

Williams forces inquiry into DOJ misconduct

by Molly Hammett Kronberg

In a Capitol Hill press conference March 11, Senator Harrison Williams of New Jersey blasted the American press for having “so distorted the issues” of the Abscam frame-up against him “as to make it unrecognizable.” The international press corps of 100 reporters had hoped that Senator Williams’s press conference—in which he announced he would resign from the U.S. Senate rather than proceed farther with the week-long hearings on whether he would be expelled from the Senate over Abscam—would be a tearful goodbye like Ed Muskie’s or Tom Eagleton’s. Instead, the stunned press heard itself indicted by Senator Williams for its irresponsible and criminal misrepresentation of his frameup. The press, charged Senator Williams, “have said I am a broken man. They have said that my wife was in tears in the gallery. I am not a broken man. And I can tell you that the only time my wife was in tears during the last two years was when she heard of the death of Marie Weinberg. I am reminded of what the great Italian poet Dante had to say about the users of false words, whom he put in the bottom of the eighth circle of Hell, just above the traitors . . .

“I am innocent,” he continued. “I was confronted with men like Judge [George] Pratt and Prosecutor Thomas Puccio who had no hesitation and spared no effort to exonerate those who manufactured crime. . . . If I ever have the opportunity to be in the same room with Mr. Puccio, *I’ll walk out.*”

“I was faced with massive momentum against me in the Senate. Nonetheless we succeeded in getting the facts of the crimes of the FBI and its accomplices onto the Senate floor. I believe it is best now to separate this

exposure from my own personal situation. I plan to go ahead with my personal fight in the courts and I am confident that I will eventually be exonerated in full. . . .

“And, I don’t ‘feel’ innocent; I *know* I’m innocent.”

Most important Senate debate in century

Senator Williams’s aggressive and self-assured resignation speech (which, New York and New Jersey press were quick to note, not only charged as virtually treasonous the judgment-by-the-press but also did not exclude the Senator’s possibly seeking re-election to his old Senate seat) capped a week of the most dramatic, passionate, and constitutionally crucial proceedings in the history of the U.S. Senate.

On March 9 and 10, the fourth and fifth days of the hearings on Senator Williams’s case, grievous misconduct by the Justice Department and Federal Bureau of Investigation in the Abscam operation against Senator Williams was exposed before the Senate. Forgery, perjury, acquiescence in illegal targeting operations by FBI Director William Webster, were all brought out in the debate.

Yet, despite all the revelations, which made manifest that the Carter Justice Department deliberately set out to destroy political opponents of Carter’s administration and the institution of the Senate itself, under Senate Majority leader Howard Baker and Heritage Foundation dominance in the GOP, the 53 Republican Senators were forced into backing a railroad of Senator Williams. The Democratic Senators—under the direction of Democratic National Committee head Charles Manatt and Senate Minority Leader Robert Byrd—were also “dis-

ciplined" into conniving at a railroad. A few courageous Democrats, among them Senators Inouye of Hawaii and Melcher of Montana, emerged as a Constitutional bloc against the expulsion of Williams.

The implications of an expulsion of Harrison Williams stretch far beyond the present. If the Senate were to allow itself to ratify the frame-up of one of its members by the corrupted "Dope, Inc." elements in the Justice Department, it would thus ensure that the U.S. Senate could not survive as an independent institution. If that were to happen, in turn, it would mean that no obstacles remained to the creation in this country of a dictatorship based on a program of fascist economics like that the Carter administration attempted.

'Illegal' to be a Senator

In Tuesday's debate it became clear that with an illegal operation like Abscam in full swing, the constituency representation on which American politics has based itself for 200 years is "illegal" by the standards of Abscam! Senators Howell Heflin (D-Al.) and Malcolm Wallop (D-Wyo.), representing the Senate Ethics Committee and its expulsion-recommendation against Williams, were grilled by Democratic Senators Russell Long, Patrick Leahy, and Joseph Biden on what precisely were the "improprieties" the FBI, Justice Department, and Ethics Committee insist Williams committed. Senator Leahy expostulated: "There are many of us who have business interests, and many bills come up that may correspond to some of these areas. Are you saying that anyone who has an interest in any private venture is guilty of an ethics violation? . . . Because if you are, we are going to be here for a hundred years, trying 99 other Senators." Ethics Committee Chairman Wallop, manically determined to throw Williams out of the Senate, said flatly that the "quid pro quo" basis on which constituency politics functions is an "ethics violation."

