

# New governors launch Schachtian austerity

by H. Graham Lowry

A year ago, Massachusetts and California were generally perceived to be as far apart economically as they are geographically—especially in their abilities to generate the revenues needed for the public services and functions of the state. In the New Year, both states are looking at record rates of financial collapse, under new governors proposing nothing more than savage austerity. Hjalmar Schacht, Adolf Hitler's minister of economics, must be smiling somewhere.

In Massachusetts, Gov. William Weld must have even caught Goebbels's attention, by invoking John Winthrop, John Adams, and John Kennedy in his Jan. 3 inaugural address, and calling his plan to wipe out up to \$2 billion in vital services over the next 18 months an "entrepreneurial government" that "understands that sometimes the most helpful thing you can do is get out of the way." Weld intends to see that you do, and stop asking "how many teachers we employ or how many streetcleaners we send out."

## California: spiritual renewal in poverty

California's Gov. Pete Wilson was a little folksier at his inaugural Jan. 7, featuring the Kingston Trio singing "It Takes a Worried Man," and an appearance by the San Diego Chicken, who will soon be counting his feathers. The state now projects a deficit for the coming fiscal year of up to \$10 billion, *10 times* the current year's shortfall! Citing "unprecedented fiscal constraint," Wilson asked, "How can new programs be undertaken when existing programs seem inescapably threatened by the budget crisis?" The answer, he said, is "new preventive programs at the expense of established remedial programs. . . . That is *exactly* what we must propose." California, Wilson said, will "shift from the remedial to the preventive, from income maintenance to enrichment of individual potential, so that we may set the human spirit soaring."

With nothing soaring but the deficit, the Wilson administration is already planning at least \$708 million in further cuts for the current fiscal year, on top of the \$2.7 billion slashed last July and a \$900 million tax hike. Another \$200 million in "fees" will be squeezed from the already cash-strapped cities. The public education system, from the kindergarten to college levels, will be gutted by \$500 million to \$1 billion during the remainder of this school year alone—if Wilson gets his way in demanding the repeal of Proposition

98, which guarantees the school system 40% of the state's general funds.

## The Massachusetts debacle

Upon the ashes of the "Massachusetts Miracle" of the now-departed Gov. Michael Dukakis, William Weld has established an apparatus for police-state austerity. The collapse of the state's "post-industrial society" wiped out \$1.23 billion of anticipated revenues from July through October of last year. Massive cuts left a remaining deficit estimated by Dukakis at around \$125 million through this June, but Weld's first cabinet meeting Jan. 7 revised that figure to \$850 million, on top of a projected shortfall of up to \$1.6 billion for the 1991-92 fiscal year.

Said Weld, who trampled on the Constitution as former head of the Criminal Division of the Justice Department, such huge additional cuts "would be very painful." But, he added, "there is a sense that if we don't do these things now, things could go even rougher for the human service community in the future." A cartoon in the *Boston Globe* on Jan. 3, done as a mock movie poster, portrayed Weld in a trenchcoat holding a smoking machine gun, with a maniacal expression on his face, under the headline "Starring Bill Weld as 'The Terminator.'"

In his inaugural, the heir to one of New England's oldest dope-trafficking fortunes called Massachusetts "a fiscal Beirut," with "its spirits lower than its bond rating." He also called for preventing social problems rather than waiting to seek cures. "Providing day care or home care for the elderly is less intrusive and less expensive than early institutionalization. The same principle applies, of course, to prenatal and perinatal care," he said. Weld told his cabinet members to be ready for "crisis management" and have "painful" budget-cutting targets ready within a week. He also announced a new "downsizing committee"—certainly a euphemism worthy of Goebbels—to ensure that the bloodletting objectives are reached, and named notorious union-buster Stephen Tocco to head it.

Tocco, the former executive vice president of the Associated Builders and Contractors, a non-union construction group, led an unsuccessful campaign in 1988 to repeal the state's longstanding prevailing wage law. In a letter to Weld, Leo Purcell, president of the Massachusetts Building Trades Council, denounced the appointment as "a slap in the face" to labor. "If there is one person in the state of Massachusetts who has come to represent everything that working people have fought against, it is him," Purcell added.

Just in case any opposition proves troublesome, Weld has also named his top enforcer to the "downsizing committee," his chief of staff Mark Robinson, who played the same role under Weld in the Justice Department's Criminal Division. Secretary of Administration and Finance Peter Nessen, a holdover from the Dukakis regime, was also assigned to this familiar role.