

## OKC Investigator Under Attack

by William F. Jasper

Talk about overkill!! For the past year and a half, the powers that be in Oklahoma political and media circles have ganged up with federal authorities in a desperate attempt to stop the effort of State Representative Charles Key to have a county grand jury look into the Oklahoma City bombing. Governor Frank Keating, U.S. Attorneys Joseph Hartzler and Patrick Ryan, State Attorney General Drew Edmondson, District Attorney Bob Macy, the **Daily Oklahoman**, the **Tulsa World**, and the major television stations have piled on with a steady fusillade of brutal broadsides, spurious accusations, wholesale smears, and back-room dealings that would have destroyed lesser men.

Representative Key has been repeatedly mauled as "irresponsible," "weird and misguided," "paranoid," and worse. Attorney General Edmondson has accused Key of engaging in a "wasteful witch hunt" and "paranoid conspiracy pandering." The Clinton Administration, which shamefully exploited the grieving survivors and family members of victims to lobby Congress for its badly misnamed "anti-terrorist" legislation, also succeeded in winning over many of these emotionally battered people to the view that anyone who questioned the government's handling of the bombing case must be an "anti-government" extremist in sympathy with the accused bomber, Timothy McVeigh.

### Dubious Charges

More recently, the **Tulsa World** and the **Daily Oklahoman** have hammered the resolute legislator with scandalous stories alleging that he was exploiting the bombing for personal profit through a fund-raising letter on the Internet, speaking honoraria, and the sale of videotapes about the bombing. These accusations were given the appearance of legitimacy when Key was subpoenaed by Attorney General Edmondson on May 5th to answer charges about illegal fund-raising before a multi-county grand jury. The front-page headline in the May 6th **Daily Oklahoman** blared: "Key Ordered to Grand Jury: Fund Raising for Bomb Inquiry Probed." **The Oklahoman** proudly proclaimed that it had played a critical role in bringing about the investigation of Key:

The attorney general's action is a result of an inquiry by **The Oklahoman** about Key's seven-page solicitation letter on the Internet. The letter asks for money to "secure copies of the voluminous (federal) government documents and to pay independent investigators" and other expenses for the county grand jury investigation....

[Attorney General] Edmondson questions whether Key broke the law by not registering with the attorney general's office to solicit money. He also is reviewing the contents of the letter for accuracy.... Edmondson said, "Our only interest is whether the laws of the state of Oklahoma have been broken."

Charles Key, of course, sees it quite differently, calling Edmondson's actions a "witch hunt, intimidation and harassment," and "malicious prosecution." He is not alone. V.Z. Lawton, a federal HUD employee and survivor of the Murrah Building explosion, says that "this is such a transparent and blatant attempt to smear Charles Key and halt his investigation that I think it's backfiring on Edmondson." Lawton told THE NEW AMERICAN that some of his fellow federal employees who had not shown interest in signing Key's petition for a county grand jury changed their minds and signed on after they saw the flagrantly political attack by Edmondson on Key. "You don't have to be that bright or look that hard to see the fraud and hypocrisy in these charges," says Lawton. "For over a year and a half, they've been doing everything imaginable and employing the most absurd arguments to prevent Charles from impaneling a grand jury to investigate one of the worst crimes in our country's history. Now, after he's overcome all of their legal challenges in the courts and is close to getting a county grand jury investigation going, they drag him before a multicounty grand jury for what amounts to jaywalking, while the bombing and other genuine, serious crimes go uninvestigated."

State Representative Bill Graves, an attorney who accompanied Key to the grand jury inquest to serve as his legal counsel, stated: "The law is pretty clear that you are not required to register before you hit the ten thousand dollar threshold, and Charles [Key] had not hit that limit so was not required to register. Edmondson knows that. They're just trying to slow Charles down or stop him through harassment." According to Graves, Key had only raised \$7,680 and was thus exempt from the registration requirement. However, even if he had exceeded the ten thousand dollar limit, it would be highly unusual for the attorney general to be so intensely scrupulous about such a minor and fairly common violation.

### **Support for Key**

State Representative Leonard Sullivan is certainly curious about the attorney general's new-found scrupulosity. Although Sullivan has publicly stated that he does not agree with Key's bombing theories, he says Edmondson's attacks on Key are a clear abuse of the powers of the attorney general's office and an egregious example of capricious persecution.

State Representative Hopper Smith also challenges the validity of the Edmondson probe. "Look, Charles Key is an elected official who has constituents who were killed in the bombing," Smith told THE NEW AMERICAN. "His former secretary was killed there. He has constituents in his district and other Oklahoma citizens who come to him and tell him that they witnessed Timothy McVeigh with

other associates at and around the vicinity of the bombing site. He learns from a member of the federal grand jury that improper and possibly illegal actions were committed during that inquiry and that a major cover-up may be underway. There seem to be credible witnesses and evidence to back up at least some of these charges, and the courts have vindicated him all the way up through the State Supreme Court."

