

Business Briefs

Labor

Increasing Overtime Is Endangering Workers

With the “New Economy” erasing almost every gain that organized labor has won in the past 100 years, states throughout the United States are debating legislation to stem the rising use of mandatory overtime, which is increasingly responsible for death and injury in the workforce. Overtime was an issue in the Verizon strike, and is becoming an issue in the minimum wage debate.

In May, Maine passed a bill capping overtime at 80 hours in any two-week period (i.e., you can’t be forced to work more than 80 hours a week). Firefighters in Connecticut recently unsuccessfully challenged the constitutionality of mandatory overtime, on the grounds that it violated the Thirteenth Amendment ban on slavery.

However, many workers want the overtime, because wage levels, particularly in the service sector, are insufficient to support a family.

In the Congressional debate over raising the minimum wage by \$1 an hour (currently \$5.15), House Speaker Dennis Hastert (R-Ill.) has introduced an amendment seeking to help employers who want to avoid overtime pay costs, by disqualifying technology workers, sales personnel, and others from the protection of the Fair Labor Standards Act, including minimum wage and overtime pay provisions. In fact, the people working the longest hours are just these “New Economy” workers—white-collar workers on salary.

Health

World Flu Epidemic May Be on Its Way

Public health officials are preparing for the possibility of an outbreak of a new strain of influenza, which could develop into “a global pandemic,” the Sept. 18 *Philadelphia Inquirer* reported. The week before, experts, including state epidemiologists, met at the

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta, Georgia, to discuss the problem.

“The appearance of a pandemic is sort of like an earthquake,” said W. Paul Green, from the Influenza Research Center of Baylor University, Texas. “You know the conditions are right for it to happen. You just don’t know when it’s going to happen.”

The *Inquirer* recalls the last three big epidemics, in 1918, 1957, and 1968, in which 620,000, 70,000, and 34,000 Americans died, respectively. The worst one, in 1918, killed 20 million people worldwide. Now, the scenario discussed at the CDC meeting, “is an altogether new strain that human immune systems are unequipped to counter. This happens when a virus from another species, typically a bird, passes to a human, or combines with an existing human flu, in a way that allows the new hybrid disease to spread.”

“Virologists are especially concerned because a dozen flu strains now exist in birds but not in humans,” the daily said. There are no vaccines for these flu strains, and it would take six to eight months to develop vaccines. Robert Webster, chairman of virology and molecular biology at St. Jude Hospital in Memphis, Tennessee, said that two of these strains have come perilously close to “making a pandemic-scale jump in recent years.”

There was a close call in 1997, Webster said, when new strains of flu were found in Hong Kong chickens. Due to Hong Kong’s “exceptional health surveillance system,” this was identified and the chickens slaughtered. Two days later a human flu hit Hong Kong; had the two strains combined, it could have generated a pandemic, he said.

Demographics

World Population Growth Rate Sinking Toward Zero

Although the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) booklet, released on Sept. 21, lies outright about it, the report itself makes clear that the growth rate of the human species has dropped to, at most, 1.1% per year, down from 1.29% per year in 1998.

The rate of annual increase was 1.7% in 1992, 1.9% in 1988, and 2.4% in 1975. In demographic terms, this is an extraordinarily rapid, and increasing pace of decline. If the global physical economic collapse continues with no solution, the human growth rate will clearly fall below zero in the immediate years ahead.

The UNFPA report is issued every two years, and for the first time this year, contains nothing about rapid population growth or its effects; rather, it chooses the subtitle “Men and Women in a Time of Change,” and is essentially a Malthusian global social-work manual. Only in the concluding population-data pages, does the UNFPA print the claim that the current world population growth rate is 1.3% per year. However, a comparison of the population totals with those printed in the same report for 1998, shows a total growth, over 1998-2000, of 2.25%.

This continues a long and dishonorable practice by UNFPA (which sponsored the 1994 neo-Malthusian “Cairo Conference”) of misrepresenting the population data gathered by the UN’s demographic agency, the UN Population Division. And those data themselves have only an indicative accuracy in a period in which some nation-states are collapsing and population figures are being guessed at and massaged. The UN data for September 2000 estimate a current world population of 6.055 billion, and imply a current annual growth of just over 60 million souls. This is the equivalent merely of one England added to the world each year—“this little isle,” and hardly overpopulated with souls.

Economic Policy

Malaysian Press Hits ‘New Colonialism’

The former group editor of Malaysia’s leading press conglomerate, NSTPI, A. Kadir Jasin, blasted the new colonialism, in his Sept. 10 column in the *New Straits Times*.

Jasin wrote: “In the post-Cold War period, more people were impoverished and economies ruined in the name of democracy and free market. Fragile democracies col-

MALAYSIA will surpass Singapore as the leading transshipment port in Southeast Asia, as Maersk Sealand of Denmark, the world's largest container line, shifts its hub from Singapore to Malaysia's port of Tanjung Pelepas in Johor. The port will obtain over 10% of Singapore's container traffic.

