

The case of NASA administrator James Beggs

The current FBI "corruption" investigation against officials of NASA's Johnson Space Center is not a new political tactic. The 1980s prosecution of NASA Administrator James Beggs—which was eventually dropped—took a tragic toll in human life, as the chain of events which led to the loss of the Space Shuttle *Challenger*, and the death of seven astronauts, can be traced directly to the witch-hunt against Beggs.

On Dec. 2, 1985, then-NASA head James Beggs was indicted by the Department of Justice for violations of and conspiracy to violate federal procurement regulations. On June 19, 1987, all of the charges were dropped, when William Weld, currently governor of Massachusetts and then head of the Criminal Division of the DOJ, could not explain why 82 boxes of documents that had been obtained by the defense under the Freedom of Information Act had been "overlooked" by the prosecution. The defendants were exonerated.

In between these events, Beggs was forced to resign as NASA administrator. One month after he did so, under an incompetent temporary replacement, William Graham, the *Challenger* was launched in freezing weather, resulting in the explosion of the orbiter.

Although no longer in an official position, Beggs was at NASA headquarters in Washington on the morning of Jan. 28, 1986, when the *Challenger* was launched. Had he been administrator, he would have been down at Cape Canaveral, as he or his deputy had been for every Shuttle

launch since his assuming the top position at NASA. Asked that morning whether the Shuttle would fly that day, Beggs replied, "Brrrrr. It's too cold."

In an interview with this news service on July 2, 1987, Beggs explained, "It was a cold morning and it had been below freezing through the night, and what you don't know with that vehicle, is whether you've got internal ice." Morton Thiokol, Inc. engineer Alan McDonald, Beggs stated, voiced objections to the launch on a number of counts, "and there were several good reasons why we wouldn't [have] launched that morning." McDonald was "worried about several things that morning," including ice on the gantry, and the effect of the cold on a number of components in addition to the booster seals, Beggs stated, "which is what I would have been worried about had I been down there."

At a press conference following the announcement that the case against him had been dropped, Beggs stated that the indictments brought by the Department of Justice were "politically motivated." There was ample evidence the defendants were not guilty when the case was brought.

In leading the space agency, Beggs had clearly annunciated his political views. "More than a century and a half ago, there were the Luddites. More recently, there was the Club of Rome," he stated at a lecture in 1984. "The fundamental error made by the Luddites, the Club of Rome, indeed by the malthusians and others who have shared their philosophy, is one of forgetfulness. They forget to remember that the human imagination is not finite." He held this view, and fought for increased funding for the space program, in opposition to the free marketers and budget slashers in the Reagan-Bush administration.—*Marsha Freeman*

component of an even larger private sector-government illegal joint strike force.

The role of the Heritage Foundation

Although the "Get LaRouche" effort escalated dramatically around the NBC libel trial, the campaign had begun earlier. In the summer of 1982, simultaneous broadsides against LaRouche had been issued by the Mont Pelerin Society-captured Heritage Foundation and the ADL. During this period, Canon Edward West of the Episcopal Archdiocese of New York had candidly told visitors that the Anglican apparatus would let their "Jewish friends at the ADL" take care of LaRouche.

Although the ADL did take on a particularly significant and vicious role in the ensuing slander and frameup drive, the fact that the Heritage Foundation launched a nearly identical and simultaneous attack was of great significance. The Heritage Foundation has been the hub of the British-spon-

sored Conservative Revolution assault against the U.S. Constitution and the American economy since 1978 (see last week's *EIR* for a comprehensive report on this). In recent months, Heritage Foundation literature has formalized the alliance with the ADL. A recently published Heritage policy guide for new Republican members of Congress lists the ADL's Washington "fact-finder" Mira Lansky Boland as their "expert" on terrorism. It was on behalf of this apparatus, spawned by the British and the Mont Pelerin Society of free-market fanatics, that Brian Ross undertook the slander against Lyndon LaRouche and associates.

It is not from FBI headquarters that Ross takes his orders, in his current deployment against NASA. He is one of the media "hit-men" at the disposal of the Mont Pelerin Conservative Revolutionists. His current targeting of NASA is taken right out of the Mont Pelerin Society's blueprint for the complete destruction of what remains of America's preeminent science and technology driver, the national space program.