

TEXAS DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION

The Fight for the Future Of the Democratic Party

by Harley Schlanger

The business-as-usual atmosphere which generally characterizes the race for state chair in the Texas Democratic Party was shattered this year, as an angry insurgency has broken loose in the party. This was reflected in the balloting at the state convention in Fort Worth the weekend of June 10-11, in which a run-off was forced between the “establishment’s” choice for chair, Boyd Richie, and former State Rep. Glen Maxey.

Driving this insurgency were Lakesha Rogers, a member of the LaRouche Youth Movement (LYM), and Charlie Urbina-Jones, a labor lawyer from San Antonio. While Urbina-Jones fought to make the party both more inclusive, and more combative against the faction of so-called “moderate” Democrats, which has presided over the catastrophic collapse of the party in Texas, it was up to Rogers and the LYM to put the programmatic issues on the table. It was the combined vote for Urbina-Jones and Rogers in the chair’s race which led to a run-off, as neither Maxey nor Richie, the other two candidates, achieved a 50% vote in the first round.

Throughout the weekend—and especially in their speeches to the more than 6,000 delegates and alternates to the convention on June 10—Rogers and the LaRouche activists put the party on notice. They insisted that the Democratic Leadership Council (DLC) operatives, who have dominated the party in Texas for the last two decades, and have played a crucial role in undermining the party nationally, be booted out, starting with Felix Rohatyn.

Rogers, LaRouche, and the FDR Legacy

Rogers’ speech, and those of the three who placed her name in nomination, were well received by the delegates (see

full texts, below). “I’ve taken on the fight,” she stressed, “which is necessary to adopt the principles to take the country back to the ideas and the legacy of Franklin Roosevelt.”

Rogers was interrupted frequently by applause, as she gave a stirring call to make that FDR legacy come alive again for the voters of Texas. Her appeal for a policy of outreach especially resonated, as many of the delegates were voicing similar concerns. For example, many of them who are members of the graying Baby Boomer generation, have been asking why there are so few youth involved in the party.

There was a crescendo of applause as she described how to address this, to return the Democrats to majority status in Texas: “I want to let you know, I am an organizer. After graduating college, I found that our generation had no future. We’re not trained in skilled labor, our productive capabilities are falling! We’re losing our labor forces right now.”

She finished with a rousing call to action: “You and I, together, will take this party back. We’ll take it back to the people, and we’ll make sure that *we win the fight* to take Texas back ‘Out of the Bushes and Into the Future!’ And we are going to do it *without DeLay!*”

Rogers’ speech was the culmination of a two-month organizing drive, which was launched following a discussion between this author and Lyndon LaRouche about how to reignite in the Democratic Party the “spirit of 2005,” when Congressional Democrats successfully mobilized to turn Bush into a premature lame duck. That mobilization keyed off LaRouche’s exposure of the role of Synarchist banker George Shultz in pushing the hapless Bush to back a Chilean-style privatization of the U.S. Social Security system. Demo-



EIRNS/Christopher Landry

Kesha Rogers of the LaRouche Youth Movement addresses the Democratic State Convention in Fort Worth on June 10. Her campaign for the party chairmanship sparked an “insurgency” against the “New Democrat” opponents of the FDR legacy, who have ruined the party over the past two decades.

crats, with the open support of some Republicans, rallied the population to defend Social Security, which had been instituted as part of FDR’s New Deal. This was a major defeat for Shultz’s Wall Street pirates.

Instead of building on this victory, leading Democrats pulled back in early 2006, putting pragmatism and personal ambition ahead of defending the general welfare. Felix Rohatyn—like his old collaborator Shultz, a Wall Street Synarchist fascist, who came from the same Lazard Frères investment bank which supported the fascist movements in Europe in the 1920s and 1930s—emerged as a leading figure in the Democratic Party, both through his role with the DLC, and as a Wall Street moneybags for candidates who shared his hostility to FDR.

Rohatyn, using the DLC as a base of operations, has attempted to sabotage the efforts of LaRouche and his co-thinkers in the party to remove Dick Cheney and the neo-cons from the White House, putting out the line that it is better to leave Cheney in office, to run against him! Rohatyn has simultaneously attacked LaRouche’s efforts to pass legislation to save the auto industry’s machine-tool sector, working instead as a paid operative for Delphi and General Motors in dismantling the auto industry, outsourcing its jobs while preaching that globalization is unstoppable and good for the country, and that a return to the policies of FDR is unacceptable.