Cranston: 'shocked by government duplicity'

Senator Alan Cranston (D-Calif.) rose to present his resolution to censure, rather than expel, Senator Williams. Though Cranston's speech was weakened by his assertion that Williams warranted censure, rather than full exoneration, he insisted that the case of Harrison Williams is an issue on the outcome of which rises or falls America's form of government: "I believe there has been the grossest abuse of power and misconduct by the executive branch of the United States government in the investigation and subsequent prosecution of Senator Williams. . . . Senator Williams faced what was a cruel, unreasonable, unwarranted, improper test. . . . An operation such as Abscam, when directed against the co-equal legislative branch of the Government by the executive branch, poses a very real threat to the separa-

tion of powers. . . . Unchecked abuse of executive branch investigative and prosecutorial powers could escalate into despotism. . . ."

Senator Cranston reviewed the revelations by Marie Weinberg, wife of Abscam conman Mel Weinberg, who in January (one week before her violent death) gave affidavit evidence of Weinberg's bribery of FBI agents and perjury during the Abscam trials in which his was the main testimony against Senator Williams. "There is ample reason," said Cranston, "to believe Marie Weinberg. Her credibility has been clearly established by much independent corroboration. . . . Her husband, on the other hand, is a self-admitted liar who has perjured himself on numerous occasions in Abscam judicial proceedings. . . . I suggest to my colleagues that Mel Weinberg's lack of good character is a red herring being used by Mr. Puccio [chief government Abscam prosecutor—ed] to distract attention from the real issue of the Abscam operation. . . . I am shocked by this government duplicity."

The media and the 'fixers'

Thursday morning's press, March 10, gave an idea how far the media, in the service of the Abscammers, were prepared to go in surrounding the Senate and public with "perceptions" to make the fix against Senator Williams possible. Senator Cranston's speech, and the exchanges between Wallop and Heflin of the Ethics Committee and other Senators, were blacked out. Anyone who relied on the average U.S. newspaper or newscast would have had no idea whatever of the issues before the Senate.

The deployment of Republican and Democratic Senators of the anti-Williams camp on March 10 made obvious the outlines of a railroad. First, the word went out, through the media, that a Republican Senate Caucus under tight discipline was prepared to move against Williams. Although Howard Baker was forced to say three times, "for the record," that no such caucus had met, the virtual dead-silence of the Republican Senators on the most important constitutional issue to confront the Senate in decades made it pretty clear that the GOP controllers—the Roy Cohn-Heritage Foundation-Baker-Bush crowd—had established top-down direction.

Kennedy liberals in the Democratic Party staged a floor-show Thursday afternoon which disrupted the discussion and made it equally clear that the Manatt-Byrd-Kennedy wing of the party was deployed for a "fix."

As the debate opened, Senator Daniel Inouye (D-Hi.) rose to refute, again, the spurious charges against Williams and to stress, again, that the great danger now was that, if the Senate simply used the trial record of the Abscam frameup by which Senator Williams was

convicted, it would lose all independence and instead fall under the sway of a Justice Department and FBI whose conduct is "very much in question." Inouye told his colleagues that all were under great political pressure; they were being told that it was "expedient" to vote for expulsion; the press was insisting that those who rejected expulsion were risking their political careers. But, he said, a monstrous miscarriage of justice was underway, in which the U.S. Senate was being told to presume Williams *guilty*.

Inouye said there were those who criticized Williams for having given too long a speech to the Senate, those who criticized his wife Jeanette for appearing on television to compare Abscam to Nazi tactics; but, said Senator Inouye, *Senator Williams thinks he's innocent*. Under the American system of law, Williams should not have to *prove* his innocence; the American system of law, which was suspended here, assumes a man's innocence until his guilt is proven.

