

Democrats At a Turning Point: Kerry Starts Telling the Truth

by Nancy Spannaus

A shift in the campaign strategy and tactics of Democratic Presidential candidate John Kerry, to hold President George W. Bush and his controller, Vice President Dick Cheney, accountable for disaster in Iraq and for the horrendous condition of the U.S. economy—a shift demanded by leading Democrats Lyndon LaRouche and former President Bill Clinton, among others—holds the promise of victory for the Kerry-Edwards ticket in November.

That shift, which has been taking place as incompetents and saboteurs within the campaign, such as the consultant Bob “Loser” Shrum, have been downgraded in favor of several former Clinton aides, has been evident on the stump and in campaign ads in the two weeks immediately following Labor Day. Democratic insiders saw a key, and perhaps decisive, turning point in this battle—and the election—on Sept. 20, in Kerry’s policy address on the Iraq War at New York University. That speech was clearly intended to pre-empt the President’s remarks before the United Nations General Assembly the next day.

Kerry kept up his tough, and increasing Presidential, assault on Bush over the next days, during a trip to Florida. Over and over, he hammered on the fact that the President is not in reality: Before a rally of 9,000 gathered at the T.D. Waterhouse Center, near Orlando, Kerry said, “I’ll tell you, I’ve traveled to something like 47 states in the United States over the last two years. George Bush has only been traveling in one state, the state of denial,” and then lit into Bush on Iraq. Noting that the campaign had neared Disney’s “fantasy land” in Orlando, Kerry said, “The difference between George Bush and me, is that I drove by it. He lives in it.”

It is Lyndon LaRouche’s assessment that, if Kerry keeps up these tough, high-impact, focussed attacks, and extends them to the economy, before the Sept. 30 debate with the President, that he will have his campaign on track.

At the same time, LaRouche is deploying his Youth

Movement (the LYM) in a crucial ground-assault, with particular focus on the swing state of Ohio. On Sept. 22, LaRouche’s political action committee issued a salvo to shape the Democratic campaign, entitled “It’s the Physical Economy, Stupid!” This 32-page pamphlet documents the 40-year collapse of the nation’s infrastructure and manufacturing workforce, and lays out LaRouche’s proposals for reconstruction. It’s a hit on the flank that Bush-Cheney cannot defend—the real collapse of living standards of the forgotten men and women of the United States. If these citizens can be brought out to vote, as the LYM intends, Kerry can be elected in a landslide.

The New York University Speech

Speaking with great force and passion in New York on Sept. 20, Kerry compared Bush to the fools who led the United States into the swamps of Vietnam, where he had fought, and where tens of thousands of Americans died—and still the foolish leaders refused to see their errors. Iraq, he said, was a similarly avoidable disaster, and those responsible must be held accountable. The President, he said, denies that he makes mistakes, denies reality, and the nation and the world suffer.

“Now, I will say to you it is never easy to discuss what has gone wrong while our troops are in constant danger,” said Kerry, in marking the difference between himself and Bush as a leader. “But it is essential, if you want to correct the course and do what’s right for those troops, instead of repeating the same old mistakes over and over again. I know this dilemma first-hand. I saw first-hand what happens when pride or arrogance take over from rational decision-making. And after serving in a war, I returned home to offer my own personal views of dissent. I did so, because I believed strongly that we owed it to those risking their lives, to speak truth to power. And we still do.”

Kerry hammered away at the fact that the President and the Vice President are continually refusing to tell the Ameri-

can people the truth about what's going on in Iraq, as well as about what drove them to invade. He put it more toughly than he has done before:

"A month before the war, President Bush told the nation, 'If we have to act, we will take every precaution that is possible. We will plan carefully. We will act with the full power of the United States military. We will act with allies at our side and we will prevail.' He said that military action was not unavoidable. Instead, the President rushed to war, without letting the weapons inspectors finish their work. He went purposefully, by choice, without a broad and deep coalition of allies. He acted by choice, without making sure that our troops even had enough body armor. And he plunged ahead by choice, without understanding or preparing for the consequences of post-war, none of which I would have done.

