

National News

Court denies Billington 'habeas corpus' motion

In a terse, one paragraph, unpublished decision on July 16, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit dismissed Michael Billington's appeal and denied him *habeas corpus* relief. Billington will appeal the corrupt decision within 60 days to the U.S. Supreme Court. He is presently serving a 77-year sentence in Virginia for alleged securities fraud violations. The history of the case makes clear, however, that Billington's only "crime" was his association with Lyndon LaRouche and his effort to seek vindication for LaRouche and his associates through the notoriously barbaric Virginia court system.

Billington, along with LaRouche and five others, was railroaded in the 1988 Alexandria, Virginia Federal court. While Billington was still serving his Federal sentence, Virginia's Attorney General Mary Sue Terry sought to put him in jail for 90 years, on the same charges.

State Judge Clifford Weckstein attempted to have Billington give up his right to a jury trial for a bench trial, which would have guaranteed a guilty verdict and light sentence. When Billington refused the deal, his lawyer, Brian Gettings, insisted that Billington was a deranged LaRouche fanatic, and sought multiple psychiatric exams and, ultimately, Billington's confinement in a state mental hospital. This bizarre proceeding, played out in the media just before jury selection, featured Billington's own attorney claiming that his client was a member of a criminal cult. The court refused Billington's request to change lawyers.

Gettings prevented Billington from testifying in his own defense, continuing to claim that Billington was crazy despite the fact that the psychiatrist found Billington perfectly sane. Judge Weckstein imposed the full jury sentence because Billington insisted on his right to jury trial.

Billington has sought state and Federal relief through *habeas* proceedings. His petition demonstrated massive withholding of exculpatory evidence by prosecutors, in addition to the violation of his right to counsel.

Federal Judge Richard Williams granted

a hearing on Billington's claims concerning his lawyer. During the discovery proceedings before Judge Williams, additional information emerged showing that prosecutors had coerced and manipulated their most significant witness into making charges of fraud. Judge Williams refused to consider this information, and, then, also dismissed Billington's claims against his lawyer, ruling that Billington's "zealous" devotion to LaRouche justified the actions of his attorney at trial. The Fourth Circuit's decision upholds Judge Williams's decision in the case.

Citizens try to repeal electricity dereg

A Massachusetts group called the Campaign for Fair Electric Rates is attempting to place a referendum on the November ballot to repeal the electricity deregulation plan that was passed by the legislature last November, and went into effect this spring. The deregulation, which has been a disaster everywhere it has been put into effect, allows "free competition" in marketing electricity to consumers.

According to Ed Kelly, who is the associate director and general counsel for the Campaign, they have collected more than 44,000 petition signatures for the ballot initiative. Under the current law, Kelly told *EIR*, there is a mandated 10% reduction in electric rates for the next seven years. But, if a customer leaves his utility and contracts with a power marketer, and that marketer can't deliver or goes bankrupt, the customer can only change back to the old utility by forgoing the discount, and being charged whatever the market or spot price is at that time. For low-income people, Kelly says, this could make electricity unaffordable. In addition, under deregulation, where there is no legal requirement to serve all customers, power marketers can triage whomever they consider a credit risk.

Mistakenly, the Campaign is calling the legal allowance, that the utilities can recover 100% of their costs that would become "stranded" at the market price for power, a "bailout." In fact, most of these costs are

investments in nuclear power plants, which costs were vastly inflated by senseless environmentalist delays and the high-interest-rate regime of the 1980s.

Kelly also reported that there is a ballot drive in California to repeal its deregulation law, that has already collected more than 700,000 signatures.

Release of CIA-Contra drug report is delayed

A classified version of the second volume of the CIA's report dealing with allegations of agency involvement with crack cocaine and the Contras has been delivered to Congress, and Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.) is urging that the entire report be released to the public.

According to the *New York Times* and Associated Press, the report states that the CIA had received reports of drug trafficking involving about 50 Contras, and it continued to work with about two dozen of them despite the reports.

The *New York Times* says that many of the allegations in the second volume "track closely with charges that first surfaced in a 1987 Senate investigation." What the *Times* does not say is that the 1987 investigation, conducted by a committee that Kerry chaired, found that officials associated with Oliver North and others in the White House National Security Council Contra program were dealing with known drug traffickers.

Crime alert out for fugitive Bush partner

The Voice of America has issued "International Crime Alerts" for an indicted fugitive from justice, a longtime partner of former President George Bush's son Jeb, who is making a second run as Florida governor. Wanted bulletins for Miguel Recarey have been posted on the Internet by the Voice of America/United States Information Service.

Recarey headed America's largest health maintenance organization, International Medical Centers (IMC), in Miami. Jeb

Bush helped Recarey take a vast illegal fortune from the Department of Health and Human Services. Recarey paid Jeb at least \$75,000 for his intercession with the government. When George Bush was running the illegal Contra resupply operations, Recarey helped launder money to the Contras through Miami.

