

## **After West Virginia: How To Move a Mountain**

by Debra Hanania-Freeman

LaRouche Political Action Committee (LPAC) Chairman Lyndon LaRouche called Hillary Clinton's 41-point smashing defeat of Barack Obama in West Virginia on May 13, "the biggest event in world history in the last month."

With the continued inescapable acceleration of the financial and economic collapse, both here in the U.S. and globally, a faction of the Anglo-Dutch financial establishment has been desperate to drive Clinton out of the race. Fearing the emergence of a U.S. Presidency capable of opposing their global war drive, of addressing the world food crisis, and of implementing a new financial architecture that would amount to the equivalent of a New Bretton Woods system and an international New Deal, they've thrown all caution to the wind in a blatant attempt to take over and control the U.S. election.

The situation prior to West Virginia's primary was indeed tense. Foreign agents of influence like Felix Rohatyn and George Soros had worked hard to orchestrate a clamor of calls, that was widely featured in the media, for Clinton to withdraw. Despite strong showings for Clinton in all the opinion polls, the sort of vote fraud that had been carried out in North Carolina could not be ruled out. If they could pull off another North Carolina, the stage was set to shut down the Clinton campaign—and that included an effort to convince her finance committee to pull the rug out from under her.

Instead, Clinton scored a blowout 41-point victory, smashing Obama in every demographic group, and strengthening her capacity to continue through to the August Convention and take the Democratic nomination. One well-placed political analyst likened the Clinton win to a revolution in the making.

### **Attempting To Drive Her Out**

Since Obama won the Iowa caucuses, there has been an escalating attempt to drive Clinton out of the race. A variety of

potential scenarios were in play, but none of them could tolerate Clinton as the Democratic nominee, much less, as President. In fact, following the blatant fraud in North Carolina, individuals close to Clinton were told as much; that what was perceived as a Clinton-Clinton Presidency would simply be too independent, and potentially impossible to control.

The fact that Clinton commanded a larger portion of the popular vote, and that millions of Democrats had not yet had the opportunity to vote; the fact that she had beat Obama in every state critical to a Democratic victory in November; and the fact that she continued to show that she was the Democrat who could beat McCain, seemed inexplicably irrelevant to the Party elite behind Obama. Within days of his pyrrhic North Carolina win, Obama virtually declared himself the Democratic nominee, and even went so far as to challenge the presumed Republican nominee John McCain to a one-on-one debate some time in early June. When all else failed, the Obama campaign literally tried to buy Clinton off, offering to pay her estimated \$25-30 million campaign debt if she would withdraw from the race. The press and media chant that the Democratic race was over, grew ever louder.

Clinton refused to bend. She continued to do as she has since New Hampshire, and took her campaign directly to the lower 80% of the population, stressing her willingness to address the problems the current depression brings with it. Despite the insistence that the campaign was over, and that their votes were irrelevant, West Virginia Democrats responded. In an act of outright defiance, they came out in healthy numbers, delivering Clinton the win she needed.

Despite the public bravado, there was a sense of panic in the Obama camp that Clinton had once again captured the momentum of the campaign, just as she had following wins in New Hampshire, Ohio, Texas, and Pennsylvania. In an attempt to somehow kill the effect of Obama's 41 point loss,



hillaryclinton.com/Barbara Kinney

*West Virginia voters, like those pictured here at Hillary Clinton's victory celebration in Charleston, gave her a landslide 41-point victory in the May 13 primary.*

John Edwards, who just 48 hours earlier, had said that he wouldn't make an endorsement until after all the primaries had taken place, made a Michigan appearance with Obama, endorsing his candidacy.

The endorsement itself was no surprise. Obama has been courting Edwards for four months, and Edwards, who has enjoyed a lot more success as a liability lawyer than as a candidate, has simply been holding out for the best deal. But, aides to Obama admitted that Edwards was growing increasingly concerned that Obama's inability to win white working-class voters was doing too much damage to the Illinois Senator's campaign. Edwards gave what amounted to a stump speech highlighting his favorite subject—John Edwards. Some commented that when the time came, Edwards seemed reluctant to hand over the microphone to Obama.

