

National News

Workfare in New York is a 'colossal disaster'

Rev. Peter Laarman of New York's Judson Memorial Church told *EIR* on Aug. 6 that the workfare situation today is a "colossal social disaster," in the wake of Mayor Rudolph Giuliani's declaration on July 20 that he will require virtually all adults on welfare to work for their benefits by the year 2000. Laarman works with the Urban Justice Center and its "Workfare Campaign of Resistance." He said that Giuliani's plan "flies in the face of reality here, which is actually that the number of women and children in extreme poverty in New York is still growing, not declining."

Of the 32 public assistance centers, Laarman said, "three or four are now designated job centers and people wear smiley faces. What used to be caseworkers are called financial advisers. What they're really doing, essentially, is denying benefits on an unprecedented scale. You can come in there in desperate need and they'll now say, 'Well, you haven't had your job interview, so we can't help you.' Basically, they've reduced the rate of initial grants from 40% to about 9%."

Since 1995, nearly 400,000 people have been purged from the welfare rolls in New York City. Under the new policy, only the most severely disabled people—some 340,000 adults—will continue to receive cash assistance.

D.C. 'medical marijuana' ballot initiative fails

The Washington, D.C. Board of Elections and Ethics announced on Aug. 5 that a ballot initiative, which would have legalized the distribution of "medical marijuana" in the District, would not appear on the ballot, because sponsors failed to gain enough valid signatures. The initiative was launched by the AIDS activist group Act-Up, and there were early indications that the group was expecting to receive personal financial backing from George Soros.

White House drug policy adviser Gen.

Barry McCaffrey (ret.), in an Aug. 13 press release, described the initiative as "another orchestrated effort to undermine sensible drug control policies designed to keep dangerous substances away from our country's children. The end result of an initiative such as this would be to weaken our science-based approach to safe and effective medicine. . . . This is not the time to use ballot-box ploys to make this drug more readily available. Instead, it is time to pay attention to the science-based information already available about the consequences of marijuana use. Residents of the District of Columbia were wise to reject dangerous policy and confusing rhetoric that made up this ballot initiative."

Robertson evangelizing for Bush-Ashcroft slate

Pat Robertson put in the good word for Texas Gov. George Bush for President, on CNN's "Evans, Novak, Hunt and Shields" broadcast on Aug. 15. "I think George W., as he's called, is a wonderful guy. He's been a good governor. He's coming out with a social and moral agenda that I would applaud, especially for individual responsibility," Robertson said. He proposed a ticket with Bush and Missouri Sen. John Ashcroft, as ideal.

Co-host Robert Novak asked Robertson if Ashcroft is his first choice. "I like John a lot," he replied. "I think he has a message that plays very well in the heartland of America. And if you would pick the way the electoral vote would come down, I think if you can take Ohio and Michigan and Wisconsin and Illinois and Missouri, all those states, plus a good portion of the South and some of the West, I think you've got it in a walk. And I think that's the kind of message that John Ashcroft could deliver."

Earlier in the broadcast, Robertson revealed House Speaker Newt Gingrich's (R-Ga.) role in the British-led "morality wars" against President Clinton. Robertson described President Clinton as "a serial philanderer" and "a liar, who apparently has perjured himself and may well have suborned perjury." Robertson said that he had met Gingrich shortly after the Speaker had spo-

ken with the President: "And he said the President said to him, 'Are you accusing me of lying?' And he said, 'Yes, I am.' And I said, 'You called the President of the United States a liar?' And he said, 'Well, he is.'"

Robertson patted himself on the back for turning Gingrich around, saying that he had instructed the Speaker a few months ago: "Please get moving on these issues. We have a great grassroots movement we have to energize. And if you folks just continue to make nice with Clinton and there's no differentiation, how can we get people to the polls?"

As for morality and truth: *EIR* revealed last year that, between August 1994 and September 1995, Robertson raised funds for "Operation Blessing" to fly medical aid to Africans in the Rwanda/Zaire war zone, which were used instead to ship equipment to Robertson's Zairean diamond-mining concession.

Washington Post howls over McDade-Murtha vote

After a lengthy and deep silence on the McDade-Murtha "Citizens Protection Act," the *Washington Post* published an editorial attack on the bill on Aug. 13, using formulations straight out of the lying propaganda prepared by the Justice Department (DOJ) and its foot soldiers, Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.) and Ed Bethune, FBI Agents Association general counsel.

The *Post* admitted that "the House supported it overwhelmingly as a reform," when it was included in the Justice Department appropriation, but added, "in fact it is a bad idea. In the name of reining in prosecutorial misconduct, the so-called Citizens Protection Act would create a procedural web that is simply incompatible with effective federal law enforcement."

