

RAISING HELL

*How the Center
for Investigative Reporting
Gets the Story*

by DAVID WEIR *and* DAN NOYES

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Teamster Madness

by Douglas Foster

Shortly before he died of cancer in May 1981, Frank Fitzsimmons, then president of the Teamsters, sent an urgent message to his underlings about a nefarious conspiracy to rip his organization asunder. The "intelligence report" Fitzsimmons sent along to his international executive board warned of a "full-blown freakout from the entire 'Get the Teamsters' network." The report said this "freakout" had been sparked by the election of Teamster ally Ronald Reagan. It described the anti-Teamster network as a Big Business/Red Menace combine that included Wall Street financiers, "press prostitutes," and international Socialists—all prepared to join hands and spend "countless millions of dollars on the war against [the Teamsters] to stop their role for economic development and improved standards of living."

As shocked as they were by the Fitzsimmons mailing, sent along with a personal cover letter, most of the officials who received it ignored the most salient fact: the report had been produced not by the union's research department but by a bizarre right-wing cult—the U.S. Labor Party—led by Lyndon LaRouche. For LaRouche, a fixture of the political fringe, approval from Fitzsimmons, president of America's largest

union, capped a ten-year effort to wield influence in the labor movement.

LaRouche's attempt to attain power in the American labor movement has been marked by acts appropriate to those of political "hired guns":

- His followers have been responsible for intimidation, phony letters, fake newspaper articles and other cleverly constructed "dirty trick" campaigns against Teamster reformers and progressives in other unions, including Leonard Woodcock, former president of the United Auto Workers.
- Hate-filled, often inaccurate "intelligence" information on the supposed "enemies" of organized labor has been transmitted to union leaders with no indication that the information reflects the bias of the increasingly reactionary U.S. Labor Party or its spinoffs. This activity echoes both the style and substance of the intelligence that LaRouche and company have provided to corporations and government intelligence agencies.
- Through the *American Labor Beacon*, a widely circulated glossy magazine, LaRouche associates are now trying to effectively propagandize not only union leadership but rank-and-file workers. Locals in at least four different unions have already responded favorably to the *Beacon*, and several union local presidents or past officials have taken up the magazine's line. The *Beacon* flatly denies affiliation with LaRouche or the U.S. Labor Party, even though its editor and publisher are both Labor Party regulars.

The Politics of LaRouche

You may have learned of Lyndon LaRouche from tripping over his followers as they campaigned for nuclear power in airports behind strident banners ("Feed Jane Fonda to the Whales!" and "More People Died in Ted Kennedy's Car Than Have Been Hurt By Nuclear Power"). Perhaps you've heard of his people buttonholing businessmen to sell \$400-a-year subscriptions to their *Executive Intelligence Review*. Or you may

have read of them offering their "intelligence" about progressive activists to police departments.

LaRouche has run for the presidency twice, in 1976 and 1980, on platforms best described as a progressive's nightmare: he calls for immediate construction of 120 nuclear power plants, blames the B'Nai B'rith Anti-Defamation League for funding the Nazis and calls publicly for an "American Whig" coalition of business and labor to turn the country around while secretly seeking a military solution to the nation's problems.

LaRouche's own political odyssey has been an odd one. He began on the Left, in 1948, as a member of the Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and drew fleeting notice in the late 1960s only when he abandoned the SWP, was expelled from the Students for a Democratic Society for disruptive behavior and founded, with the help of 30 followers, the National Caucus of Labor Committees. Little of substance was heard from the NCLC for four years or so, as the organization grew slowly to an estimated 2,500 members and—like so many "vanguard" parties of the time—busied itself with rhetorical attacks on capitalism and predictions of revolution.

Then, in 1973, LaRouche swung radically rightward. His followers conducted "Operation Mop-up," a series of brutal, chain-swinging attacks on left-wing groups, such as former SWP friends and the Communist Party USA, and NCLC members began schooling in guerrilla training. Classes in guerrilla warfare reportedly included education in "political" techniques like garroting, knifing and booby-trapping. During this period, LaRouche also came to terms with capitalism, constructing a multi-million-dollar series of computer businesses (including the now-bankrupt Computron Technologies of New York)—a mainstay of LaRouche's political survival.

From 1973 on, LaRouche and his followers targeted trade-union chieftains for special attention and, through a plethora of front groups, began to emphasize the importance of reforming labor. A former *New York Times* editor remembers receiving scores of telephone calls at the time from businesspeople who wanted to find out more about LaRouche. "These industrialists got a long pitch about how LaRouche wanted to reform

labor along constructive lines," the editor recalls. The quiet methods employed by LaRouche to infiltrate labor have avoided headlines, but the "constructive lines" of reform have become clear in the intervening years.

The Gospel According to LaRouche

In dozens of books and articles since 1977—on military, political, historical and aesthetic topics—Lyndon LaRouche and his followers have signaled the key elements of a neo-Nazi outlook, including:

- a pathological hatred and fear of Jews as alleged usurers and terrorists and as carriers of moral corruption and diseased philosophies;
- a belief that wealthy Jews such as the Rothschilds (and, by implication, the world Jewish community) comprise the core of a subhuman species, apart from the human race;
- a conspiracy theory of history that blames the world's political and economic problems on machinations by these subhumans (who are allegedly plotting genocide on a world scale); and
- a militant program for (1) the "immediate elimination" of Jews from American public life and their subsequent indictment for alleged treason against the Republic, (2) the establishment of a fascist-style "industrial-capitalist" dictatorship under LaRouchian leadership, and (3) the "total mobilization of the entire nation" to prepare for "total war" (a line from Joseph Goebbels), with the aim of establishing "firm-handed" LaRouchian regimes throughout the world.

