

Business Briefs

Transportation

Card calls for more trucking deregulation

U. S. Transportation Secretary Andrew Card has called for more deregulation of the trucking industry, even though recent studies have blamed deregulation for the bankrupt state of the airlines. Currently, the trucking industry is free of any federal regulation. Card is pushing ahead with the Bush administration's proposal to also prohibit states from regulating rates, routes, and service of interstate motor carriers.

Under the same plan, the Interstate Commerce Commission is to be "sunsetting" effective Oct. 1.

The secretary presented the plan at a press conference and subsequent testimony before Congress.

Card said that the Motor Carrier Act of 1980 has been "a tremendous success, saving U.S. business and consumers an estimated \$15 billion annually in transportation costs." The secretary did not mention the thousands of jobs and hundreds of trucking companies that disappeared under that first round of deregulation.

Card stressed that his plans would not affect safety or financial responsibility requirements, such as insurance and bonding.

Foreign Aid

Forbes attacks IMF's, Bush's Russia policy

Malcolm Forbes, Jr., editor-in-chief of *Forbes* magazine, published a pair of brief signed editorial comments in the March 30 issue, attacking Bush administration and International Monetary Fund policy toward Russia.

Under the title, "Keeping Russia's Economy Flat on the Ground," he advised Boris Yeltsin's finance officials to "ignore their U.S. counterparts. We have nothing useful to offer them on how to save their free-falling

ruble and economy. . . . We are pushing Russia and other formerly communist countries in Europe to join the International Monetary Fund as a condition for getting Western aid. The IMF will hinder their recoveries, not speed them. . . . The IMF's mixture of inflationary devaluations, incentive-destroying tax increases and pain-inflicting, riot-producing, abrupt cutoffs of subsidies do the patient infinitely more harm than good. No amount of IMF cash could overcome its toxic prescriptions. . . .

"They should also look up how Alexander Hamilton 200 years ago turned the worthless dollar into the world's premier currency: He did so by selling bonds that were, in effect, backed by proceeds from sales of public lands. Russia could do the same with such assets as its oilfields, gold mines, etc."

The second editorial attacked the State and Defense departments' "dumb, shortsighted, counterproductive policy concerning Americans' buying Russian technology. State and Defense Department bureaucrats are blocking these sales. The rationale of these blockheads: Starve Russian space and military industries of cash, and they will decline so much that they will never again pose a threat to the U. S.

"This reasoning is absurd. Our best, most lasting defense is to help implant a strong democracy in Russia. Democracies don't go to war against each other."

Science

Appeal to Congress to fund cold fusion

An appeal to Congress to fund cold fusion research was delivered April 1 by Dr. Eugene Mallove of MIT before a hearing of the House Appropriations subcommittee on energy and water. Mallove, author of the book *Fire from Ice; Searching for the Truth Behind the Cold Fusion Furore*, (New York: John Wiley & Sons) scored the lack of federal support, terming it a "scandal of neglect by the Department of Energy of a new technology."

Said Mallove, "It is the 11th hour for fiscal year 1993, but there is still time to shift some money" in the budget into cold fusion research; just \$10 million a year of seed money would make a difference, he added. Mallove ridiculed the 1989 Department of Energy report which ridiculed cold fusion. He called the DOE report, "negative, untenable and completely obsolete." Mallove cited, as refutation of the DOE's findings: 1) the recent grant of \$12 million by the Electric Power Research Institute for cold fusion research; 2) dramatic success in experimental cold fusion results at Hokkaido University in Japan; and 3) the Como, Italy international cold fusion conference in 1991.

Mallove gave the committee copies of the March 1992 issue of the Japanese edition of *Scientific American*, which contains a report on cold fusion. This report is missing from the English-language edition. Its editor, Dr. Jonathan Piel, has called cold fusion "pathological science."

Biological Holocaust

Most AIDS cases projected for Asia

By the year 2000, the majority of the 40 million people worldwide expected to be infected by AIDS will be in Asia, the Asian Development Bank has predicted in a report released in early April. While the incidence appears much less in other parts of Asia, the number of people infected with the HIV virus which causes AIDS is now up to 400,000 in Thailand and up to 1 million in India, the World Health Organization estimates.

The bank said that although the figures for other Asian countries were much lower, the reasons for this could be insufficient testing and poor recordkeeping. The bank said Asian governments must take more forceful steps to stop the spread of AIDS before the disease becomes an epidemic. The bank predicted that the combination of increasing mass migration of labor and a growing intra-Asian tourist industry would soon increase the spread of the

disease to countries scarcely affected at present. It noted: "The burden of the disease falls disproportionately on women in poor countries."

