

National Liberation Committee Formed

by Andrew Spannaus

May 13—The newly formed Italian National Liberation Committee (CLN), which brings together various movements and associations intent on defending Italy from the dictatorship of the financial markets, has launched its first organizing initiative: collecting signatures on a proposal for restoring the separation between commercial banks and investments banks, following the principle of the original 1933 Glass-Steagall Act in the United States.

The name “National Liberation Committee” is taken from the body created during the resistance against Fascism in World War II. Various groupings with different backgrounds came together to defeat the Mussolini regime and its Nazi backers, leading to the creation of the modern Italian Republic at the end of the war.

On May 10, ten representatives of the CLN went to the Supreme Court in Rome (Corte di Cassazione) to register what is called a “Popular Initiative Bill,” a system which allows any group that collects 50,000 signatures on a proposal to force the parliament to consider it. The registration was published in the Official Journal of the Italian Republic the next day, marking the start of the six-month period for the collection of the signatures. Now, the participating organizations—including Movisol, the LaRouche movement in Italy—will begin mobilizing the population for this essential step towards the reorganization of the bankrupt financial system.

As *EIR* readers may recall, numerous resolutions and bills in favor of Glass-Steagall have been introduced in the Italian Senate and Chamber of Deputies in recent years. Indeed, thanks to Movisol’s campaign in particular, the issue of protecting the real economy from the catastrophic effects of the speculative global financial system has been picked up by a number of political figures, and found its way into the national debate at many levels. Just since the beginning of 2012, bills

have been introduced by Sen. Oskar Peterlini, former Economics Minister Giulio Tremonti, and also by the Lega Nord political party, which included Glass-Steagall among the points of its electoral program at the beginning of this year.

Homage to ‘International Commitments’

What has not been seen, however, is a serious shift within the Italian institutions. Although it is clear that the policies of the Troika (European Central Bank, IMF, European Commission) have been disastrous, leading to economic and social destruction in countries such as Greece, Spain, and Portugal, much of the Italian political class continues to pay homage to the “international commitments” represented by the EU budget criteria, and demands for further deregulation and privatization. This, despite the fact that two years of harsh austerity have led to a sharp drop in Italy’s GDP, and produced the beginnings of a seismic shift in the political system.

In the national elections held in late February of this year, a full 25% of the population voted for the grouping founded by populist comedian Beppe Grillo, the Five Star Movement (M5S). The M5S focused mostly on superficial and misleading aspects of the current crisis, such as political corruption and wasteful spending. Yet the discontent in the population caused by the economic collapse has led to an explosion in the movement’s support, because it was seen as being “new,” outside of the current political institutions. For example, the M5S refuses to go on television, and only organizes over the Internet and at street rallies.

Despite this electoral earthquake, the other three largest political parties (the center-left Democratic Party, center-right People of Freedom, and centrist Civic Choice) have formed a grand coalition government—with essentially the same policy as that of the technocratic Prime Minister Mario Monti before them! They are playing politics as usual, while planning a few superficial reforms that they hope will placate some of the popular rage. In terms of basic economic policy, nobody in the “mainstream” has dared to question the free-market, pro-austerity bent that has created this situation, or to state the obvious: that the euro currency must be abandoned if European nations hope to survive. At best, they speak of loosening the budget criteria imposed by the European Union for a year or two, to at least par-

tially stop the bleeding. A fundamental change it is not.

A Return to Sovereignty, Sanity

The CLN’s mobilization for a Glass-Steagall law in Italy aims to rapidly inject reality into this situation. The awareness of the need for insulating the real economy from the collapse of the global financial system is spreading rapidly among protest groups across the political spectrum. Within the M5S as well, there are many inexperienced members who now find themselves in the parliament, and need to be educated as to the real issues to be tackled. A discussion process has begun, with the goal of freeing the movement’s rank-and-file from the ideological control exercised by Grillo and his partner Gianroberto Casaleggio, whose worldview is closer to that of Prince Philip than Franklin Roosevelt.

The CLN aims to drive a process that can influence all of the political parties, involving citizens and groups willing to defend Italy’s population, and demand a return to sovereignty and sanity. As of this writing, there are five other movements that belong to the CLN, besides Movisol. They come from varied backgrounds, and include, for example, an association for the defense of children, a large consumers’ association, and a network of small businesses.

The concept behind the CLN is to bring together diverse organizations around four points: 1) national sovereignty, and thus withdrawal from the Lisbon Treaty, the EU document that overrides member states’ national constitutions; 2) Glass-Steagall; 3) a National Bank to provide productive credit to the economy; and 4) a change in the tax-collection system to avoid foreclosures against homes and businesses. The last point is particularly important for businesses, which have been hard hit by the economic crisis. As turnover has gone down and the banks have cut off credit, companies are forced into bankruptcy, and end up losing everything; this often extends to the personal assets of the business owners, and has driven many to suicide. While many in the media express their shock at the situation, very few have had the courage to make proposals that would actually improve the economy.

By working to gather over 50,000 signatures in the coming months, the groups participating in the CLN will be creating an organizing process that can put pressure on the institutions, and force them to take responsibility for the future.