Texas campaign manager during the '72 Presidential campaign, appointed him U.S. Permanent Representative to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, where he served from 1998-2001. In 2008, in response a call by Helga Zepp-LaRouche to double worldwide food production, McGovern told the LaRouche Political Action Committee (LPAC), that he would support all efforts to increase world food production at an upcoming Food and Agriculture Organization meeting. "We can't put hunger on hold," he said. "We have to look forward both to a larger world population, and to feeding them better."

Looking back to Kennedy's Food for Peace policy, McGovern said, "JFK developed a blueprint. We kept India alive, for example, until, through the Green Revolution, it became self-sufficient in food. That has to be our food politics, worldwide."



McGovern Center

Although McGovern lost his bid for the Presidency in 1972, he later joked that probably "even Dick Nixon would have been happier if I had won." He is shown here campaigning in Syracuse, N.Y. in 1972.