

Is 'the Hammer' Headed For the Slammer?

by Harley Schlanger

In the often strange and fascinating world that is Texas politics, allegations of illegal fundraising and abuse of power are not exactly unheard of. Yet, rarely are they so closely intertwined, as in the unfolding scandal surrounding U.S. House of Representatives Majority Leader Tom DeLay ("the Hammer"), whose fundraising apparatus and political hit team were served with 32 felony counts of indictment on Sept. 21, for allegedly funneling corporate campaign contributions to Republican candidates for the Texas state legislature.

Under Texas law, it is illegal for corporations or unions to contribute money to individual political candidates. Although DeLay was not among those indicted, Travis County District Attorney Ronnie Earle told the press that he will continue his investigation, after a new grand jury is empanelled. The consensus among leading political and legal circles in Austin is that DeLay and his close ally, Texas House Speaker Tom Craddick (R-Midland), will be among those investigated in the next round. It is thus looking more likely that the slogan on a bumper sticker circulated by LaRouche PAC throughout his Congressional district and statewide—"Save the Congress Without DELAY"—may soon be a reality. The scope of the continuing investigation led one well-known Democratic Party opponent of DeLay to quip, "I wonder if he will be able to continue serving as Majority Leader—from jail!"

DeLay's Agenda: Corporate Fascism

It is too early to know if the self-styled "Hammer" of the Congress will soon be housed in the slammer. However, the indictments handed down so far cover a pattern of corrupt behavior and illegal activity conducted on behalf of securing a prize long coveted by DeLay: top-down control over the U.S. House of Representatives. The indictments stem from a scheme hatched by DeLay to create a money machine to fund Republican candidates for the Texas House of Representatives, and thus give him a majority in that body. This would enable DeLay to push a radical redistricting plan through the Texas House, thereby increasing the number of Republicans elected to the U.S. House from Texas.

With a stronger Congressional majority, DeLay would then eliminate every remaining piece of legislation which protects working people, the poor, the sick, and the elderly. Instead, DeLay would push his agenda of bankers' fascism, including full deregulation; privatization of Social Security;



The LaRouche Youth Movement in Texas campaigns against "The Hammer," whose bizarre Congressional redistricting scheme is depicted on the poster.

free trade agreements for his corporate backers, such as those profiting from slave labor practices in the Marianas Islands; and labor "reform" measures—i.e., attacks on wages, benefits, pensions, and other measures which protect American jobs and workers.

To pull this off, DeLay founded Texans for a Republican Majority (TRMPAC), in association with another DeLay operation, Americans for a Republican Majority (ARMPAC). Among those indicted were John Colyandro, the executive director of TRMPAC; John Ellis, one of DeLay's chief political operatives, who is the executive director of ARMPAC; and fundraiser Warren RoBold, who worked for both ARMPAC and TRMPAC. TRMPAC raised nearly \$600,000 from corporate contributors. DeLay has tried to minimize his connection to TRMPAC, saying: "I was not involved in the day-to-day operations of TRMPAC. . . . I raised money for them and made appearances for them when they had fundraisers." However, the *Houston Chronicle* reports that TRMPAC was set up at DeLay's direction, that he served on its board of advisors, and that much of its funds were collected at fundraising events addressed by DeLay.

The Hammer's Redistricting Scam

Money contributed to TRMPAC was then delivered to about 20 Republican candidates for the Texas House in 2002, with \$152,000 of that personally delivered by Texas Rep. Tom Craddick to 14 of them. When the GOP took over the Texas House in the November 2002 elections, Craddick was elected Speaker. Once DeLay had control over the Texas House, he used his newly purchased clout to push through redistricting. The contentious session of 2001 failed to pass a redistricting plan, so a Federal court drew up the new districts. This was challenged in 2003, as DeLay's flunkies backed his new plan. It took three special sessions before the Texas Democrats gave in to the DeLay-controlled legislature, which

then imposed a plan acceptable to their boss.

Under this plan, DeLay redrew the U.S. Congressional districts to provide the GOP with a gain of at least six seats, taking seats away from Democrats not submissive to DeLay, such as U.S. Reps. Nick Lampson, Lloyd Doggett, Chet Edwards, Martin Frost, Charles Stenholm, and Max Sandlin. Unfortunately for DeLay, these Representatives are fighting for their seats, and all are in a position to win, despite DeLay's rigging of their districts.

DeLay is himself facing a tougher-than-expected race, as Democrats in his district, spearheaded by an aggressive campaign by the Democratic candidate, Richard Morrison, and backed by the growing force of the LaRouche Youth Movement (LYM), now sense that DeLay is vulnerable. The LYM is finding great demand for LaRouche PAC bumper stickers, "Improve Texas Without DELAY," and "Save the Congress Without DELAY," and expect to get out thousands of LaRouche PAC's book, *Children of Satan*, which has a chapter on "Beast-Man" DeLay.

Can DeLay Survive?

In addition to the indictments against three DeLay political hacks, the grand jury issued indictments against eight corporations. These include: two energy companies, the Williams Companies Inc., and Westar Energy Inc.; both expected to benefit from DeLay-backed legislation for expanded deregulation; and a special DeLay favorite, Bacardi USA Inc.

There will be a close watch to see what effect the corporate indictments have on DeLay's ability to raise money. His success has stemmed from his ability to deliver to his corporate backers. DeLay is a bully. But will his corporate cronies pull back now, knowing that giving to DeLay may make them a target for investigation?

And what effect will this have on the Republican Party, in Texas and nationally? With Craddick, the first Republican Speaker since Reconstruction, facing grand jury scrutiny along with DeLay, will the Texas money machine that fueled both DeLay's and President Bush's march to power begin having second thoughts, especially as Bush is showing signs of cracking under a sharpened assault by John Kerry?

There is also the still-unresolved complaint before the U.S. House Ethics Committee, which DeLay is furiously trying to squelch. The complaint was filed by freshman U.S. Rep. Chris Bell, a Houston Democrat, who was the first victim of DeLay's redistricting. Bell's complaint accuses DeLay of abusing power, misusing government resources, and improperly raising campaign funds. While DeLay attacks the complaint as the result of "frivolous charges" by Bell, the action by the Travis County grand jury this week may turn some heads in Congress. After hearing about the indictments, Bell said, "These indictments are a clear indication that the ethics complaint against Mr. DeLay is substantive and extremely serious. "Anything less than a full investigation would signify a failure on the part of the committee to fulfill their responsibility to protect the integrity of the House."