

National News

Court upholds censure of Abrams in Contra affair

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia ruled Feb. 5 that George Bush's pardon did not protect former State Department official Elliott Abrams from being censured by the D.C. Bar Association. Abrams pleaded guilty in 1991 to withholding information from Congress in its Iran-Contra probe, and President Bush pardoned Abrams and others in his "parallel, secret government," just before leaving the White House.

The D.C. Bar Association subsequently suspended Abrams from practicing law for one year. A judiciary panel overturned the action, but the Court of Appeals determined to uphold the disciplinary power of the bar, and settled on censuring Abrams as a penalty.

Senators hear case for technological innovation

A bipartisan Senate caucus met Feb. 11 with representatives from the national laboratories, industry, academia, and the Clinton administration, to consider the impact of projected federal cuts in R&D spending over the next five years. The roundtable discussion was the first public event held by the Senate Science and Technology Caucus, led by Sen. Bill Frist (R-Tenn.), Senate Budget Committee Chairman Pete Domenici (R-N.M.), and Democrats Joseph Lieberman (Conn.) and Jay Rockefeller (W.Va.).

Dr. Mary Good, Undersecretary of Technology in the Department of Commerce, warned that, with an "innovation system unparalleled in the world, global science and technology leadership is ours to lose." Good pointed out that the figure of \$78 billion is commonly cited for federal R&D spending, but that only \$20.2 billion is allocated for non-defense R&D, outside of medical research. That small amount of funds has to be divided among all the other federal R&D programs—including space, energy, basic science, and Earth sciences.

Dr. Alvin Trivelpiece, former head of the Department of Energy's magnetic fusion program, and now director of the Oak Ridge National Laboratory, pointed out that "over one-third of our Gross Domestic Product comes from goods and services that are based on nothing more than our knowledge of the fundamental properties of atoms and their major subatomic parts—electrons, protons, and neutrons." Oak Ridge has been a leader in the development of civilian nuclear technology.

Trivelpiece summarized the argument of Nobel economist Robert Solow, that "technological advances spur greater per-capita production." The reason that the government does not prioritize the budget on that basis is, Trivelpiece asserted, a political problem. He pointed to "inspiration" as a major responsibility of government-funded science programs.

Sweeney rejects Social Security privatization

Speaking to San Francisco's Commonwealth Club Feb. 7, AFL-CIO President John Sweeney blasted the proposal by the majority of the Social Security Advisory Council, to privatize the fund by turning it over to the financial markets. He warned that after privatization, the vast majority of retired people, who don't have "good investment counselors," will end up in "the county poorhouses, which, of course, we closed down shortly after we passed Social Security 60 years ago."

Under the advisory council's plan, Sweeney said, in the first 12 years alone, \$240 billion would be paid to stockbrokers in fees and commissions, on more than \$4 trillion put into the market, while payroll taxes would be raised 26% and benefits cut 30%.

He then savaged the much-touted "Chilean model," put forth by the Heritage Foundation and others:

"It works, doesn't it? Sure it does: the workers pay 20% for old age, disability and survivors insurance and health care, while employers pay nothing. The for-profit businesses which run the program get a 3% administrative fee, their investors earn a 22%

annual profit, and 70% of the workers have less than \$2,500 in their retirement accounts."

Jewish scholar says ADL should no longer exist

Morton E. Teicher, the founding dean of the Wurzweiler School of Social Work of Yeshiva University in Miami, Florida, has issued a scathing attack on the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) of B'nai B'rith. In a recent letter to the *Jewish Journal* of Florida, Teicher declares, "This arrogant organization has outlived its usefulness.

"Thriving on sensationalism," Teicher writes, "the ADL insolently goes its own way, blatantly seeking publicity in order to raise money. . . . The ADL stridently insists that anti-Semitism is flourishing in America so that it can continue to milk dollars from fearful Jews. A former leader of the organization insults our intelligence by asserting that American Jews are at 'Square One' in combatting anti-Semitism, as though no progress were made in the last 40 years.

"ADL brazenly justifies its questionable existence by blowing up minor anti-Semitic incidents. The hollow siren sounded by ADL alerts us to a non-existent American Nazi threat. The National Jewish Community Relations Council, the America Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress and local community relations councils amply fulfill a responsible watchdog function. We don't need a shrill, publicity-seeking irresponsible ADL. . . . We need to put the ADL out of business!"

Power companies grab for 'free market' profit

A near orgy of utility mergers is under way, as major companies position themselves to soak up some of the \$200 billion-a-year "income stream" of electricity service billings—hoping to dominate the new "free market" anticipated under deregulation. Nine mergers await approval by the Federal Regulatory Commission.

Enron Inc., based in Houston, with inter-

DEATH SENTENCES have been overturned for 68 U.S. prisoners during the past 25 years, due to serious doubts about their guilt, according to a study by Michael Radelet, sociology chairman at the University of Florida. He said his finding adds to the American Bar Association's recommendation to halt executions, until reforms in the judicial process can be made.