A GAZA PORT agreement between Israel and the Palestinian National Authority has been signed, allowing construction to start, the Israeli daily *Ha'aretz* reported on Sept. 22. The port was blocked by the Israeli Defense Ministry until Prime Minister Ehud Barak allowed it to go forward, and it was then stalled over security and environmental issues.

A RAIL LINE linking Kazakhstan with Turkey via Uzbekistan and Iran (Almaty-Tashkent-Tehran-Istanbul) will open on Jan. 1, 2001, Ablay Myrzakhmetov, the head of Kazakhstan Railways, said on Sept. 22.

KAZAKSTAN Prime Minister Kasymzhomart Tokayev called the water problem in southern Kazakhstan an "unbearable phenomenon," at a Cabinet meeting on Sept. 19. One proposal is to build the Koksaray reservoir on the right bank of Syrdarya River, which would cost \$160 million.

THAI RESEARCHERS have developed a rice strain with 12 times more protein. Most rice contains 1% protein. The new strain was developed from a Chinese rice, from which a mutant strain proved to have 12% protein, but it was not appetizing. The Thais cross-pollinated this strain with their Thai fragrant rice, with the result being tasty and high-yielding.

PAKISTAN'S Chief Executive, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, said that the government plans to build a network of roads linking Chitral, Hunza, Skardu, Chilas and other parts of its Northern Areas, to boost trade with China and the Central Asian states. He was speaking on Sept. 18 to an International Silk Route festival in Gilgit.

lapsed as quickly as they were established, resulting in anarchy and chaos. In some former Soviet bloc countries, the new mafias and gangsters took over the economy while the poor became poorer. Elsewhere, people took to the streets daily to demand the blood of their former leaders, while the democratically elected leaders fumbled. For promoting violence, they were called 'brave people' by the likes of U.S. Presidential candidate Al Gore. And he looks set to become the next U.S. President. . . . The success stories of nations like Malaysia are largely ignored because the way these nations manage their politics and economy do not coincide with the predatory instinct of the developed West where the winners take all. Even as we speak, the Philippines is being forced to spend its meager foreign reserves to defend the tumbling peso."

New Zealand

Financial Times Finally Admits, EIR Was Right

The London *Financial Times* ran a story ridiculing the "New Zealand model" as a colossal failure, on Sept. 4. In "Al Gore's New Zealand Model: 'Reinventing' Corruption, Genocide," in *EIR*'s Jan. 15, 1999 issue, the Mont Pelerin Society's policies in New Zealand were exposed as boosting poverty, unemployment, and teen suicide rates, while the oligarchy-controlled media were promoting this model worldwide.

"If ever a country has been run by economists, it is New Zealand," says *Financial Times* writer John Kay. "According to current orthodoxy, New Zealand has done everything right. . . . What was one of the world's most comprehensive welfare states has been dismantled."

The result? "The standard of living has fallen from 1.25 times the average in high-income countries in 1965 to 0.62 last year." Nonetheless, he continues, "the program is still widely admired outside New Zealand," referencing a 1999 CIA study boldly lying that the reforms boosted growth and improved income levels, then publishing statistics which exposed their own lies. Through-

out the globe, the International Monetary Fund and World Bank push the "New Zealand model."

"You might equally congratulate a man jumping off a cliff for his firmness of purpose," writes Kay.

Economic Crisis

Hyperinflation Has Moved into Commodities

In an article dedicated to explain the story behind "core inflation," Italian journalist Maurizio Blondet uses material published in *EIR* to warn that the rising oil prices are indicative of real inflation, as opposed to the official, doctored figures. The article appeared in the Italian daily *Avvenire* on Sept. 9.

"Core inflation is the barometer that indicates only nice weather," Blondet said. "Core inflation (that is, excluding oil and food) is stable. . . . Thus, the Federal Reserve can repeat that 'core inflation is under control,' and avoid raising interest rates. Should it raise rates, the stock market would collapse. End of the American miracle, stocks in limitless, triumphant rise, the inflow of foreign capital to make profits in the Grand Casino. The Federal Reserve has fed this miraculous financial growth, injecting enormous liquidity into the system, that is, billions of dollars to speculators, so that they could go on betting even when they were bankrupt (as in the case of LTCM [Long Term Capital Management hedge fund])."

"The result: asset price inflation. Inflation is confined to the stock market, as long as the game goes on. The U.S. stock market today 'is worth' (on paper) \$17 trillion, three times the European GNP. An astronomical, unreal figure. If asset prices fall, it is probable that such a surplus liquidity would run to buy raw materials, igniting hyperinflation. Maybe it is already on. Oil price rises of 400% in a few months are already inflationary (pardon, you cannot say that)."

However, the Federal Reserve likes the oil price increase, because "it supports the value of a currency [the dollar] which, logically, should fall, because the U.S.A. is the most indebted country abroad."