

'Cult Awareness' gang gets press 'exposure'

by Herbert Quinde

Leaders of the Cult Awareness Network (CAN), the professional hate group which has targeted the political movement associated with presidential candidate Lyndon LaRouche, have been garnering a bit of press exposure recently.

Cynthia Kissler, executive director of CAN, was in a previous professional incarnation a topless dancer, reports the July issue of the *Religious Freedom Alert*. Recently, Kissler has been receiving media coverage as the self-appointed spokesperson for a political vigilante group, the so-called "LaRouche Victims' Support Group." CAN sponsored the creation of the phony "Support Group" as part of a black propaganda campaign of slander and libel against LaRouche and his associates.

"Self-styled 'cult expert' Cynthia Kissler . . . and de facto 'Godmother' of the larger 'family' of deprogrammers, exit-counselors and their assorted aiders and abettors . . . has been notably silent in explaining exactly what qualifications entitle her to decide what religions are acceptable and which are not," reports the article entitled "CAN Godmother's Qualifications Revealed."

An "affidavit circulating among groups victimized by CAN indicates that Cynthia has not always been so reluctant to reveal her qualifications.

"According to the affidavit, Ms. Kissler formerly worked as a topless dancer at the Blue Note Lounge in Tucson, Arizona. The affidavit, which was sworn by one of Ms. Kissler's professional colleagues at the Blue Note, goes on to report that Ms. Kissler was fired due to her inability to get along with co-workers and customers."

A CAN of deviants

Observers of the hate group point to a pattern of deviant-behavior character traits among top leaders and members of CAN. The *Alert* comments, "Rumors of Ms. Kissler's exotic qualifications first surfaced last year when CAN president Michael Rokos was exposed as a convicted sex-offender with a taste for young boys."

EIR has also confirmed that CAN activist and LaRouche-hater John Overington introduced a bill in the West Virginia State Assembly, where he is a legislator, proposing that lavatories be installed in peep-show parlors so patrons can wash themselves off after their heated activities. Overington's concern for his peep-show constituency has earned him the nick-

name of "Pee-Wee." The reference is to Pee-Wee Herman, the stage name of the hyperactive nerd actor Paul Reubens, well-known among young children, who was recently arrested for masturbating in public at a triple X-rated movie theater.

But Virginia Lamp Thomas, a Washington, D.C. CAN activist and Deputy Assistant Secretary of Labor for Congressional and Intergovernmental Affairs, has by far received the most media attention in recent weeks. Ginny, as she is known by her friends, is the wife of President Bush's nominee to the U.S. Supreme Court, Judge Clarence Thomas. She has been profiled by the *Washington Times*, *New York Post*, and *Washington Post*, which have highlighted her "cultist" past. The *Washington Times* carried two articles on July 16 entitled "Thomas: Different Roads, Same Destination" and "Black Community Looks Askance at Judge Thomas' White Wife."

The *Times* reported, "Mrs. Thomas's decade in Washington has taken some twists she couldn't have imagined as she made her way east from Omaha.

"She would become involved with Lifespring, a motivational training group she now condemns as a cult."

Most people who make a mistake in life usually resolve their problems by taking stock of themselves, putting the experience behind them, and getting on with their lives. But hard-core CAN members allegedly are characterized as individuals who refuse to accept responsibility for their decisions and develop a paranoid obsession for blaming others—i.e., the cult—for their personal problems, say disaffected CAN members.

Commenting on Mrs. Thomas's cult encounter, the *Times* writes, "Mrs. Thomas didn't exactly put the experience in a closet and forget about it.

"Since 1985 she has been an active public advocate against cults and sects she claims brainwash their members. As a staff member with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce in 1986, Mrs. Thomas led anti-cult workshops for congressional staffers. She has been a featured speaker in several discussions sponsored by" CAN.

"During a March 1985 American Bar Association session on cults and tort lawsuits against them, Mrs. Thomas said she was brainwashed by Lifespring.

"But if Lifespring is controversial, the group Mrs. Thomas joined to condemn it is not without taint.

"Last year the Cult Awareness Network's national president, the Rev. Michael Rokos, resigned after reports surfaced that he had been arrested in Baltimore in 1982 for soliciting sex from an undercover officer disguised as a male prostitute.

"The network is involved with deprogrammers, who are hired by parents to detach their family members from religious groups," reports the *Times*. CAN promotes the kidnaping of persons from groups it targets as "cults."

"Some religious rights advocates," the paper comments, "believe that Mrs. Thomas's apparent bitterness toward Lifespring may complicate her husband's handling of religious-liberty cases if he is confirmed for the high court."