

Cult Awareness Network and Rick Ross lose \$5 million suit

by Bruce Director

A federal jury in Seattle, Washington has ordered professional kidnapper Rick Ross and the Cult Awareness Network (CAN) to pay nearly \$5 million in damages to one of Ross's kidnap victims. The verdict is a major embarrassment for corrupt elements of the Department of Justice, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF), and news organizations which have promoted charlatans Ross and CAN as so-called experts on cults.

Ross, a former jewel thief who styles himself a "cult deprogrammer," contributed to the deadly raids on the Branch Davidian headquarters in Waco, Texas in 1993. Masquerading as a "cult expert," Ross provided the ATF and FBI with inflammatory and unreliable information from one of his "deprogramming" victims. The victim, David Block, became a confidential informant for the ATF. This drivel was decisive in the ATF's decision to storm the Branch Davidian compound.

Ross, who has no formal training in psychology, also "advised" the FBI during the siege with his crackpot theories about "mind control" and cults, while CAN operatives became prime sources for most news organizations covering the siege.

U.S. authorities were also plied with similarly questionable "intelligence" provided to them by Australian private investigator Geoff Hossack, operating through the Australian Foreign Ministry and the U.S. Embassy in Canberra.

FBI, ATF criticized

Emory University Prof. Nancy T. Ammerman strongly criticized the FBI and ATF for relying on Ross and CAN. In her recommendations as an outside expert to the departments of Justice and Treasury (ATF is a division of the latter), she said that Ross and CAN "have a direct ideological (and financial) interest in arousing suspicion and antagonism against what they call 'cults.'"

Law enforcement authorities nationally have been corrupted by CAN's unsavory hate campaign, even to the point of protecting and condoning criminal activity. Federal and state officials involved in the fraudulent prosecution of Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr. and his associates, collaborated freely with CAN operatives. Galen Kelly and Donald Moore, a former sheriff's lieutenant in Loudoun County, Virginia where LaRouche lives, applied CAN's deprogramming tech-

niques to prosecution witnesses who then gave false testimony for the government. Assistant U.S. Attorney John Markham, who prosecuted LaRouche, was scheduled to be a featured speaker at CAN's 1990 national conference.

The Chicago-based CAN, while claiming to be a clearinghouse for information on "cults," is in fact a referral service for a network of kidnapers-for-hire. CAN maintains links with other hate-groups, such as the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith (ADL) and the American Family Foundation (AFF). Like the ADL and AFF, CAN relies on funding and protection from some of America's most prominent establishment families and foundations. CAN receives substantial funding from the du Ponts, the Richard King Mellon Foundation, and the Granger Foundation, among others. AFF receives funding from the Scaife Family Foundation, the J.M. Foundation, the Pew Foundation, the Swig Foundation of ADL National Commissioner Melvin Swig, and Wall Street's Bodman and Achellis foundations.

'Atrocious and utterly intolerable'

The jury verdict in the judgment against Ross and CAN was the result of a civil suit brought by Jason Scott, who in 1991 was kidnapped by Ross and two others outside Seattle and taken to Ocean Shores, Washington, where he was held against his will. Ross had been hired by Scott's mother, who wanted to force her son to leave a Bellevue, Washington pentecostal church. She had been recommended to Ross by CAN's Northwest representative. Ross and his team were paid \$25,000 for the job.

After being held for five days, Scott escaped his captors and notified police. Ross, Charles Simpson, and Mark Workman were charged with unlawful imprisonment in the incident. Simpson and Workman pled guilty to lesser charges, and Ross was acquitted after a one-week trial.

Subsequently, Scott filed a civil suit charging Ross, Workman, Simpson, and CAN with conspiracy to violate his civil rights. The jury also found Ross, Workman, and Simpson had engaged in conduct "regarded as atrocious and utterly intolerable in a civilized community."

CAN was ordered to pay \$1,087,500 in punitive and compensatory damages, and Ross must pay nearly \$3.1 million. Simpson and Workman have to pay more than \$250,000 each. The judge called the verdict, "very reasonable."

Ross remained defiant even in the face of the verdict. "This will in no way, shape, or form stop me," he told the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, but, he added, "I already sent out a letter to my clients saying I could no longer perform adult involuntaries."

