

Congressional Closeup by William Jones

LaRouche activists descend on Capitol Hill

Some 50 supporters of Lyndon LaRouche from around the country descended on Capitol Hill during the second week in February to demand justice for LaRouche and his six imprisoned associates. They targeted, in particular, members of the Senate and House Judiciary Committees, which have oversight responsibilities over the judiciary system.

Reactions from congressmen varied widely. One congressman, Barney Frank (D-Mass.), a closet liberal who recently came out of the closet, lost his cool and sent for the police to clear his office of these uncomfortable constituents.

Sen. Al D'Amato's (R-N.Y.) office was subjected to a sit-in by angry constituents who wanted to speak with the senator on the LaRouche case. D'Amato's brother, who was accosted in the halls by the New York delegation, mistakenly taken for the senator, was given a dressing-down for his brother's refusal to meet with his constituents.

The office of Sen. Bill Bradley (D-N.J.) gave the excuse that they wouldn't interfere in matters of the judiciary branch. This was also the response of the offices of congressmen who themselves were on the judiciary committee. Sen. Lloyd Bentsen (D-Tex.) had instructed his aides not to talk to anyone about court cases.

Staffers from the office of Rep. Frank Wolf (R-Va.), the congressman from the district where LaRouche lives, were generally snide and abrasive. One aide to a Texas Democrat who said that "some people think LaRouche should be kept in jail" also commented on the problem of the collapse of farming by saying that "farm-

ers are three-quarters responsible for their own problems."

Although the general reaction to the lobbying effort was hysteria and fright, a number of people took the matter more seriously. A letter from former Attorney General Ramsey Clark to Judge Albert V. Bryan questioning the rapidity of a trial involving complex charges, which the lobbyists circulated, created quite a bit of interest. One northeastern congressman commented, "I know more about LaRouche than you think, and I know about the use of these conspiracy charges by the federal government." Another congressman commented, "The Department of Justice is out of control."

During lunch hour on Feb. 7, fifty LaRouche supporters held a demonstration on Capitol Hill, featuring slogans like "J-U-S-T-I-C-E: we won't leave 'till LaRouche is free," and "Gulag justice we must abort; close Judge Bryan's Nazi court." They also demanded a "sub-minimum wage for Congress." Several congressmen passed by during the course of the demonstration. Barney Frank yelled, "LaRouche got the justice he deserved. I hope you have your bail money ready."

House votes against a pay raise

Congress yielded to intense public pressure and voted on Feb. 7 to reject a 50% pay raise for its members, federal judges, and top administration officials. Forced into a recorded vote that its leaders had tried for weeks to avoid, the House of Representatives disapproved the pay raise 380-48. The Senate then voted 94-6 against the pay

raise and sent the measure to President Bush, who signed it just hours before the midnight deadline. The defeat of the congressional pay raise also killed raises of 16-50% for 6,200 members of the Senior Executive Service, made up of career civil service employees above the rank of GS-15.

Yeutter approved as Agriculture Dept. head

On Feb. 8, the Senate approved Clayton Yeutter as head of the Department of Agriculture in a unanimous 100-0 vote. Yeutter said that he plans to be "deeply involved" in the final two years of negotiations of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), which will be led by the new Trade Representative Carla Hills.

Yeutter told the Senate Agriculture Committee, "If we hang tough and negotiate skillfully, we can open markets." Yeutter plans to cut income supports to U.S. farmers because they are "trade distorting." He also plans to increase funds for export subsidies to use as "leverage for trade reform."

Yeutter told the committee that "American agriculture is still far too dependent on the generosity of the American taxpayer for its livelihood." One "cannot realistically hope to escape" farm spending cuts, he said.

The budget for the USDA is projected to be \$52.1 billion during 1989, including \$13.8 billion in crop price supports.

The Yeutter confirmation had been delayed because of questions concerning his relation to the scandal on the Chicago commodity futures markets.

Tower still dangling

While President Bush reiterated his support for his Defense Secretary-designate John Tower, expressing his confidence that Tower would win Senate confirmation, Senate committee members are still expressing skepticism about the nomination.

Although the major objections to the Tower nomination, sensationally played up by the mass media, have concerned Tower's alleged drinking problem and womanizing, the latest question marks were raised in connection with contributions which Tower (while a senator) may have received from companies now under investigation in the FBI's "Ill Wind" probe of defense procurement. According to a report in the *Washington Times*, the FBI is also looking into charges that aides to the former senator profited by selling classified documents to defense firms.

Some senators are expressing doubts that Tower will be confirmed, with all these "snags." Even Republican stalwarts are starting to balk. Sen. Malcolm Wallop (R-Wyo.) said that the Tower situation was "beginning to look a little Bork-like" (Robert Bork was the failed 1987 nominee for Supreme Court Justice.) Sen. Sam Nunn, chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, said that, although Tower may still be confirmed, "certainly he has been damaged."

Tower has been subject, ever since his nomination, to a negative media campaign. Despite his compatibility with the new Bush team and his statements endorsing limits on the Strategic Defense Initiative, Tower is still suspected of being a defense advocate, who might under some circumstances oppose the policy of disarmament and appeasement.

In spite of all the flap, Tower has been carrying out some of the functions of secretary of defense, attending the annual meeting of the Wehrkunde defense association in West Germany, and on Feb. 4, addressing the American Friends of Turkey. At the AFOT meeting, Tower stressed two major points: 1) that NATO has placed too much emphasis upon the central front (West Germany), and it needs to place greater emphasis upon the northern and southern flanks; and 2) that the greatest foreign policy debacle of the Congress in recent history was the decision to embargo Turkey after the Cyprus war.

New budget procedure proposed by senators

What is billed as a "radical reform" of the budget process, which would adopt some of the streamlined procedures used after the 1987 stock market crash, was put forth by Sen. J. Bennett Johnston (D-La.) and Sen. Pete Domenici (R-N.M.).

"The budget process is not working," said Senator Johnston. "This will work, just as the last summit meeting worked." the reform proposal would: 1) create a new, 18-member budget committee, which would include congressional leaders and the key players on each house's budget committee, appropriations committee, and the Senate Finance and House Ways and Means committees; 2) replace the current year-by-year budget system with two-year budgeting; 3) require the President's signature on budget resolutions, making them binding laws rather than "blueprints" for spending.

If not passed by May 15, a budget

resolution based on Gramm-Rudman deficit-reduction targets would automatically become law. Providing for a high-powered budget committee and an early deadline for action, say the proposal's advocates, would accommodate the White House's interest in early budget negotiations with Congress.

Senate Budget Committee chairman James Sasser (D-Tenn.) questioned the need to reform the budget process. "There's continued tinkering with the process, but the process is not the problem," said Sasser. "The problem is, there's not enough money to go around."

Carlucci gives advice to Congress

In a letter published in the Jan. 29 issue of *Roll Call* magazine, outgoing Defense Secretary Frank Carlucci gave a few words of advice to the Congress. "There has been an erosion of trust [between the Executive and Legislative branches], without which no partnership can function effectively," he wrote. "This cannot continue without doing serious damage to the national interest."

Abuse in the defense industry should be prevented and violations of the law prosecuted, Carlucci wrote. "But we must also provide the stability and incentives for private industry to seek defense business and produce quality goods as efficiently as possible. . . . The impact of further defense reductions on America's coalition strategy would be severe, since our force structure is now stretched as thin as it can be stretched, while still allowing us to maintain our deployment rotation schedules."