

National News

Shanker reports on education collapse

The horrifying collapse of education in the U.S. was underscored by an open letter to President Bill Clinton from American Federation of Teachers President Albert Shanker, and published in the *New Republic*.

Shanker welcomed Clinton's commitment to improving education, but warned that there are dire problems affecting urban school districts which "cry out for immediate solutions," including "violence, crumbling schools, and an influx of immigrant children who need extra resources at a time when budgets are shrinking." Many schools, which should be "havens for children living in dangerous neighborhoods," are no longer safe. "We can hardly pick up a paper these days without reading that some child has been wounded or killed on a school playground or in the halls—often by another child." After giving gruesome examples of this, he noted "Teachers suffer from stress that is almost beyond endurance."

On "crumbling schools," he gave the example of "East St. Louis, Illinois, [where] a junior high school and a high school had to be closed twice in one week because sewage from backed-up toilets flooded the buildings. . . . In New York, [there is] a school where the staircase became a waterfall when it rained and where blackboards were so badly damaged that teachers feared kids would cut their hands if they did boardwork."

Hentoff exposes prison 'live burial'

Nat Hentoff's column in the Jan. 9 *Washington Post* highlights the longstanding U.S. government promotion of prisons which incarcerate inmates by burying them alive—i.e., keeping human beings in cells with no windows, sunlight, or even human contact, as guards speak on intercoms, meals are slid in through slots in the door, and no prisoner can see out of the cell door, while a closed-

circuit camera watches the prisoner's every move.

One example, often visited by prison officials from other states and countries, is the Pelican Bay prison in northern California, where 1,056 prisoners have been locked in the Security Housing unit. Prisoners are locked in 8 × 10 foot cells built on the sensory deprivation model described above for 22½ hours a day. When they emerge for the exercise period, they are in handcuffs and chains.

An American Civil Liberties Union National Prison Project report notes, "There are no training programs for prisoners, no correspondence courses, and no vocational training. . . . No personal calls are permitted unless there is a verifiable emergency such as a death in the family."

A federal class action suit, *Madrid v. Gomez*, has been filed by Pelican Bay inmates to determine if this violates the Eighth Amendment barring cruel and unusual punishment because such practices "tamper with the mysteries of the brain." Unlike bad prison conditions that result from "budget shortages," this hellish incarceration is costly. Hentoff urges Clinton Attorney General appointee Zoe Baird to support halting these vicious measures.

AIPAC and neo-cons orbit around Jack Kemp

The Jan. 12 *Washington Times* profiles how the various Republican Party factions are consolidating, and identifies the Jack Kemp camp as the roost of the American-Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) and the neo-conservatives. The Kemp group is called "Empower America" and features Michael Novak, Jeane Kirkpatrick, and William Bennett. Dan Cohen, a longtime leading AIPAC fundraiser, will serve as the top assistant to the group's president, former Rep. Vin Weber (Minn.).

In addition to Kemp, GOPers are gravitating toward: Sen. Bob Dole (Kan.), who sees deficit reduction as the only issue to be addressed; Sen. Phil Gramm (Tex.), who has the same agenda as Dole, and also wants to avoid "cultural and social issues"; Massa-

chusetts Gov. William Weld, who is leading the homosexual and abortion lobby in the party, with some support from the Kemp camp; the pro-abortion Republican Majority Coalition, which is led by Sens. Arlen Specter (Pa.), John Chafee (R.I.) and Nancy Kassebaum (Kan.); a congressional group of conservatives led by Newt Gingrich (Ga.), Henry Hyde (Ill.), Dick Armey (Tex.) and Tom DeLay (Tex.); a foundation headed by Pat Buchanan; a re-invigorated American Conservative Union, which is beginning a membership drive after sinking to near-bankruptcy; and the Christian Coalition apparatus run by Pat Robertson.

What's hot, what's not in environment chic

Syndicated columnist Alston Chase blasted environmental faddism in the Jan. 10 issue of the *Washington Times*. "In this electronic age," he wrote, "style is substance, and the environment is a gleam in a spin doctor's eye. . . . Here's what's out and what's in, in 1993:

"Out: Global warming. In: Global cooling. From a political standpoint, the greenhouse effect is the ideal apocalyptic scenario, as it takes 1,000 years to disprove. . . . In 1980, scientists predicted global warming would cause sea levels to rise 25 feet. In 1985, the National Research Council predicted a 3-foot rise. Last year the journal *Science* estimated seas would drop a foot. And now, many scientists suspect that the greenhouse effect will cause global cooling: By increasing evaporation, it will produce more clouds and thus more snow at northern latitudes, triggering a new ice age."

"Out: Dangers of CFCs. In: Dangers of HCFCs" which are supposed to replace CFCs. The latter have not yet passed toxicity tests.

"Out: Grazing. In: Browsing. The campaign to end grazing on public lands, known as 'Cattle-free by '93,' may not meet its deadline. But it is gaining strength. Led by militant vegetarians and pre-Columbian romantics, it would evict sheep and cattle from rangelands to make room for deer and elk—animals that are far more destructive. . . .

