

# National News

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## Edelman: Welfare reform just made poor poorer

Who is worrying about the children? asks an Aug. 11 letter to the *Washington Post* by former Assistant Secretary of Health and Human Services Peter Edelman, who resigned when Clinton signed the welfare bill in August 1996. Edelman, now a professor at Georgetown University Law Center, points to the fact that 40% of welfare recipients thrown off the rolls nationwide—2.5 million people—have not found jobs, and says that the “triumph” of welfare reform trumpeted by the *Post* is “hardly a triumph.” “The real news is deeply troubling. The poor are barely better off in this phenomenal prosperity, and the extremely poor . . . are worse off,” Edelman says, citing the recent Urban Institute study on people leaving welfare.

On the same day, an article on graft and corruption in the Washington, D.C. welfare program noted that the majority of 13,000 recipients—mostly single mothers—still on welfare in D.C. have no skills. Some “cannot read even basic signs,” and more than two-thirds read below a sixth-grade level.

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## Los Alamos spy case was ‘built on thin air’

Breaking a long public silence, Robert S. Vrooman, the former counterintelligence chief at Los Alamos National Laboratory, charged in an interview with the Aug. 18 *Washington Post*, that Federal investigators targeted physicist Wen Ho Lee as an espionage suspect because he is a Chinese-American. Federal authorities still do not have a “shred of evidence” that Lee leaked nuclear secrets to China, he said. The stolen data, such as the information on the miniaturized W-88, the object of the alleged theft, had been distributed to 548 different addresses at the Defense Department, Energy Department, defense firms, branches of the armed services, and even the National Guard, he said.

Vrooman and two other former Los Alamos officials have been recommended for disciplinary actions by Energy Secretary Bill Richardson, who is under pressure from Congressional Republicans. Vrooman, a former CIA operations officer, said, “I’m not going to go down in history as the guy who screwed up this case, because I wasn’t. This case was screwed up because there was nothing there—it was built on thin air.”

Also on Aug. 18, the *New York Times* quoted Vrooman as saying that there were 83 people who went to China from Los Alamos during the same period as Wen Ho Lee, but these, “a lot of Caucasians,” were not investigated. Vrooman said that the Energy Department’s Office of Counterintelligence had identified Lee as “the prime suspect based on, at best, cursory investigation at only two facilities,” i.e., Los Alamos and Lawrence Livermore. “The investigation lacked intellectual rigor,” Vrooman said.

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## ‘Compassionate’ Bush is a vengeful killer

MSNBC anchorman Charles Grodin laid to rest any illusions about George W. Bush’s pretense at “compassionate conservatism,” during his evening broadcast on Aug. 8, demonstrating that, as Texas Governor, Bush made vindictive use of the death penalty. Grodin cited Bush’s interview with the September 1999 issue of *Talk*, in which he made fun of his denial of a 30-day stay of the execution of Karla Faye Tucker, who was killed by lethal injection in February 1998. Grodin showed the footage of Tucker calmly asking for the stay. But when *Talk* asked why Tucker had requested the stay for herself and others, he mimicked a whimpering voice, “Please don’t kill me.” Grodin, while claiming the death penalty issue was “difficult,” noted that in Houston alone, three times as many death-row inmates have been executed as in any other state, and that Bush had never granted anyone a stay.

Meanwhile, Pope John Paul II appealed to Bush to spare the life of Larry Keith Robison, scheduled to die on Aug. 17. Robison is a paranoid schizophrenic. Apostolic Nuncio Archbishop Gabriel Montalvo wrote, “Kill-

ing people to show that killing people is wrong is a striking contradiction, even more so when mental illness seems to be involved, as in this case. His Holiness appeals to your Constitutional power to spare the life of Mr. Robison by commuting his sentence through a gesture of pardon that would hopefully contribute to the promotion of non-violence in today’s society.”

A Texas court has issued a stay for one month, sparing Bush the ignominy of killing again.

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## ‘Debate’ launched on preemptive detentions

“In a liberal society it may prove too much to jail people for their personalities alone, but the debate is worth having,” wrote Holman W. Jenkins, Jr., in a commentary in the *Wall Street Journal* on Aug. 11. Taking off from the rampage of daytrader Mark Barton, Jenkins cites a proposal by British Home Secretary Jack Straw in which “the state could confine people suffering from ‘severe personality disorder’ for indefinite periods on the advice of psychiatrists. A new network of Ashworth-like facilities would be designated to hold them.” He described Britain’s Ashworth as “a hospital for convicted criminals with dangerous personality disorders.”

The plan has raised an uproar in Britain, Jenkins says, “but the uproar itself is useful and will have a good effect as we get wind of it over here.” Because “psychologists have begun to develop reliable tools for judging who is capable of violence, and equally important, the circumstances that elicit it,” he says, it has become harder for them not to take pre-emptive action against dangerous individuals.

“In a liberal society it may prove too much to jail people for their personalities alone,” Jenkins concludes. “But the debate is worth having.”

