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## North Rhine-Westphalia Election

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# LaRouche Intervention: No 'Politics As Usual'

by Rainer Apel

The outcome of the May 22 State parliament elections in North Rhine-Westphalia will be decisive for the way politics develops in all of Germany. With its almost 18 million inhabitants, this largest state of Germany is home to more than 20% of the nation's electorate.

Should incumbent Gov. Peer Steinbrück of the Social Democrats (SPD) be defeated on election day, the state will come under the control of the opposition Christian Democrats (CDU), thereby giving the CDU a two-thirds majority at the Bundesrat, the upper house of the Federal Parliament. The CDU would then be able to block most of the legislative projects planned by the SPD-led national government of Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, and Germany would be ungovernable.

One week before election day in North Rhine-Westphalia, according to polls, the SPD and its Green party coalition partner were trailing the CDU and its Free Democrat Party partner by 5%, so that a defeat of Steinbrück by CDU top candidate

Jürgen Rüttgers seemed likely, even considering the fact that three weeks earlier, the CDU was ahead by 11%. The CDU is suffering from an erosion of popularity that has two main aspects, both of which have to do with the forceful political intervention of the LaRouche movement and its Civil Rights Movement Solidarity, or BüSo, party, which ran 41 candidates for the state Parliament.

A 20-member campaign squad of the LaRouche Youth Movement (LYM) contributed decisively to the CDU's troubles. In early March, the LYM e-mailed and faxed the first "Open Letter to the Voter," written by BüSo chairman Helga Zepp-LaRouche, to many local offices of the SPD and labor unions. In follow-up phone calls, the LYM found many open to a discussion about the BüSo's proposal for the re-industrialization of North Rhine-Westphalia.

The BüSo call for strict control of derivatives speculation, and for state-guaranteed issuance of industrial loans to create productive jobs, also met an interested response from SPD and labor union officials. By mid-April, this debate triggered by the BüSo/LYM had created the political environment which allowed SPD national chairman Franz Müntefering to launch harsh attacks on speculators and hedge funds, whom he likened, in an interview April 17, to "financial locusts." Like the locusts in the biblical plagues, Müntefering said, they descend upon firms and jobs and raze everything to the ground.

The heated public debate provoked by these remarks helped to create an even more intense discussion of the principle of the Common Good as the foundation stone for a modern and just state order nationally, and internationally.

This is an essential point of the BüSo, in promoting the LaRouche proposal for a New Bretton Woods financial architecture.

In two articles published April 20 and 22, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* daily, the chief mouthpiece of the "City of Frankfurt" bankers and monetarists, noted that LaRouche was the key factor behind the revival of a debate, in the U.S. as well as in Germany, about Rooseveltian New Deal concepts. In particular, the daily commented that the BüSo was intervening forcefully into election campaign events of the SPD, apparently with the impact illustrated by Müntefering's remarks.

Frustration among SPD voters and members at the Schröder government's monetarist policies is, however, immense, and the Müntefering move did not remoralize the Social Democrats to the extent that they would be reactivated in large numbers during the remaining weeks of the election campaign. However, the debate has para-



*LaRouche movement organizers in Aachen, North Rhine-Westphalia, on March 14. The party sparked a nation-wide debate on the economic policy crisis.*

lyzed larger sections of the CDU, especially those that dislike the party's top candidate, Rüttgers, for his radical budget-cutting propaganda, and therefore, the CDU election campaigning was slowed down.

### **The Schwarzenegger Effect**

The drastic drop from a CDU lead of 11% over the SPD, to only 5%, within the last four weeks of the campaign, is generally attributed, by CDU party members and voters alike, to the increasing unpopularity of Rüttgers. And that also has to do with the second initiative launched by the BüSo/LYM concerning Rüttgers's enthusiasm for California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, who is on the record for his pro-Hitler remarks. Rüttgers was the target of a cartoon that was popular, not only at campaign events of the SPD, but at those of the CDU as well. The cartoon gave the latent anti-Rüttgers sentiment among voters the right name at the right time.

The leverage which the BüSo/LYM campaign developed, was paid prominent tribute in an election special of the main state electronic media, Westdeutscher Rundfunk, which in early May portrayed the BüSo as "a small party with a seismographic capacity." The BüSo also received positive coverage in the state's leading news daily, the *Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, which on May 13 wrote: "The Bürgerrechtsbewegung Solidarität (BüSo) is the only party in Germany that campaigns for the reindustrialization of the Ruhr Region into a powerhouse for technology."

But programs alone, good as they may be, cannot transform the political scene sufficiently in a state like North Rhine-Westphalia, the electorate of which has been forced through more than 30 years of de-industrialization. The former powerhouse of the productive German industry is now a region with more than 1 million unemployed, while 70% of those who still have a job are working in the service or entertainment/media sectors. From their state of depression and frustration, voters can be elevated only through Classical culture, through irony—which is what the LYM has done, in direct contrast to the counterculture presented by the other parties.

The LYM has played Classical music from their campaign sound cars, and has sung Classical and traditional songs with modified lyrics. For example, the miners' anthem, "Glück-auf," was used in the BüSo campaign television spot, with new words. One of the favorites is the LYM song, "Hört doch endlich auf zu jammern, sei nicht länger Untertan," which means, "Once and for all, stop that complaining, stop being the serf that you have been." American spirituals like "Oh, Freedom" also are popular in the campaign.

The outcome of the election will influence the rest of Germany through changes in the SPD-CDU national balance of power. But the debate on the essentials of economic and financial policy, which the LaRouche movement has catalyzed, is the most important achievement of the election campaign.