

Wright purge signals new reign of terror

by Nicholas F. Benton

With the resignation of House Speaker Jim Wright (D-Tex.) on May 31, the Democratic Party leadership of Congress suffered its third major loss in less than a week, signaling the onset of an even more massive purge of constituency-based politicians in the coming months.

In his speech to the House May 31, Representative Wright defended himself against the so-called "ethics" charges brought against him, and made an eloquent appeal to put the petty fixations with minor infractions of the "ethics" rules behind Congress's more important business of running the nation. "It is grievously hurtful to our society when vilification becomes an accepted form of political debate and negative campaigning a full time occupation," he said. "All of us in both parties . . . must resolve to bring this period of mindless cannibalism to an end. There's been enough of it!"

But Wright's passionate speech made his own decision to duck a fight on the "ethics" charges against him seem even more cowardly. It was a decision which amounted to an invitation for an escalation of the same process to rout dozens of elected officials.

Wright's own departure, which was set up by a long and tortuous process of innuendo and smear stories in the press, culminating in three distinct allegations of "ethical" indiscretions (commonly multiplied into 69 by the major media) by the House Ethics panel, was sped along by the sudden resignation of Rep. Tony Coelho (D-Calif.), the third-ranking House Democrat, the week before.

Coelho, who, as House Democratic Whip, was in line to compete with House Majority Leader Rep. Thomas Foley (D-Wash.) in the bid to succeed Wright as Speaker of the House, wasted no time turning in his resignation, when a hint of scandal about his financial and personal affairs hit the newspapers.

Thus, the loss of both Wright and Coelho to the pressure of "ethics" charges, combined with the death of the 88-year-old chairman of the House Rules Committee, Rep. Claude Pepper (D-Fla.), left the Democratic Party leadership in the House in a shambles.

The end is nowhere in sight. The *Washington Times*, a commonly used "leak sheet" for elements in the Justice Department, hit the newsstands May 29 with the blaring headline, "Sex Probe Focuses on House." Naming no names, the article set off alarm bells throughout the city, saying, "Federal law enforcement authorities are conducting a preliminary inquiry into allegations of sexual misconduct by at least five members of the House involving minors and male prostitutes."

Agents of the Justice Department, the FBI, the Capitol Police, at least one House committee, and possibly the District police are all involved in the probe, the article stated. "Besides the House members, the preliminary inquiry extends to current and former congressional staffers."

These are investigations apparently unrelated to the case of another congressman, Rep. Donald "Buzz" Lukens (R-Ohio), who was hit with a conviction on misdemeanor charges May 26, based on his admission to having sex with a minor.

In all, according to reliable sources, at least 10 congressmen are under active investigation on a wide variety of "ethics" charges, including Rep. Bill Gray (D-Pa.), the chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus.

Abuse of judicial power

What is behind this blizzard of "ethics" charges and investigations? Sources in Washington confirm that it has nothing to do with the quest for "clean government" by the Justice Department or any congressional committee, but is a conse-

quence of an attitude of permissiveness by Congress toward the politically motivated abuse of judicial power that has led to the targeting of independent political forces, beginning in the early 1980s with the infamous Abscam and Brilab “stings,” and leading to dirty tricks against former Democratic presidential candidate Lyndon LaRouche, the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, defense contractors targeted by “Operation Ill Wind,” and others.

The capitulation of virtually everyone in Congress to the police-state measures used to purge popular legislators such as Sen. Harrison Williams (D-N.J.) in the early 1980s ensured that Congress had been turned into a mockery of constituency-based political representation, becoming instead a rubber stamp for policies of the Eastern Establishment, which has controlled the Justice Department as its enforcement arm since the early days of J. Edgar Hoover.

The threat of a congressional “page boy” scandal that grabbed the nation’s headlines in the early 1980s was sufficient blackmail to keep Congress in line then.

Little by little, such police-terror control over the nation’s democratic institutions has insinuated itself into the day-to-day functions of government during the 1980s. By giving the Democrats such tools to unleash effective campaigns against President Reagan’s Supreme Court nominee Robert Bork in 1987, and against President Bush’s nominee for defense secretary, John Tower, earlier this year, the proponents of such “government by terror” gave the Democrats the rope to hang themselves with as well.

It provided the pretext for House Republican Whip Rep. Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.) to unleash the campaign against Wright. Once the process got rolling, not only did Gingrich quickly find the mud he was slinging at Wright sticking to himself, but now, all of Congress is being ruled by the politics of terror.

Democrats who months ago were gloating over the fall of Bork and Tower, and the conviction of LaRouche, are now filled with dread at the long reach of the Justice Department into their personal lives.

One observer noted the correlation between the “ethics” purge in the U.S. Congress and the Reign of Terror that the French Revolution degenerated into, under the influence of Marat and Danton. Another compared the blood-letting to Pol Pot’s genocide in Cambodia, as depicted in the movie *The Killing Fields*, where children, acting as agents for the Khmer Rouge, examined the hands of captives to determine, by how calloused they were, whether or not someone was a representative of the bourgeoisie and therefore worthy of death. Such examinations are comparable to the “ethics probes” now paralyzing the U.S. government.

Jimmy Carter for Speaker?

To what end is the congressional terror leading? *Time* magazine suggested in late May that, with the demise of

Wright and Coelho, Democrats in Congress might resort to “an odd quirk in the U.S. Constitution that theoretically allows the House of Representatives to reach outside its own ranks in selecting a Speaker.”

If they were to do so, *Time* mused, former President Jimmy Carter might be their wisest pick. This would place Carter two steps from a return to the presidency. According to the 25th Amendment, were the President and Vice President to die or otherwise be eliminated, the presidency would fall to the House Speaker.

Short of this scenario, however, it is thought that Eastern elites wish the Congress to be controlled by partisan extremists, who will bring effective functioning of government to a screeching halt in the name of ideological and partisan causes.

A parliamentary system

Ruled by such personality types—Gingrich typifies this among Republicans, while Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell (D-Me.) is also much more like this than is generally recognized—Congress will lose the vital component required to make the constitutionally inspired “separation of powers” principle function, namely, a spirit of bipartisanship in the face of vital national interests.

Instead, the government will become a gridlock of unyielding forces. Under these conditions, degeneration of the U.S. government into a parliamentary form—a multi-party system in which tiny factions wield enormous power in coalition configurations—will be the first, decisive step toward an authoritarian dictatorship, devoid of accountability to the public will, which would be instituted under “emergency” statutes as economic and strategic crises hit.

In his resignation speech, Wright cited his efforts, unsuccessful in the end, to “tell his side of the story for at least a year.” He noted that the five original charges against him had all been dropped, and were replaced by three new ones, which the media multiplied into 69. Wright dispatched those charges with straightforward and detailed explanations, although most media failed to report this part of his speech.

However, if Wright’s decision to offer his resignation was puzzling, his explanation for what was behind the process was misguided. He blamed it on a combination of “ambiguities and confusion surrounding the ethics laws” and partisan “vilification” carried out by “self-appointed vigilantes carrying out personal vendettas against members of the other party.”

In reality, the blame lies squarely with the elites operating behind the scenes, who have manipulated the writing and interpretation of the rules and have sent the “vigilantes” of both parties on their missions, backed by the Justice Department. Until they, and their sinister motives, are made the focus of the problem, the situation will only degenerate further.