

# National News

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## AFL-CIO head: End GOP's reign in Congress

AFL-CIO President John Sweeney, calling Republican Presidential nominee Bob Dole the "Darth Vader of American politics," urged delegates to the Machinists convention in Chicago Sept. 24 to get out and work to reelect President Clinton, and return a Democratic majority to Congress.

"Two years ago we lost 29 Congressional districts to 'Newtie and the Blowhards' by less than 5,000 votes," Sweeney told members of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers, referring to House Speaker Newt Gingrich and the freshmen Republicans in Congress as a "gangsta rap group." Sweeney noted that in those districts where Republicans won, "we had two to three times that many union members who didn't even vote," Sweeney said.

The AFL-CIO hopes to put at least "100 activists" in each Congressional district, Sweeney said, and is counting on 30 hours of electioneering work from every one of them before Election Day, Nov. 5. "You have to work together with other members in your lodge and with the people in your community like serious voters, and get involved in this dirty business called politics," he said. His message to Dole was, "You've been an anti-worker, anti-union politician for 40 years, and we're not going to forget."

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## Welfare law destroying decent-paying jobs

Under the new federal welfare law, New York Republican Mayor Rudolf Giuliani is expanding the number of city welfare recipients thrust into slave-labor workfare, by 4,000 to 5,000 persons every month. Despite opposition from the city's municipal workers, Giuliani has rejected a union demand, that the number of welfare recipients herded into the city workforce, be frozen at the current level of 35,000.

As expected, union jobs are already be-

ing eliminated as a result. Recently, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority announced a concession by the Transport Workers Union, permitting the use of thousands of welfare recipients to clean subways and buses, while eliminating 500 unionized cleaning jobs through attrition. Under the arrangement, welfare recipients will perform such tasks as cleaning and clerical work in order to receive their welfare checks, at less than half the pay of union members.

Workfare recipients work a maximum of 26 hours per week, in a formula tying their welfare benefits to the equivalent of minimum wage. The Welfare "Reform" Law stipulates that 2.2 million welfare recipients be placed in workfare jobs nationwide by the year 2002, including up to 200,000 in New York State.

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## Over 150 saw missile before TWA explosion

Citing high-level federal officials, the *New York Post* reported Sept. 22 that the FBI has interviewed 154 credible witnesses, who described seeing a missile in the sky just before TWA Flight 800 exploded on July 18. The witnesses include scientists, schoolteachers, Army personnel, and business executives. "Some of these people are extremely, extremely credible," a "top federal official" said.

The FBI also sat many of the witnesses down with U.S. military experts, who debriefed them and independently confirmed for the FBI that their descriptions matched surface-to-air missile attacks. "There is no event on land or in the sky that can explain away what these people saw," said the federal official. According to the *Post*, law enforcement sources say that the hardest evidence so far, overwhelmingly suggests that a surface-to-air missile was fired from a boat off Long Island.

The *Washington Post* claimed Sept. 23 that investigators are looking at the possibility that a missile could have passed through the belly of the plane without itself exploding—but touched the center fuel tank, setting off the explosion that destroyed the aircraft.

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## British lord confirms Bundy was 'our boy'

Lord William Rees-Mogg, notorious for his hatred of President Clinton and of the United States, has engaged in maudlin mourning over the recent death of McGeorge Bundy, a lifelong tool of British interests. In a gushing eulogy in the Sept. 20 issue of *Strategic Weekly Briefings*, Lord Rees-Mogg, a spokesman for the British oligarchy, praised Bundy as "probably the ablest of all the young men in the Kennedy White House.

"He was also the last of the true Brahmins, the last person of a certain American background to exercise great power in American affairs. When he left his post as special assistant to the President for national security affairs [i.e., national security adviser] in December 1965, it marked nearly the end of a particular tradition in American public life."

Writing of Bundy in typical oligarchical fashion, Lord Rees-Mogg reverentially notes, "McGeorge Bundy was a Lowell on his mother's side. He was the best, he was the brightest; he was the right stuff; he was the real thing. He had those qualities that mock the fates, and in the end the fates mocked him back."

From David Halberstam's 1969 book *The Best and the Brightest*, Rees-Mogg quotes his description of Bundy as "above all a man of the Establishment, the right people deciding the right policies in the right way. He believed in the capacity and the right of the elite to govern on its terms."

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## Five million ex-felons still disenfranchised

An estimated 5 million Americans in 13 states have been permanently deprived of their right to vote, by laws which disenfranchise convicted felons even after they have served their time in prison. A disproportionate percentage of them are African-Americans.

A front-page story in the Sept. 19 Richmond, Virginia *Times-Dispatch* described the ugly features of this obscene practice in

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Virginia, where the law was enacted to curb the vote of blacks and poor whites. Today, it affects 241,420 felons, including an estimated 144,000 black men (African-Americans make up 60% of the Virginia prison population, but only 19% of the general population). A felon can only regain his right to vote through a costly and elaborate procedure, five years after he is free. Only about 75 felons have their right to vote restored each year.

