Stephen S. Rosenfeld

NCLC: 'A Domestic Political Menace'

Americans interested in political democracy had better realize that one of its current chief polluters is something called the National Caucus of Labor Committees, whose political arm is the U.S. Labor Party, which is running one Lyndon H. LaRouche for President.

For a long time I thought the NCLC was just a bunch of harmless left crazies who phoned a bit too often to report that the Rockefeller heir James Tilton was planning to run for President. But until Post reporter Bill Chapman's story of Sept. 12 did I realize that for some years the NCLC has been terrorizing a broad center-left band of the political spectrum: Noam Chomsky, Marcus Raskin, Frances Fox Piven, Lester Brown, the Communist Party, United Auto Workers, and so on.

Then I found two other-factual accounts worth reading, Charles Young's "Mind Control, Political Violence and Sexual Warfare: Inside the NCLC" in the June Crawdaddy, and "NCLC: Brownshirts of the Seventies," a pamphlet put out by Counterspy (available from T.I.P., P.O. Box 1424, Arlington, Va. 22210). In a typical detail, reported by Young, NCLC goons in an attack on a Socialists Workers Party meeting in Detroit "beat a paraplegic with clubs."

Perhaps not by chance, the most detailed accounts of NCLC doings have appeared in the underground press. This may be because so many NCLC victims have been on the left, which most "straights" tend to imagine not as the object of violence but as its source.

Recently, the Washington Star and the New York Times published "straight" interviews with Lyndon LaRouche, also known as Lyn Marcus, the NCLC führer, letting him talk about his presidential campaign as though he were a bratty but acceptable member of the political community.

It is by similarly trading on the press' post-Vietnam sense that it must be more open to political dissenters that the NCLC, through the U.S. Labor Party, its front, has importuned journalists and their news organizations in recent months.

But they are not simply political dissenters. LaRouche calls himself a Marxist but the actual body of his thought, to the extent that his ravings about "fear of rats" and the like can be so described, belongs to the radical right, the Nazi fringe. He and his apparently brainwashed acolytes (his methods seem Moon-like) are interested not in dissent or dialogue but in disinformation and disruption, especially of the left.

NCLC poses as the purest embodiment of the left but, far from wanting to persuade or co-opt or even to dominate it, it wants to crush the left. The left is its special passion. The syndrome is familiar to anyone who has studied the rise of Hitler.

What should be done about these dangerous people?

We of the press should be chary of offering them print or air time. There is no reason to be too delicate about it: Every day we decide whose voices to relay. A duplicitous violence-prone group with fascist proclivities should not be presented to the public unless there is reason to present it in those terms. We should look more closely at its activities and its lavish and secret financing.

People of the left should not cripple their own defense, as some do, by complacently accepting a.m. harassing phone calls as an exercise of the caller's First Amendment rights, or by holding back from requesting official intervention out of the suspicion (unproven) that the NCLC is a creature of the police.

The government should be encouraged to take all legal steps to keep the NCLC from violating the political rights of other Americans. We are emerging from a period in which the police power was too often placed at the service of a hysterical anti-communist. This severely reduced the rights of many law-abiding citizens, especially on the left. The police ought now to be used to protect the left, and, of course, the center and right as needed, against violence and terror.

If the FBI could for 38 years track the Socialist Workers Party, a legitimate political entity, without finding one acceptable reason to do so, then it should be so less ready to vigorously apply the law to the NCLC, whose activities plainly fall within the ambit of the Justice Department's own new guidelines for domestic intelligence gathering.

An FBI spokesman, reporting that the bureau is in fact investigating the NCLC, read to me Director Clarence Kelley's testimony of last March in which he characterized it as a "violence-oriented organization of revolutionary socialists" with a membership of nearly 1,000 located in chapters in some 50 cities ... involved in fights, beatings, using drugs, kidnappings, brainwashes and at least one shooting. They are reported to be armed, to have received defensive training such as karate, and to attend cadre schools and training schools to learn military tactics ...

Can anyone recall an instance in which the FBI and the American left have agreed so precisely on a domestic political menace?
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Bryan Silcock