THE TERRORIST NEXT DOOR

THE MILITIA MOVEMENT AND THE RADICAL RIGHT

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ad offering free copies of Sheldon Emry's anti-Semitic pamphlet, *Billions for the Bankers, Debts for the People.*

While leaders of Grass Roots AAM issued defiant denials in response to the *Denver Post* article, spokesmen for AAM, Inc., in Washington, D.C., strongly condemned violence and distanced the organization from those who had attended "meetings or other activities which had as its purpose, avowed or secret, the use of violence, unlawful conduct, or illegal acts." AAM, Inc., also denounced the use of its "logo, stationery, and name by organizations and different groups for their own gain." These and other statements were crafted by David Senter, a burly, cigar-chewing Texas cattleman who had come to Washington at the behest of AAM to work in the Texas Office of Federal-State Relations. When Senter's plain talk and no-nonsense attitude got him dismissed from that post, he was hired as national director of AAM. The *AAM News* had enthusiastically endorsed Senter in 1980, but by early 1983 it was attacking him fiercely.

More than one thousand farmers attended the AAM national convention in Nashville that January, just weeks after Jerry Wright's farm sale. Armed guards flanked the doors, bickering marred the two-day proceeding, and right-wing activists managed to push through a resolution calling on AAM to protest the Federal Reserve as "illegal." The sponsor of the resolution was Patrick "Family Farmer" O'Reilly, a vocational instructor—turned—farmer and an ardent supporter of right-wing conspiracist Lyndon LaRouche. In 1980, O'Reilly ran for Congress as a Democrat in Minnesota under the slogan, "You don't have to be gay and kill babies to be a candidate for the Democratic Party." Two years later, he ran on the LaRouche-sponsored National Democratic Policy Committee ticket. O'Reilly not only introduced the anti—Federal Reserve resolution at the Nashville convention, he arranged for LaRouche to address the group.

Once a 1960s left-wing activist with a tiny band of followers, LaRouche was the paranoid leader of an anti-Semitic political cult with international neofascist connections. After breaking with the left in 1973, LaRouche had launched a dizzying array of publications and front groups dedicated to attacking David Rockefeller, the "Zionist lobby," British bankers, the Queen of England, and a host of other imaginary perils. LaRouche's elaborate conspiracy theories and dire warnings about global calamity helped reinforce the fierce loyalty of several hundred zombielike followers. To curry favor with a wider audience, LaRouche promoted nuclear energy, a "Star Wars" missile defense system, called for a "War on Drugs," attacked Jimmy Carter, and ran for president in the 1980 Democratic Party primaries. He also called for "parity" and demanded emergency relief for farmers.

"LaRouche targeted his message to conservative blue-collar and small-business voters whom he felt would support him as an alternative to the liberalism of the Democratic Party leadership," explained author Dennis King, an expert on LaRouche. Although most Democratic officials dismissed LaRouche as a crank, he ended his 1980 presidential campaign with 185,000 votes, more than
$500,000 in federal matching funds—a first for an extremist candidate—and national name recognition. (Democratic strategists and pundits were forced to rewrite their assessment of LaRouche six years later, when two of his supporters, Mark Fairchild and Janice Hart, stunned the political establishment by winning the Democratic Party nominations for lieutenant governor and secretary of state in Illinois.)

LaRouche's rantings about the British royal family and his technocratic ramblings about the marvels of nuclear fusion were hardly of interest to farmers. But his broadsides against the Rothschilds, the Rockefellers, and President Carter received a warm response. A clever opportunist, LaRouche linked AAM demands for parity to his attacks on the International Monetary Fund, the Federal Reserve, and the World Bank. In 1980, he tried to woo AAM president Marvin Meek as his vice presidential running mate. Meek declined, but LaRouche and his lieutenants dogged AAM followers at their meetings and national conventions. Soon Georgia AAM leader Tommy Kersey was being quoted in LaRouche's twice-weekly newspaper, New Solidarity. And by early 1983, a core of high-ranking AAM activists, including Kersey, had become key LaRouche supporters. One of them, AAM activist Billy Davis, a Mississippi lawyer and a cattleman, signed on as LaRouche's vice presidential nominee in 1984.

After David Senter convinced the national leadership of AAM to repudiate LaRouche, he received death threats, which prompted him to send his wife and four children back to Texas for safety. He also sought help from the Washington, D.C., Capitol Police who provided round-the-clock security and advised him and Marvin Meek to wear bulletproof vests. And so when LaRouche supporters in AAM ran into difficulties organizing their anti-Federal Reserve protests in February 1983, it was only logical that they blamed David Senter.

