

# Neil 'Ceausescu' Hartigan uses Gestapo tactics against petition signers

by Patricia Salisbury

Neil Hartigan, Attorney General of the state of Illinois, who is seeking the Democratic Party's nomination for the office of governor for the third time, is rapidly becoming known as Neil "Ceausescu" Hartigan. Using the power of his office, Hartigan has set in motion a Gestapo intimidation campaign against every individual who signed the nominating petitions of his opponents.

He has identified his opponents as "the LaRouchies." The following Illinois Democrats who are allied with political prisoner Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr., filed on Dec. 19 over 10,000 nominating petition signatures to have their names placed on the ballot for the March 20, 1990 Democratic primary: Mark J. Fairchild for the office of governor; Sheila A. Jones for lieutenant governor; Janice A. Hart for secretary of state; Ronnie Y. Fredman for state treasurer; and Patricia Noble-Schenk for state comptroller.

Then on Dec. 26, the week following the filing of this slate's petitions, Hartigan gave a press conference claiming that Democratic Party attorneys had spent a week poring over the petitions of the LaRouche slate and discovered 6,088 invalid signatures among the 10,010 signatures filed on behalf of the five candidates. Five thousand valid signatures are required to place the slate on the ballot.

According to Illinois press reports, Hartigan was initially charging that petitions were filled with repeat signatures and the names of unregistered voters, non-registered circulators, etc. He then went on to claim that some registered voters who signed the petitions told the Hartigan campaign they were duped by circulators who claimed to be passing petitions on tax reform, anti-abortion, and other issues.

Veteran observers of the Chicago political scene believe that, since Hartigan and the Democratic Party leadership know of the highly efficient and accurate methods of petitioning practiced by the LaRouche forces, it was the charge of "fraud" that they were really gunning for.

## Voters harassed

The Hartigan apparatus, having declared that it intended to disqualify the opposing slate, began a Nazi Gestapo-style

deployment of scores of employees of the Attorney General's office, complete with badges, as well as hired Democratic Party flunkies, to call every single person who had signed the nominating petitions, as well as to visit them in their homes and places of work, to seek to intimidate them about signing the petitions.

This Gestapo tactic was accompanied by a form letter sent out on Dec. 28, ostensibly from the campaign headquarters of Neil Hartigan for Governor; however, the Fairchild-Jones campaign has learned that people employed by the office of the Attorney General flashed their official badges to those being pressured to withdraw their signatures, and also subpoenaed them to sign "fill-in-the blank" affidavits, notarized by these hired employees of the Attorney General's office.

Citizens who signed the petitions were called and the conversations went like this: "Did you know that you signed an illegal petition? There could be criminal charges involved. I'm with the Attorney General's office. Meet me at. . . ." One person reported that two people came to her home and met with her, with this "fill-in-the-blank" affidavit to sign. Another voter said that he was told to come to an office building, which turned out to be a factory which deals in the production and sales of gravestones. When he came to the meeting following the kind of telephone call described above, he was very nervous and felt he had done something wrong. Upon entering the meeting room, a person identified himself as working for the Attorney General's office and flashed a badge, shoving the "fill-in-the-blank" affidavit into his hands to sign.

## Whose fraud?

It is apparent that this charge of "fraud" against the Fairchild-Jones slate is the chief tactic Hartigan has in mind to disqualify all 10,010 signatures, because in hearings before the Election Board the week of Jan. 5, the Democratic Party and Hartigan's attorneys presented 150 bogus affidavits as evidence of "a pattern of fraud, coercion, and deceit." They made motions that because of this "pattern," every single petition signature should be challenged, even though the

deadline for challenges has passed. To the dismay of the attorneys for the Fairchild-Jones slate, the hearing officer granted permission for the Hartigan Gestapo force to review and challenge all of the signatures. This binder check began on Jan. 10.

Sham of all shams, given the fact that while the Hartigan team filed 150 affidavits, they subpoenaed only six people in the Chicago, Cook County area to come in and give oral testimony before the Election Board hearing officers Jan. 8-12. Of these six, only three showed up, and three didn't even honor the subpoenas. Of the three who testified, all were people who depend for their livelihoods on the Democratic and Republican parties. One is a relative of the Cook County sheriff (a Republican elected official), who said that he was subpoenaed by the Attorney General's office. Another is the daughter of a Cook County commissioner who is vying for a promotion in the office of Hartigan himself. And the third is a personal secretary of the Cook County sheriff.

