
National News

HUD reports housing crisis for poorest

A new study by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), entitled "Waiting in Vain: An Update on America's Housing Crisis," documents that the crisis in affordable housing for the nation's poor has greatly deepened. There are two types of government housing assistance for the nation's poor and lower-income families: 1) public housing, which is built with government financing for low-income families; and 2) "Section 8" rental assistance, which provides vouchers for a portion of the poor's monthly rental costs.

According to the new HUD study:

- The time people spend on waiting lists to get into HUD-assisted public housing "increased substantially between 1996 and 1998." For the largest public housing authorities, the average wait list rose from 22 to 33 months from 1996-98, a 50% increase. In some large cities, the waiting list is even longer: eight years in New York City, six years in Oakland, California, and five years in Washington, D.C. and Cleveland, Ohio.

- The waiting period for Section 8 rental assistance—how long one has to wait to be placed into the program, and start receiving assistance—is now ten years in Los Angeles and New York City, seven years in Houston, and five years in Memphis and Chicago.

- Where waiting lists for HUD-assisted programs have not been closed due to their overwhelming size, the number of people applying increased by 10-25% during 1997-98.

- "Between 1995 and 1997, rents increased faster than income for the 20% of American households with the lowest incomes."

Labor, Democrats think 'Big Al' is 'Bor-r-ring'

In what is described as a "testy" meeting, Al Gore spoke before a United Auto Workers conference in Des Moines, Iowa on March 22, and "ran into a buzz-saw of questions" about the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), according to Associ-

ated Press. When Gore was introduced by Dave Neil, the state head of the UAW, Neil said tersely, "We are of the opinion that NAFTA does not work. I guess I'll just stop there."

Gore acknowledged in his speech, "We have not agreed with you on every issue. You are keenly aware of that. I am keenly aware of that. If you are looking for perfection, keep on looking," Gore added.

He was hammered with questions on the global warming lie, as well as on NAFTA. When Gore insisted that he backed labor's goals, one questioner drew cheers when he shouted from the back of the room, "How come you don't twist arms on labor like you do on NAFTA?" "I want to work with you," Gore pleaded. "I come from a progressive tradition that is in my bones."

At the March 19 Democratic National Committee meeting in Washington, Gore received a lukewarm reception from many of the members, according to a party official who was there. Gore signs were passed out to the crowd to wave during Gore's speech, but a number of participants did not take them. Then, allegedly because of fire regulations, all guests were ordered out of the room. In fact, *EIR's* source said, there was less applause and cheering for Gore after he spoke, than before.

Clinton receives award named for Yitzhak Rabin

President Bill Clinton asked for God's help to "hasten the day of Yitzhak Rabin's dreams," as he accepted the Shalom Chaver Award from the hands of Leah Rabin on behalf of the Yitzhak Rabin Center. Recalling the late Israeli Prime Minister's quest for peace, the President said that Rabin had known that "bold steps" would have to be taken to secure a "strategic peace, a circle of peace with others in the region to isolate and weaken extremists."

The President also thanked Leah Rabin for her remembrances of King Hussein of Jordan. Of these two men he said, "Hussein and Yitzhak Rabin were brave soldiers who had the courage to tell the hard truth that there would be no security for any in the Middle East without fairness for all, that the time had come to lift people's hopes, not

exploit their fears, to reach across the divide of history and hatred to fulfill the true promise of the Promised Land. They knew well enough that extremists would try to derail the peace accord by keeping fear and frustration, mistrust and misery, dominant in the lives of ordinary Palestinians and Israelis. But they were determined to turn back the tide, and so they did."

On March 23, Clinton met with Rabin's peace partner, Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat for 90 minutes, including one hour behind closed doors. Arafat said that their discussion on Palestinian statehood, which he has pledged to announce on May 4, involved a "very extensive and in-depth conversation." Overall, he described the meeting as "constructive and fruitful."

DOJ fights to preserve corrupt prosecutions

Testifying before a subcommittee of the Senate Judiciary Committee on March 24, Deputy Attorney General Eric Holder again urged Congress to either repeal the "McDade Amendment" passed last session, or to postpone its implementation, scheduled for April 19. That amendment to the Department of Justice appropriations bill was based on the "Citizens Protection Act" to rein in abuse by Federal prosecutors, co-sponsored by Pennsylvania Reps. Joseph McDade (R) and John Murtha (D). The debate from both sides of the House floor on Aug. 5, 1998 included the out-of-control abuses of Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr.

In a further effort to enshrine Federal prosecutorial abuse, various proposals are being made to incorporate what are now special prosecutor investigations into the DOJ Criminal Division's Public Integrity Section. Former Deputy Attorney General Philip Heymann told the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee on March 17 that he advocates creating a structure in the Criminal Division, "very much modelled after the British system—a director of public prosecutions," where the Assistant Attorney General in charge of the investigation could not be contacted by anyone in the White House or Congress, and not even "at the initiation of the Attorney General or the Deputy Attorney General on a particular case."