"The AAM, Inc., crowd is driving farmers out of its organization by its underhanded methods and slanders against the Grass Roots AAM in Colorado and supporters of Lyndon LaRouche," wrote Lawrence Freeman, a high-ranking LaRouche lieutenant, whose broadside was published in AAM News. LaRouche's activities provoked tension within AAM, but the deeper conflict revolved around the Posse-oriented politics of the Campo, Colorado, faction and the attempts by Washington leaders to rein them in. Predictably, Farmers Liberation Army founder Keith Shive encouraged the split. "The only solution is for AAM Grass Roots to take the name AAM because it rightfully belongs to them.... Our problem with low farm income can never be solved in Washington, so why flirt with the enemy?" Tired of issuing damage-control statements, Senter and others wrote new bylaws that permitted the expulsion of any state chapter that gave "express or tacit approval" to any activities "deemed unlawful by the appropriate civil authorities." This was the last straw, as far as many in Grass Roots AAM were concerned. In September 1983, the Kansas and Colorado chapters voted to withdraw from the national organization. "There may have been a time when the rift could have been healed," wrote AAM News publishers
fire in the carport of his Denver home. He had been assassinated by Bob Matthews and members of the Order.\textsuperscript{22} Five months later Matthews was dead and two dozen of his followers were subsequently arrested and convicted on racketeering charges for bank robbery, counterfeiting, and murder, including the killing of Berg. During the group's trial in Seattle, government prosecutors argued that Berg's on-air quarrels with Rick Elliott had precipitated his murder. It was a plausible theory because one of Berg's killers and Elliott were linked.

David Lane was a Denver-area Klansman, NAPA member, and Aryan Nations supporter who had worked as a night watchman at Elliott's NAPA office in Brighton (on the outskirts of Denver) at the time of the KOA broadcasts. And it was Lane who later joined The Order and drove the getaway car after Berg was shot.\textsuperscript{23} One month before Elliott was interviewed by Berg on KOA, Lane paid for a full-page ad in the Gazette promoting the Aryan Nations.\textsuperscript{24} Titled "The Death of the White Race," the ad proclaimed: "Your first loyalty must be to your race which is your nation."\textsuperscript{22a} The same issue of the Gazette carried the first installment of Gordon Kahl's sixteen-page letter giving his one-sided account of the North Dakota shootings.\textsuperscript{26} And later that month, Elliott ran an excerpt from The International Jew—The World's Foremost Problem, Henry Ford's notorious rewrite of the Protocols.\textsuperscript{27}

By the fall of 1983, the farm crisis was worsening. With harvest in full swing—and annual operating loans coming due—thousands of farmers packed school auditoriums, sale barns, and church meeting halls to hear what Elliott had to say. "Farmers: Are Your Lenders Deciding Your Destiny?" advertised one hand-lettered sign, inviting anyone with "sleepless nights, no living funds, complicated legal problems [and] no operating capital" to the middle-school auditorium in Cameron, Missouri. A week later Elliott joined Tommy Kersey, Gene Schroder, and Lyndon LaRouche to address more than one hundred supporters at Kersey's headquarters in Unadilla, Georgia.\textsuperscript{28}

For a $500 application fee, Elliott promised cash-strapped farmers low-interest loans while dispensing bogus advice culled from the Posse Comitatus, including instructions for filing "common-law liens" against creditors. Elliott also told farmers that every loan they had signed since 1974 was "null and void" because the contracts didn't comply with the federal Truth in Lending Act.\textsuperscript{29} Like his other legal advice, this was wrong, too, as agricultural loans were explicitly exempted from the Act. But because Elliott told farmers to shun lawyers, those who listened to him rarely learned that simple truth until it was too late.\textsuperscript{30} Relying on Elliott's boilerplate lawsuits, many farmers fell victim to foreclosure after they missed deadlines for filing important legal papers. Others were assessed fines for clogging the legal system with frivolous lawsuits. One Nebraska federal judge dismissed more than forty NAPA-style lawsuits over the course of two years.\textsuperscript{31}

By June 1984, Elliott was claiming twenty thousand members in about forty states and boasting that the circulation of the Gazette had risen to sixty-eight
to Georgia and called for a “Great American Money Rally... to receive the official opinion of Georgia’s attorney general, Mike Bowers, concerning constitutional, congressional, and state government accountability for the U.S. Federal Reserve banking system through which ‘debt’ is both generated and resolved.” Though Kersey predicted between twelve and fifteen thousand people would show up, fewer than thirty attended, hardly enough to cheer him on. A year later, Kersey, forty-eight, closed his farm-protest office and moved on to selling insurance.