In several states, their browsing is the single greatest threat to endangered plants.

"Out: Hamburgers. In: Buffalo burgers. Bill Clinton loves Big Macs, but Ted Turner is serious about marketing bison, and we know who has more impact on public tastes. Perhaps Mr. Turner will do for junk food what CNN did for junk news, making buffalo fat the most fashionable source of cholesterol since Martha's Vineyard discovered brie. . . ."

"In short, old ideas get new labels, science remains in doubt and symbolism still triumphs over substance. Americans value nature more and each other less. . . ."

HHS may raise Medicare age to 67

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has recommended raising the age for Medicare eligibility from 65 to 67. According to early-January press accounts, HHS has drawn up an internal report which says that such a move would save the government billions of dollars.

The report openly concedes that raising the eligibility age would force some people to delay retiring so they can keep their employers' health insurance, while others who had to retire earlier than 67 could wind up with no health insurance at all until they reached the new eligibility age.

"Gradually changing the Medicare entitlement age to 67 would save three-quarters of a trillion dollars over a 30-year period beginning in the year 2003," says the report, which was produced by the office of the HHS inspector general.

Maryland seeks to speed up executions

Gov. William Donald Schaefer has formed a Commission on the Death Penalty, to study ways to speed up the death penalty and thus deter crime, according to the *Baltimore Sun* on Jan. 5. In fact, studies have shown that states which have the death penalty have

higher murder rates than those which do not.

State Sen. Walter M. Baker (D-Cecil County), who is a member of the commission of seven, has already filed eight bills to shorten capital appeals in the legislature. The commission has a year to complete its study. The Maryland Catholic Conference has stated that it hopes the commission conducts a fair analysis of the death penalty and recommends that it be abolished.

Maryland has 13 prisoners on death row, but has not executed anyone since 1961. The U.S. Supreme Court overturned portions of Maryland's death penalty law in 1987 and 1988, which required new trials for those with death sentences.

'Unequal justice' in Milken, Billington cases

The Jan. 18 issue of the Liberty Lobby's publication *Spotlight* carried a brief news item titled "Unequal Justice," comparing the kid glove legal treatment of Michael Milken to LaRouche associate Michael Billington.

"In the wake of both the Inslaw scandal and the revelations of prosecutorial misconduct in the proceedings against retired Cleveland autoworker John Demjanjuk, now facing a death sentence in Israel, it has become clear the Justice Department is thoroughly corrupt. Now comes further evidence. Michael Milken, the junk bond king of the 1980s, who many blame for inventing the destructive practice of leveraged buy-outs resulting in the reign of corporate pirates on Wall Street and the loss of millions of jobs to industrial looters, has left prison to enter a halfway house and begin the second phase of his punishment—1,800 hours of community service. He was also permitted to keep the bulk of his ill-gotten billions. Milken served a grand total of 22 months in prison for the largest securities fraud in the nation's history. Contrast this with the 77-year sentence given to Michael Billington, an associate of enigmatic presidential candidate Lyndon LaRouche, also for securities fraud. His case involved \$76,000 in disputed funds. There is no question both LaRouche and Billington were punished by Justice because of their political views."

Briefly

● **A FEDERAL GRAND JURY** refused to indict Sen. Charles Robb (D-Va.) in its 18-month probe of the illegal taping of conversations that Gov. Douglas Wilder held over a car phone. Robb announced he will run for reelection in 1994, in a race that may include Wilder and Oliver North.

● **GOV. DOUG WILDER** of Virginia lifted the stay of execution from paraplegic Charles Stamper, in a concession to his political rival, Attorney General Mary Sue Terry. Stamper, who was crippled in a prison stabbing, will be lifted from his wheelchair into the electric chair for his execution, scheduled for Jan. 19.

● **KKK SKINHEADS** harassed LaRouche supporters organizing in Elkton, Maryland recently. They were teenagers who identified themselves as belonging to the Ku Klux Klan, and all sported identical tattoos. Later a caller to the organizers' office said, "Stay out of Elkton; the KKK has been here for 100 years."

● **THE FBI** is having little luck gathering statistics on so-called hate crimes, according to a Jan. 6 article in the *New York Times*, on the FBI's first annual hate crimes report. The reporting procedure was established by a federal law, with backing from the Anti-Defamation League.

● **'IT'S DEJA VU**, all over again." "The question is, how do we prevent this from becoming an obsession of the Carter administration," said columnist Carl Rowan, referring to foreign policy problems facing the administration, on the Jan. 9 broadcast of "Inside Washington." "Clinton, Clinton," interrupted National Public Radio's Nina Totenberg.

● **SOME CLINTON AIDES** are telling him that one "complexity" in an intervention into Bosnia is the fact that "Slobodan Milosevic . . . was resoundingly elected President of Serbia and can no longer be considered a mere communist dictator," a Jan. 10 column in the *Washington Times* by Morton Kondracke said.