LaRouche said that Rogers’ campaign would offer Texas Democrats a rallying point, to go against the DLC subversion of the party. Many Texas Democrats, who had once played a leading role in winning the legislative battles for the New Deal, and who had seen their state develop as a result of such

policies, have been thoroughly disgusted by the party’s recent submission to the “New Democrats.” The so-called New Democrats have been instrumental in destroying the legacy of FDR, with their anti-government, pro-free-trade rhetoric.

The growing groundswell against them was intersected by the efforts of Urbina-Jones to turn this year’s convention into a referendum. “*Ya basta!*”—“enough”—was the rallying cry for those who have had their fill of the “Bush-lite” turn of the Texas Democratic Party.

It was in this environment that Lakesha Rogers’ campaign provided an additional spark, and served to clarify the reasons why an insurgency was necessary.

Unity Around Principle

The underlying issue, which was voiced by Urbina-Jones, and, to a lesser extent, by Maxey, as well as by a large number of delegates, is that the party has been going in the wrong direction for the last two decades. The party should concentrate on jobs, health care, basic economic issues—the usual Democratic Party “red meat”—but there was a strong response to Rogers’ insistence on going beyond the rhetoric.

First, it is essential that the allies of Shultz and Cheney be driven out of the Democratic Party. What good is it, she and other LYM members asked, if Cheney were to be removed, but Shultz’s longtime collaborator, Rohatyn, remained a leading figure shaping the direction of the party?

Secondly, Rogers emphasized that the Democrats must go deeper than seeing the fight as “New Democrat” versus “New Deal.” The real battle is over fundamental principles of economics, understanding the difference, for example, be-

tween the foolish “pay as you go” budgetary axioms, and the creation of Federal credit, which FDR used to build infrastructure and create jobs, to get the U.S. out of the Great Depression, and John F. Kennedy did to fund the space program. There were many animated discussions at the Rogers’ campaign booth in the exhibition hall, as Democrats stopped to engage in in-depth dialogues with the contingent of LYM members.

This battle was made concrete by the circulation of the LaRouche PAC “White Paper” on Rohatyn’s role in dismantling U.S. industry (see *EIR*, June 16, 2006), which was grabbed by delegates, along with LaRouche’s Emergency Recovery Act of 2006.

This programmatic perspective was reflected by a number of the speakers, with many calling for policies for the “common good” and the “general welfare,” and repeated references to FDR. Barbara Ann Radnofsky, the Democratic candidate for U.S. Senate, invoked John F. Kennedy and the Moon mission as an example of the kind of policies needed today, to inspire a new generation.

The additional factor, which represented a real change at this year’s convention, was the growing recognition that LaRouche has been right, about the economy, and about the Democratic Party. There were many who stopped at the Rogers’ booth to talk about past run-ins with LaRouche, to say that they met LaRouche at a meeting, or a conference, or remembered him from his address to the state convention in 1980. His involvement in the party was referenced by former chair, Bob Slagle, who silenced a few hecklers when LYM member Natalie Lovegren nominated Rogers. Slagle, who served as the chairman of the convention, insisted that the party respect the rights of LaRouche and his presence at the convention. His statement was met with applause, and the response from the delegates, from then on, to Rogers and her supporters, was quite enthusiastic.

One leading Democrat remarked that LaRouche had been right in the 1980s, when he warned of the danger of fascism in America. “We didn’t acknowledge him then, but now, it is clear. People are hurting. We need his voice.” Another senior Democrat was more succinct. In speaking of the highly visible presence of Rogers and the LYM, he said, “LaRouche is back, bigger than ever.”

The convention ended on a high note. While Boyd Richey was elected chairman on the second ballot, he ended the convention saying that he has gotten the message, and that he intends to work with Maxey, Urbina-Jones, and Rogers. In a post-conference letter he sent out widely, he wrote, “I also want to thank Glen Maxey, Charlie Urbina-Jones and Lakesha Rogers—for running constructive campaigns that emphasized your ideas about how we can improve our Party. I look forward to working with you as we strive to . . . turn out the winning margin in November.”

Rogers replied immediately, pledging that she and the LYM, and Lyndon LaRouche, are ready to take on that task.

