

# Business Briefs

## Health Care

### National nursing shortage continues

Despite a nationwide nursing shortage, the depression has made it difficult for nursing schools to increase their enrollment, reported the March 22 *Richmond Times-Dispatch*.

Nationwide, hospitals reported a 9% "vacancy rate" among their nursing staff last year, and although the American Nurses Association has committed itself to increasing the number of nurses available, nursing schools say that they are unable to expand their enrollment, largely due to economic conditions. Most nursing schools do not have the funds to hire more staff, which means that thousands of applicants have had to be turned away.

Salary levels for teachers of nursing are also low. "We're going to have to lobby with state governments to make sure there's money for nursing education," said Dr. Lucille Joel, president of the American Nurses Association.

## Development

### 'Post-industrial society? No thanks'

The above is the headline of an article in the most recent issue of the Catholic magazine *Studi Cattolici*, published in Milan, Italy. The article blasts the "ecological" ideas spread by the Trilateral Commission, the Club of Rome, the Carter administration, and those contained in the Clean Air Act pushed by President Bush.

"The basic problem is this: Is economics a field where few people exert power over the rest of society, or is it the necessary instrument for the survival of the human species? If the first alternative is true, then the Anglo-American policy of the past 20 years is correct. But let us see how it works: When the productive capacities sink under a paper circulation in the form of a debt of unprecedented dimensions . . . the military machine is set into motion to control directly what is still today the most

precious raw material, oil, and possibly to use this control in order to get profits with which to attempt to pay off the enormous debt. It is anyway . . . an imperialistic policy.

"If the second alternative is true, then the 'free market' must be regulated so as to allow and favor the development and implementation of technology, so as to overcome the 'ecological' or 'financial' crisis through development. . . . If development has to continue, there must be a continued increase in the productivity of the system, and this increase must not be a consequence of an increase in the exploitation of a given technology, but a consequence of going over to higher technologies. This implies that the cultural standard of society must improve, as its internal harmony must increase."

## Living Standards

### Half of urbanites below poverty level

Nearly half the U.S. urban population lives below the poverty level, according to a National League of Cities report released in mid-March. The report documents the abysmal standard of living in America's central cities. By 1989, over 43% of the urban population was living below the poverty level. Three-fourths of the nation lives in metropolitan areas of at least 100,000 people.

Per capita income had already fallen below \$10,000 by 1987 in the cities of Newark, El Paso, Cleveland, Baltimore, Detroit, Buffalo, St. Louis, Dayton, Birmingham, Miami, New Orleans, Louisville, and San Bernardino—and was just barely above that level in Chicago, Philadelphia, Milwaukee, Memphis, Toledo, Tucson, Fresno, Columbus, Norfolk, and Pittsburgh. Newark's figure was only \$7,622.

Among the cities surveyed, official unemployment rates in 1988 had already topped 12% in Baltimore, Chicago, St. Louis, and San Antonio, while Detroit's was over 17%. Actual unemployment levels were far higher, and have risen even more

under the Bush administration. The U.S. Conference of Mayors has also reported that requests for emergency food assistance increased by an average of 22% during 1990, according to a survey of 30 major cities, and 75% of those seeking assistance were members of families.

According to a study by the Food Research and Action Center, a non-profit anti-hunger group, at least one out of every eight children in the U.S. under the age of 12 is going hungry. This amounts to 5.5 million children, and is probably a very conservative figure, since the Census Bureau itself classifies 9.4 million children as "poor." The typical hungry family experienced "food shortages"—that is, they missed meals—on average seven days a month, or about 25% of the time.

## Germany

### Industrialist endorses maglev train project

The chairman of the biggest rail firm in eastern Germany has endorsed the Berlin-Frankfurt magnetic levitation (maglev) train project proposed by the state government of Thuringia. Günter Gross of Deutsche Waggonbau AG, a group of five firms that specialize in the production of locomotives and other rolling stock, said at the Leipzig Industrial Fair on March 19 that such a modern railway technology project would have an important function for the entire transportation sector in eastern Germany.

German Transportation Minister Günter Krause also signaled interest in a maglev project in a statement on infrastructure projects in eastern Germany.

Meanwhile, a group of "alternative economists" urged a DM 550 billion state investment program for eastern Germany in a memorandum presented to the press in Bonn on March 29.

The group of predominantly left-wing Social Democratic economists from all over Germany welcomed the most recent adjustments in the government's strategy for the economic reconstruction of eastern Germany, but rec-

commended a much stronger emphasis on state-funded job creation.