The LaRouchians, like many neo-Nazis in West Germany today, use code words and elliptical arguments to conceal some of the nastiest implications of their propaganda. But they also have produced a vast quantity of overtly anti-Semitic literature, attacking the "Jewish lobby," the "Jewish bankers," "Jewish hypocrisy," the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, Nazi hunter Simon Wiesenthal, Israel and Zionism. LaRouche himself traces the "problem among Jews" back to ancient times, to the "tradition of the Jews who demanded the crucifixion of Jesus Christ . . ."

LaRouche and his followers also rant against the "British," an obvious code word. The "British" in LaRouchian propaganda

usually have Jewish surnames, and LaRouchian writers carefully point out that the "City of London" is the headquarters of the Rothschilds and other Jewish "oligarchs."

In one key article, LaRouche lists a string of wealthy British families (all but one Jewish) and then defines "Britain" as "these same families' interests." LaRouche and his followers spare no adjectives in excoriating the biological-racial characteristics of the "British." Writes LaRouche: "The ruling British elite . . . are clever animals, who are masters of the wicked nature of their own species, and recognize ferally the distinctions of the hated human species." Elsewhere, LaRouche hails himself as the "potential destroyer" of the "evil species."

Overtly favorable references to Nazi Germany crop up in the military writings of LaRouche. For instance: "During 1939–1941, there was a sound and intense German nationalist enthusiasm in Germany for defeating Britain." And this one, published in 1978: "England was then, as now, the enemy of continental Europe, including the German nation."

The LaRouchians mix their pro-Nazi statements with statements that give a superficial impression of anti-Nazism, their attacks on the Rockefellers as "Nazis," for instance. But such usage is mere trickery. When the LaRouchians call for the "immediate elimination of the Nazi Jewish lobby" from American public life, they are using the word *Nazi* to disguise their own advocacy of a Hitler-style policy.

The first target of this policy, apparently, is to be the "British." A LaRouchian editorial says that if the British do not end their nefarious activities (such as encouraging Israel against the Neoplatonic-humanist Arabs), they should be subjected to the "treatment" meted out "to Japan in 1945." As to the Soviet Union, LaRouche suggests that the United States can achieve "total victory" via ABC "paving" (ABC means atomic, bacteriological and chemical warfare, combined) "to the purpose of exterminating every possible means of opposition."

—Dennis King

A Disinformation Campaign

In February of 1980, a sophisticated forgery of *The Pittsburgh Press* front page appeared in union halls across Michigan during the heat of hard-fought local union elections. The headlined

story linked a small band of union reformers known as Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU) with the Ayatollah Khomeini and militants holding American hostages in Iran. It was attached to a leaflet that advised, “[No one] should even *talk* to people who give aid, comfort and publicity to enemies of the United States.”

In 1981, the Teamsters for a Democratic Union was again the target of dirty tricks. Hundreds of union locals received copies of a forged letter purportedly written to TDU leader Peter Camarata, a dockworker from Detroit, by Reed Larson, the president of the vehemently antiunion National Right to Work Committee.

The letter read: “Dear Pete . . . I believe the discussion concerning the merger of PROD [Professional Driver’s Association] and TDU to make a stronger anti-Teamster movement, as agreed, will be greatly beneficial to the National Right to Work Committee.” It added that a \$25,000 check was enclosed, further assurance “that you are going to have the NRWC’s total effort of support in your upcoming effort to disrupt the Teamsters’ Convention and discredit Fitzsimmons and the hierarchy of the Teamsters Union.”

The contents of the letter targeted two long-time LaRouche enemies: “Dr. Arthur Shenfield of the Mont Pelerin Society and Stuart Butler, board member of the NRWC and board member of the Heritage Foundation”—both fairly obscure targets of LaRouche’s wrath. “Of course, it’s a phony letter,” Larson snorted, adding that TDU had refused even to sell literature to the National Right to Work Committee. “They don’t even want to talk with us,” Larson adds. “We wouldn’t object to talking to them.”

These widely circulated forgeries are just two representative cases of the sort of campaign LaRouche sympathizers often conduct. (Labor Party publications have even taken on the protective coloring of official union periodicals. The *Beacon* is visually similar to *The Teamster*; and *New Solidarity*, the Labor Party newspaper, once emphasized the word *Solidarity* in its logo in an effort, claimed the United Auto Workers’ general counsel, “to palm itself off as our newspaper,” *Solidarity*. A UAW lawsuit against the Labor Party for trademark

and copyright infringement eventually provoked changes in the Labor Party publication.) And according to several sources, LaRouche’s people have hounded reformers, sneaking into meetings, posing as reporters and turning over names of those who attend reform meetings to union higher-ups.

But LaRouche’s plumbers have *not* always enjoyed the active support of top union officials. LaRouche’s first flirtation with Teamster brass occurred back in 1975, when operatives reportedly set up New Rule, a group ostensibly organized to address Teamster Union problems. In 1978, LaRouche’s U.S. Labor Party produced its first broadside designed to curry favor among union chieftains. The exposé, entitled “The Plot to Destroy the Teamsters,” reported a conspiracy by the “Rockefeller Lower Manhattan Group” and others, including the Trilateral Commission, the Institute for Policy Studies and the Stern Fund, to crush the Teamsters.