Nomination by Natalie Lovegren

Hello, my name is Natalie Lovegren. I’m from South Texas, the Rio Grande Valley, a strong Democratic area. I am proud to nominate Kesha Rogers for the position of Texas Democratic State Chair. Kesha is here as a leader of the LaRouche Youth Movement [a few boo’s from the audience]. Now, a few of you may—. [Bob Slagle, a member of the party’s Executive Committee who chaired the session, interrupts and takes the mike.]



Slagle: Now, hold on. I was run against by a LaRouche candidate everytime or almost everytime I’ve run, or run for reelection. We believe in free speech in the Democratic Party. Please don’t boo, because I’ll have—[loud, sustained applause] because if you do I’ll have to add back time, and I don’t want to do that. Thank you for your courtesy.

Lovegren: A few of you may still be stuck in the ’80s and believe slanders about LaRouche, but some of you may remember the 1980 Democratic State Convention in San Antonio, where LaRouche addressed the convention; he was brought in by Texas farmers and he warned that if we moved away from the FDR tradition, and abandoned labor, abandoned farmers, abandoned small business, we would become a minority party.

Now, Kesha is part of building a youth movement to revive that legacy, to revive the Franklin Roosevelt legacy, and to rebuild the nation, through a new mission orientation around scientific and technological development, around creating jobs through mass infrastructure projects for water, power, transportation. Kesha understands that it is the responsibility of every elected official, every representative of our republic, to look to those in the greatest need and the poorest condition, and fight to uplift them. [applause] Her campaign represents mass outreach to old and new voters, to revive that principle, the principle of the general welfare, the principle of the common good, to revive that principle in this state. Kesha represents the dignity, and the commitment to principle that is greatly needed to lead this party, and it is my honor to nominate and support her. Thank you.

Second by Michael Maddi

I second Lakesha Roger’s nomination, as a member of the Baby Boomer generation that now is *misleading* the nation. Kesha represents not only the youth who look for real leader-

ship from the Democratic Party. She also represents those Democrats of my generation who know that the party must reject the post-industrial ideology of the 1960s that infected our generation. This ideology has led us into the pit of globalization and free trade. Right now it is causing the shutdown of our auto industry and its essential machine-tool capacity, and the highly paid skilled jobs associated with it.

Kesha has been an active Democrat as a grassroots organizer and precinct chair for several years. Kesha says it's time to return to the tradition of FDR, and industrial production, and skilled jobs, and decent wages. She is calling on Democrats to get behind a program for the poor and middle class, students, and the elderly, the lower 80% we have largely abandoned as Democrats. This is an organizing strategy that will bring former Democrats and disenchanted voters in general, back to our party. That's how we will win in November and in 2008.

Fellow delegates, vote for Kesha today and follow her "Out of the Bushes, Into the Future"!



district, not a stone left unturned, that we did not go into; whether it was door to door, or on the traffic islands, we were educating the population about the evils of Tom DeLay.

Now, leadership, on the other hand though, is not just telling people how bad things are. We have to have a solution to the problems. We have to go in, and demonstrate to people that there are real solutions to this crisis we face as a nation, and Kesha Rogers has demonstrated, time and time again, that she's willing to fight for a real transformation, against globalization and free trade.

We're going to "Get Out of the Bushes, and Into the Future," with Kesha Rogers.

Thank you.

Lakesha Rogers

'Out of the Bushes And Into the Future'

Speech to the Convention, June 10.

Hello Democrats, my name is Lakesha Rogers, and I am running for your Democratic Party Chair. I am running because this nation is in great danger. We are in danger right now, of losing our great nation, losing our Constitution, and losing the principles which shaped this great Republic! We're losing those principles, because thugs like Dick Cheney, Tom DeLay, have destroyed our country, and the values which we represent. We have to take them back! This is why I've launched a campaign with the slogan, "Out of the Bushes and Into the Future." And those of you who know what that means, know that we must fight *now*, to take Texas back, and take this nation back. [applause]

I have fought, in the Democratic Party, and been a Democrat for the last 29 years. I'm 29 years old. I started as a precinct chair for many years, and I've taken on the fight which is necessary to adopt the principles to take the country back to the ideas and the legacy of Franklin Roosevelt; to those ideas that were once shaped by great leaders such as Henry B. Gonzales and Ralph Yarborough, who understood that we have to stand up to the devices of those of Wall Street and the financier interests, those who are now trying to come in and hijack and cripple the Democratic Party. Those like Felix Rohatyn, who want to destroy our party, and individuals who want to make sure that we don't have a nation any longer.

