

DeLay Getting Desperate As Scandal Waters Rise

by Anton Chaitkin

Pressed by multiplying criminal investigations of his fundraising agents, and embarrassed by the wide circulation of a dossier on his mental life while under the control of religious psychopaths at “The Fellowship,” House Majority Leader Tom DeLay is flailing about for support to save his power. On March 10, DeLay presented, to a closed-door meeting of House Republicans, a new would-be agenda for the country, called wistfully, “Conservative Blueprint of Success.” His appeal got mixed reviews, according to a report by his political friends.

In December and January, the LaRouche in 2004 campaign brought out hundreds of thousands of the pamphlet, *Children of Satan II: The Beast-Men*—with its account of DeLay’s drunken fall and zombie rebirth—to all Washington, D.C. neighborhoods, and to Congressional and other government offices. The pamphlet pinpointed the role of Congressman Frank Wolf (R-Va.) in guiding DeLay into the Hitler-emulating Jesus cult called “The Family” or “Fellowship Foundation.” Stung, Wolf, in late February, tried to separate himself from DeLay by calling for FBI and Justice Department investigations of Jack Abramoff, DeLay’s chief lobbying/fundraising coordinator. Abramoff is accused of extracting huge payments from Indian tribes in exchange for promised or implied protection of their casinos by DeLay. The FBI was already probing related Indian-tribe lobbying activities. Under the heat of the national publicity, Abramoff resigned from the Miami-based law firm Greenberg, Traurig, for which he was chief Washington lobbyist.

Wolf and Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) also called for a Congressional investigation. They do not explicitly name DeLay, but Abramoff has been DeLay’s main manager for relations with money and power, ever since the two men created Americans for a Republican Majority (ARMPAC), using Enron funds, in 1994.

The Texas Case, and the Houston Mistake

Meanwhile in DeLay’s home state, Travis County (Austin) District Attorney Ronald Earle is investigating the illegal use of corporate donations, through ARMPAC’s spinoffs, Texans for a Republican Majority (TRMPAC) and Texas Association of Business (TAB), to grab control of the Texas legislature in the 2002 elections. The scheme allowed DeLay to redraw the Texas Congressional districts, so as to increase the hold of Republicans, and of DeLay personally, over the U.S. House of Representatives. One of the contributors to

DeLay’s Texas legislature caper was the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, who have also paid Abramoff \$10 million in fees; legislation delivered by DeLay exempted their casinos from Federal scrutiny. Indictments are expected soon in the TRMPAC/TAB case. DeLay’s own daughter Danielle Ferro, who received over \$20,000 from TRMPAC to fundraise for state legislature candidates, testified to a grand jury, in answer to D.A. Earle’s subpoena. Tom Craddick, whom DeLay’s TRMPAC/TAB operatives made Speaker of the Texas House of Representatives in the 2002 scheme, is himself facing a dragnet of subpoenas from the prosecution.

DeLay also seems to have organized the illegal covert funding of a campaign against a November 2003 Houston urban transit funding referendum. This may prove to have been a big political, and legal, mistake. “Texans for True Mobility”—Republicans led by DeLay—spent around \$2 million in a failed attempt to defeat the light-rail proposal. The group set up a tax-exempt funding mechanism, for “educational” purposes, which allowed them to conceal their donors. But tax-exempt units are not allowed to fund political campaigns. Civil suits have been filed, with the potential for triple damages against illegal donors. Attorney Andy Taylor set the tax-exempt unit up, and also created the Texas Association of Business, an arm of DeLay’s ARMPAC/TRMPAC.

All these were DeLay’s personal projects. In both the TRMPAC/TAB case and the Houston referendum affair, the burning question is whether he personally will face criminal prosecution. DeLay is vulnerable in Houston because his anti-transit actions were widely resented. Besides trying to stop the bond funding for light rail, he used his Congressional clout to block the use of Federal funds for Houston’s program, and the available funds were redirected to other cities. DeLay represents a wealthy suburb of Houston, not the city itself.

Encouraged, Congressional Democrats are using DeLay as a foil in their 2004 electoral strategy. In the past, Democratic leaders have apparently so feared DeLay that they repeatedly refused even to support the Democratic nominees opposing him for his seat. But Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) told a leadership luncheon in early March, that DeLay’s extremism would be the topic of a broad array of Democratic campaigns. The Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee has proudly unveiled Cockroach Corner website, satirizing DeLay, the former pest-control man.

In the March 10 Republican closed-door session, DeLay reportedly spoke of increasing Homeland Security, doubling the size of the economy (by extending tax cuts for wealthy donor-lobbyists), and “Protecting The Family.” His Religious Right loyalists in the House applauded, but the *Washington Times* pointed to skepticism and grumbling in the conservative ranks: “Some members weren’t thrilled with the speech. ‘It was vague; there wasn’t much there,’ said one Republican, who asked to remain anonymous. . . . Many conservatives were bitterly disappointed that House leadership and President Bush” have not dealt with a growing fiscal disaster.