At first blush, LaRouche must have seemed too incredibly strange even for then Teamster President Frank Fitzsimmons. What changed? The never-ending support for Fitzsimmons’ policies worked away at the Teamster inner circle’s resistance, and Teamster International officials learned how useful LaRouche’s people could be in crushing growing dissent from below.

Listening to dissent is a relatively new experience for Teamster brass. Before 1976, the overwhelming challenge of battling antiunion employers largely spent the energies of the rank and file, and reform movements were short-lived affairs. But by 1976, the routinized convention steamroller changed forever. Top Teamster ranks had splintered in 1974, when Jimmy Hoffa left prison and threatened to oust Fitzsimmons and “clean out” former allies from the Mob. Hoffa disappeared and was permanently silenced before the 1976 convention, but a burly, open-faced dockworker named Peter Camarata—elected as a delegate from Detroit, Hoffa’s home local—showed up to complain from the floor about overpaid union officials and undemocratic procedures.

Camarata was a radical rank-and-filer, unlike Hoffa, but he drew attention because his radicalism was rooted in his family history. He could speak softly about the human side

of economic hardship, since his father had been an autoworker at Packard when that line was discontinued in 1958. And he knew about job grievances firsthand, from his experience as a dockworker in Detroit.

Camarata and a group of rank-and-file Teamster militants, a few associated with the Trotskyist International Socialists, met and founded Teamsters for a Democratic Union. Although their organization failed to catch instant fire among the two million Teamsters across the country, the past five years have marked notable successes. TDU merged with another reform group, the Professional Driver's Organization (PROD), and increased in membership to 8,000. From one end of the Teamster empire to the other, from New York to Los Angeles, the progressive group made steady progress, electing local union officers and delegates to the 1981 convention—no small task in an operation in which 90 percent of the delegates are union officials beholden to their headquarters.

In a 1981 TDU report, "Who Runs the Teamsters Union," the group revealed that 38 top union officials held a combination of union posts at more than \$100,000 a year each. The report also raised uncomfortable reminders of top officials' career histories, including new president Roy L. Williams' four criminal indictments—two for embezzlement, one for a false entry on a government report and the last for conspiracy to bribe Nevada Senator Howard Cannon.

Though even Camarata admits TDU is no real threat to established Teamster power yet, its role as a bothersome public conscience and its steady growth and persistence probably panicked the Teamster top leadership, leading them to reach out to LaRouche's fanatics.

LaRouche's presence can be low-key; but reformers also report that in heated election campaigns pitting reformers against incumbents, LaRouche followers plunge right in, often with the active support of International Teamster officers. "[The union] has a general organizer named Larry McHenry. He is a full-time organizer to disorganize TDU. He works side by side with them [LaRouche's people]. They're the ones who put out the leaflets. They do barn distribution for

McHenry," Camarata says. (McHenry could not be reached for comment.)

Some of the LaRouche "intelligence" distributed to union officials is laughably unreliable. In the material Fitzsimmons sent to his high command, for example, radical journalist Paul Jacobs was identified as a "Controller of the Berkeley Free Speech Movement and later a controller of the Maoist Revolutionary Communist Party and the Eldridge Cleaver-Black Panther terrorists." The outline of his activities concludes: "Today Jacobs works at *Mother Jones*, a magazine which features slanders on the Teamsters and the Laborers." Jacobs left *Mother Jones* in 1977; he died of cancer one year later.

Whether accurate or not, LaRouche propaganda has had a brutal effect in some locals, however. When California recording secretary Jim Rush ran for re-election on a reform ticket in 1977, for example, he and his fellow candidates were buried by a tide of literature accusing them of drug selling and terrorism. It was produced by the U.S. Labor Party, paid for by an employer, then distributed by establishment candidates in the union hall. "It's hard to fight against that kind of thing," Rush says now. "The members pick up the material because they think it's the union newspaper. It's hard to go out afterward and find every member of a large local and explain the situation."

Rush has been offered a libel settlement by LaRouche's organization, but he lost the election and was never able to return to his local union. He now works as an investigator at the law firm that brought his libel suit in San Francisco. Rush claims that Labor Party involvement in the Teamsters is more widespread than this investigation shows. "Wherever you find local union officials who have titles with the International Teamsters, you'll find Labor Party people," Rush says.

Long-time Teamster militant Ted Katsaros of New York, where Labor Party staff members have been intensely active in Teamster politics, says that LaRouche's people have been successful in turning the tide against reform in close election contests. "The Labor Party's real purpose is to disenchant the critics, [to convince] people who are cynical already

that nothing can change, that it's a stacked deck," Katsaros adds.

LaRouche and Jackie Presser

By 1980, LaRouche could count as allies Teamster Union Vice President Jackie Presser and two international general organizers, Larry McHenry and Rolland McMaster, who are appointed by the general president. Relations grew so warm that McMaster even publicly endorsed LaRouche for president when he ran as a Democrat in the 1980 primaries.

Teamster Vice President Jackie Presser is the director of the union's core strength in the Central Conference. He heads the union's communications department, and he runs the Ohio chapter of DRIVE, the Teamster political arm. He is a savvy political operator and has been largely responsible for the Teamsters' cozy ties with President Reagan, serving last year as a key advisor on the Reagan transition team.