The IMC building was owned by Jeb Bush's business partner Camilo Padreda, who later pled guilty to fraud against the Department of Housing and Urban Development. When IMC collapsed, with \$300 million missing, Recarey was indicted for fraud, wiretapping, and other crimes. He fled the country, showing up in Venezuela, later in Spain, always to be protected by former President George Bush and his networks. Spain turned down a 1995 extradition request from the Clinton administration.

Egypt asks Wolf for freedom from meddlers

U.S. Rep. Frank Wolf (R-Va.), a leading co-sponsor of the Freedom from Religious Persecution Act, returned from a July "fact-finding" trip to Egypt, ostensibly to investigate the treatment of the Coptic Christians, soundly rebuffed by the victims he sought to defend. Wolf's visit came just as Egypt was repairing a three-year-long estrangement with its southern neighbor, Sudan, one of the original targets for destabilization under Wolf's proposed legislation.

Emerging from a meeting between President Hosni Mubarak and Congressman Wolf, Presidential Adviser Dr. Osama Al-Baz told reporters: "The Congressman came to Egypt to see the conditions of Christians, not to investigate or question anybody. . . . We reject any intervention in this issue either on the part of governments, or parliamentary authorities, or non-governmental organizations (NGOs). We do not have a Christian minority; they are citizens who enjoy equal rights and duties with Muslims." He continued, "Christians in Egypt say that they do not need protection. Pope Shenouda III of Alexandria, representing the highest Coptic authority in Egypt, said that Egyptian Copts

are protected by Egypt's Muslims, government, and leadership."

While Wolf was in Cairo, Foreign Minister Amr Moussa was meeting in Washington with State Department and other officials to outline the countries' future "strategic relation." The contrast left the Egyptian public wondering for whose strategic interest Wolf is working.

U.S. mourns death of astronaut Alan Shepard

Alan Shepard, the first American to go into space, died on July 21, after a long illness. He was 74. On May 5, 1961, Shepard put his faith in the word of Wernher von Braun and his team at the Marshall Space Flight Center, that their Redstone rocket was ready to be "man-rated," and climbed into the Mercury capsule, which he had named "Freedom 7."

The success of Shepard's 15-minute, sub-orbital flight prompted President John F. Kennedy to announce 20 days later that, before the end of the decade, America would put a man on the Moon. While training for the first two-man Gemini mission in early 1964, Shepard was grounded by an inner ear ailment. In 1969, experimental surgery for his ear condition allowed him to be restored to full flight status, and in 1971, Shepard commanded the flight of Apollo 14 to the Moon. At a celebration in Huntsville, Alabama in 1985, to honor the German space pioneers, Shepard boasted that he had flown every rocket the German team had developed, starting with the Redstone, and ending with the Saturn V.

In a statement released on July 22, NASA Administrator Dan Goldin said, "The entire NASA family is deeply saddened by the passing of Alan Shepard. NASA has lost one of its greatest pioneers; America has lost a shining star." The National Space Society, founded by Wernher von Braun in 1974, also issued a statement. The Society's president, Shuttle astronaut Charlie Walker, said that Shepard succeeded in his first mission, "and did it with humor—humor that he later carried to the Moon along with a golf ball and club."

PRESIDENT CLINTON was the target of three Texas men arrested in an alleged assassination plot on July 1. Johnny Wise, Jack Grebe, and Oliver Emigh are being held without bond. A Federal informant in the case reportedly claimed the three suspects were tied to the "Republic of Texas" separatist group.

GOP CONGRESSMAN Dana Rohrabacher (Calif.) is spearheading an effort to raise \$1 million for "humanitarian" aid to the forces of Cambodia's Prince Ranariddh, which the Congressman's top aide, Al Santoli, called "democratic soldiers." In fact, these very forces had merged with the hard-line Khmer Rouge after their aborted coup attempt in July 1997. Santoli is also leading the effort to postpone Cambodia's elections, on behalf of the "democratic soldiers."

PHILADELPHIA'S transit strike was tentatively settled on July 10, pending a final ratification vote on July 24 by the Transport Workers Local 234. The strike lasted 40 days. The three-year contract reportedly calls for 3% annual raises, and will send the crucial issue of hiring of part-time workers with no benefits to an arbitrator.

NEW YORK CITY construction workers are planning more actions, a union leader told *EIR*, after the successful June demonstration of 30,000 hardhats against privatization. The demonstration, which coincided with the New York Building Trades Convention, so angered Gov. George Pataki (R), that he cancelled his engagement to speak at the convention.

PINOCCHIO PAULA JONES had plastic surgery on her nose on July 17, according to the *New York Post*. Informed sources report that the offending proboscis was growing with every passing press conference, and even the prosecutors were beginning to notice.