I want to let you know that I have led the fight on the ground to build a groundswell in the Democratic Party, to bring the fight back to the people once again. We cannot be

Nomination by Dennis Daulton

Hello there, my name is Dennis Daulton, and I am glad to nominate Kesha Rogers for the Democratic State Chairmanship.

At age 18, I joined the U.S. Navy, and I did this for two reasons. First was to serve my country, but second was to gain the leadership skills necessary to be a Democratic candidate, who could win and lead this nation to victory [applause]. Well, I did get elected as a Democratic candidate to the precinct chair, now twice. But, the leadership skills I've learned have come through organizing with the LaRouche Youth Movement, organizing on the streets of this nation, talking to the population about the necessary economic reforms that our country needs, to survive.

We organize mostly on college campuses, organizing around the FDR tradition, industrialization, infrastructure projects. But we have battles with these students, battles over ideas, ideas that will shape this country's future.

Now, Kesha and I came up, we cut our teeth in our fight we waged against Tom DeLay in the 22nd Congressional District [cheers, applause]. There was not a corner of that



mechanical about this. This party is not about business. It's about bringing in ideas from young people, bringing in ideas to shape the future once again. Bringing in those ideas that are going to *challenge*, challenge the traditions which are necessary to have a real impact in the population, fighting for the forgotten men and women of this nation.

The first order of business for the Democratic Party, has to be to *get Cheney out now!* [applause] And Maxine Waters, Representative from California, has just recognized this, and I am going with her on that one.

I stood strong in the fight to bring down Tom DeLay, going door to door, organizing day by day. I want to let you know, I am an organizer! After graduating college, I found that our generation had no future. We're not trained in skilled labor, our productive capabilities are falling. We're losing our labor forces right now. We have to bring labor into discussions of the Democratic Party. We have to bring the forgotten men and women! Why is it that we have almost 36 counties not here, represented? We should have made sure that they were here! Why is it that we don't have more young people here? I'm going to bring them in! [applause] Why are we not addressing the needs of our farmers? We have to bring them in, now!

And I ask you today, that you join me. I am ready to join with you, as your leader and as a candidate for the Texas Democratic Party Chair. I'm ready to work with you, to reorganize and to change this party, back to the traditions which it once represented. I know I'm young; I don't know everything. But you and I, together, will take this party back. We'll take it back to the people, and we'll make sure that *we win the fight* to take Texas back Out of the Bushes and Into the Future! And we are going to do it *without DeLay!* [cheers]

Democrats: I'm counting on you to make a change. Join me, now! Thank you. [cheers, applause]

Interview: Lakesha Rogers

Texas Dems Make Way for LaRouche

Harley Schlanger interviewed LaRouche Youth Movement leader Lakesha Rogers on June 12, immediately after the conclusion of the Texas Democratic convention. Here are excerpts.

EIR: Kesha, you entered the race for Texas Democratic Party chair rather late. Why did you decide to run?

Rogers: After the announcement by Tom DeLay that he was

resigning, many Democrats acted as though we could get by with nothing more than the "we're not them" attitude, that the Republicans are so bad, people will automatically vote for Democrats. To address this in Texas, as well as the same problem nationally, you and Lyn [LaRouche] suggested that I run for the office. . . . The idea was that my campaign can shape the potential for a landslide victory in 2006, to win back the House and the Senate. We launched the campaign with the slogan "Out of the Bushes and Into the Future," which created an immediate impact statewide, and nationally.

EIR: What's been your experience in the Party?

Rogers: I have been active for many years. . . . I campaigned for former Mayor Lee Brown (in Houston) and worked in Congressional campaigns, such as for Sheila Jackson Lee (D-Tex.) and others. After joining the LaRouche Youth Movement (LYM) three years ago, I became a precinct chair. With the LYM, I played a key role in leading the fight against the poster boy of free trade and corruption, Tom DeLay. We showed Democrats how to take on the Shultz/Rohatyn crowd which was behind Social Security privatization. And we are showing Democrats that we can, and must, discuss these issues, at the highest level, with constituents in the lower 80% of family income brackets, that that is how we can give them a sense of mission in working with the Democratic Party.

EIR: What kind of campaigning did you do?

Rogers: We took the approach of building a groundswell in the population. The idea was to rejuvenate those layers which had been displaced by the Democratic Party, bring them back into the fight. I travelled with other members of the LYM throughout the state, organizing at campuses, union halls, Democratic Party meetings, at tax offices, and post offices. . . .

