

## EIR's Benton assaulted in New Orleans

Late Saturday night, Aug. 13, *Executive Intelligence Review* Washington Bureau Chief and White House correspondent Nicholas F. Benton was brutally assaulted in the streets of New Orleans. He was apparently followed from the Republican Convention Center, where he had been attending a pre-convention event.

Jumped from behind by three or four men and hit upon the back of his head, apparently with a bottle, Benton was knocked unconscious and then beaten around the head. He was apparently driven to and dumped in a location some distance away, and awoke to find himself in the emergency room of Charity Hospital.

While Benton fortunately does not appear to have been severely injured, in the nature of the attack he could easily have been killed. He suffered head injuries requiring ten stitches, and suffered an eye injury which required surgery. The assailants seized both his White House press credentials and his letter of authorization for a Republican National Convention press pass.

The attack has all the signs of a professional operation, particularly since it was conducted by a racially mixed team, which New Orleans police say is extremely unusual in that city.

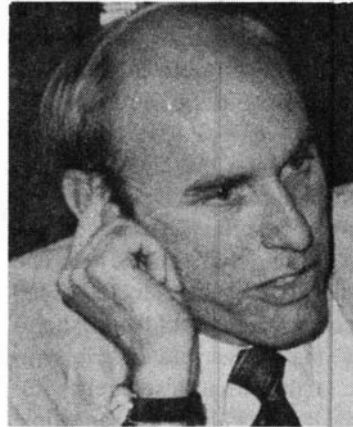
Just one week earlier, Benton had been at the center of the international furor that was unleashed in the wake of his question to President Reagan about Democratic contender Michael Dukakis's health records. As is now well known, it was Benton who asked the question to which President Reagan responded with what became known as the "invalid" joke.

Benton has been covering the White House beat for *Executive Intelligence Review* for the last three years.

The brutal attack on Benton is the second time within two months that a leading associate of Lyndon LaRouche has been the target of a terror attack. In late June Warren J. Hamerman, chairman of the political action committee, the National Democratic Policy Committee, was the victim of an early-morning hit-and-run vehicular homicide attempt.

### A press campaign

LaRouche, Benton, and the NDPC as a whole, were among the targets of a vitriolic press campaign launched in the wake of the still-unclarified matter of Democratic contender Dukakis's medical records. Among the more lurid of the items that floated to the surface was a scurrilous article



Nicholas F. Benton, White House correspondent and EIR columnist since 1985.

by LaRouche-hater Joel Bellman, in the Aug. 8 edition of the *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*.

The article singles out Benton's work at the California convention of the Republican Party in 1976, and notes his role in the Dukakis affair. Author Bellman ended with the following call:

"Given the well-known LaRouche propensity for political espionage, sabotage, and subversion, why do reporters give their material any credence at all? Why is the GOP still willing to exploit these anti-Democratic antics? And when will Democrats finally retaliate against the fifth column trying to destroy their party from the inside out?"

And, only hours after Benton was assaulted, the New Orleans correspondent of the Italian Communist Party's newspaper, *L'Unità*, filed an article containing a death-threat against Benton and anyone else working with LaRouche to destroy Michael Dukakis's presidential chances. *L'Unità* correspondent Siegmund Ginzberg wrote in the Aug. 15 issue, "*He who deals a low blow, will die by a low blow*. The dirty campaign of ignominious rumors had hit Dukakis when the LaRouche people (the same LaRouche who accused the Queen of England of drug trafficking) spread the rumor that the U.S. Democratic Party candidate had been treated by a psychiatrist."

The same issue of *L'Unità* contains lavish coverage of an endorsement of Dukakis by none other than President Daniel Ortega, head of the Nicaraguan Sandinista government.

### A cover-up coming?

*EIR* has learned that a cover-up may be under way with respect to the assault on Benton. Sources familiar with the case say that one suspect was taken into custody by the New Orleans Police Department. He was apprehended with Benton's wallet and press credentials in his possession. The police department, however, had not contacted Benton 48 hours after the suspect was arrested.

However, Benton's belongings were apparently turned over to the FBI, despite the FBI's previous assertions that the case was strictly a local police matter, over which it had no jurisdiction.