It isn't even clear how much the Edwards endorsement will actually help Obama. One senior member of Congress, who has not declared support for either Obama or Clinton, shrugged off the endorsement. "Edwards ran for the nomination in 2004 and lost it. Then he ran in the general election with Kerry and lost. He tried for the nomination again this time, and again, he lost. The fact is, the guy is a three-time loser." Either way, the Edwards endorsement and the trickle of superdelegate endorsements cannot erase what occurred in West Virginia.

## Winning the Tough Districts

Among white voters without a college degree, Clinton defeated Obama by 50 percentage points. Among white voters

making less than \$30,000 a year, Clinton's margin of victory was more than 60 percentage points. Clinton won every demographic, including those that had previously been going to Obama. The only exception was the small handful of voters with post-college degrees; there she and Obama were tied 49-49.

The speech Clinton delivered the night of her West Virginia victory explicitly targeted more than the voters of West Virginia. "There were some folks who didn't want us to keep going until we got to West Virginia," she said. "They wanted to say West Virginia doesn't matter. I don't think they understand West Virginia, or politics, because West Virginia really matters when it comes to making the decisions that affect our country," referring to the central role the state played when John F. Kennedy overcame deep skepticism about his Catholicism to win here.

"In light of our overwhelming victory here, I want to send a message to everyone still making up their mind," Clinton

said, speaking directly to the Democratic superdelegates, among others. "I am in this race because I believe I am the strongest candidate to lead our party in November of 2008, and the strongest President to lead our nation starting in January of 2009. I can win this nomination, if you decide I should. And I can lead this party to victory in the general election if you lead me to victory now. The choice falls to all of you, and I don't envy you."

So much for the ridiculous speculation in the press about which exit strategy Clinton would use to gracefully leave the race. Instead of kneeling down and letting the clock run out, Clinton threw a "Hail Mary" pass to the party leaders watching on the sidelines. "The bottom line is this," she said: "The White House is won in the swing states, and I am winning the swing states overwhelmingly. I am more determined than ever to carry on this campaign until everyone has had a chance to make their voices heard."

The next day Clinton traveled to Washington to rally her Capitol Hill supporters who, along with those as yet uncommitted superdelegates, have come under excruciating pressure that some say is tantamount to threats. Clinton's aides were instructed to do everything they could to keep uncommitted superdelegates from making endorsements; despite the repeated pronouncements by the Obama camp that he has clinched the nomination.

She used the meeting to drive home the point that she is more competitive with precisely that category of voter, and in the districts where Democrats will face their toughest race this fall. In a presentation titled "Winning in the Tough Districts,"

the Clinton campaign highlights that she won 16 of 20 congressional districts that had voted for Bush, and are now represented by first-term Democrats. Many Democratic lawmakers believe winning in these districts is critical to protecting or expanding their majority in Congress. Clinton won the districts represented by freshman Democrats Zack Space (Ohio), Gabrielle Giffords (Ariz.), Jerry McNerney (Calif.), Tim Mahoney (Fla.), and Nick Lampson (Tex.), who are all uncommitted superdelegates. Several other freshman superdelegates from Republican-leaning districts responded by recently declaring their support for Clinton: Reps. Chris Carney (Pa.), Heath Shuler (N.C.), and Ciro Rodriguez (Tex.). Although the press has made much of the superdelegates Obama has picked up, the simple fact is that Clinton has forestalled the much-predicted post-North Carolina superdelegate stampede to him.

Later, when she met with her finance committee, if there had been any intention by some of them to pull out, it certainly wasn't apparent. To underline their continuing support, and Clinton's intention to stay in the race, her campaign purchased a series of ads and opened new campaign offices in Oregon and Kentucky, the next of the five remaining primary states to vote (on May 20). The ads focus heavily on those economic issues most important to the lower 80% of the population for whom Clinton has become a voice.

It is an absolute nightmare for those behind the Obama candidacy. In their view, Clinton should have been out of this race back in March, and the fact that she has stubbornly stayed has created a major problem for them. Right now, there is no easy way to go after Clinton, especially after her landslide victory in West Virginia, and what are expected to be similar big wins, at least in Kentucky and Puerto Rico, without eliciting great sympathy and potentially great anger from voters. And, the fact that she has achieved those victories running *against* the Party establishment makes her increasingly unpredictable. The implications if Clinton continues to go after "Wall Street" and continues to focus on economic issues, create the potential for a situation that could get completely out of control.