Meanwhile, Dr. Jacob John, who heads the Department of Microbiology, Virology, and Immunology at Vellore, India's groundbreaking Christian Medical College, has said that the latest findings show that at least 2.5 million Indians are HIV positive. Dr. John has been appointed to WHO's global program, a committee for epidemiological support and research. He noted that "unlike Africa, where the leadership also have been affected, here the elite may be spared. "But the poor who live in overcrowded places" will be hit hard. "This group will fall sick like dogs and die like flies. Today they are dying of TB and diarrheal disease. We won't do any more to save them from AIDS either."

Europe

U.N. commission advises East against free market

A report by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) was characterized by BBC April 7 as a "full-blooded attack on the western radical free-market model that was supported by the Reagan and Thatcher governments in the 1980s." The ECE advises eastern European countries to avoid the "simple free market" policies that were implemented in the Anglo-American world during the 1980s.

The ECE report, put together by economists from both East and West for the annual ECE analysis on European economies, claims that the decline across the former communist states "appears to be on the scale of the Depression of the 1930s. . . . Many of the people in these countries must now be wondering whether the invisible hand of the market is really an iron fist."

The report speaks of a "growing fear . . . that the increasing economic straits will lead to disillusion and impatience with both the idea of the market and the democratic pro-

cess. . . . If the western governments wish to reduce these growing risks, a much greater commitment to the success of the reform process will be needed on their part."

The report also warns that the proposed \$24 billion "western aid package" of the Group of Seven could be "debt-creating, like so much of western aid so far, since much of it will have to be paid back with interest." So far, genuine assistance from the West, if measured in grants and low-interest loans, had been small "despite the considerable publicity given to the growing number of financial commitments."

Middle East

Israeli economy undergoes contraction

The Israeli economy is at a standstill, and is even manifesting signs of a downswing, the Bank of Israel reported March 31. The primary cited reasons are the drop in immigration to Israel, the slump in the American economy, the emerging recession in western Europe, and Israel's failure to obtain U.S. loan guarantees. According to the Bank of Israel report, several economic indicators showed contraction during the first months of 1992, including the fact that imports of raw materials, machinery, and equipment decreased. The housing market is in distress, and the problem of unemployment is worsening.

A related item in the April 1 *Jerusalem Post* notes an official Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics estimate that 36% of the new immigrants in the job market are unemployed. The figures are worst for those immigrants who have most recently arrived. The head of the Russian immigrant party "Da," Yuri Kosharovsky, claims that fully two-thirds of the employed immigrants are not working in their fields of expertise. Da is calling for a massive job-creation program in Israel.

Meanwhile, immigration into Israel from Russia is way down from anticipated levels, a fact which Israeli experts attribute to the high rate of unemployment among immigrants.

Briefly

● **HOLLINGER, INC.** may try to buy the bankrupt *New York Daily News*, the *New York Times* has reported. Chairman Conrad Black is also negotiating with Peter S. Kalikow, the personally bankrupt owner of the *New York Post*, about merging the *Post* and the *News* under his control. Hollinger owns London's *Daily Telegraph*, the *Jerusalem Post*, the *Sydney Morning Herald*, and the *Financial Post* in Toronto.

● **THE U.S. STEEL** industry is "in the process of going into a major calamity," Paine Webber analyst Peter Marcus told the *Wall Street Journal*. Major steel producers have attempted to raise prices, but discounting is so heavy that USX, Inland, Bethlehem, Republic, and LTV, simply can't make steel from ore, coke, and limestone as cheaply as it is being sold.

● **POPULATION GROWTH** in Russia slowed sharply last year, with deaths increasingly outpacing births in the last few months of 1991. Figures show that Russia's population grew by 130,000 to 148.8 million in 1991, only half as much as in 1990. "This is largely a result of people's falling living standards," demographer Yevgeny Krasinets told ITAR-TASS.

● **RUSSIA AND JAPAN** will build two major pipelines to develop the natural gas resources of Siberia, the two governments announced April 3.

● **FAMINE** is an even greater danger this year than in 1991, according to the European Commission. Sixty million people are threatened with starvation, especially in Africa, but also in South America and Asia.

● **LAROCHE'S** Paris-Vienna-Berlin "Productive Triangle" program for integrated European infrastructure development was introduced during a plenary debate in the Hungarian Parliament in Budapest in early April. The debate, which concerned legislation on road-building, was broadcast live on TV and radio.