By midsummer 1986, Humphreys’s star also was beginning to wane. He filed for Chapter 7 bankruptcy to avert a sheriff’s sale and he lost the 265 acres surrounding the Heritage Library to foreclosure the following year. Although Humphreys blustered about making a show of armed resistance if “at least seventy-five men” came to his aid, only a handful of supporters did, and of those, four were stopped on traffic complaints and arrested on weapons charges. To make matters worse, Humphreys faced charges of assault and battery brought by his wife.

These troubles didn’t prevent the former millionaire from seeking the Republican nomination for Congress that fall. Describing himself as a “student,” the clean-cut and boyishly handsome thirty-three-year-old declared his intention to unseat Representative David McCurdy, a popular Democrat. Humphreys campaigned against taxes, attacked the Federal Reserve, renewed his call for a land sabbath, and received 28 percent of the vote in the general election. His showing was comparable to that of other GOP nominees in Oklahoma congressional races who stood no chance of winning, but the fact that nearly thirty thousand people voted for him at all reveals much about the blind loyalty of Republicans in heavily Democratic districts, the ignorance of the Oklahoma electorate, and the right-wing sympathies of at least some of those thirty-thousand voters.

In May 1986, Rick Elliott was convicted by a Colorado jury on fourteen counts of theft and one count of conspiracy and was sentenced to the maximum of eight years in jail (his wife received a deferred sentence in exchange for an earlier plea bargain). Elliott had been represented by a public defender at the trial, but he turned to a fellow anti-Semite for help with his appeal. Newly graduated from the University of Wyoming College of Law, Roger Elletson was the author of a rambling twenty-nine-page tract entitled *Highlights of the Power Parameters of Money*. According to Elletson, Karl Marx was a “talmudic sage”; America was “saturated with debt and racial aliens”; the Russian Revolution wasorchestrated by Wall Street; and “the Oppenheimer-Rockefeller-Rothschild cabal” was intent on achieving “the total annihilation of the Aryan race and every vestige of Christian Civilization in South Africa.” Elletson’s love for the Aryan race notwithstanding, Elliott’s conviction was upheld and the Colorado con man was finally sent to prison where he served four years.

The high point for the right wing in 1986 came on March 18, when two LaRouche followers, Mark Fairchild, thirty-one, and Janice Hart, twenty-eight, stunned the Illinois political establishment by winning the Democratic Party
nominations for lieutenant governor and secretary of state. Though Party officials painted the upset as a fluke, the Fairchild–Hart victories owed much to the concerted appeals they and other LaRouche candidates had made to blue-collar workers, farmers, and other disenfranchised voters. Campaigning in the state capital, Fairchild had called for a halt to farm foreclosures, a freeze on farm debt, and higher commodity prices so farmers could make “an adequate profit.” LaRouche-sponsored candidates did particularly well in downstate Illinois, an area hard-hit by the farm crisis. Illinois was losing more than five thousand farms a year, and congressional estimates predicted the number of farms would shrink 40 percent nationally over the next fifteen years. There was clearly a link between the Fairchild–Hart victory and the plight of rural voters, and this prompted groups like the Illinois American Agriculture Movement (which was not allied with the Grass Roots faction) to express concern:

The AAM cautions all farmers to be wary of political recruiters for extremist groups who may canvass rural Illinois, inspired by the recent Fairchild–Hart Democratic primary victory. . . . This is not the time to submit to extremism and demagoguery. Rural Illinois’ problems will be solved within the mainstream.

Illinois law required candidates for governor and lieutenant governor to run on the same ticket, and the Democratic Party gubernatorial nominee, former U.S. senator Adlai E. Stevenson III, refused to run on the same ballot as Fairchild. Calling LaRouche supporters “neo-Nazis” and “adherents to an extremist philosophy steeped in violence and bigotry,” he hastily organized a third party bid but was defeated that November.

“I’m going to revive the spirit of Abraham Lincoln and General Patton. We’re going to roll our tanks down State Street,” Hart had proclaimed wildly the day after the primary. In spite of this bizarre statement she pulled 478,000 votes in the general election—100,000 more than she had won in the primary. Although there would be no tanks rumbling through Chicago, Hart and other LaRouchies had the satisfaction of delivering the Illinois statehouse to the GOP. In addition to putting LaRouche’s name on the front page of daily newspapers around the nation, the fiasco heightened awareness about the vulnerability of rural residents to right-wing appeals.

