

THE SKEPTICAL EYE

Big Head's Back

Today is a special day, students, because we're going to have a special guest for today's class. He'll be talking to you about how the greenhouse effect doesn't exist, how there's more than enough ozone to go around, and how cold fusion promises to provide more and better energy than ever before. He'll explain that scientists who claim the ozone layer is disappearing are nothing but hucksters and con men, and how the Science Mafia keeps cool stuff like cold fusion out of magazines like *Nature* because they're a bunch of big meanies who belong to an "Aristotelian cult" begun by Bacon, Descartes, and Galileo. He'll finish up by telling us all about how entropy doesn't exist. Our special guest currently resides in the federal pen in Rochester, Minnesota, after having been convicted on multiple counts of conspiracy and credit-card fraud, and he's recently been campaigning from his jail cell for the Democratic presidential nomination with the wishful slogans "The only opponent George Bush feared enough to put in prison" and "He's in prison because he wouldn't sell you out." So, class, let's give a big welcome to today's substitute teacher: Mr. Lyndon LaRouche.

Lyndon LaRouche loves science. Maybe that's too mild; Lyndon LaRouche has a real *hard-on* for science. His organization's newspaper, the *New Federalist* (formerly *New Solidarity*), is unique in running lengthy articles about recent developments in science alongside blood-drenched, paranoid tales of narcoterrorists and "Dope, Inc." The *New Federalist* is nothing if not eclectic; after four pages of Third World banking intrigue, for example, readers of the *New Federalist* will suddenly be treated to a full-page article on how, in 430 CE, St. Augustine refuted the Manicheans and proved that entropy is impossible (November 13, 1987). Regardless of

how apparently screwy some of the LaRouchian insights are, his followers certainly want to feel as though they're riding the technological wave of the future.

When I first encountered the LaRouchies eight years ago, the first thing I'd noticed was that their literature kept pushing fusion power. It wasn't until I asked a few questions that my schizodetector went BINGBINGBING, as they chatted about how drag-queen Henry Kissinger was in collusion with Malthusian zero-growth proponents at the Wharton School to destroy technological growth in Ibero-America while Roy Cohn deliberately kept gay bathhouses open to ensure British hegemony over the Third World. Dennis King's book *Lyndon LaRouche and the New American Fascism* (Doubleday, 1989) comes highly recommended to anyone who still believes that LaRouche is merely a kooky credit-card cheat who thinks Queen Elizabeth smuggles hash. King describes, in patient detail, how LaRouche developed a uniquely American form of fascism from the ruins of his quasi-leftist organizations.

One of my regrets in life was not attending a conference sponsored by the LaRouchian "Human Rights Commission" (concerned entirely with springing LaRouche from jail) in March 1991; the letter inviting me promised that "one leading physicist . . . acquainted with Albert Einstein, plans to show that LaRouche has contributed far more to science than Einstein."

It might have been entertaining. According to LaRouche (January 1991), a group of "fanatics" has been pushing "an explicitly pagan—that is, New Age—doctrine," which he interchangeably calls chaos and catastrophe theory. As far as I can tell, he characterizes catastrophe theory as the collapse of what he calls the *theorem-lattice* of formal

mathematical systems, and chaos as when you see it on your computer screen. Whichever it is, LaRouche feels that it's not only "seemingly ludicrous but actually dangerous," and that anyone who promotes it "simply should be thrown out of the university as dangerously incompetent; they lack elementary competence in mathematics and physics." (Remember: he's *contributed more to science than Einstein!*) And the Mandelbrot Set's just another hypnotic tool used by narcoterrorists and Henry Kissinger, I guess.

Still, regardless of the wonky thinking behind the above (I mean, really, confusing chaos theory with catastrophe theory and somehow bundling it up with a variant of Godel's incompleteness proof? I've met cinderblocks with more insight!), one can't help but notice a strange kind of science *uber alles* amongst the LaRouche crowd. I don't mean the love of cool gadgets like laptop computers and MIDI sequencers. The LaRouchies are into saving humanity, so they like the big toys—like tokamaks and plasma fusion and lasers.

