

New Moves To Clean Up Congress Without DeLay

by Anton Chaitkin

The Congressional enforcer for the fascist agenda of the neo-conservatives, whom everyone thought could never be touched, is currently headed toward the ropes. Texas Republican Tom DeLay, the Majority Leader of the House of Representatives, was targeted for his corruption by Lyndon LaRouche's political campaigns months ago, under the slogan "Clean Up Congress without DeLay." Now DeLay has been admonished by the House Ethics Committee twice in the last week, and Congressional Democrats themselves are getting some guts. On Oct. 7, Democratic Rep. Chris Bell of Texas told a conference call for reporters that DeLay "could face indictment in the near future," and called on him to immediately step down from the leadership of the House.

Bell himself had issued an ethics complaint against DeLay, for the Majority Leader's actions in the redistricting of Texas. The Ethics Committee, which had been sitting on this matter, and others, for months, went into motion one week before and admonished DeLay for threatening a fellow Republican, in order to get his vote. Then on Oct. 6, the Committee admonished DeLay in the redistricting matter, although it had to put off matters related to "The Hammer's" fundraising, because of ongoing criminal probes.

Then, of course, there's the fact that DeLay has to get the voters' verdict on Nov. 2. LaRouche's Youth Movement has been playing an active role in his district, in support of his Democratic opponent, Richard Morrison.

Criminal Probes

Criminal probes in Texas, Florida, and Washington, D.C., and U.S. Senate and House investigations, are increasing the pressure on the political-influence and fundraising apparatus celebrated as "DeLay, Inc." by its beneficiaries and victims. Investigators are reportedly looking to squeeze less important accomplices to get higher, closer to DeLay and his "kitchen cabinet."

Angry Senators from the Indian Affairs Committee stunned a Sept. 29 public hearing by identifying over \$66 million in payments and uncounted millions more in political donations and influence-purchasing, extracted from six Indian tribes over three years by casino lobbyist Jack Abramoff and his secret junior partner, Michael Scanlon. The partners shared millions of this loot with former Christian Coalition executive director Ralph Reed, Abramoff's protégé and currently Southeast USA director of the Bush-Cheney election campaign.

Abramoff has been the most important manager of Tom DeLay's lobbying and fundraising machine; Reed and the Rev. Pat Robertson provided the religious-right muscle for DeLay to grab power in the Republican Party; Scanlon was DeLay's chief of staff and public spokesman.

Tension was high on Sept. 29—the Committee had never seen abuses on this scale. Abramoff refused to answer Senators' questions, invoking his Constitutional right against self-incrimination. Scanlon hid out and avoided service of his subpoena. Committee chairman Sen. Ben Nighthorse Campbell (R-Colo.) said Scanlon would come into hearings voluntarily, or be dragged in by Federal marshals.

In Texas, District Attorney Ronald Earle of Travis County has indicted three top DeLay cronies and numerous corporations in his growing probe of the Tom DeLay-affiliated Texans for a Republican Majority Political Action Committee (TRMPAC). The charges specify that TRMPAC and related channels used illegal corporate donations to elect candidates and seize control of the Texas Legislature, in order to remap the Texas Congressional Districts to increase DeLay's power in the U.S. Congress.

Of the millions taken from the Indians, how much was swept into DeLay's Texas PAC operations? This the Senate Committee and the Ronnie Earle team in Texas have not yet determined.

With the law closing in, the rattled Bush-Cheney campaign kept DeLay out of the spotlight during the Republican Convention at the end of August. An Oct. 4 DeLay fundraising event in a private Austin club was held at 8:00 a.m. instead of at noon as publicly announced, in order to avoid protesters and media.

Ripping Off a Region

Particularly astonishing to Senate probers was the trick reportedly played on the Tigua tribe: Abramoff and Scanlon worked to get the Texas government to close the Tiguas' Speaking Rock Casino in El Paso, Texas, after Abramoff got millions of dollars from Louisiana's Coushatta tribe, 800 miles away, to lobby to block competitors' casinos—i.e., across the border in Texas. Abramoff and Scanlon then shook down the Tigua tribe for several million dollars in lobbying fees and hundreds of thousands in contributions to Republican Party candidate-funding organizations, hiring Abramoff and Scanlon as lobbyists for reopening the casino that they had worked secretly to close.

During the Republican Convention, Ralph Reed admitted to reporters that he had received "between \$1 million and \$4 million" in payments that Abramoff and Scanlon derived from casino-owning tribes. Reed said Abramoff asked him to form a coalition through religious circles to oppose casinos that would compete with other casinos. The resulting shadow group, "Committee Against Gambling Expansion" (based in Philadelphia), ran radio ads in Texas in the scheme which shut the Tiguas' casino.

Reed also admitted using these millions, which were channelled from the looted tribes through Abramoff and Scanlon, to run campaigns in Alabama. The Mississippi Choctaws paid about \$5.4 million to Abramoff's firm between 2001 and 2003, with the idea of keeping their casino customers coming across the border, by limiting gambling facilities inside Alabama.

The *Washington Post* reported May 18, 2004, that Michael Scanlon's firm for the Indian casino business, Capitol Campaign Strategies, contributed \$500,000 to the Republican Governors Association (RGA) in two checks delivered Oct. 17 and Oct. 22, 2002. The RGA disclosed neither donation to election authorities until April 2004. But the RGA reported on Oct. 21, 2002, transfer of \$2,450,000 to the Republican National State Elections Committee. That Committee sent, from Oct. 17 to Oct. 31, 2002, checks for \$603,000 to the Alabama Republican Party, and for \$600,000 to the campaign of Bob Riley for Governor of Alabama—Riley is opposed to legalized gambling; his Democratic opponent was viewed as more favorable.

Reed has acknowledged spreading money from the casino tribes into Alabama for the use of the Alabama Christian Coalition.

And probers will be concerned about the role of Michael Scanlon, who had been press secretary to Bob Riley in 1997, when Riley served in Congress prior to becoming Governor.

Scanlon went from Riley's office to become press spokesman for Tom DeLay. Scanlon's words were immortalized, after a fashion, when a memo of his leaked out and was later widely quoted as exemplifying DeLay's philosophy of government. Said Scanlon, "This whole thing about not kicking someone when they are down is bullshit. Not only do you kick him—you kick him until he passes out—then beat him over the head with a baseball bat—then roll him up in an old rug—and throw him off a cliff into the pounding surf below."

Scanlon left DeLay's staff in 2000 to join Abramoff's private ventures. But Abramoff and Scanlon, as private lobbyists, continued working with DeLay on the Marianas Islands and other lucrative business. Abramoff got millions representing sweat-shop initiatives in the Marianas, while DeLay worked to prevent minimum wage standards in that Pacific Ocean zone.

Scanlon faced reporters following the February 2001 gangland assassination of Gus Boulis, owner of SunCruz, Florida's largest fleet of casino-gambling cruise ships. Scanlon was the new spokesman for SunCruz, because boss Abramoff was in the process of seizing control of the floating casinos. Jack Abramoff reportedly planned to develop the floating casinos by selling \$100 million in junk bonds in the Marianas Islands.

Scanlon told reporters, "I do think it's a bit premature to follow a storyline about how a Washington lobbyist fellow, like Jack, now finds himself in this tumultuous world of murder for hire."