"Yet today President Bush tells us that he would do everything all over again the same way. How can he possibly be serious? Is he really saying to America that if we know there was no imminent threat, no weapons of mass destruction, no ties to al-Qaeda, the United States should have invaded Iraq? My answer, resoundingly: No, because a commander in chief's first responsibility is to make a wise and responsible decision to keep America safe.

"Now—now the President is looking for a reason, a new reason to hang his hat on. It's the capability to acquire weapons. But ladies and gentlemen, my fellow Americans, that was not the reason given to the nation. That was not the reason that Congress voted on. That is not a reason today; it is an excuse.

"Thirty-five to 40 countries have greater capability to build a nuclear bomb than Iraq did in 2003. Is President Bush saying we should invade all of them? I would have personally concentrated our power and resources on defeating global terrorism and capturing Osama bin Laden.

"I would have tightened the noose and continued to pressure and isolate Saddam Hussein, who was getting weak, who was weak and getting weaker, so that he would pose no threat to the region or to America.

"The President's insistence that he would do the same thing all over again in Iraq is a clear warning for the future, and it makes the choice in this election clear: more of the same with President Bush or a new, smarter direction with John Kerry that makes our troops and America safer. That's the choice."

Kerry then offered a four-point program to end the spreading conflict in Iraq, which included language that mirrored LaRouche's Southwest Asia peace plan, issued four months ago, in calling for bringing in regional powers and nations to guarantee the country's sovereignty, as the United States withdraws its forces (see also excerpts in this week's *Feature*).

Dealing With an Idiot

Kerry seems to have realized that he has to puncture President Bush's world, including by treating him as the idiot he

is. In his appearance on the David Letterman show Sept. 21, Kerry poked fun at the protracted negotiations with the Republicans over the Presidential debates, saying he had wanted Vice Presidential candidate John Edwards to stand in the debate, while Cheney wanted to sit, so "we compromised and now George Bush is going to sit on Dick Cheney's lap." This reference to the well-known, and sadly accurate, joke about Bush being a puppet of the Vice President, is likely to get under the President's skin.

When asked about Bush's tax plan on that same show, Kerry quipped that under the plan, Cheney can claim Bush as a dependent, that your refund check can go directly to Halliburton, and that Attorney General John Ashcroft gets to write off the entire U.S. Constitution.

The format of the upcoming three Presidential debates was also a source of humor, as the President's men are making endless demands in order to control the questioning, particularly in the debate where the public is to be allowed to question the candidates. Kerry joked about this, on the "Live with Regis and Kelly" show, saying that negotiations had been hung up because of Bush's insistence on "lifelines," so he could call for help on tough questions.

As far as this author knows, this is not really the case, but the Bush campaign is insisting that no surprise questions get asked, and that the moderator actually cut off a questioner from the audience who deviates substantially from his or her written text.

The Economy

It is increasingly being recognized in the Kerry campaign, that the attack must be pressed harder on the economy. Kerry had picked up the spirit in his attack on Bush's proposal for privatizing Social Security. Speaking in West Palm Beach, Florida on Sept. 21, Kerry said that the scheme is a "rip-off, not a plan."

And in Ohio, where, contrary to ballyhooed polls, the race is toe-to-toe, the Kerry-Edwards campaign has put out a 16-page pamphlet on a "real economic plan" for the state. In addition to documenting the loss of manufacturing jobs and health care in the state, the plan hits the decline in wages, and proposes various kinds of tax incentives for job creation.

What the Kerry campaign is missing, however, is the courage to tell the truth about the systemic nature of the current crisis, and the need for a radical shift to FDR-style solutions. When the candidate spoke to the Detroit Economic Club on Sept. 15, with former Treasury Secretary Bob Rubin at his side, he came closest to exposing the fraud of the so-called recovery. George Bush has created more excuses than jobs, Kerry said, and has become the first President since Herbert Hoover to see a decline in jobs during his Presidency.

Now, with the release of the LaRouche PAC pamphlet, a clear attack on the collapse and solution for the economy is available for all those Democrats who want to fight. With about four weeks to the election, the battle is joined.