

# National News

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## Sweeney tours Asia, meets union officials

AFL-CIO President John Sweeney began a tour of Japan and Hongkong on April 7, heading a delegation of AFL-CIO leaders including UAW International President Stephen Yokich. The delegation was scheduled to participate in an annual bilateral meeting with JTUC-Rengo, the Japanese trade union federation, to discuss a wide range of issues, including trade policy, a number of organizing and bargaining campaigns (including a campaign to organize California strawberry workers, as Japan consumes 3% of the U.S. strawberry market), and labor disputes involving Japanese and American multinational companies.

Since last November, JTUC-Rengo and the AFL-CIO have both endorsed the boycott of the New Otani Hotel in Los Angeles. While in Japan, Sweeney will meet with executives of New Otani Company, Ltd. to discuss the company's continued opposition to employee organizing at their Los Angeles hotel, where the AFL-CIO demonstrated during their February Executive Council meeting.

Sweeney was also scheduled to travel to Hongkong, to meet with union representatives to discuss the question of the independence of trade unions after the Chinese takeover of Hongkong in July.

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## New developments in James Earl Ray case

Appearing on CNN's "Crossfire Sunday" on April 6, Dexter King, the son of slain civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr., said that his father's real killer (a.k.a. "Raoul") had been found. Dexter King met the week before with James Earl Ray, the patsy in the Martin Luther King assassination who had been coerced into a guilty plea and is now seeking a fair trial. Dexter King said that he is now convinced that Ray is innocent.

Dexter King said that "very compelling evidence should be brought before a court of law." He said that "Raoul," whom Ray had long identified as the actual assassin of Martin Luther King, had been located, and that there were at least three witnesses who had corroborated that Ray was not the shooter. Dexter King declined to identify "Raoul" or reveal his location "for fear of his safety . . . [or] that he might leave before being brought to justice." Dexter King said that the proper place for presentation of Raoul's identity and other new evidence was a courtroom.

In related news, the Tennessee Court of Criminal Appeals has lifted a three-year-old order, which should permit a ballistics test to be conducted, as a step toward a trial for Ray.

A Criminal Court judge in Memphis on Feb. 20 had recommended that tests be conducted to compare the bullet which killed Martin Luther King, Jr., with the rifle on which James Earl Ray's fingerprints were found. That decision has now withstood a review by the Court of Criminal Appeals, which in 1994 had ordered a stay on a previous order for a ballistics test. At the Feb. 20 hearing, Ray's lawyer William Pepper argued that a scanning electron microscope—which was not available in the 1960s and '70s—would show definitively that the bullet that killed King could not have come from Ray's gun.

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## Virginia's Gov. Allen salutes the Confederacy

Virginia's Gov. George Allen (R) on April 9 signed a proclamation establishing April as Confederate History and Heritage Month in the state. The declaration calls the Civil War a "four-year struggle for independence and sovereign rights." It praises Confederate citizens' sacrifices "to the cause of liberty . . . and preserving the self-determination of the bond of States." The document makes no mention of slavery or black people.

Virginia leaders of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) denounced the

proclamation, saying that Allen has offended black Southerners and used language favored by white supremacist groups. Several of them called for Allen to resign.

Apparently, no one has yet publicly protested the act as an offense against the Constitution and the federal union, although NAACP spokeswoman Linda Byrd-Harden came the closest, by saying that the governor's "acts border on treason." This is the third year that Allen has issued the proclamation, which, this year, was mildly criticized by Lt. Gov. Donald Beyer (D).

In response to all the criticism, Allen backed off a bit. "Surely I don't want to upset anyone," he said. "For those who are sincerely offended . . . I apologize."

The state NAACP has scheduled a demonstration at the Richmond state capitol building on April 30, to "bury" Confederate history month, the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* reported on April 12.

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## Court okays ban on affirmative action

A three-judge panel of the Ninth Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals has upheld California's Proposition 209, which seeks to ban affirmative action programs. The measure was approved in a popular referendum in November 1996, by a vote of 54% to 46%.

In December, U.S. District Judge Thelton Henderson granted a preliminary injunction blocking Proposition 209, saying that the measure probably violated the constitutional right to equal protection. "It is not for this or any other court to lightly upset the expectations of the voters," Henderson wrote. "At the same time, our system of democracy teaches that the will of the people, important as it is, does not reign absolute but must be kept in harmony with our Constitution."

However, the three-judge appeals panel, made up of two Reagan appointees and one Bush appointee, said that the popular will *should* reign paramount. "A system which permits one judge to block with the stroke of a pen what 4,736,180 residents voted to enact as law tests the integrity of our consti-

## Briefly

**WAL-MART** has replaced General Motors as the largest private employer in America, *Fortune* magazine reports. In 1996, Wal-Mart employed 675,000 workers worldwide, versus 647,000 for General Motors. In terms of sales, Wal-Mart, with \$106.1 billion in sales, is now the fourth largest company in the United States.