Melcher, Inouye: pro-constitutional bloc

Next spoke Senator John Melcher (D-Mt.). He reminded the Senate of an old Sam Rayburn quote that "political speeches you don't make can't hurt you." However, Melcher declared, he was about to make a speech at great political risk, a speech Sam Rayburn would have advised him not to make.

He focused on the economic collapse overtaking the United States—firm and farm bankruptcies, unemployment. This issue, said Senator Melcher, is one the Senate must address, and must address correctly. But it could be addressed correctly only if the Williams issue were addressed correctly first.

To do that, the Senator attacked Abscam prosecutor Thomas Puccio and Federal Judge George Pratt, who presided over Williams's frameup, and he attacked the credibility of the FBI "evidence" with which the frameup was secured. I refuse to get on this railroad, Senator Melcher said.

In closing his remarks on "vigilante law," Senator Melcher quoted from Robert Bolt's play about Sir Thomas More, *A Man for All Seasons*. There Bolt makes More say: There is God's law and man's law; certain things cannot be trampled on. Though a man tear down the law to get at the devil himself, when the devil turns around to get at you, there will then be left no law standing to protect you.

Here the liberal-Democratic clique intervened, with statements from Senators Leahy (Vt.), Stennis (Miss.), Pryor (Ark.), and Bradley (N.J.). Each asserted that the FBI-Justice Department behavior was heinous, and required immediate investigation, but that Harrison Williams had to be expelled. Senator Williams rose to ask Senator Leahy's opinion, as a former prosecutor, of the conduct of Thomas Puccio. Leahy responded that

he thought Puccio had violated his oath of office, and perhaps should even be disbarred—but still Senator Williams had to be expelled!

A subsequent statement by Senator Pryor provided at the same time evidence of a ghastly level of involvement in the FBI's targeting of Senators by FBI Director William Webster personally, and, also, in its melodramatic effect, a sure way to break up the Senate deliberation and reflection which Senators Inouye and Melcher was trying to develop. Pryor introduced a memo just obtained from FBI files, never before revealed to the Senate, showing that the FBI targeting of Senator Larry Pressler (R-S.D.) was not the freelance action of a lower-level FBI agent but was approved in writing by the FBI Director himself. The stagey method of presenting the evidence (though the evidence itself is powerful proof of the dimensions of the illegal Abscam operation thrown against Harrison Williams) was designed by Pryor and his fellows to distract attention from the constitutional line of argument so carefully built up by Melcher and Inouye.

As the Senate adjourned on March 10, it became evident that the evening press was trying to pillory Senator Williams. Across the airwaves, rumors, vilifications; the press line was uniform: Senator Williams a "broken man," his "fight over," and so on *ad nauseam*.

Certainly that is why the press corps was so taken aback on March 11 when, in announcing his resignation, Senator Williams stressed two things: He said he had accomplished what he set out to do—to bring before the Senate the dimensions of the FBI-Justice Department illegal actions against the legislative branch. Second, he exposed the near-treasonous actions of the U.S. press in acting as judge and jury against an innocent member of the U.S. Senate.

The next step: investigate Abscam

The significance of the revelations before the Senate of gross wrongdoing by the Justice Department and FBI is twofold. First, even some of the Senators who were in the "railroad" camp felt forced to make some of these revelations. They were responding to an upsurge of public sentiment on the Williams case the like of which has not been seen in the U.S. in almost 20 years. Senators' offices were comparing the outpouring of phone calls from their constituents to the passion generated by the Vietnam War.

The second point of importance about these revelations is that, once forced onto the Senate floor, they are now there, in public, to be used to dismantle the FBI-Justice Department Abscam operation which was aimed at the U.S. government. Senator Inouye has pledged an "open; no-coverup" investigation into Abscam. They can be turned against the very people who have tried so hard to "fix" the case against Harrison Williams.