

Jailed associates of LaRouche denied parole

In hearings during the second week of July, political prisoners William Wertz and Edward Spannaus were denied parole. In both cases, hearing officers were shameless in admitting that their decisions were based upon the venomous filing by the "Get LaRouche" task force's darling prosecutor, Kent Robinson. Wertz and Spannaus are political associates of Lyndon LaRouche, who is running for Congress in Virginia's 10th Congressional District. They were railroaded to prison with LaRouche in a December 1988 show trial in Alexandria, Virginia. The two are each serving a five-year sentence in federal prison.

Prosecutor Robinson's submission to the Parole Commission also seeks to ensure that LaRouche, who was sentenced to 15 years in jail, is also denied parole, clearly with the intention that he not leave prison alive. LaRouche is 67 years old.

Wertz and Spannaus have stated they will take legal steps to challenge the malicious lies concocted by Robinson, which caused the Parole Board hearing officers to do the task force's bidding in denying them parole.

Political animus

The politically motivated nature of this operation to deny LaRouche, Wertz, and Spannaus parole, was given away when Robinson cited recent demands for repayment of contributions freely given by two supporters, Helen Overington and Elmer Yoder—after LaRouche, Wertz, and Spannaus were jailed—as examples of "continuing frauds" for which they are to be held accountable. The cases are part of an ongoing extortion effort, spearheaded by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL). Conspicuously, Robinson omitted to mention the case of Harriet Driver, in Ogle County, Illinois. There, after LaRouche associates, indicted on a trumped-up robbery charge, caught prosecutor Dennis Schumacher colluding unlawfully with NBC's Pat Lynch and the ADL, the charges against them were quickly dismissed.

Likewise, the political animus of the "Get LaRouche" operation was exposed by the questions asked of prisoner Wertz during his hearing. One hearing officer asked, "What policies do you support of LaRouche?" Later, in asking a legitimate parole question about what he intended to do upon release and hearing that Wertz would like to work for *New Federalist* newspaper, the officer retorted: "Isn't that associated with LaRouche?" The officer concluded the hearing by asking, "If you have any remorse, why would you go back to work for this organization?"

In light of these questions, and the fact that a different

hearing officer in the Spannaus hearing said he was bound by the pre-assessment report (which was made after Robinson's filing, and which changed Wertz and Spannaus from the lower offense severity category level of five, up to a six), it is clear that orders have come from the top to keep this railroad on track.

Appeals Court grants Ascher's petition

In a hopeful development, Virginia's intermediate Appellate Court in Richmond has granted Rochelle Ascher's petition for appeal from her 1989 conviction in Loudoun County on "securities fraud." Ascher, a nationally prominent associate of imprisoned political figure Lyndon LaRouche, was convicted on April 5, 1989 and sentenced to *86 years in prison* by a jury inflamed with prejudice against LaRouche and anyone associated with him. Her sentence was reduced to 10 years by the Court, and she is free on bond pending appeal.

There is no automatic right to an appeal in Virginia in criminal cases. The Appeals Court decides whether or not it will grant a petition for appeal and, if it does grant the appeal, decides which issues from a trial may be appealed.

The Court of Appeals certified July 25 that Ascher could appeal trial judge Carleton Penn's error in not granting a change of venue, and his error in seating a jury. The jury *voir dire* (questioning) in the Ascher case exhausted the entire jury pool for Loudoun County, as juror after juror admitted prejudice against LaRouche.

The Court of Appeals also certified an appeal on the issue of whether or not the "securities" fraud charge brought against Ascher can stand. The loans at issue in her case were loans to political causes associated with LaRouche. Judge Penn refused to let the jury consider whether or not the lenders were loaning the money to a controversial political cause for political—as opposed to "securities investment"—purposes, or to consider whether or not Ascher knew or believed that these political loans were securities. The loans for which Ascher was convicted were ruled for the first time to be securities in Virginia *after* Ascher had been indicted (in January 1987).

A reversal on this issue could affect other LaRouche friends tried for "securities fraud" in Virginia, such as Michael Billington, who was railroaded to an incredible 77-year sentence.