

Rights panel blasts Virginia trials of LaRouche associates

The Commission to Investigate Human Rights Violations denounced, in a statement issued on Jan. 11, the "continuing witchhunt" against Lyndon LaRouche and his associates, represented by the trial set to begin in Leesburg, Virginia on Jan. 23, of 16 individuals and five corporations associated with Mr. LaRouche. The defendants are: Rochelle Ascher, Michael Billington, Barbara Boyd, George Canning, Richard Freeman, Anita Gallagher, Paul Gallagher, Fred Haight, Laurence Hecht, Keith Levit, Donald Phau, Martha Quinde, Stuart Rosenblatt, David Shavin, Richard Welsh, Kathy Wolfe, Campaigner Publications, Caucus Distributors Inc., Executive Intelligence Review, Fusion Energy Foundation, Publication and General Management.

Below is the full text of the commission's statement:

On Sept. 25, 1987, The international Commission to Investigate Human Rights Violations, meeting in Paris, France, warned against the "lawless, anti-constitutional political prosecution" of the political leader Lyndon LaRouche, his associates, and supporters. Our warnings went in large part unheeded. A Soviet-style "show trial" against LaRouche and six associates in federal court in Alexandria, Virginia, resulted last month in the conviction of LaRouche and six associates for conspiracy and mail fraud charges, for which the seven will be sentenced on Jan. 27.

Now, unless some force of reason and judicial fairness intervenes, this unprecedented witchhunt will escalate on Jan. 23, when the Loudoun County (Va.) Circuit Court trial begins against 16 individuals and five corporations associated with LaRouche.

This trial is the result of indictments handed down in February 1987, by a Loudoun County Grand Jury, for alleged securities fraud. The impetus for the investigation can be directly traced to the order for a nationwide witchhunt against LaRouche, put out at a conference convened by then U.S. Attorney William Weld and the FBI in February 1986.

This mega-trial could last as long as 63 months—or 5 years—as each defendant is tried separately, three months apart.

Not only is the length of the trial outrageous, but the substance of the charges is exactly the same as the charges in the federal trial last month, with the addition of the thoroughly bogus "securities fraud" charge. Were the double jeopardy

not obvious enough, defendant Michael Billington, who was convicted in Alexandria in December, will be tried in Loudoun County as well, on essentially the same charges for which he was tried and convicted in federal court.

The idea that associates of LaRouche could receive a fair jury trial in Loudoun County is so absurd as to be laughable. An organized smear campaign by local political opponents against LaRouche, who maintains a residence in Leesburg, has been so intense as to inflame virtually every resident of the county. Additionally, since in the Commonwealth of

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The Commission is particularly concerned about the precedent being set in this trial, that loans to a political organization can be construed to be "securities," and that fundraisers must therefore register with the state before raising loan monies for political campaigns. Not only is this an entirely new, *ex post facto* interpretation of the Commonwealth's securities statutes, but such a ruling strikes at the heart of our constitutionally guaranteed freedoms, chilling the right to free association. A guilty verdict on this count would also set precedent for the trial set to begin against LaRouche associates on similar charges in New York later this month.

The LaRouche associates and related organizations are being tried for "conspiracy" to violate the Commonwealth of Virginia's security statutes, by taking loans for political associations without registering to sell securities. If this charge, and the related counts, are allowed to stand, then we have reverted as a nation to the kind of barbarism that we see in the Soviet Union, where political opponents of the regime are imprisoned, while charges against them are cooked up based on *de novo* interpretation of the law.

Remaining counts are simply mirror-image copies of the loan fraud charges on which LaRouche and his associates were convicted in the Alexandria show-trial.

It is said that history repeats itself the second time as farce. This situation, however, has no humor in it for this nation, or for freedom-loving people anywhere. It took a civil war to put this kind of injustice to rest the last time. Let us pray that it doesn't come to that again.