Access to Presser for LaRouche is a prized possession, of course, because Presser is a high-level link to the Teamsters and to the White House. The ties between Presser's operations in the Teamsters and LaRouche's organization are sometimes circuitous, however. For example, Mitchell WerBell III, a blustery former member of the Office of Strategic Services and one-time international arms merchant, provides an interesting link between LaRouche and Presser. Although WerBell refused to be interviewed for this story, it is a matter of public record that he was an associate of Cleveland mobster John Nardi. Nardi was, in turn, Presser's right-hand man until 1977. In 1977, Nardi was blasted away by a 16-stick dynamite bomb placed in his car in the parking lot of Presser's home local—a yet unsolved murder. Nardi's friend WerBell is also an important figure in LaRouche's circle, having trained U.S. Labor Party bodyguards in guerrilla warfare techniques on his Georgia farm.

Since Nardi's murder, Presser has maintained his own discreet ties with LaRouche's followers. His articles in the Ohio Teamster newspaper mirror LaRouche "intelligence" and par-

rot the Labor Party's *American Labor Beacon* stories, but Presser never credits LaRouche directly. While the *Beacon* promises to defend "labor from its enemies within and without," Presser pledges, "We Must Get Ready to Take on Foes Within and Without"; the *Beacon* blames a conspiracy between government and the media for persecution of the union and warns of a "Get the Teamsters network," while Presser decries the "baseless, unjustified attacks from Communist Socialist-orchestrated media, newspapers, TV or radio—organized by the captive political spokesmen who are and have been the advocates of 'Get the Teamsters.'"

Presser is a glib speaker with the heavy gait of a fat man confident of power, and he is a steady source of quips for LaRouche's followers. When Presser began referring to Peter Camarata as "Commie-Rat-A" during last year's Teamster convention, for example, the *Beacon* quickly picked up the slur. When Presser is annoyed, he shakes the large gold bracelet inscribed with big letters, J-A-C-K-I-E, and clenches his jaw, as the folds of fat vibrate.

Presser denies close contact with LaRouche just as he denies contact with organized crime elements. Asked by *Mother Jones* about Jimmy "The Weasel" Fratianno's statements identifying Presser as a tool of an alleged organized crime figure in Chicago, Presser snapped, "Forget about Fratianno. . . . He's a pathological liar and killer and that's all he is." In another interview, this one with ABC News, Presser waxed more eloquently: "We've been the media's meat, and you boys continue to write about us as the stepchild of the labor movement. . . . I wouldn't know organized crime if they were filming this program."

If Presser cannot recognize mobsters, he needs an ophthalmologist. Jackie's father, "Big Bill" Presser—a key old-timer who brought Jackie into the union, showed him the ropes and protected him until he died of a heart attack in late July—was repeatedly identified during his lifetime as a central link between blue-chip criminals and the Teamsters Union. Big Bill Presser was twice jailed during the 1960s, once for contempt of Congress and later for obstruction of justice. A Labor Department probe of Jackie Presser's own base of operations,

Joint Council 41 in Ohio, found that the list of officials "read like a Who's Who of organized crime."

Could Presser Become Top Man?

No organization is a monolith, and a small band of Teamster officials led by the union's liberal gray eminence, Second Vice President Harold Gibbons, has grown concerned about Presser's ties to organized crime, his continuing relationship with LaRouche and the possibility that he will make a run for the top union spot if Roy Williams is convicted on his conspiracy to bribe indictment and removed from office. The prospect that Presser could win the presidency, bringing his seamy connections with LaRouche into the Teamsters' Marble Palace in Washington, D.C., is a bit more than Gibbons can stomach. "There will be a lot of meetings if this guy makes a grab for the top spot," Gibbons says.

Gibbons blames Presser for the steady inroads made by LaRouche staff members into the Teamster community. "They came out with some pretty snazzy material. And it probably impresses him. That's why he associates with them. He seems to admire the literature they put out. The more I see, the more suspicious I become," Gibbons says.

Gibbons' conversation is sprinkled with nostalgic memories: of desegregation drives in St. Louis; of actions in support of civil rights, such as the time he shut down Missouri's largest construction project in support of Martin Luther King, Jr.; and of the social service centers set up under his direction to care for the poor of East St. Louis. Gibbons also muses publicly about a different vision of the Teamsters Union, a vision that might reignite a coalition between labor and the poor and reach out to European unions for mutual support abroad.

While Gibbons dutifully echoes the official line about TDU, calling Camarata and his allies a "crackpot, lunatic fringe," he also emphasizes that he has repeatedly counseled against overreaction in the face of dissent, vigorously opposing any alliance—public or secret—with LaRouche. For his efforts,

Gibbons has been targeted by LaRouche devotees as an "agent" for the "Second Socialist International."

The Beacon Brand of Unionism

Success with the Teamsters has led to recent expansion of LaRouche's labor campaign, featuring the Labor Party's Committee Against Brilab and Abscam, set up to defend union chieftains accused of taking bribes. In early 1981 he launched the high-gloss tabloid, *American Labor Beacon*. The *Beacon* has used the Teamsters as its centerpiece but reaches out to other union officials, such as Laborers Union President Angelo Fosco, recently indicted on criminal charges and reputed to have ties to organized crime, and International Longshoremen's Association President Tommy Gleason.

In a recent issue of the *Beacon*, an Operating Engineers Union local president from Wisconsin parroted the LaRouche conspiracy theory about "big money czars" supplying cash to the "association for Union Democracy, Ralph Nader's Public Citizen, Inc. etc."

"Dissidents in the ranks are only tools of the czars working to eventually bring about total control as in Russia," the local president was quoted as saying, a concise reflection of LaRouche's philosophy. Why the "big money czars" are so frantically intent on transforming the U.S. into a Russian satellite is never quite adequately explained.