Sham of all shams, out of the 50 affidavits the Hartigan team claims they collected from the Sterling, Illinois area—where one LaRouche activist collected 200 signatures and, according to the local press, is being threatened with a criminal investigation for “fraud”—Hartigan's team could only produce 12 people to testify that they had been defrauded by the petition circulators. To underline ever further the total disregard for any appearance of law, these people “testified,” not in person, but *via telephone hookup!* So, out of 150 so-called affidavits of people who Hartigan claims were defrauded by the Fairchild-Jones slate, he only managed to get 15 people to testify to this!

Prior to the Fairchild-Jones slate presenting their case before the Election Board, a reporter for one of the Chicago local wire services reported that a press release was circulating from the lawyers of the Democratic Party regarding criminal charges against all circulators, as well as possibly the candidates themselves. This unnamed reporter said that he was told, “This goes way beyond just the ballot!”

All of these charges by Hartigan are easy enough to disprove, as the Fairchild-Jones slate is totally confident that it has the needed 5,000 signatures.

But for the reader to really understand the motivation of “Ceausescu” Hartigan, read the following shocking, lying statement which he made: “This anti-Semitic, racist hate group does not belong on the ballot. It is an offspring of the extremists who produced the Ku Klux Klan, the German-American Bund, and Silver Shirts of the 1930s.”

Many will hear in this echoes of another Democratic gubernatorial hopeful from the state of Illinois, Adlai Stevenson III, mindlessly stating these same libels in 1986, when LaRouche allied candidates Mark Fairchild and Janice Hart won the Democratic Party nominations for the offices of lieutenant governor and secretary of state. The only difference is that many Illinois politicians are not convinced that Hartigan is as driven to be governor as Stevenson was, given

the fact that he has established a track record of dropping out of races the longer the campaign continues, while leaving supporters to fend for themselves.

### The real Nazis

So, the question is: Who or what is driving Neil Hartigan to step across the line of the law and risk not only the Democratic Party establishment's defeat in the March primary (for the second time), but also the very real possibility of being impeached from the office of Attorney General, as a result of his own indictment for fraud and misuse of the powers of office?

On Jan. 13, the Fairchild-Jones slate entered into record the answers to this question. Candidate Janice Hart gave testimony to the Board of Elections which was devastating to the Hartigan forces. The Hartigan quote printed above was read into the record, as well as the Fairchild-Jones platform leaflet that was distributed during petitioning. Mrs. Hart then made a powerful statement to the hearing board: “My father is a Polish Jew, who fled the Nazis. That Neil Hartigan is calling me and our slate Nazis and racists is reprehensible. This is a police-state witchhunt, akin to the regimes of Deng Xiaoping and Nicolae Ceausescu. The citizens of Illinois and the world are watching this and are sick to their stomachs.”

As the attorneys for the Democratic Party and Neil Hartigan sat there with their mouths open, uncertain how to respond, Gerald Pechenuk, who was a petition circulator for the LaRouche slate and a notary public, issued an emotionally charged indictment of the entire proceedings, presenting to the Election Board the actual campaign literature that was used in petitioning—literature on the economic crisis, the rise of Satanism, and other pressing issues. He concluded his testimony: “I don't fault the people who were railroaded, intimidated into signing these bogus affidavits. Tyrants have the power to do this. I don't fault the hearing officer sitting in on these illegal and undemocratic proceedings. And I don't even fault the attorneys for Neil Hartigan. You're only doing your job. Like truck drivers did on their way to Auschwitz!”

Stunned silence followed.

As we go to press, attorneys for the Fairchild-Jones slate, Russell Stewart and Michael Null, are filing motions to deal with the various issues, and Mr. Null, a leading civil libertarian and constitutional attorney, has filed a motion for injunctive relief and a halt to these proceedings.

Although the challenge was supposed to have been ruled on by Jan. 17, the Election Board ruled to postpone any decision until Jan. 24. The ballots were to be printed up before that, so a big fight broke out between the Election Board and the Hartigan attorneys over whether to include the names of the LaRouche slate on the printed ballots or not. The Election Board finally ruled that it was easier to temporarily certify the candidates, pending the outcome of the Jan. 24 hearing.