We focussed on LaRouche's proposal for retooling the auto industry, to enable long-term infrastructure development. We had to educate people on the Hamiltonian model of public credit, versus the free trade model of Shultz and Rohatyn.

A crucial part of this was discussing the urgent need to kick out the dirty Wall Street faction, which has attempted to hijack the party, trying to eliminate the legacy of Franklin D. Roosevelt, to get the party to go along with free trade and globalization. We led a strong fight to expose the role of Felix Rohatyn in attacking this FDR legacy, which is still important in Texas. This really shook things up, especially in discussions with Congressmen and elected officials.

EIR: What kind of response did you get from Texas Democrats?

Rogers: It has been one of an overwhelming eagerness for honest leadership and open discussion, and a strong rejection of the status quo. . . .

For example, a man on the State Democratic Executive Committee stood up in the meeting when the interim chair

was selected, and demanded that LaRouche literature not be allowed in the convention. This same man was intersected repeatedly by the LYM at the convention. After the speech that I gave at the convention, he told me he was very inspired. There was a new, massive openness from elected officials, and from party “regulars.”

EIR: One party leader told me that there is a lot of anger among Democrats, as many of the traditional constituents are hurting and they feel abandoned by the party. Was this evident to you?

Rogers: This was absolutely the response of many Democrats. People saw no solutions being provided. One lady summed it up just right when she said that everyone knows she’s a Democrat, and she tells everyone to vote that way, but they ask her, “Is it really going to hurt less to get screwed by a Democrat?” She continued, “What do I tell those people? How are we going to hold our elected officials accountable?”

There’s a paradox in Democrats’ minds over Clinton, that supposedly the economy was great, but he also went along with NAFTA, and now jobs are being outsourced left and right. The problem resides in the constituents’ idea of being able to change things themselves. They are being told to vote for the Democrats, and everything will be all right.

We’re telling people that we have to change things *right now!* We, the LaRouche organization, have a solid solution on the table, and we are organizing elected officials to take it up now, and pass the emergency legislation. Don’t wait until after the November elections; confront these guys now. Tell them they have to act now if they want to deserve your vote in November. . . .

EIR: By the time of the convention, Lyndon LaRouche had brought Rohatyn’s role into the open. While Rohatyn may not be well known in Texas, the Democratic Leadership Council is. What response did you get when you said you intend to clean Rohatyn and the DLC right-wingers out of the party?

Rogers: The key to exposing the impotence of the leadership of the Democratic Party was making Rohatyn the issue, educating Democrats on the threat his financial circle represents to the party, and the nation. Many responded by saying, “So that’s the bastard wrecking the party?” We put many people on edge over Rohatyn. But we have the goods on this guy, his role in pushing privatization and opposing the FDR legacy in the party.

When we discovered his role in the Delphi bankruptcy, Lyn immediately authorized the publication of a White Paper,



EIRNS/Michael Steger

Rogers: We are bringing in the ideas necessary “to have a real impact in the population, fighting for the forgotten men and women of this nation.”

“Rohatyn: The French-Nazi Connection,” which we saturated the convention with. While some just don’t want to deal with this, many people indicated they are ready to fight. . . . They are ready for a transformation of the party. The key to this transformation is the ability of youth to go in with real solutions, to inspire change and open the party up to LaRouche’s ideas. . . .

EIR: At the close of the convention, the new chairman, Boyd Richie, specified that he wants to work with you to win in November 2006.

Rogers: Mr. Richie’s comments signified a real change. He recognized that to win, he would have to open the party, as I emphasized throughout the campaign. He was really challenged by the fact that he did not win in the first round, and he saw the insurgency in the party. I am encouraged by his statement, because it reflects an understanding that change is necessary.

The LYM, and I, plan to escalate the drive for organizing throughout the population, reaching out to the lower 80% of family income brackets, and especially to youth, labor, farmers and ranchers, and racial and ethnic minorities. This has been expressed clearly to Mr. Richie, that we are prepared to join with him to do that.

We have also spoken to many Democratic candidates about the impact the LYM can have in shaping their campaigns, to organize a landslide in November, to demonstrate that the Democrats will no longer run as “Bush-lite,” but will provide real solutions to the crises they face. I think many of the candidates . . . are open to collaboration on this kind of principled basis.