It would seem that even the Teamsters would want to put some distance between LaRouche's brand of lunatic fringe politics and their own philosophy. Yet, at the Teamsters' convention in Las Vegas, Jackie Presser himself left the speakers' platform to cozy up to the *Beacon's* publisher, Allan Friedman, and its editor, Larry Sherman. In addition, local Teamster officials have been flooded recently with letters from well-known union officials and ex-officials urging them to support the *Beacon* with bulk subscription orders for their membership.

One typical letter was sent out on *Beacon* letterhead and signed by Jack Goldberger, a retired San Francisco-based

Teamster official with a reputation as a progressive. "Every day, people hear lies, half-truths and slanders coming out of the press," the letter read. "The *American Labor Beacon* has finally given an effective voice back to labor. I would particularly stress the importance of getting this publication out to the membership."

Goldberger confirms that he did, in fact, sign the *Beacon* solicitation letter. He says, now, that he does not "know who Mr. LaRouche is or who the U.S. Labor Party is" but that he still supports the *Beacon*. Teamster Second Vice President Harold Gibbons says the solicitation drive has been successful in drawing bulk subscription orders for the *Beacon* from across the country.

The latest issues of the *Beacon* are stuffed with such high-gloss praise for Teamster leaders that the paper resembles an official union publication. A catalog of other stories sketch coming battles for unions against:

- a federal strike force in Miami, which pursued an investigation resulting in the indictment of Laborers Union President Angelo Fosco;
- the "pro-terrorist rag" *Mother Jones*, *The Village Voice* and mass media on the whole; and
- "Socialist" labor leaders such as International Association of Machinists President William Winpisinger, Douglas Fraser of the United Auto Workers and Jerry Wurf from AFSCME, who, according to one headline, "Plan Government Disruption. . . ."

This is not a record that should go without comment. With influence in the Teamsters, the Operating Engineers, the Laborers and the Longshoremen's Association already, the *Beacon* could become an effective tool for indoctrinating labor into LaRouche's own brand of right-wing fringe politics. Access to the rank and file is LaRouche's best hope for converting a segment of the country's working people to the Labor Party analysis. That is, perhaps, its greatest danger.

Local union officials are drawn to the *Beacon* for its labor coverage in a nation where there is generally little media attention given to labor at all. They are not told of the *Beacon's*

ties to LaRouche or the Labor Party. In fact the U.S. Labor Party no longer technically exists. It has dissolved itself, like the National Caucus of Labor Committees before it, into the National Democratic Policy Committee, the Fusion Energy Foundation and, now, the *Beacon* itself. But no matter what LaRouche calls it, the party line remains essentially the same, and the *Beacon* is rife with it. One recent story linked the Trilateral Commission, the Italian Communist Party and Alexander Haig in a plot to overthrow the Italian government; and even the *Beacon's* labor stories are filled with LaRouchianisms like "big money czars" or "international socialists" conspiring to attack trade-unionism.

Despite all of this evidence, the *Beacon* is still often mistaken for an independent, labor-oriented publication and not the LaRouche house organ that it is. Some union members interviewed during the research for this story stated that the *Beacon* had no affiliation with the U.S. Labor Party or Lyndon LaRouche. Bruce Wood, a *Beacon* staffer in Detroit denied any affiliation with the Labor Party. "We operate as a business," Wood said. "We're not a cause. We run it as a totally separate business." Perhaps the most overwhelming evidence to the contrary is simply in the backgrounds of the two men who are instrumental in producing the *Beacon*: editor Larry Sherman and publisher Allan Friedman.

Sherman's record speaks loudly. In 1973, he ran for the Boston school board on the U.S. Labor Party ticket. In 1974, he was a Labor Party candidate for the Ninth Congressional District in Boston. Also that year, he was a candidate for governor on the Labor Party ticket.

In 1976, he was a member of the executive committee of the National Caucus of Labor Committees.

In 1977, Sherman, as a representative of the U.S. Labor Party, met with the New Hampshire state police to give "intelligence information" on Seabrook demonstrators. The Labor Party is one of the nation's largest compilers of intelligence dossiers on antinuke and peace activists and has voluntarily turned over this information to police and federal investigative agencies like the FBI.

In 1979, Sherman ran in the Boston mayor's race as the

U.S. Labor Party candidate. That same year, *New Solidarity*, the Labor Party paper, reported that Sherman was the New Hampshire coordinator for Citizens for LaRouche during LaRouche's presidential bid.

By the end of 1980, Sherman had become the editor of the *American Labor Beacon*.

For his part, *Beacon* publisher Allan Friedman ran for office only once. That was in 1976 in the 17th Congressional district in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. He was the U.S. Labor Party candidate.

Is LaRouche Truly Dangerous?

One union president who finds LaRouche's penetration of labor disconcerting is Machinist chief William Winpisinger, a progressive who hopes to revitalize labor by building new coalitions with unorganized workers, minorities, women and the poor. Winpisinger was a key supporter of the AFL-CIO's "Solidarity Day" rally, which drew nearly 400,000 to Washington, D.C. last September. "I find it very disturbing to learn that these people have got a foothold in the labor movement," Winpisinger says. "If I ever have to resort to [using them] to get elected, I would withdraw from the race."

Even conservative unionists have spurned LaRouche's entreaties, refusing to stoop to an alliance with him, however convenient. When reform candidate Ed Sadlowski challenged stodgy Lloyd MacBride for the presidency of the United Steelworkers of America in 1976, for example, the establishment team received repeated offers of help from LaRouche. "They would send us enormously long messages about things they thought we should be doing," reports Steelworkers Secretary-Treasurer Lin Williams, who ran on the MacBride ticket. "They looked to us like long letters from fanatics."