The subscription ads for LaRouche's *21st Century Science and Technology* magazine advises potential subscribers to "Get Ready for the 21st Century." As an added bonus, new subscribers receive "beautiful" color paintings entitled *Fusion on the Moon* and *Chemical Laser in Space*. The magazine's championship of industry is without restraint, or shame: it characterizes environmentalists as "popufobics," "faunophilic," and Chicken Littles, "a species in need of extinction." (Politically correct, it is not.) The magazine is chockful of ads for books about fusion power, space travel and colonization, and exposes of the environmental movement; even "Surfaces of Negative Curvature Beltrami Models" are sold for a limited time only. (They look like

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trumpet bells.) The articles in *21st Century Science and Technology* range from speculations on cold fusion to criticisms of data regarding the holes in the ozone layer to histories of such advances as Reimannian geometry, magnetic-levitation trains, superstring theory, and fullerene.

For example, the winter 1990 issue's cover reads, "Scientists Refute Hoaxsters. There Are No Limits to Growth!" It turns out the "hoaxes" refuted are ozone depletion and the greenhouse effect, elsewhere described as "disinformation campaigns of the technophobes." (The greenhouse effect is still being debated, but at this stage of the game, doubting ozone depletion is like doubting the second law of thermo—oh, yeah . . . St. Augustine. Plumb forgot.) The same issue characterizes animal rights as "the new Nazi movement," complete with swastika. Another issue contains a lengthy attack on Food and Water, Inc., an activist group—excuse me, "a small group of well-funded ecoterrorists"—opposed to food irradiation.

I assume that even the most ecologi-

cally concerned of us get grumbly when the Gaia platitudes start flying thick and heavy. But when *Nature* or *Science* or *Scientific American* runs articles critical of environmentalism and its claims, they don't accuse people of fraud or psychosis. It would be a mistake to take LaRouche's anti-environmentalism as merely a difference of opinion on scientific matters. LaRouche's magazine serves a pretty sinister purpose: its uncompromisingly anti-activist stance is partially intended to build a support base for LaRouche among those within powerful institutions.

For example, during the 1970s and early 1980s, the LaRouchies' championing of nuclear power and fusion research earned them many contacts within the defense and energy industries. King's book details how scientists working on fusion and related projects (many of whom later became part of Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative plan) welcomed this political organization that was so willing to promote their work and urge its funding. At one point, *New Solidarity* dubbed SDI the "LaRouche-

Teller Initiative"; physicist Edward Teller, once vilified by the LaRouchies, was reluctant to criticize a group so supportive of SDI. (Teller has since denounced LaRouche as "a poorly informed man with fantastic conceptions." You don't say.) This appeal to technocrats enabled the LaRouche organization to gain credibility among defense researchers and in the news media.

If these people were cognizant of the LaRouchies' fascist tendencies, history of anti-Semitism, and associations with unsavory right-wing figures, they were willing to overlook them. For example, Winston Bostick, whose 13-page article on superstrings graces the winter 1990 issue of *21st Century*, is a longtime LaRouche associate who also worked on beam-weapons-related research at Kirtland Air Force Base. In a phone interview with Dennis King, Bostick claimed to support LaRouche's attempts to promote "German military, scientific, cultural, and economic traditions."

Well, Germany has a long history; which German "traditions" in particular? (Take a guess.) The LaRouchies have also published *Primer for Those Who Would Govern*, a book by none other than rocket pioneer Hermann Oberth. Their own review says that Oberth, prior to World War II, "promoted the development of the rocket projectile as the only available means to settle differences between opposing armies." Oberth, *21st Century* claims, "inspired a whole generation" of rocket scientists, "among them Wernher von Braun, Arthur Rudolph, and Krafft Ehrlicke."