This is not the first time that Attorney General Edmondson has engaged in reprehensible actions concerning the bomb investigation. When ABC's **20/20** program ran an important segment in January on the compelling evidence indicating that federal authorities had prior warning of the bomb attack, Edmondson's office launched an immediate propaganda counteroffensive disguised as a spontaneous response from the bomb survivors. On February 5th, a fax transmission to federal employees on the official letterhead of "Drew Edmondson, Attorney General of Oklahoma" sought signatures from survivors to go with letters that were to be sent to various news organizations. The fax cover sheet said it came from Richard M. Wintory, Chief Deputy Attorney General of the Criminal Division.

### **Sham Appeal**

One letter was entitled "A Plea to the Media from Oklahoma City: Don't OJ Us!!!" Apparently intended as an all-purpose attack aimed at dissuading any other journalists from following up on the **20/20** story -- or any other "unapproved" elements of the bombing case -- the letter declared: "A recent **20/20** story has elicited fears in the family members and survivors of the Oklahoma City Bombing that even the mainstream media is willing to exploit us for no purpose other than to enhance their ratings on the air and in publications. We are writing today asking for responsibility and restraint in covering what many believe to be the other 'trial of the century' -- PLEASE DON'T OJ THE OKLAHOMA CITY BOMBING TRIAL."

The **20/20** broadcast, said the letter, introduced the nation to "a ridiculous theory of a government conspiracy in this crime" and "paranoid delusions." It engaged in the "lowest forms of tabloid journalism" and "was filled with unsubstantiated and baseless claims that have been repeatedly debunked." The letter was signed, "Many Survivors and Family Members, Oklahoma City Bombing." The federal employees were asked to sign their names to the bogus appeal. Blast survivor V.Z. Lawton was one of many who refused. But he went further and publicly denounced the letter for the sham that it was. "Since the communication was loaded with lies and half truths, I certainly could not sign it and I felt like a state attorney general could better spend his time supporting an effort to find the truth rather than this transparent effort at helping to hide it," he wrote in a prepared response to the media. "I think it is interesting," Lawton told THE NEW AMERICAN, "that Edmondson is claiming to find a pretext for criminal

investigation in Charles Key's letter when his own fraudulent letter is the one that deserves investigation."

Mr. Lawton is not alone; another survivor who is also outraged by the attacks of the attorney general's office on ABC and Representative Key and is willing to speak out is Jane C. Graham, also a HUD employee. The February memo from Wintory/Edmondson, says Mrs. Graham, is deceptive, dishonest and "totally inappropriate coming from the attorney general." "I am angry," she said in a typed response to the memo, "that the attorney general's office would play on the emotions of this office at HUD under the guise of keeping us posted on how they are proceeding and planning the case, causing further emotional turmoil in this office between employees."

Like many other survivors, Graham is completely dissatisfied with the federal investigation and believes the county grand jury is the proper vehicle to resolve many of the troubling discrepancies in the case. "I was in the building at the time of the bombing," she says. "I felt both bombs." And like many other survivors -- not to mention millions of television news viewers -- she vividly remembers the subsequent discovery of additional explosive devices, which sent rescuers and spectators scurrying from the Murrah Building that morning, as bomb squads were brought in to disarm the bombs. She wants to know why that has been hushed up and denied, especially since it corresponds with the testimony of experts like General Benton Partin (Ret.) and physicist Sam Cohen who insist that internal demolition charges were used in the building. "What's there to hide, why all this suppression of evidence and pressure on federal workers to shut up?" Graham asks.

You never hear from "dissident" survivors like Mrs. Graham, however. Why? Because she's too darn *inconvenient*, of course. As a lifelong Democrat, federal worker, and longtime union official, she defies easy stereotyping as an "anti-government," "right-wing" extremist. Mrs. Graham is, in fact, president of AFGE Local 3138. "A lot of people here feel the same way I do," the feisty union president told THE NEW AMERICAN, "but they're afraid of losing their jobs or being subjected to abuse if they say something. But that's not my way; nobody's going to bully me into silence."

As we write, Representative Key's volunteers are collecting petition signatures for that grand jury campaign. They must turn in 5,000 qualified voter signatures from Oklahoma County by June 2nd. Judging from all of the temporizing and obstructionism employed thus far, we can expect that the counting process will be dragged out as long as possible and that more legal challenges will be attempted to thwart the effort. "Our opponents have tried just about every dirty trick possible, but I'm sure there are still more they will try to spring," says Key. "But they might as well face it: We're not going to stop until the truth has been brought out and justice has been served."