For rank-and-file reformers who have been victimized by Labor Party smear tactics, the Teamster-LaRouche alliance is more than an abstract problem. In New York—where union officials subscribe, to the tune of \$400, to the *Executive Intelli-*

gence Review and LaRouche followers have regularly picketed against reformers—activist Ted Katsaros is concerned about a "circle, a pattern hooking up the Mob, crooked labor officials and the U.S. Labor Party."

Several long-time observers of American labor history, with all its twists and turns, were shocked when briefed about this investigation. One of the most respected labor writers in the country, A. H. Raskin, now retired from *The New York Times*, says he considers it historically unprecedented for a group of such certifiable extremists to make headway inside the labor movement.

When all is considered, what is the real danger of this emerging alliance, beyond the unpleasant suppression of Teamster dissent? Is not Jackie Presser simply an anomaly, and are not Lyndon LaRouche's followers simply marginal, though dramatic, kooks? Not really. Union leaders like Presser use LaRouche propaganda to bolster their grip on the union. Their day of reckoning is postponed, and they avoid coming to terms with legitimate protests by the membership they claim to represent.

Where union members are taken in by the Labor Party material, because it comes to them masked as trade-union information, their attention is turned from the serious economic and political problems that confront them. Their energy is dissipated by worthless hatreds of nonexistent conspiracies. The possibility of a new, creative role for labor in confronting the nation's deepening economic crisis fades.

American labor has traditionally been torn by contentious impulses, to defend capitalism but demand reform of it. Even representatives of conservative "business unionism" have normally felt a deeply sown sense of social responsibility. Samuel Gompers, first president of the American Federation of Labor, said in 1893, "We want more schoolhouses and less jails; more books and less arsenals; more learning and less vice; more constant work and less crime; more leisure and less greed; more justice and less revenge."

LaRouche, it seems quite clear, would give us more revenge and less justice, more greed and less responsibility, more fanati-

cism and less thought. Never before have top American labor leaders forged an alliance with cryptofascists such as LaRouche.

It is especially dangerous for labor to be sidetracked by LaRouche now, at a time of economic contraction and rising unemployment. Those hardest hit by the economy begin to look for ideological scapegoats. LaRouche and the Labor Party point out those scapegoats to organized labor at the same time that they offer to eliminate them, allegedly "solving" the complicated problems through simple means.

The U.S. Labor Party—with all its "conspiracies," "big money czars" and "enemies of labor"—provides a perfect smoke screen for overaged, hidebound, intransigent union leadership. The fanaticism of the Labor Party allows unions to *not* address the truly fundamental problems organized labor faces: how should income be redistributed; how can the unorganized be unionized; and how can the economy be revitalized to create new jobs?

Behind the Story

Las Vegas is a mecca for gamblers, entertainers, mobsters—and investigative reporters. It provides the backdrop for endless stories about the seamy side of America and how it prospers. The challenge for a journalist is to pierce the city's garish facade and expose the illicit activity. Doug Foster arrived in June 1981, on assignment for *Mother Jones* magazine, to report about one of the bulwarks of the Las Vegas power structure—the International Brotherhood of Teamsters. No place could have been more appropriate for the union's annual convention than Las Vegas, where the Teamsters have invested millions of dollars of their members' earnings in the casinos that line the strip.

During two and a half years as an aggressive reporter for the *Salinas Californian*, Foster often covered labor issues. He had recently moved to San Francisco to try freelance magazine writing on national issues, and he considered the Teamsters convention an opportunity for a major story. In preparation Foster had collected everything he could find about the union, including articles and books like Steven Brill's *The Teamsters* and Walter Sheridan's *The Fall and Rise of Jimmy Hoffa*. The *Mother Jones* editors were interested in the turmoil between the union's old guard and the small group of militant reformers known as Teamsters for Democratic Union (TDU). In addition, the recent death of Teamster president Frank Fitzsimmons had reportedly put the leadership of the union up for grabs. Still, since these aspects of the convention were likely to be well covered by the national media, Foster felt he was essentially on a "fishing expedition."

From the Las Vegas airport, Foster rode into town in a limousine and started a conversation with the driver. Two years before, the driver told him, all limo drivers in town were Teamsters. Now, in the city where they were holding their convention, the drivers had voted to decertify the union because they didn't feel it was helping them. Foster pondered the complexities of a union whose members were driven to a convention by nonunion drivers in a city where nonunion casinos had been built largely with union pension funds.

The contradictions were familiar to Foster. While a student at the University of California at Santa Cruz, he had worked in a nearby cannery as a member of the Teamsters. "That cannery had been under Teamster contract for years and none of the workers had ever seen a copy of the contract. During my years there, we organized a worker committee. For the first time, the Teamster business agent started coming around.

"The Teamsters' involvement in the cannery had been just a dues checkoff, not real representation. Some of the left political sects had begun to organize, and the Teamsters were pretty sensitive to rumblings where they'd never had any trouble before. From that involvement, I developed a special feeling about the way workers experience outrage when unions take their money and don't deliver representation."

Outside the convention hall the first morning of the proceedings, a group of pickets from TDU were passing out leaflets protesting the high salaries of the union leadership. Even though they were members, the TDU activists were denied entrance to the hall because high union officials considered them troublemakers. Most of the convention attendees were appointed officials who owed their allegiance to the union hierarchy, and therefore they were hostile to the TDU picketers. So far, everything was as Foster had expected.