Though media attention focused on Fairchild and Hart, other LaRouche candidates did surprisingly well, including two who ran unopposed (in GOP-dominated districts) and won Democratic nominations for Congress (but were defeated in the general election). One primary winner was William Brenner, an organic farmer and the former president of the Iroquois County National Farmers Organization (NFO). The group advocated collective bargaining as the route to higher prices and was generally thought of as a liberal farm organization; however, unlike AAM, Inc., it had yet to publicly denounce the radical right.
Parroting what he had learned from LaRouche and other right-wingers, NFO's Brenner claimed that the International Monetary Fund and the Federal Reserve were responsible for America's problems. A smattering of other NFO leaders did the same, including the state treasurer of its Missouri chapter.  

LaRouche was back in the news later that year, but not to celebrate. In October, a federal grand jury in Boston handed down the first of a series of sweeping indictments charging ten LaRouche activists with fraud and obstruction of justice involving two corporations, three campaign committees, and more than $1 million in unauthorized charges to the credit-card accounts of more than one-thousand people. A subsequent federal indictment issued in Virginia charged LaRouche and others with conspiracy and more than $34 million in loan fraud.

A federal raid on the group's headquarters in Leesburg, Virginia, threw the LaRouche operation into temporary disarray. Unlike other right-wing groups, however, LaRouche's highly disciplined and well-financed organization withstood much of the pressure. LaRouche operatives returned to the Farm Belt in September 1988 with a cleverly packaged organizing drive they called "Food for Peace." The name was chosen because it was easily confused with the U.S. government overseas aid program by the same name. Like previous LaRouche pitches to farmers, this one demanded parity prices, a moratorium on farm foreclosures, extolled the unlimited virtues of technology, and attacked progressive farm groups. According to LaRouche, PrairieFire was in league with the Anti-Defamation League, the Israeli secret police, and the Soviet KGB as part of a "vast gang-countergang scenario . . . with the purpose of turning small numbers of economically distraught farmers into 'suicide terrorists' patterned on Gordon Kahl and Arthur Kirk." Adding further detail to these delusions, LaRouche said progressive farm groups were controlled by an international oligarchy operated by Benedictine monks headquartered in Collegeville, Minnesota.

As many as four hundred people from thirty states and ten countries came to Chicago to applaud Food for Peace, and local meetings were held in fifteen states and Canada that fall. The effort finally stalled after LaRouche and six aides were convicted of conspiracy and loan fraud in December 1988. Farm issues remained high on the LaRouche agenda during the five years he spent in federal prison from 1989 to January 1994, but he never duplicated his success of the late 1970s or the mid-1980s.

Farmers had always paid a price for embracing the radical right, and by the late 1980s the costs of doing so were becoming much more apparent. PrairieFire and its network of supporters worked hard to highlight this fact, emphasizing the practical as well as the moral, ethical, and legal liabilities of becoming involved with both the hard Posse and its softer variants in the Christian Patriot movement. PrairieFire did this, in part, by helping orchestrate denunciations of the movement and by regularly supplying the media with the inside information it needed to publish exposés about the radical right. The resulting bad press both dampened Christian Patriot morale and encouraged more aggressive prosecu-
In October 1986, Jewish groups and farm organizations announced a nationwide petition drive calling for a moratorium on farm foreclosures, "fair prices for farm products that cover the cost of production," and emergency assistance for farm and rural families. "We in the farm community are proud to stand arm-in-arm with the Jewish community," announced American Agriculture Movement executive director David Senter at a press conference in New York. A leader and veteran of the battle to keep LaRouche followers and the Posse out of the ranks of AAM, Senter understood the importance of standing publicly with Jewish groups. Speaking alongside him at the Manhattan headquarters of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations was David Goldstein, the director of the Kansas City Jewish Community Relations Bureau. The petition drive had grown out of Goldstein's efforts to bring Jews and farmers together to fight both anti-Semitism and farm foreclosures.¹ “For the security of the Jewish community, we felt it necessary to combat this flaring-up of anti-Semitism," Goldstein explained. "And in keeping with our religious tradition and social values, we determined that we must come to the aid of our rural brothers."² Inspired by his words and his example, other Jewish groups took similar steps, but not the Anti-Defamation League, which still insisted on downplaying both the rural crisis and threat of the radical right.

While Jewish organizations reached out to farmers, so, too, did the Reverend


8. Ibid., p. 8.


12. Patrick O’Reilly, interview by the author.

13. Dennis King, interview by the author.

14. For the most thorough analysis of Lyndon LaRouche, see: Dennis King, Lyndon LaRouche and the New American Fascism (New York: Doubleday, 1989). King’s account of the 1980 presidential campaign appears on pp. 90—91.


16. David Senter, interview by the author.