Not their first kidnapping

This is not the first kidnapping-for-hire that has landed a CAN deprogrammer in hot water.

In 1992, E. Newbold Smith, a financier of the Cult Awareness Network, along with CAN security consultant Galen Kelly and former Sheriff's Lt. Don Moore, were indicted with two others on federal kidnapping conspiracy charges. Moore, a former special deputy U.S. Marshal, was a key investigator in the fraudulent prosecutions of Lyndon H. LaRouche and his associates. All four men were acquitted in that case, but several months later, Kelly was convicted for kidnapping a Washington, D.C. woman a year earlier. Kelly's conviction was overturned on appeal after serving 16 months in prison. Faced with a re-trial, he pled guilty to lesser

charges after admitting to kidnapping the woman. Moore also pled guilty for his role in the kidnapping and served eight months in federal prison.

In all these cases, CAN officials facilitated the link-up between family members and the kidnapers they hired. While CAN claims not to endorse so-called "involuntary deprogrammings," i.e., kidnapping, officials of CAN repeatedly refer callers to "deprogrammers" known to be kidnapers.

At Newbold Smith's request, CAN hired known kidnapper Kelly, as an expert on LaRouche. The project, conducted jointly with the AFF, was designed as part of a harassment campaign against LaRouche and his associates, including the planting of false stories in the media, instigating frivolous lawsuits, and initiating bogus criminal charges. During that time, Kelly maintained contact with officials of the Internal Revenue Service, the FBI, and various state law enforcement agencies. During this same period, while on retainer with CAN, Kelly is known to have committed at least three forcible kidnappings-for-hire.

Corrupt DOJ officials seek to oust Kelly's prosecutor

In apparent retaliation for prosecuting CAN's kidnap-for-hire ring, Assistant U.S. Attorney Lawrence Leiser is now facing dismissal from the Department of Justice (DOJ), according to published news accounts. Leiser, the only federal prosecutor to take on what he called CAN's "cottage industry" of deprogrammers, is accused of withholding evidence in his prosecution of CAN kidnapper Galen Kelly. Even though his initial conviction was overturned, Kelly eventually pled guilty to lesser charges while admitting to the kidnapping for which he was originally convicted.

The efforts to oust Leiser originate from a corrupt network of current and former DOJ officials long sympathetic to CAN. They include Deputy Assistant Attorney General Mark Richard, former federal prosecutors John Markham, Kent Robinson, and Mark Rasch, IRS special agent Lance Lydon, and others. This is the same network which Boston Federal Judge Robert Keeton cited for "institutional and systemic prosecutorial misconduct" during the first bogus prosecution of Lyndon LaRouche.

During the kidnapping investigation, Kelly and his accomplice Donald Moore bragged about the very misconduct cited by Judge Keeton. These boasts were captured on FBI tape recordings and made public during Kelly

and Moore's trial.

From the beginning, CAN's sympathizers have sought to sabotage Leiser's prosecutions of CAN's funders and kidnapers. John Markham, who prosecuted LaRouche, represented E. Newbold Smith when he was charged with conspiring to kidnap his son, Lewis du Pont Smith, an associate of LaRouche. Mark Rasch, another former LaRouche prosecutor, now with the Anti-Defamation League's law firm Arent Fox, represented Ann Kleinhanz, a Kelly victim-turned-accomplice.

Most egregious were the actions of IRS special agent Lydon, who was the chief IRS agent in the LaRouche case. Just days before the start of Kelly's kidnapping trial, Lydon conducted a raid on the home of Kelly's kidnap victim and main accuser. Lydon later told Kelly that he thought the raid would derail his prosecution. It is documents related to Lydon's search which Leiser is accused of withholding. Lydon was helped in his efforts by probation officer Susan Williams, the wife of Leiser's superior, Justin Williams (see *EIR*, June 30, 1995, p. 24).

Enormous pressure was brought to bear on DOJ officials to intervene to stop the prosecutions. Nathan Lewin and Stuart Levey, lawyers for Ira and Michelle Bruschan-sky, Kelly's accomplices, made a formal appeal to Deputy Assistant Attorneys General Richard and Gerald McDowell for help. Richard was already corrupted by CAN, having been the chief DOJ official overseeing the Waco disaster.

While Richard and McDowell refused to intervene at the time, the matter is still not over.