

LaRouche Backs Rangel: Revive the Draft!

by William F. Wertz, Jr.

Rep. Charles Rangel (D-N.Y.), soon to be the chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, tossed a political hand grenade into the post-election debate on Iraq, by announcing his intent to reintroduce a bill calling for the revival of the draft. Lyndon LaRouche has long supported Rangel on the question of the draft. As LaRouche put it on Sept. 30, 2005, "It makes sense. There are many reasons for it, and he knows them all."

In contrast, Rangel's proposal immediately drew opposition from leading Democrats as well as from Republicans. Incoming Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) said Rangel should stick with tax and spending issues. A spokesman for Senate Majority Leader-to-be Harry Reid (D-Nev.) said that Reid "still believes these problems are best addressed by making needed adjustments in the all-volunteer force rather than scrapping the system completely." On the Republican side, Rep. Duncan Hunter (Calif.) claimed that "the military is meeting all of its goals on re-enlistment. . . . We're doing very, very well." Tim Kane of the right-wing Heritage Foundation claimed that "there is a terrible myth out there that says we need to have a draft, because America's military is . . . unbalanced."

However, in an interview with John King on CNN's "The Situation Room," on Nov. 20, Rangel was undeterred:

"It's not within my jurisdiction, but, as long as I'm alive, I want the Administration to justify why we're in Iraq. . . . And if we're going to need more troops, I'm sick and tired of them coming from the same communities, offering hundreds of thousands of dollars, and spending \$4 billion on ads. Anyone that will tell you that the affluent are enlisting, is just not telling the truth. So, whether this becomes a bill or not, the debate will prove that they are enlisting and recruiting in areas of the highest unemployment. And that is whether it's the inner cities or whether it's the rural area. . . .

"[T]he head military officer general in Iraq testified last week in front of a Senate committee and while he said we didn't need any more troops, he said that even if we did, we don't have that many combat troops available.

"So what does this mean? You send the troops back five and six times? You go deeper into the reserves and the National Guard? This is so totally unfair. . . . If it is not enough to be patriotic and to enlist, then it is not enough to go to war. We have never heard the President of the United States, or the Commander-in-Chief make any argument in appealing to the people to enlist because it is the patriotic thing to do.

“Instead of that, they offer a \$40,000 bonus, \$70,000 education, and \$4 billion in ads.

“And so I’m saying if you have to go to war, don’t just let the poor that come from these communities of high unemployment be in harm’s way. Let everyone go or look to diplomatic solutions to these very serious problems. But each time they say, put the military options on the table in Iran, the military options on the table in North Korea, we need more troops in Iraq, then I’m saying that it’s not *their* kids they’re talking about. Most of the people talking have received deferments.”

Asked if there was any doubt in his mind that his proposal does not have the votes, Rangel responded: “In this new Congress, bills get hearings, they listen to the evidence and they determine whether or not they need this type of legislative solution. Now we haven’t even had a Congress. We don’t have the committees. As a matter of fact, the next chairman of the Armed Services committee will be Ike Skelton. And Ike knows that he represents rural areas, that too many people from rural areas that need jobs are looking toward the military. And he’s put out press releases about it. So I don’t know what’s going to happen in the next Congress. I do know this: Some people are saying we need a military solution in Iraq. And I’m saying, with whose kids do you need it?”

Rangel-Cleland Dialogue

‘We Pay More for Youth To Die, Than To Live’

by Michele Steinberg

On Sept. 15, 2005, more than a year before the midterm election which was a vote of no-confidence against George Bush, Dick Cheney, and the tragic, worsening fiasco in Iraq, Rep. Charlie Rangel (D-N.Y.) spoke at a hearing called by Democratic Rep. Lynn Woolsey of California. At that forum, Rangel explained why reinstituting the draft would be an important step in stopping the Bush Administration from starting more needless wars. His dialogue with former Sen. Max Cleland (D-Ga.) is one of the most dramatic discussions by two war heroes—Rangel from the Korean War, and Cleland from the Vietnam War—of how the Administration has destroyed the U.S. military. The excerpt below first appeared in EIR in 2005:

Rangel: . . . [W]hat supprises me is that there’s no outrage in this country for the young men and women that are there, the 1,800 that have died . . . over 12,000 that are wounded. And the fact that they come from the inner cities and the rural areas, and the Pentagon says with great pride that we are

increasing the bonuses from \$10- to \$20-, and \$20- to \$30-, and now \$40,000 because these people “want to fight.”

Now it just seems to me that since they come from the area of the highest unemployment, that if indeed the President was sincere in bringing liberty and freedom throughout the world, and especially in the Middle East, the sacrifice should be made by a broader cross-section of Americans, who believe that that is our mandate. Whether it’s a draft, or whether the President can make an appeal to the children of the CEOs or the Pentagon or the Congress, where everyone would believe that this is a mandate. . . .

[T]he taking of life—unlawfully and immorally—when it’s not in defense of you or your country, is probably one of the greatest sins that could possibly be committed. And this would include the tens of thousands of Iraqis, that have committed *no wrong*.

And so, Senator [Cleland], it seems to me that we could really end this war overnight, if we had a draft in this country, where *everybody* had to serve, and everyone had to be placed in harm’s way. . . .

Cleland: . . . You pointed out something that has bothered me, and that is that now *we’re paying more money for young men and women to die, than to live*. I think we have to be very careful about that. I happen to believe in the concept of the citizen soldier, which is why I volunteered for Vietnam, and why I was in ROTC. . . .

Fifty percent of all the casualties come from rural America. *Fifty percent of the casualties in Iraq come from rural America*—part of our country that probably has the least opportunity for jobs and investment in higher education. So, there is a disproportionate sharing . . . and we’re seeing the American military, and the civilian leadership at the Pentagon want to pay more and more for people to “re-up.” I understand that a Special Forces sergeant will get \$130,000 to re-up. That’s moving very closely to a mercenary force—kind of an American foreign legion! . . .

And, I happen to think, and one of the reasons I’m here plugging for an exit strategy, is that it immoral, *immoral*, and violates the right to life for these young men and women, to send [them] into combat, without a strategy to win, and without a strategy to get out. . . . The President calls that, “staying the course.” I call it immoral. . . .

There is no way we can maintain the occupation of Iraq at the current level. There’s no way we can “stay the course.” We’re throwing in almost everybody that is able-bodied in the Guard and Reserve, and now we realize we need the National Guard down in . . . Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana. So, we have committed our Reserves, and our bottom-line defenses, all in this so-called war in Iraq. . . . In the Guard, recruiting is down 43%. . . . This is insane. . . .

[T]here was no strategy to win. There was a strategy to take out Saddam Hussein, and a strategy to occupy the oil fields. That’s the only strategy that there was. . . . Now, we’re living in the mess that we created. That is generating more terrorism. . . . creating more insurgents. . . .