The *Post*—perhaps fearing loss of copy if the DOJ permanent bureaucracy couldn't try its untenable cases in the *Post*'s pages—mouthing the DOJ's complaints that the bill would create an outside review board that would "easily become a roving, unaccountable body meddling in sensitive and continuing law enforcement matters." The editorial

concluded, "Prosecutorial misconduct is a serious problem to which the department cannot be too sensitive. The McDade legislation, however, is deeply flawed. Fortunately, the Senate version of the appropriations bill contains no such provision, so there is a good chance it will be stripped from the legislation in the conference committee. Failing that, President Clinton should consider vetoing the whole package."

Medicare patients' rights vs. HMOs upheld

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit has just handed a major victory to Medicare patients who are wrongly denied medical care by their health maintenance organizations (HMOs).

In its Aug. 12 decision, the court ruled that the government must abide by Medicare law and rigorously oversee HMOs, and even terminate their contracts if necessary, in order to uphold the rights of Medicare patients. It states that the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, which oversees Medicare, must guarantee Medicare HMO patients their "due process" rights. The Ninth Circuit's ruling, albeit only applicable to Medicare patients, appears to have set a significantly higher standard than that typically used to judge HMO crimes.

No disability pay for mentally ill, says daily

The *Richmond Times-Dispatch* came up with a novel way to save the budget in its Aug. 10 editorial: deny Social Security disability payments to mental patients who are functional enough to perform low-wage jobs. "Many (most?) psychotics are functional as long as they take medication," wrote the daily's editors. "There is no reason they cannot mop floors or wash dishes to earn a living. . . . Today's jobs may be less physically demanding than at any time in history. How much exertion does it take to sit and type on a keyboard all day?" (The

editors should know.) "Individuals truly disabled by mental illness should be in institutions. . . . The money for their care could be deducted from the \$74 billion doled out annually for disability."

Social Security disability is critical for the seriously or chronically mentally ill. It helps to fund group homes and half-way houses, which, in many cases, is the preferable medium-term solution for people who can no longer live with their families. It also helps to fund affordable housing, which a job washing dishes or mopping floors could not—even assuming that an individual suffering from hallucinations and/or delusions (with or without medication) could consistently perform.

State Dept. suspends Sea Launch project

On July 27, the State Department suspended the international Sea Launch project, to launch Ukrainian Zenit rockets, using a Russian third stage, integrated and controlled by Boeing, from a converted Norwegian Kvaerner oil platform, placed close to the Equator. In the wake of the hysteria over Chinagate, the State Department had concluded that "sensitive" U.S. information was improperly disclosed to Russian and Ukrainian engineers. The project was to be the first launch of a commercial communications satellite from the floating platform scheduled for early next year.

Boeing discovered last year that some security procedures had been lax, and in March disclosed the information to the State Department. Both industry and government officials admit that "all the secret stuff is theirs, not ours," and that the project would have allowed the United States to look into the technical aspects of the Ukrainian Zenit rocket, which was previously the Soviets' SS-18 ballistic missile.

The United States has spent tens of millions of dollars to create civilian work for Russian and Ukrainian engineers and rocket specialists to keep their capabilities intact. Boeing's Tim Dolan was quoted in the *Washington Post* on Aug. 11, that about 10,000 Russian and Ukrainian jobs created through Sea Launch are now threatened.

FEMALE CHAIN GANGS are now picking up trash in Scottsdale, Arizona, courtesy of Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio, who prides himself as "America's Toughest Sheriff." At the time the chain gang was sighted by an *EIR* reader, the temperature was 118°F. Arpaio says that his female chain gang, the first in America, is "voluntary."

SEVENTY MEXICANS have died this year trying to get into the United States over the border, considered a virtual Berlin Wall since Operation Gatekeeper was put into effect to stem illegal immigration four years ago. Seven of the deaths occurred on Aug. 13. Despite warnings and television announcements, clearly, some consider the risk of dying in the desert less threatening, than dying in a *maquiladora*.

MARGARET THATCHER appeared over the weekend of Aug. 15-16 at several Republican Party fundraisers in Iowa, at the behest of Republican Presidential aspirant Steve Forbes, where she reportedly raised \$500,000 for the Iowa GOP.

NORTHWEST Airlines pilots have set a strike deadline for Aug. 29, after a 30-day cooling-off period, at the same time that the airline has not reached contract agreements with its machinists or flight attendants. Northwest workers had made substantial pay givebacks in order to prevent the airline's bankruptcy in the early 1990s, while its owners had become obscenely rich from the leveraged buyout.

LAROCHE Democrat Larry Freeman, running for Maryland's governor, called on "good Democrats to ensure that Republican candidate Ellen Sauerbrey is resoundingly defeated in November." Freeman was responding to Eileen Rehrman's decision to withdraw as a Democratic contender against incumbent Parris Glendening (D). Rehrman, like Sauerbrey, backs legalized slot machine gambling in Maryland, which is staunchly opposed by Glendening.