JEAN KENNEDY SMITH, U.S. Ambassador to Ireland, has President Clinton's "unequivocal" support, State Department spokesman Nick Burns declared Feb. 11. Burns denied she would be recalled because of "dissatisfaction with how the peace process has gone. I say that specifically because that was the charge made in a major [British] newspaper. That newspaper is wrong, dead wrong on the facts."

LETHAL DOSES of narcotics have been prescribed by more than half of the San Francisco Bay area's leading AIDS physicians, the *New England Journal of Medicine* claims. Of 118 doctors, anonymously responding to a poll of 228 AIDS specialists in the Community Consortium, 53% reported prescribing a lethal dose of opiates at least once.

JACK KEMP, on NBC-TV's "Meet the Press" Feb. 9, said his appetite is "whetting" to run again for President. He called for a "Hong-kong-like tax code for the District of Columbia," and hailed Newt Gingrich for pushing "fast-track authority for the President to include Central and Latin America in the NAFTA hemispheric free trade zone."

SECURITIES TRANSFER-TAX legislation has been filed in the New Hampshire legislature. Modeled on the Pennsylvania initiative of Rep. Harold James, the New Hampshire measure was introduced at a House Finance Committee hearing Feb. 10 by Rep. Roland Hemon (D-Dover), who also called Schiller Institute spokesman Phil Valenti as an expert witness.

ests tied to ex-President Sir George Bush, is on a national acquisition drive. A merger of Enron Inc. and Portland General (a \$3.2 billion deal) is under consideration in Oregon. Enron is also courting residents of Peterborough, New Hampshire, a town of 5,300, because the village is a pilot project for opening the state's electricity market to "free competition" by 1998. Enron threw a picnic, sent in 30 salespeople, offered a 15% electric rate reduction, and signed up 700 customers designating Enron as "marketer of choice."

The Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, the nation's largest municipal utility, approved a three-year agreement on Feb. 4 to have Duke/Louis Dreyfus manage its wholesale electricity trading and retail marketing. Duke/Louis Dreyfus will receive \$6 million a year, plus a portion of any sales it makes from the Los Angeles water department's power-generating facilities to a customer base of 1.3 million people. The Los Angeles City Council still must approve the deal.

On Feb. 5, Washington State approved the merger of Puget Sound Power and Light Co., and Washington Energy Co., paving the way for the creation of the largest electric and natural gas utility in the Northwest.

Hard winter aggravates threat to beef supply

Severe winter weather is causing huge livestock losses in the High Plains, adding to the devastating effects of low cattle prices imposed by the beef cartel. Hardest hit is South Dakota, where the state's Agriculture Department estimates that at least 100,000 head have been lost out of a total herd of 3.9 million cattle. Serious flooding may add to that during the spring snow melt. The Army Corps of Engineers, projects that water flows in the Jim River will be nine to ten times higher than normal.

But low prices are already ruining ranchers, posing a threat to the national food supply. Montana range calves were bringing the rancher 90¢ per pound in 1995; now they bring 60¢ per pound. Some farmers taking calves to market, find they owe money to the sales barn, after fees, trucking, and other costs are totalled. The low cattle prices have

been imposed by the beef processor trust of IBP (directly interconnected with George Bush's interests), Cargill, National Beef, and ConAgra, which together, control 80-90% of all beef slaughtered in the United States. The cartel is protected by the prevailing national U.S. "market-based" agriculture policy, codified in the 1996 seven-year "Freedom to Farm Act."

Medical journal backs dopers against Clinton

The once-prestigious *New England Journal of Medicine* has endorsed high-roller financier George Soros's campaign to legalize marijuana. A Jan. 30 editorial, entitled "Federal Foolishness and Marijuana" and signed by Dr. Jerome Kassirer, denounces President Clinton and his administration for opposing "medical use" of the drug, despite referendums approved in Arizona and California—with heavy infusions of cash from Soros.

"I believe that a federal policy that prohibits physicians from alleviating suffering by prescribing marijuana for seriously ill patients is misguided, heavy-handed, and inhumane," Kassirer intoned. "Marijuana may have long-term adverse effects and its use may presage serious addictions, but neither long-term side effects nor addiction is a relevant issue in such patients. . . ."

"Whatever their reasons, federal officials are out of step with the public. Dozens of states have passed laws that ease restrictions on the prescribing of marijuana by physicians, and polls consistently show that the public favors the use of marijuana for such purposes. Federal authorities should rescind their prohibition of the medicinal use of marijuana." (Less officious during an interview with ABC's "Nightline," Kassirer snapped that federal officials should "take a hit themselves," i.e., smoke marijuana, and accept legalization as a *fait accompli*.)

Echoing the drug lobby's strategy for full legalization, Kassirer urges physicians to prescribe marijuana in defiance of the law. "Eventually, their actions will force the courts to adjudicate between the rights of those at death's door and the absolute power of bureaucrats."