

National News

First Lady travels to North African countries

First Lady Hillary Clinton began a 12-day trip to North Africa, beginning on March 20. After hosting 24 hours of meetings at the White House on March 18-19 with New York's leading Democrats, with whom she discussed a possible Senate campaign, Mrs. Clinton and her daughter Chelsea left for a good-will visit to Egypt, Tunisia, and Morocco. Their itinerary originally included stops in Israel and Jordan, but due to the Israeli election campaign and the death of King Hussein, those countries were taken off the agenda.

In Washington, Mrs. Clinton previewed her goals on March 16, saying that she hopes to bring America and the Arab world closer together. "For too long, our close ties with the Arab world have been compromised by negative stereotyping on both sides. With populations that total almost one-half of the Arab world, these countries represent a diversity of cultures, ethnic groups, and histories, and provide us an opportunity to learn more about what they are doing . . . their history, and to become closer friends and partners in building a better future."

Susan McDougal finally testifies in her defense

As she has always said she wanted to do, Susan McDougal gave the testimony in open court starting on March 22, that she had refused to give behind closed doors to Kenneth Starr's Whitewater grand jury. McDougal is on trial for criminal contempt, after years of being dragged through a legal nightmare by Starr: She was convicted in the Whitewater case, in order to pressure her to testify against the Clintons; when she refused to lie, she was jailed for 18 months for civil contempt; unbroken, she was then tried in California on embezzlement charges. Since her acquittal in that case, Starr has now charged her with criminal contempt.

The first three questions her lawyer asked her, were the same ones that she had refused to answer in front of the grand jury. McDougal also described how her former

husband Jim McDougal had made up stories about Clinton to avoid going to prison, and how he had told her to do the same thing, saying, "If you don't tell this story, you're going to jail." She said that her former husband had first refused to cooperate with Starr, but changed his mind after being convicted of fraud in their 1996 trial. "He told me this is something he had to do because he did not want to die in jail," she said. Nevertheless, Jim McDougal died in Federal prison in March 1998.

Hickman Ewing, Starr's top dog who is supervising the McDougal trial, was subpoenaed by her defense to testify, since she is making Starr's vindictiveness a central issue in her case. He admitted on the stand that he had drafted an indictment of Hillary Clinton.

In spite of a Justice Department investigation into his office, Starr still has a number of "Get Clinton" cases pending, including another trial of Webster Hubbell, and cases around the Kathleen Willey matter. There is also still a possibility that Starr will indict Bill and/or Hillary Clinton (or has already).

Scaife loses in effort to block probe of Starr

A special three-judge panel ruled on March 18 that it has no authority to intervene in the Department of Justice's pending investigation of independent counsel Kenneth Starr. The panel, known as the Special Division for the Purpose of Appointing Independent Counsels, denied the application by the Richard Mellon Scaife-funded Landmark Legal Foundation, which had asked the court to issue a writ of prohibition ordering the Attorney General to stop the DOJ investigation into Starr's misconduct.

The court dismissed Landmark's application on two grounds. The first was that Landmark had no standing to bring the action, and that the independent counsel law does not provide a right of action by private citizens. Both the DOJ and Starr had agreed on that point. But the court went further, despite Starr's request that it not do so, and it ruled that it has no jurisdiction over the matter, and that it has no authority to block the Justice Department's investigation of Starr's conduct.

EIR filed an *amicus curiae* brief in the case on March 8, exposing Landmark's ties to Starr and to Starr's backers, and showed that Landmark itself was part of the covert back channel between Starr's office and Paula Jones's lawyers which the Justice Department is reported to be investigating. *EIR*'s brief also urged the court to reject Landmark's application. Apparently regarding the issues raised by *EIR* as too hot to handle, the court made no reference to *EIR*'s brief (which appeared in the March 19, 1999 issue) in its order and opinion.

Private prison companies taking it on the chin

On March 1, a Federal judge in Ohio granted preliminary approval to a \$1.6 million settlement against Corrections Corp. of America, on behalf of the more than 1,500 inmates who were abused (two were killed) at CCA's Youngstown, Ohio private prison. Alphonse Gerhardstein, one of the attorneys in the suit, told *EIR* that the settlement is "very creative and effective," and will be good for the community as well as CCA (which refused to comment when contacted by the *Washington Post*).

Also on March 1, the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) corrections unit announced a press conference with several congressmen and labor leaders, to unveil its Public Safety Act. The Act would not only prohibit Federal private prisons, but would deny Federal grants for correctional facilities to states and localities that operate private correctional facilities. The legislation notes, "the need to make profits creates incentives for private contractors to underfund mechanisms that provide for the security of the facility and the safety of the inmates, corrections staff, and neighboring community."

According to the Feb. 22 issue of *The Common Denominator*, the Public Benefit Corp. in Washington, D.C. is preparing to sue CCA over more than \$1.5 million in overdue heating bills. CCA has not paid PBC for heat or hot water at its Correctional Treatment Facility for more than a year. Private prison companies claim to "save" money for municipalities—apparently one method is not to pay their bills.