## Does the Math Matter?

But, what about the math? The argument that there is no way that she can take enough delegates to deprive Obama of the nomination is as empty as Obama is himself. In addition to the five primaries remaining, where 189 elected delegates are at stake, there is the question of the disposition of the 366 delegates from the disputed primaries in Michigan and Florida, both states that heavily favored Clinton. If, and how, those delegates are apportioned is likely to be decided by the Democratic National Committee Rules and By-Laws Committee when it meets in Washington, D.C. on May 31. If those 366 delegates are apportioned between Clinton and Obama based on popular votes, it would give Clinton a net increase of 47 delegates, significantly narrowing Obama's current delegate lead.

Since the superdelegates are all technically unpledged, i.e., not bound to any candidate, regardless of whom they might or might not endorse prior to the Convention, a favorable decision by the 30-member panel would provide strong impetus for Clinton to take her campaign all the way to Denver, bolstering her argument to the superdelegates that she is ahead in the overall count of the popular vote, and possibly move them into her column. If the panel fails to seat those delegates, it runs the risk of major protests and demonstrations, both before, and during the convention, led especially by the Florida delegation. Hispanic delegates from across the nation have already indicated that if the largely Hispanic Florida delegation is not seated, they will join the demonstrations.

When all the arguments are made, while delegate counts are, of course, important in a practical sense, those who understand history know that it is the political *dynamic* that will determine the outcome of this campaign, and right now, the dynamic of the campaign seems to be favoring Clinton. For all the talk about Obama's ability to bring out new voters, Clinton has repeatedly brought out the base of the Democratic Party in large numbers, despite what might be the most massive press and media barrage to be fired against any candidate, other than Lyndon LaRouche, in U.S. history. And, she continues to address the issues that people care about most.

Some of the current polls indicate that Obama might be able to beat McCain in a one-on-one race, but Clinton defeats him handily. Perhaps more important, in-depth polls do show, as her "Winning the Tough Districts" presentation illustrates, that a Clinton win would be accompanied by a significant increase in the Democratic majority in Congress. If Obama were to win the nomination, the same polls show that while he might take the White House, the Democrats would likely lose congressional seats. One senior congressional Democrat commented, "You have to wonder, what the hell are Dean, Pelosi, and Reid thinking? Clinton is clearly the best nominee for us. Sure, there's the pressure from the leadership to go for Obama, but people are waking up today and are looking at results in West Virginia, and thinking about Kentucky and Puerto Rico, and saying, 'Hey, let's slow this thing down.' If we keep going this way, we're not only going to lose an election that we should, by all arguments, win, but the Democratic Party is going to be marginalized to the point of being irrelevant. If that happens, God help us all."

There's no question that if Clinton stays in this race and sticks to the policies that have resulted in her coming this far, she can win the Democratic nomination and the Presidency. And, while the economy has emerged as the single-most important issue in the campaign, what is truly shaping this campaign, more than anything else, is Hillary herself. The press may report endlessly about this or that poll, but what they fail to report is most interesting of all: Democratic voters are *not* tired of the campaign. In fact, 72% of all Democrats, including those who identify themselves as favoring Obama, think Clinton should stay in the race all the way to the Convention.

An increasingly angry lower 80% of the electorate says they support Hillary Clinton because they believe she is the candidate who is willing to address the collapse of the U.S. economy and issues related to it. And, they resent the attempt to be dictated to: to be told that the campaign is over. Polls show that those voters favor Clinton, not only because of her stand on economic issues, but because they see her as a fighter, and as someone who will fight for them and won't quit. As one Democratic member of Congress put it, "The way my constituents look at the situation, is that guys like Obama and Edwards may look and talk pretty, but you don't get a sense of them as real people. It's just not the case with Hillary Clinton. They feel like they know who she is. She may not always be right, but she's a fighter, and they like that. Plus, the woman is tough. She exudes pure brawn; unflinching, steely brawn. When the time comes that they have to decide who they want sitting on their side of the table, whether they're going up against Wall Street or some foreign dictator, they're going to go with Clinton."

What those voters are responding to is a quality of leadership, especially leadership in the face of adversity. In the wake of his defeat in Pennsylvania, Obama appeared to be in danger of unraveling. Clinton has taken everything that has been thrown at her, and has managed to maintain her focus with calm, and keep fighting. Given the crises that lie immediately ahead for our nation, it is a quality that we should all take note of.