

# Business Briefs

## Space

### Fletcher noncommittal on NASA'S future

NASA administrator Dr. James Fletcher punted at his press conference in Washington Jan. 11 when asked by *EIR*'s Nick Benton to comment on the implications of administration support for a privately funded space station, and of Soviet efforts to beat the United States to Mars.

On the former, a joint venture between Westinghouse, Boeing, and some former NASA employees, Fletcher said only that he was worried about the demand by the private group that 75% of its space station be leased by the U.S. government over an extended period. "That might commit us for too long a period into the future," he commented.

As to the Soviet Mars project, his response was, "They are trying to accomplish what we did in 1976, which is to land on Mars. We have chosen a different objective since doing that, which is to explore planets farther out in the solar system with our Magellan, Galileo, and Ulysses probes."

## Environmentalism

### New Jersey may ban irradiated foods

New Jersey will ban irradiated foods, if the governor signs a bill approved by an overwhelming majority of both houses of the state legislature in early January. Maine and Vermont have already enacted such bans.

Gov. Thomas Kean said he would not sign the bill before asking the state health department for a recommendation.

Irradiation, only recently approved for certain foods by the Food and Drug Administration, destroys bacteria in treated foods, vastly increasing their shelf-life, with no deleterious effects on taste or nutritional value. It is deemed an especially important technology for transport-poor Third World countries. Nevertheless, kook environmen-

talists and malthusian genocide advocates have opposed the technology, exploiting fears of "radiation."

Among those telling Governor Kean not to sign the New Jersey bill is B.P. Sonnenblick, one of the nation's top experts on the biological effects of low doses of radiation and the author of New Jersey's radiation protection law. He scoffs at the contention of what he calls the "crackpots" from the anti-nuclear and environmentalist groups, that USDA approval of food irradiation was "hurried."

Sonnenblick informed the governor that 30 years of testing on animals found no ill effects. He characterizes the environmentalist groups as "Luddites, similar to the anti-science mob which burned the house of physicist Priestley."

## Financial Policy

### Will Europe, Japan force changes on U.S.?

Tensions over financial policy between the United States, on the one side, and Europe and Japan on the other, could lead Europe and Japan to use threats not to purchase U.S. Treasury Bills as a lever to force American financial reform, an aide to the former Chancellor of West Germany, Helmut Schmidt, told a caller Jan. 11.

"The question will be, one: How could the international community *oblige* the U.S. to behave more reasonably . . . cutting the budget deficit, cutting the current account deficit, stopping the import of foreign capital, and increasing taxes."

One way, he suggested, would be to impose European Community regulatory measures forbidding the export of capital to the United States.

Western financial markets' enthusiasm over the Soviets' flotation of a bond issue on Swiss markets in early January, he said, could be interpreted as a sign that certain financial groups in Europe were "getting nervous" over their participation in the U.S. Treasury market, and were showing they could "recycle money somewhere else."

This whole topic, he said, would be discussed in Moscow in May at a meeting of the Inter-Action Council, an elite group founded by Schmidt, essentially to find ways to smoothly adapt the Western democracies to life in a Soviet-dominated world.

## AIDS

### Infant infections high in New York

One baby in every 61 in New York City is infected with the AIDS virus, according to the results of testing just concluded by New York State health officials.

In a statewide program, the blood of every infant born during a month-long period, beginning in late November, was tested for AIDS antibodies. The blood tests were performed on 19,157 infants. Of 9,047 born in New York City, 148 carried antibodies to the AIDS virus—a sign that their mothers were also infected.

Results throughout the state varied from 1 in 43 babies infected in the Bronx to 1 in 749 infected in Upstate New York.

In a related study, city health officials said that tests on anonymous blood samples from nearly 4,000 pregnant women who had their babies or aborted showed about the same proportion of women infected as babies who tested positive for the antibodies.

State Health Commissioner Dr. David Axelrod called the results of the baby study "alarming," and wrote physicians in the state that "the implications of these findings warrant immediate attention."

## Infrastructure

### Security Pacific writes off Third World loans

Security Pacific Bank has become the first of the top 10 U.S. banks to officially set its Third World loan loss reserves at over 50%, which amounts to a technical admission that