Road and railway projects, construction of new homes, restoration of run-down social housing projects, telecommunications, and soil conservation programs were proposed by the group, which called for a period of five years of concentrated investments.

## Technology

### Government blamed for lack of progress

A revival of manufacturing is essential for science and technology, scientists argue, according to columnist Leonard Silk in the March 22 *New York Times*. Some scientists attending a conference sponsored by the Carnegie Institute recognize that current U.S. economic policy is largely to blame for the fact that the nation is falling behind in industrial development.

Despite progress in many scientific areas, Silk reports, at the conference James S. Langer of the University of California stated, "The cost of introducing new technologies in this country is enormous; capital is expensive; licensing can be risky and time-consuming, and if the product is really novel, the materials manufacturer is exposed to a variety of legal hazards."

Silk recaps the initiative made by President Roosevelt in 1944, instructing Vanevar Bush, in whose honor the Carnegie conference was held, to determine how contributions to science and technology could be fostered, to stimulate the economy.

## Health

### Vaccinations drop, disease on the increase

Vaccinations of infants and children in the United States has fallen so much that measles outbreaks are becoming commonplace, and other diseases like rubella and whooping

cough (pertussis) are resurfacing, reports the March 24 *Washington Post*. Although exact statistics for the U.S. are not available, because the Reagan administration abolished the monitoring of preschool immunization rates, data assembled by the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta, Georgia and other sources rank the U.S. immunization rate as the worst of any nation in the Western Hemisphere except Bolivia and Haiti.

According to the CDC, only 70% of one-year-olds are immunized, while only about half of two-year-olds in U.S. inner-cities are vaccinated. Last year, 47% of measles cases occurred in children under five. As of the report, there were 19 measles outbreaks in progress in the U.S.

The Bush administration's plan for dealing with the lack of immunization "would be to withhold federal food, medical, and welfare benefits" for people "until immunization requirements were met"! But nowhere addressed is the problem of the enormous number of clinics shut down in urban areas, nor that the cost of vaccinating a child in a public clinic has gone from \$6.69 in 1982, to \$91.20 today, a thirteenfold increase, nor that often what few clinics do exist require physical exams and impose other requirements that poor families just can't afford.

## Education

### Thousands of teachers being laid off

Thousands of U.S. teachers are receiving lay-off notices this spring, as state budgets slash funds for education, AP reported March 28. "From the numbers we've been seeing, conservatively, we're looking at 13 or 14 states where we expect to see teacher reductions of up to 5%," said Jewell Gould, director of research for the American Federation of Teachers.

In California, about 10,000 teachers received RIFs—reduction in force notices. In New York State, 8,000 will be laid off unless a change is made in the budget by April 1. Last year in Massachusetts, 2,000 lost their jobs; this year is expected to be much worse.

● **AIDS ORPHANS** under the age of 12 in Uganda number some 85,000, according to the government. Other sources, however, say that 1 to 1.5 million children are without parents because of AIDS.

● **CRUDE STEEL** world output fell by 3.1% in February compared to one year ago, the International Iron and Steel Institute reported March 22. U.S. steel production fell 19.2% in February. In Germany, it was up by 1.7%, while Japanese output was up almost 7% over a year earlier.

● **CONTINENTAL** Airlines holdings posted a stunning fourth quarter loss of \$2.25 billion, the largest quarterly loss in air transportation history. Most of the loss resulted from accounting entries reflecting the final demise of Eastern Airlines. However, the loss was far greater than analysts had expected, and was even more than the \$2 billion all airlines lost during all of 1990.

● **BRONFMAN** family corporate fronts may be downgraded by the major credit rating agency in Canada, the March 22 *Wall Street Journal* reported. Dominion Bond Rating Service issued a rating alert on Brascan Ltd., Hees International Bancorp Inc., and Great Lakes Group Inc.—all major holding companies for the Bronfman family. Dominion also placed on its alert list the largest natural resources company in Canada, Noranda Inc., which is owned by Brascan and Great Lakes Group.

● **TUBERCULOSIS** cases undiagnosed in Texas jails are contributing to significant increases of TB in the state, say experts. The number of active TB cases in Texas increased 17% between 1989 and 1990. John Bybee, head of the tuberculosis division of the Texas Department of Health, told the *Houston Chronicle* he expects to see a similar increase this year.