All three are Class of Peenemunde, early 1940s, and the latter two have longstanding relationships with LaRouche. Rudolph, for example, was the production manager at the Mittelwerke factory, and the Justice Department charged him with working thousands of poorly fed slave laborers to death. Even though Rudolph admitted that he'd been fully aware of the Mittelwerke living conditions, the LaRouchies organized a defense fund for him.

But LaRouche seems loathe to align himself with science as a whole. Remember: part of *21st Century's* goal is to present LaRouche as a revolutionary scientific thinker, which means he's got

to disagree with traditional science in visionary ways. The problem is he's chosen cold fusion as one *cause celebre*, and *21st Century* has been running articles about all the "latest breakthroughs." "Malthusians" are attacked for suppressing Pons and Fleischmann's claim of cold fusion because it calls into question "all of quantum theory" and thereby threatens what LaRouche calls the "Science Mafia." He has attacked *Nature's* refereeing editors, the American Physical Society, and pretty much all scientists everywhere as members of an "Aristotelian cult":

In the 17th century, Bacon, Descartes, and Galileo came along and they reintroduced Aristotelianism into science under the guise of empiricism. They deliberately mystified science by denying the existence of the continuous manifold, the reality of the generating principle. They created the London Royal Society, which was a Baconian society, as a branch of Freemasonry, as a Rosicrucian cult.

(See, I'm not making this up.)

Your humble columnist has to admit that some of the scientific content of *21st Century* is a bit over my head; but if LaRouche's understanding of chaos theory is any indication, I'm not missing much. The editors—mostly longtime LaRouche aides—seem to feel that, the more scientific jargon and equations they can cram into an article, the more impressive it is. I'm inclined to think that this pseudoerudition is designed solely to look as though it operates in a loftier realm in order to present an image of LaRouche and his followers as deep-thinking, well-educated philosopher-scientists, drenched in historicity. That helps explain why the *New Federalist* runs articles about seventeenth-century philosophical debates and why *21st Century* makes a point of including thermodynamic equations and histories of Riemannian geometry. It provides a coffee-table snob appeal: "I read a magazine with equations. I chat about fifteenth-century Jesuit debates for fun. I read Schiller and listen to Beethoven. What do you read? *Reader's Digest* and *Discover*?"

Which brings me to a somewhat poignant observation. In his autobiography *The Power of Reason*, LaRouche says that, when he was young, the other children used to call him "Big Head." He'd learned to read at an early age, and his bookworm image, along with his parents' strict prohibition against hitting other kids, made his childhood "years of hell." As a teenager, LaRouche, in Dennis King's words, "withdrew into his books, took long walks in the woods, and accumulated an enormous resentment against his peers. He found solace in the great philosophers . . . whose works helped him rationalize his social isolation." I wonder what would have happened if little Lyndon had joined a model rocketry club or attended a science-fiction convention; he might have turned out to be a nice guy. But now Lyndon the bookworm's grown up and, surrounded by people who believe he's a man of boundless scientific genius and global vision, he wants nothing more than to take over America . . . and really give those other kids what for. H

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Adam Thorburn

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senting a gay character who is liked by the admirable heterosexual protagonists, the film superficially presents itself as enlightened, "gay friendly."

But the film fails in its attempt to be liberated. The gay character's humanity is reduced when he is used as a foil to assure us of the hero's uncontaminated masculinity. Its progressive attitudes are further contradicted by its misogynous mother-blaming and, most of all, by its preoccupation with Tom's pursuit of male sexual wholeness. *The Prince of Tides* glorifies and reinforces a notion of sexuality in which male bodies are required to be inviolate and controlling, and female bodies are required to be receptive. As Tom's dark secret and its aftermath show, the film's central complaint against male violence is that it diminishes the virility of other men.

Most troubling, however, is that this film is not alone; it is one of many civilized voices in our culture which whisper seductive falsehoods in our ears about the mystical power and pestilence-free imperative of heterosex. "Do it!" the voices demand. "Fuck yourself senseless!" H

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