

And in that way, in a certain sense, it's a book about everybody who's part of this, this fight for the truth, this fight for a Renaissance. And the only reason that I happened to write it, is that I had the time. I was given the time, to write what many people could have written, and each would have been different and unique, but in a certain sense, it is a history of each of us who've joined this fight.

Spannaus: Well, I know that the one response that I got that was most impressive, was, people saying that they finally have a different, and more sensuous, idea of what it means to be a part of this movement, because somehow when they read LaRouche, it seems . . . they think it's above them, and he's a great man, who's taking responsibility for the world, and who knows where he comes from—I don't know, from the head of Zeus, or something. But you, you're a person who in the book is identified as coming from a Midwest town they know, who's grown up in the same period that they may have grown up in, has references that they can address, and this makes them understand, and actually, as far as I can see, be much more committed to ensuring that our country goes in the direction that the LaRouche movement is fighting for.

So, I want to thank you very much, and we'll hope to have you back again.

Stop Tommy Thompson Nomination for HHS

by Marianna Wertz

While stopping George W. Bush's nomination of John Ashcroft as Attorney General is of the utmost strategic importance, Bush's nomination of Wisconsin Governor Tommy Thompson for Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) is also of great importance, if the nation is not to descend into what Lyndon LaRouche has warned will be America's equivalent of Nazi-style fascism. Yet, while major Democratic constituency groups, including organized labor and African-Americans, succeeded in blocking the horrendous choice of Linda Chavez at Labor, and these groups have mobilized to stop Ashcroft's nomination, there is virtually no opposition on the horizon to Thompson.

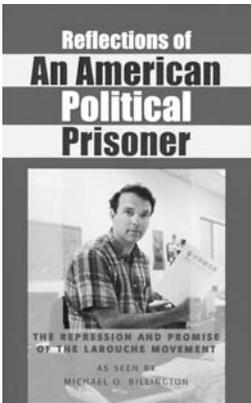
If ever a fox has been put in charge of the chicken coop, that is what putting Thompson in charge of HHS, the nation's largest civilian agency, would do. The media are touting Thompson as a "reformer," who has "revolutionized" his state's welfare system, and will bring the same kind of innovations to the Federal level at HHS. However, just a cursory glance at what he has done in his 14-year term as Governor of Wisconsin indicates that Thompson's commitment is not to the "general welfare," but rather to the complete privatization of all government services, including prisons and welfare services, and to the installation of his cronies in top positions of the private companies that administer the government funds. The result is the lowest welfare rolls in the nation, but former welfare recipients have been thrown on the scrap heap, and the rates of incarceration and racial division are among the highest in the nation.

Driving Down the Standard of Living

Among Thompson's first acts as governor (he was elected in 1986), was to launch Learnfare, the first welfare program in the country to withhold parents' cash benefits if their children skipped too much school.

Thompson also pioneered legislation that penalized women who have another baby while on welfare.

In 1982, Wisconsin became the first state to ask HHS for permission to end welfare as an entitlement, creating a two-year time limit for assistance, which was later the model for the Federal welfare policy that President Clinton, under Al Gore's and "triangulator" Dick Morris's influence, signed in 1996. Under that welfare policy, known as Wisconsin Works,



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*Secretary of the
U.S. Department of
Health and Human
Services-designee,
Wisconsin Gov.
Tommy Thompson.*

or W-2, the number of families on welfare has plummeted from 98,000 to fewer than 7,000 today, the greatest decline in the nation.

The new law stopped welfare payments altogether, and required recipients to work at jobs paying below minimum wage. At its inception, the law provided for approximately 15% of the jobs to pay about \$6 per hour, around 50% to pay about \$3.20 per hour; and around 25% to pay about \$3 per hour. In most cases, the payments are considered “grants” rather than “wages,” so the worker does not qualify for earned-income tax credits.

W2 terminated all assistance for post-secondary education and training for welfare-to-work recipients as of mid-1997, and Thompson has twice vetoed legislation allowing W-2 workers to enroll in education programs to upgrade their skills.

W-2 requires parents to work full-time when their children are only *12 weeks old*. It created a new, unlicensed child-care provider category called Provisional Care, whose providers are not required to take any classes to learn basic child-care measures. Child-care subsidies are only provided for a parent who is employed and whose income is at, or below, 165% of the Federal poverty line.

If a W-2 recipient has no income for three months, her children can be forcibly removed to a foster home.

A Federal investigation of Wisconsin’s W-2 program in December 2000 found that minority residents were denied benefits because the state failed to provide interpreters or translate documents. Thompson derided the Federal study as biased and inaccurate.

So many disabled people have been forced off welfare into work in Wisconsin, that the state agency that helps them get and keep jobs stopped accepting new clients in August 2000.

In urban Milwaukee County, which has the lion’s share of the state’s W-2 recipients, as many as nine out of ten former W-2 clients are “mired in poverty,” according to State Sen. Gwen Moore (D-Milwaukee), who criticizes Thompson for spending millions on private prisons, and virtually nothing on education and drug programs that would prevent citizens from going to prison. There has been an estimated 30% increase in food pantry visits since the inception of W-2.

Wisconsin had the highest percentage drop in the nation in 1999 of food-stamp usage by the poor, according to the U.S. General Accounting Office in July 1999. State Sen. Peggy Rosenzweig (R-Wauwatosa) called for an investigation, saying, “A culture of apathy and non-compliance has permeated the food-stamp program under W-2.” The audit found that 29% of recipients got only \$10 or less in monthly benefits.

Thompson’s Cronies

Five agencies administer the W-2 program in Milwaukee County, including the private Maximus, Inc. and YW Works, Inc. In October, Maximus was forced to pay back \$500,000 to the state, and spend another \$500,000 on extra services for the poor in Milwaukee County, to make amends for its “improper spending” of W-2 monies. This included thousands of dollars for hiring Broadway singer Melba Moore to entertain W-2 clients, for restaurant tabs for the former head of Maximus’s Milwaukee office, and for holiday parties for Maximus employees. Two of Maximus’s paid consultants are John Tries and Phil Prange; Tries is a former cabinet secretary for Thompson, and Prange is a Thompson campaign fundraiser.

Thompson is also an avid supporter of prison privatization. In 1996, he invited private prison developers, including Corrections Corp. of America, Wackenhut, and Dominion Venture Group, to make pitches for building prisons in Wisconsin. Thompson’s former top aide, Administration Secretary James Klauser, left Thompson to go to work as a lobbyist for Dominion. John Matthews, recently Thompson’s chief of staff, directs the lobbying effort for Dominion, which is now building a 1,326-bed “speculative” prison in Stanley, Wisconsin — i.e., they are assuming that their “friends” will guarantee that it will be filled when it is finished, though no permission has been granted for the building. Wackenhut’s lobbyist in Wisconsin, Bill McCoshen, is another former Thompson chief of staff.

Wisconsin is number-two in the nation in the racial gap in drug sentencing. Black men in Wisconsin are 53 times more likely to be serving time for drug crimes than white men, according to a June 2000 *Human Rights* report. Thompson’s only response to such reports has been to propose an alternative drug treatment program, which was launched as a pilot project in February 2000, and serves 48 first-time non-violent drug offenders.