A similarly ominous proposal was made in the Aug. 15 *Washington Post*, by former New York Federal prosecutor Ruth Wedgwood, who demands that the FBI revive its Counter Intelligence Program—the notorious Cointelpro—against so-called hate

groups. "Now that the FBI has had 20 years to rebuild its reputation for respecting civil liberties, we can seek a restored balance," she says.

Wedgwood goes so far as to propose legitimizing the application of "the principle of conspiracy laws to a lone plotter"—a "principle" that should be familiar to those who followed the LaRouche railroad prosecutions.

## W.D. Muhammed addresses Mid-Atlantic Muslims

Hon. Wallace D. Muhammed keynoted the Mid-Atlantic regional conference of the Society of Muslim Americans, which he heads, on Aug. 15, under the title, "Muslims Planning Their Future in America." The first speaker at the conference of 1,000 was Cardinal William Keeler, Archbishop of Baltimore, where the meeting took place.

Cardinal Keeler said that he had met Wallace D. Muhammed in 1995, and they have since worked together on common goals, citing especially the fight against child pornography. He pointed out that Maryland was the first colony, in 1630, to have religious freedom, which was overturned during the "Glorious Revolution" of 1688, and only reestablished by the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights. He said that all countries should have religious tolerance, and took a strong stand in favor of ecumenical cooperation.

Wallace D. Muhammed's keynote struck much the same themes, stressing his own commitment to ecumenical dialogue. He pointed to the complementary ideas, that the Christians believe that man is created in the image of God, and that the Koran teaches that God makes every man with His spirit blown into him. The Imam said that Cardinal Keeler had accompanied him to the Vatican and had introduced him to Pope John Paul II.

America is a wonderful place, he continued, because it has the Constitution and the Bill of Rights—not that America is perfect, but this is the land of freedom. He stressed, this freedom is the freedom to take responsibility for looking after the earth. We African-Americans, he said, should turn down the

volume on our complaints about oppression, and instead we should turn our attention to the cries of others around the world, whose suffering is even greater than our own.

Picking up a theme from the Koran, he compared the condition of African-Americans to a race, in which at first you are leading, but then become overtaken by someone else. You should applaud them for having done something better—something to provide progress for humanity, he said. Learn about the contributions that other cultures make to civilization. He also said that he has travelled to Mecca, and met there with some of the top Islamic scholars. He said that they are looking at me as a true leader in America, and that "goodness is on the rise."

## Sen. Wellstone meets with embattled farmers

Minnesota Sen. Paul Wellstone (D) began a barnstorming tour of the Midwest farm states in northwest Minnesota on Aug. 16, where he and the president of the state's Farmers Union appeared before 200 farmers, in an effort to save America's remaining 1 million farmers from free-market cartelization. Battling entrenched Republicans who passed the "Freedom to Farm" Act, Rep. Collin Peterson (D-Minn.) said that Congress will have to "pump \$10-15 billion every year into farmers' pockets until we come up with a real solution. We don't have the votes and it will take two or three years."

Wellstone told the hundreds of citizens who gathered on a farm near East Grand Forks, which had been hard hit by the Red River floods in 1997: "Time is not neutral and time is not on the side of the farmers here. . . . I don't think that it can be turned around tomorrow. But a year ago, there was no financial assistance for farmers. I can travel and I can organize."

Wellstone promised to take the rallies into Iowa, Michigan, Indiana, and other states. He was scheduled to appear in Slayton, Marshall, Montevideo, and Willmar, culminating his tour at a statewide rally at the fair grounds in Waconia on Aug. 21, billed as "Rural Crisis Accountability Day."

**MARYLAND** has been declared a Federal disaster area as a result of the mid-Atlantic drought. Maryland farmers face losses of 35-90% of their crops. Some 12,000 farmers and 350,000 who work in the state's agriculture industry are being affected by the combined blows of the drought and impossibly low farm prices.

**BLACK LAWYERS** in the National Bar Association sent U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice William Rehnquist a resolution on Aug. 10 expressing "outrage" at him for leading a sing-along of "Dixie Land" at the Fourth Circuit judicial conference in June. The resolution said that the song "became and remains a symbol of oppression."

**PENTAGON** spokesman Ken Bacon denied assertions being circulated by Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott (R-Miss.) and an aide for Rep. Dana "China-basher" Rohrabacher (R-Calif.), that a Chinese company contracted to operate port facilities at both ends of the Panama Canal represents a national security threat to the United States.

**ALL-NIGHT 'RAVES,'** the techno-music and drug bacchanals involving hundreds, "have gone mainstream," writes the *Washington Times* on Aug. 13. The Sun Myung Moon-owned paper quotes rave organizer Rev. Andrew Jones: "It has more in common with mystical strains of Christianity, dispensing with priests and saying you can have contact with God directly, experiencing ecstasy and spiritual rapture."

**OLIVER NORTH** "lost it" during his talk show on Aug. 12, while taking his own Presidential straw poll. When an Alabaman called in to support Lyndon LaRouche, North tried to bait him, asking, "Does LaRouche still say the Queen of England pushes drugs, hah, hah, hah?" The caller replied: "Why, the way I hear it, Ollie, you were helping her out on that drug running. I also hear LaRouche is the reason you lost your Senate race." North slammed down the phone.