
In Memoriam

Harrison A. Williams, Jr. (1919-2001)

by Mary Jane Freeman and Elliot Greenspan

Justice must indeed be the fundamental concern of political leaders: a justice which is not content to apportion to each his own, but one which aims at creating conditions of equal opportunity among citizens, and . . . favoring those who, for reasons of social status or education or health, risk being left behind.

— Pope John Paul II, Nov. 4, 2001

A warrior angel for justice has passed out of our midst. You may never have met him; but he acted on your behalf to secure your freedom and future. On Nov. 17, 2001, Harrison A. Williams, Jr., 81, a man of courage, true conviction, and compassion, died of heart failure and cancer. Knowing “Pete” (as he was called) as we came to know him when he battled against one of this nation’s most despicable FBI frame-ups in the early 1980s, we are sure he waged a valiant fight for life against these diseases of aging, and now has gone on to his Maker, where true and ultimate justice prevails.

We had the honor of knowing this man, and his good wife Jeanette, at a moment when their courage to stand for truth was tested. The LaRouche movement defended Pete’s integrity and helped to catalyze his fight for justice against AB-SCAM. This was the FBI “sting” operation used to unseat and break the will of Congressional leaders who were the

backbone of the nation’s once-strong political-industry-labor alliance for progress. (See *EIR*, Sept. 22, 1981, and Aug. 25, 1995.)

For The Nation’s General Welfare

It is only fitting that we memorialize his life’s contributions to the “General Welfare” of this nation.

One of the last “New Deal” FDR Democrats to serve in Congress, Williams had a driving commitment to his nation. After serving in World War II as a Navy pilot, he got a law degree. But politics was his passion. The New Jersey Democrat was elected to the House of Representatives in 1953, and in 1958, he was elected to the U.S. Senate. He was known there as the “Senator for life,” being re-elected four times, and serving for 23 years.

Pete’s public service epitomized the Pope’s call to pursue justice for all, winning him the admired nickname of the “voice for the voiceless.” Hallmark legislation he initiated or co-sponsored improved conditions of life for millions. Over two decades, he chaired many committees in the Senate, including the Special Committee on Aging. Unlike today’s political leaders, Pete championed initiatives to defend and promote the General Welfare. The list is long, but these few examples are representative of his efforts for working Americans.

Senior citizens: In 1969, as chair of the Committee on Aging, he investigated the causes of poverty among seniors. Finding that more than one-quarter were living below the poverty level, he sponsored every major increase in Social Security from then on, and worked to provide them housing.

Education: From 1971 to 1980, as chair of the Labor and Human Resources Committee, he took the lead on every Federal education bill introduced, including ensuring the passage of the All Handicapped Children Act.

Labor: Two bills to his credit which affected all working Americans, were the 1970 Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA), and the 1974 Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA). OSHA set standards to reduce occupational and health hazards in the workplace, and ERISA regulated and secured the stability of employee pension plans. He fought to protect the Railroad Retirement Fund from bankruptcy, and to ensure recipients their pensions; he authored the nation’s first program for urban mass transit.



Sen. Harrison Williams

Finance: In the 1960s, he initiated and won passage of the Williams Act, which limited the activities of foreign “dirty money” operations in the United States.

FBI-Created Crimes Dismantled The FDR Legacy

The Carter Administration’s Department of Justice (DOJ) and FBI began a series of sting operations targeting pro-growth constituency leaders. One of those, ABSCAM, targeted Congress. The *modus operandi* was to use a *pre-selected* list of elected officials, labor leaders, and businessmen, which FBI sting-men, usually crooks-for-hire, would approach, attempting to solicit criminal activity. Aiding and abetting these scams were a bevy of “investigative reporters,” whose “news” stories, consisting of DOJ leaks, appeared in national news media outlets, fostering a witch-hunt climate. The intent of such leaks was to convict the targets in the public eye.

Senator Williams said this to a 1982 public forum in his defense, sponsored by the National Democratic Policy Committee (NDPC), a 1980s political action committee founded by the LaRouche wing of the Democratic Party: “I . . . learned of the government operation in which the Executive Branch of government targeted and framed a member of the Senate, as I looked out of my house and saw a barricade of media—who received leaks from the [DOJ] before I myself was accused of any crime. . . . I knew then that the first principle of American justice was being turned on its head: that . . . a man is innocent until proven guilty. I knew [looking] out at the sea of media, innocent though I was of any crime, that I would have to battle to prove my innocence.”

At the time when the zealous ABSCAMers marked him for a hit, Pete was the formidable chairman of the Senate Subcommittee on Securities, which oversaw the regulation of securities, stocks, and bonds. He was then the major obstacle to banking deregulation, promoted by Sen. William Proxmire (D-Wisc.) and Rep. Henry Reuss (D-Wisc.) and supported by then-Federal Reserve Chairman Paul Volcker. Williams also opposed the wave of foreign takeovers of American banking and industry, which was characterized by a December 1979 London *Economist* cover story, “Buy America Cheap.”

DOJ sting-men were sent to get him out of the way.

Despite the FBI videotape showing Pete refusing—three times—a phony Arab sheikh’s bribe, he was convicted by a cowardly jury. By August 1981, the Senate Ethics committee, long a hotbed of FBI penetration operations, recommended expulsion of Williams from the Senate, based on the conviction, even though his appeals were pending. All odds were against him, yet Pete, knowing he was innocent, decided to fight. The LaRouche movement went into high-gear, organizing thousands of calls and letters of support from citizens across the nation.

On the eve of a vote by the U.S. Senate in September 1981, on whether to expel Senator Williams, LaRouche wrote: “Proven innocent of all specific crimes alleged, Sena-



Sen. Harrison “Pete” Williams, with his wife Jeanette, delivering a toast at the 1982 wedding of New Jersey LaRouche movement leader Elliot Greenspan and his bride Margaret Billington: “I have seen how Elliot, like many others who work with LaRouche, has demonstrated the kind of courage and selfless commitment to the truth which is needed to get our nation back on track. I can tell you, Elliot, and all of you—keep it up, and I assure you, you’ll be indicted!”

tor . . . Williams . . . was framed, openly and shamelessly, by the worst lot of judges and prosecutors seen in English-speaking law since the bloody assizes of the 17th Century.

“. . . If a United States Senator can be fraudulently charged and convicted in the manner Sen. Harrison Williams has been, no private citizen is safe from even more monstrous injustice imposed by sheer caprice of judges who are corrupt.

“. . . The ‘Ethics Committee’ has condoned a large-scale, willful effort to destroy the constitutional authority of the Congress of the United States.”

The expulsion debate, due to Pete’s dogged determination to exercise his full legal rights, did not occur until March 1982. After five days of debate, and after Pete won a concession that a Senate investigation into the crimes of the FBI in ABSCAM would be conducted, he nonetheless did not have sufficient votes to defeat an expulsion vote. With great dignity, Pete Williams resigned from the U.S. Senate on March 11. Seeing that his colleagues did not have the morality to exonerate him, he said that he did not want “the Senate to dishonor itself by expelling me.” He concluded, “I know I broke no laws. . . . I believe time, history, and almighty God will vindicate me.”

At a 1982 NDPC event before the expulsion fight, Pete showed his fortitude: “I have recently thought about the great Italian poet Dante, who knew, after he was politically targeted and framed in his native Florence, . . . that he would one day receive full exoneration and respect for his courage . . . to fight against evil and wrongdoing in government. . . . A true political leader must have the courage to never stop fighting.”

When our mortal lives are done, can we look back and say, “We’ve done God’s work on Earth, to leave a legacy for the future of mankind”? Without a doubt, Pete Williams did so.