

Bush's administrative fascism gets new prey

by Kathleen Klenetsky

In midst of the Great Depression, Sinclair Lewis wrote a popular novel called *It Can't Happen Here*. The book sought to discredit the idea that the fascist movements that had come to power in Italy and Germany could never be replicated in the United States. Five decades later, Lewis's fears are coming to pass—not in the way he foresaw, through a mass fascist movement, but through the instrument of a technocratic bureaucracy intent on using the judicial system to eliminate what it considers to be its political opposition.

Political economist Lyndon H. LaRouche has been the chief target of the Bush administration's drive to impose this administrative fascism, precisely because he has been the most outspoken and cogent anti-fascist in the United States for two decades. Flush with its success in railroading the innocent LaRouche and his innocent associates to jail, in the last several weeks, the Bush Justice Department has found a number of new victims, including Washington, D.C. Mayor Marion Barry, and the International Longshoremen's Association.

Target labor organizations

The Justice Department is seeking to take over the ILA, the powerful East Coast shorefront union which has a long history of bucking the elite, including repeated job actions directed toward stopping the use of U.S. goods to prop up the Soviet regime.

On Feb. 15, Bush's chief enforcer, Attorney General Richard Thornburgh, flew to New York to announce that the Justice Department was filing suit to gain control over the ILA locals that work the New York-New Jersey port. The suit, filed under the civil provisions of the notorious RICO (Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations) Act, asks the immediate appointment of a temporary court officer to oversee the activities of six ILA locals, and the appointment of trustees to run new union elections.

Thornburgh conjured up the specter of organized-crime influence over the union to justify his actions. In addition to naming ILA president John Bowers and six union locals as defendants, the suit also names John Gotti, the reputed boss of the Gambino mob family, as well as Anthony Salerno, the alleged leader of the Genovese family. Thornburgh claimed at his news conference that the suit is an effort "to remedy decades of organized crime corruption on the New York and New Jersey waterfront."

But Thornburgh's rhetoric rang a little hollow, inasmuch as, just a few days earlier, federal prosecutors dropped all charges against Carlos Eleta, a Panamanian with close ties to the new Panamanian puppet government, who had been arrested last year in Georgia on charges of conspiracy to import 1,320 pounds of cocaine into the United States.

The action against the ILA clearly aims at giving the Feds total control over the union far into the future—and not simply ridding it of possibly criminal elements. Thornburgh explained that the suit was seeking civil remedies that would allow the court to intervene on a continuous basis in the union's internal affairs, whereas under a criminal action, a one-time-only penalty would have been the probable outcome. The ILA is the second-major union to feel the Justice Department's boot on its neck. In 1988, the DoJ filed a similar suit against the Teamsters, in which it sought to get rid of the union's top officers, claiming they were frontmen for organized crime. The DoJ and the Teamsters reached a settlement which allows the government to control the union through a trusteeship.

Political lynching

The Bush administration's targeting of Marion Barry has the same goal: Eliminate any and all independent political capabilities and institutions that hold the least potential for future resistance to Bush policies. Barry was arrested Jan. 18 on cocaine charges, following a "sting" operation, after he announced that he would seek reelection. Less than four weeks later, he was indicted on five misdemeanor counts of illegal drug possession, and three felony counts of perjury.

Clearly, the mayor has serious problems. His wife has openly admitted that he has had a drinking problem for at least 12 years; and rumors that he uses drugs have been rampant for years. Such problems were a factor when the Washington liberal establishment catapulted Barry into office in the first place, sweeping out the old-guard black machine of former Mayor Walter Washington. But over the past 11 years, Barry built up an urban political machine that has engendered intense personal loyalties to him. That machine threatens, in Bush's own backyard of Washington, the top-down technocratic rule of George Bush and the "Bush league Democrats," who don't even want, in some cases like the neighboring state of Virginia, to run candidates against Bush's men.

The belief that the DoJ has been out to get Barry is so widespread, that the charges against him have triggered a political backlash, against the DoJ and in favor of Barry, in predominantly-black Washington. Moreover, as commentators as diverse as liberal Nat Hentoff and conservative William Safire have stressed, Barry's initial arrest bore all the marks of unconstitutional entrapment. Barry, who has been in a substance abuse clinic since his arrest, termed the Feb. 15 indictments a "continuation of the political lynching and excesses of the Justice Department."