The 13 states which deprive felons of the right to vote are Maryland, Kentucky, Nevada, Virginia, Mississippi, Alabama, Arizona, Iowa, Washington, Wyoming, Colorado, and Delaware. One national study, conducted in 1991 and published in the November 1993 *Yale Law Review*, estimated that at least 4.1 million felons have lost the right to vote, either permanently or temporarily. Given the huge increase in the prison population since 1991, the figure is probably closer to 5 million today.

### State highway officials sound \$350 billion alarm

The task of maintaining or improving existing U.S. highways and bridges will cost \$357.5 billion over a five-year period beginning in 1998, according to a recent official study. The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) issued that estimate in a report released Sept. 17, *The Bottom Line: Transportation Investment Needs 1998-2002*.

Increased spending by state and local governments from 1983 to 1993 has "stabilized" the deterioration of U.S. highways and bridges, but AASHTO warns that "a bigger highway investment challenge is on the horizon." Some 100,000 miles of highway must be refurbished each year to maintain their current physical condition. In addition, 125,000 bridges constructed in the 1960s and 1970s are nearing the end of their useful lives, and must be repaired or replaced.

The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) has calculated that each dollar of highway investment yields \$2.60 in benefits—such as time savings from reduced congestion, reduced operating costs, fewer

injuries and fatalities, and less pollution. Excluding the benefit of personal time savings, DOT estimated that \$1 of highway investment still yields \$2.20 in benefits.

State transportation officials report that the condition of mass transit systems has continued to worsen, despite massively increased funding by the states. In the past decade, 3,000 additional buses and rail vehicles have passed their useful life, but remain in service. To maintain 1993 physical conditions, 13,800 buses and 505 rail cars need to be replaced each year, at an estimated cost of \$2.7 billion.

Another \$2 billion a year is needed to improve and repair mass transit infrastructure. To improve performance, and increase the density of service in under-served areas, will require another \$3-4.5 billion a year, AASHTO estimates. The total bill comes to about half the current annual spending on mass transit, by individual users and all levels of government combined.

### Morris kept open line to GOP Senator Lott

The *New York Post* claimed Sept. 19 that Dick Morris, the Roy Cohn mole in the Clinton camp, maintained regular telephone contact with Mississippi Republican Sen. Trent Lott throughout 1996, until the political transvestite was purged by the Clinton camp. Morris reportedly continued these chats from his den of iniquity, long after being reprimanded by the White House in February, for leaking information to the Republicans.

According to "a source familiar with Morris's hotel records," says the *Post*, Morris called Trent Lott at least 27 times in 1996 through Aug. 1. During that same period, Morris allegedly called Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle (D-S.D.) only once.

Following Bob Dole's announcement May 15 that he would resign from the Senate, the radical conservative Lott took Dole's place as Majority Leader in June. Only nine of the reported calls were made after Lott replaced Dole. Lott's aide Susan Irby, in reply to the *Post's* story, said that Lott and Morris "pitched back and forth" proposals on budget matters.

**DELINQUENT** credit card accounts are at an all-time high, the American Bankers Association reported Sept. 17. Credit card users owed a total of \$454 billion as of June 30, up \$72 billion from the same date in 1995. The current amount owed represents 39% of all outstanding consumer indebtedness. Personal and company bankruptcy filings have also reached record levels.

**VIRGINIA** Gov. George Allen, the overseer of one of the nation's worst prison systems, bragged Sept. 13 that Virginia inmates have worked without pay for almost 200,000 hours this year, for "localities and state agencies on public works projects that otherwise might not have been completed." Their slave-labor tasks included refurbishing public schools during the summer, which Allen called "a cost-effective way for schools to maintain their facilities."

**ARIZONA'S** Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio, hailed by Bob Dole during a Sept. 16 visit to his desert "tent prison" for being tough on crime, fielded the first female chain gang in America Sept. 19. Fifteen women in chains went "voluntarily" into the desert heat, Arpaio claimed, hoping to be freed from permanent lockdown by "earning their way back" into his tents.

**PRIVATE SECURITY** spending in the United States is almost twice the amount of public expenditures on police. A 1990 study by a research arm of the U.S. Department of Justice put annual public outlays on police forces at \$30 billion, against \$52 billion spent on private security measures. The study projected that by 2000, public spending for police will increase to \$44 billion, while private security costs will hit \$104 billion.

**RICHARD ARMEY** (R-Tex.), the House Majority Leader, has declared that the Fraternal Order of Police is a "union mob dressed up like policemen." The Armeant is enraged by the police association's endorsement of President Bill Clinton.