Once he had passed through the phalanx of security guards at the entrance, however, Foster was confronted with a surprising scene. Two well-dressed, clean-cut men were passing out copies of a slick magazine. It was similar in appearance to official Teamster periodicals but was called the *American Labor Beacon*.

"I knew from living in San Francisco and knowing about extremist political sects that the *Beacon* was started and run by supporters of Lyndon LaRouche," Foster explains. "I was struck to see outsiders from an extremist right-wing sect allowed free rein of the convention hall to pass out their publication. Meanwhile, dues-paying union members who opposed official policies were kept outside and excoriated as extremists. I wondered who had given them permission to come inside the hall, but at first I didn't spend too much time thinking about it. I figured it would be picked up by the daily newspaper reporters."

Over the next few days, as he realized that the daily press was

not going to cover the LaRouche group's activity, Foster decided to make it an important part of his story. He knew that the Labor Party members had attempted to infiltrate other unions in the past, but he was unaware of the extent to which they had ingratiated themselves with the Teamster hierarchy.

By the middle of the second day of the convention, Foster had begun a systematic search to locate a possible source on the Teamster national executive board. He wanted to learn more about the Labor Party's involvement with the Teamsters. Since board members had been the targets of numerous government and press investigations over the years, they routinely brushed off his and other reporters' requests for interviews. So Foster's persistent attempts to question the board members as they emerged from meetings earned him only hostility at first. An opening resolution denouncing the press in general and celebrating a recent libel judgment against *The National Enquirer* had set an antipress tone for the convention.

Foster decided to concentrate on finding those board members most likely to oppose the Labor Party. He knew who they were from the reading he had done prior to the convention. "In a convention situation," he explains, "you can save many months of later work by simply developing some rapport with possible sources. I'd never met any of these officials before. I just wanted to get close to them and establish some kind of rapport so I could call later with questions."

Here Foster's freelance status worked both for and against him. The labor reporters for national newspapers and the television networks were covering the daily events on the convention floor. Unlike them, Foster was free from daily deadline pressure and could develop his story thoroughly; he didn't face the risk of offending union sources with stories he had filed the day before. On the other hand, Foster was unknown and lacked the clout of a big-name media connection.

Foster focused his attention on second vice-president Harold Gibbons, a progressive member of the inner circle who had been stripped of most of his powers under Fitzsimmons's regime. Circumventing the union's communications director, whose job was to shield board members from reporters, Foster buttonholed

Gibbons at the noon recess on the second day and insisted that they meet over drinks that evening. Gibbons agreed to a brief interview, but Foster was able to stretch the meeting into an hour-and-a-half discussion. Gibbons, who had been singled out for criticism by the Labor party in the past, was especially angered and frustrated by the board's decision to allow the sect's members free access to the convention floor.

Having established Gibbons as a sympathetic source, Foster set out to find other union officials who could corroborate information. Again he hovered about the union members as they entered and left sessions, trying to persuade them to talk to him. Finally, after repeated failures, he convinced some officials to cooperate. Unlike Gibbons, these sources were extremely nervous and insisted that they remain unnamed in the story. These sources agreed only to provide confirmation for any part of Gibbons's story that Foster felt needed multiple sources. With the subsequent addition of a surprise source *inside* the Labor Party, Foster had now laid the groundwork for writing "Teamster Madness."

Meanwhile, the reporter was busily trying to research other aspects of his assignment. He still considered the Labor party angle only one part of an overall feature on the union's problems. Despite the general antipathy toward him as a reporter on the convention floor, eventually he was able to fill six notebooks with interviews about attempts at union busting, deregulation of the trucking industry, renewed attempts to organize farm workers, and the involvement of organized-crime figures in the union. In the midst of the convention excitement, it was difficult to determine whether the Labor Party activity was a better story than the appearance of notorious figures like Allen Dorfman* or board member Salvatore "Sammy Pro" Provenzano, whose brother Tony was a prime suspect in the disappearance of Jimmy Hoffa.

For Foster, the convention turned into five days of nonstop reporting. From breakfast meetings with TDU dissidents, to hallway interviews with executive board members, to late-night readings of the convention transcripts, Foster probed for the issues and people around which to build his story. By the end of the week he was

* Dorfman was murdered, gangland-style, in early 1983 amid suspicions that his conviction in a bribery case would lead him to "snitch" to the authorities.

exhausted and not yet sure which theme to concentrate on for *Mother Jones*.

He spent the next month reviewing and organizing his notes for follow-up interviews. He realized that the Labor Party issue would be the major investigative angle for his story, but he still wanted to include much of the other material he had gathered in Las Vegas. *Mother Jones* wanted the story fast—in six weeks—so Foster decided that there wasn't time for Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests on the union or the Labor Party. These requests often take months or even years to produce results. Instead he began a round of telephone calls to his various sources and to the new names he collected as the investigation progressed.

He also got a few lucky breaks. A friendly Teamster from his reporting days in Salinas called to ask him about the *American Labor Beacon* that was being distributed in his local. This call led Foster to probe Labor Party activities at the local level and to see how they tied in with what he had witnessed at the national convention. Another chance phone conversation located a researcher who had made a hobby of collecting Labor Party documents and newsletters for years, ever since LaRouche had become active in the late 1960s. Later, a call to a freelance writer who had written about LaRouche produced a comprehensive card file on Labor Party personnel based on names listed in party publications.