**LLOYD'S** of London insured the Heaven's Gate cult against alien abduction, according to the American Names Association. The Goodfellow Rebecca Ingrams Pearson syndicate at Lloyd's provided a policy insuring up to 50 members of the cult for \$1 million each, against death, abduction, or impregnation by aliens. The syndicate is affiliated with the Pearson family, which controls the London *Financial Times*.

**A FEDERAL JUDGE** in Washington on April 10 struck down as unconstitutional the line-item veto legislation that was passed by Congress last term. U.S. District Judge Thomas Penfield Jackson said the Congress cannot delegate away its lawmaking authority. "Never before has Congress attempted to give away the power to shape the content of a statute of the United States," as this law does, he stated.

**BARONESS** Caroline Cox of Queensbury, the Deputy Speaker of the British House of Lords, will descend on Detroit, Michigan on April 24-27, for a memorial service for Paul Manoogian, the billionaire patron of the British-run Ramgavarparty of Armenia. Manoogian died last July; the service is being used to plan for a new destabilization of the Caucasus.

**THE NEW ATLANTIC** Initiative, whose co-chairmen are Lady Margaret Thatcher and Sir Henry Kissinger, will hold its second meeting in Phoenix, Arizona in mid-May. A leader of the NAI confirmed that there will be a panel on the issue of China as the new adversary of the United States. For the real story, see *EIR*, April 11, "The Thatcher Gang Is Out to Wreck Clinton China Policy."

tutional democracy," said the panel.

The U.S. Justice Department, which had entered the case as an *amicus curiae* opposing Proposition 209, said that it was "disappointed" in the appellate ruling.

In December, British Intelligence stringer Ambrose Evans-Pritchard wrote in the London *Sunday Telegraph* that Judge Henderson's ruling "threatens democracy." "The move," he wrote, "has led establishment conservatives in the state to join the far Right in denouncing the U.S. government as an illegitimate 'regime' that no longer has the moral authority to compel obedience."

## Los Angeles hit hard by welfare cutbacks

A report from the Southern California Inter-University Consortium on Homelessness and Poverty, which attempted to measure the secondary effects of welfare cutbacks on the Los Angeles County economy, concluded that the county's "economic recovery" could be jeopardized by reduced spending on housing, food, medical services, and consumer goods, as welfare recipients sink deeper into poverty.

The authors estimate that the Los Angeles economy would suffer direct losses ranging from \$127 million to \$1.5 billion per year. Job losses due to cutbacks in consumer spending could approach 50,000, mostly in retail trade and service industry, virtually cancelling out the 55,000 new jobs created in the county in 1996.

Researcher Jennifer Wolch told *EIR* that it would not be inaccurate to liken the effects of the welfare cutbacks to earthquake tremors, which can have a devastating impact at a long distance from the center. "If you have a situation in which a half-million people would lose part or all of their economic resources," she said, "there is not a capacity to prevent widespread social problems. Communities in the county's central region and parts of San Fernando and San Gabriel Valley's will experience the greatest cumulative impact, with the possibility of neighborhood businesses taking a nose dive and some

housing being abandoned."

The authors conclude that the 250,000 welfare recipients who are expected to find work will be competing for 75,000 jobs (including new jobs and openings created by job turnover) alongside 362,900 officially unemployed workers. An additional 125,000 discouraged workers and nearly 100,000 involuntary part-time workers would take full-time jobs, if available, according to the study.

## Judge allows doctors to give patients marijuana

San Francisco Federal District Court Judge Fern M. Smith on April 11 issued a restraining order preventing the U.S. government from prosecuting doctors who recommend marijuana to their patients.

Authors of California's Proposition 215 referendum, passed last November, had sought to make it possible for doctors to "suggest" the use of marijuana to their patients, without putting the legislation in conflict with federal laws barring the use and distribution of controlled substances. The judge's order comes as attorneys for the federal government said they would not hold off prosecuting doctors who, on Jan. 14, had filed suit (along with the American Civil Liberties Union, patients, and medical associations) arguing that the physicians' right to free speech was being violated.

Legal counsel Patricia A. Seitz of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy countered that the U.S. government respects the right of doctors to discuss the benefits and hazards of treatments with their patients, but opposes any effort by physicians to help them obtain illegal drugs. "It is not protected speech if that speech is used to violate the law. The issue always boils down to what is the doctor's intent."

Judge Smith's order said that the pot-advocating doctors had raised "serious questions" about whether the U.S. government's threats of punishment, which also included losing prescription licenses issued by the Drug Enforcement Administration, are constitutional.