Foster's most useful source on the party, however, was the insider he had met at the convention. "I got to know him well enough to say hello," Foster explains. "Once I was back from the convention I began a campaign of regular phone calls."¹ Foster was performing the delicate operation of "baptizing" his source. "I kept calling him to show I was serious, to get a tidbit here and a tidbit there rather than push for it all. In my experience, with this kind of hesitant source in an organization like the Labor Party, you could get him to say a lot if you didn't push him, if you didn't make him say it all at once. You didn't make him feel like a traitor for laying out the whole scheme if he could say a small piece, and when he got embarrassed or uncomfortable, let him hang up. I wasn't worried about getting the whole story every time.")

This type of interview was the opposite of the work Foster had been doing in Las Vegas. "It's the flip side of dealing with a Roy

Williams or a Jackie Presser in a situation like the convention where you've got one shot for the next couple of years to ask them a question. There, you insist on asking a follow-up question, making them stand there, getting it all. They're experienced and they know how to deal with the press."

Foster's sensitivity with his Labor Party source eventually paid off. "He gave me a lot: the whole story of the party moving in and running the campaign against trucking deregulation and organizing demonstrations on behalf of the Teamsters against Ted Kennedy; the information on Labor Party publications on the Teamsters, the number of publications, the amount of money it cost; the way in which general Teamster organizers had endorsed LaRouche for president in 1980. He told me small things that added up to a lot. It showed a pattern."

There was little written documentation of the Labor Party's relationship with the union, so Foster's sources were vital to the story. His careful interviewing techniques, patience in developing the sources, and background in labor issues all contributed to his success.

"The only union I'd ever belonged to was the Teamsters," he says. "That was useful with some of the hostile officials. I'd say things like 'Listen, I've been a Teamster; you can't bullshit me.' That would have some effect. Labor people tend to see reporters as part of an elite that oppresses them. When it becomes clear that you're a worker too, there's more opportunity for creating rapport."

His initial deadline was delayed, so Foster's research stretched into August before he began to write. Just before ending his investigation, he requested interviews with LaRouche and his supporters in San Francisco, Los Angeles, New York, and Boston. All were declined.

Foster's first draft was an overview that placed his new information about the Labor Party as only one of several important issues facing the Teamsters union. The editors responded by identifying the Labor Party as the focus they wanted. He reluctantly returned to his typewriter to pare the story down. Although he agreed that the Labor Party alliance was an important aspect of the current state of the Teamsters, he wanted to write about the

dissidents, the leadership fight, and organized crime as well.

"In some ways, the emphasis solely on the Labor Party material missed the point by shifting the onus of responsibility from Teamster officials to LaRouche," Foster feels. "LaRouche and his supporters are not a powerful force either politically or economically, but the willingness of the Teamster brass to engage in this alliance made the LaRouche people dangerous. The focus of the story was something reasonable people could disagree about, and the *Mother Jones* editors and I did disagree."

Foster used what was now an extensive interview file to redraft the story. "I had a master interview file with all the interviews in it. I went through it and highlighted the parts of each that I wanted to make sure were included because they had either important information or good colorful transitions. Then I went to my day-to-day diary of the convention and did the same thing. Then I pulled every piece of major documentation I had and stacked them in roughly the order I thought I would need them. Next, I did an outline with a couple of lines for each major category. Finally, I sat down and wrote."

For encouragement, Foster recalled a saying from the late investigative reporter Paul Jacobs. "Whenever I think I've got writer's block, I always remember what Jacobs used to say: 'Don't give me that bullshit. A plumber doesn't get up in the morning and say, 'Ah, I can't work, I've got plumber's block.'" Put your ass in the chair and start typing."

After numerous rewrites, Foster arrived at a final draft. He remembers how difficult it was to change his writing style after several years on a newspaper. "Compared to a newspaper reader, a magazine reader wants something that's artfully done. The writing must have some attention paid to it and the story should unfold in an interesting way. A magazine reader is going to take more time to get the subtlety and complexity of the story." Although "Teamster Madness" had an investigative tone, Foster believes magazine writers need to take a softer approach generally. "The magazine writer should have the story unfold in a way that enlightens and changes readers by the process of reading, rather than hitting them over the head with the information."

The story finally appeared in the January 1982 issue amid

concerns of a Teamster lawsuit to halt distribution. "I hoped they would [file a suit]," Foster remembers, "because of the attention it would have caused. They said they were going to have a point-by-point response. They never did."

When no demand for a retraction or correction came from the union, Foster knew that "the work I'd done and the month-long fact-checking work of the magazine had all paid off."

There was some internal reaction among the Teamsters. Harold Gibbons introduced a motion against any affiliation between the executive board and the *American Labor Beacon*. Several local labor councils reproduced the story for dissemination to their membership. Foster appeared on numerous radio and television talk shows and received many calls from concerned local union presidents and business agents both in and outside the Teamsters, who wanted to know more about LaRouche and his hold over the *American Labor Beacon*. Several union officials promised to halt bulk subscriptions paid for by union dues.

Beacon staffers also sought to distance themselves from LaRouche. In a *Beacon* statement, the publication's editor and publisher insisted that "there is no existing relationship between the *American Labor Beacon* and LaRouche." Within a year and a half of the article's publication, the *Beacon* reportedly ceased publication.

In April 1983, Teamster president Roy Williams was convicted of federal fraud and bribery charges and resigned his post to avoid prison. Harold Gibbons had pledged in his final interview with Foster to lead a protracted battle to keep Jackie Presser, his longtime foe, out of the top position if Williams was convicted. But by the time that battle came, Gibbons was dead from a heart attack. Vice-president Jackie Presser, of all top union officials the most closely linked to LaRouche's followers, was elected to replace Roy Williams.

C H A P T E R

