
National News

'Infrastructure on Way To Third World Status'

In the face of massive infrastructure breakdown across the U.S.A., only Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.) uttered a word of reality at a Senate Finance Committee hearing July 10. The hearing, called to discuss "Transportation Infrastructure: Issues and Options," turned into a forum for "anything but a Federal role," with witnesses and Senators alike bowing to privatization mantras.

Considering investment in our transport infrastructure a "critical issue," Kerry said "we are on our way to becoming a Third World country," as he described the collapse of the airline industry, bridges, and waterways. He ridiculed the fact that "we've had to fight to hold onto Amtrak," instead of building new high-speed rail networks. In this regard, he noted that you can go to Shanghai, China, "get on a Maglev train" and travel at 300 mph. "We are living off what our grandparents and parents built," and it is time we "offer some leadership." He ended by saying that there's no better way to put Americans back to work.

Bush Signs Wiretap Bill; Backed by Obama

With the support of all Senate Republicans, and 21 Democrats, including Sen. Barack Obama, the Senate capitulated to the Bush-Cheney Administration again, by passing a bill on July 9 giving the government wider spying powers. A gleeful President Bush signed the bill, with Dick Cheney at his side, in a White House ceremony the next day.

The bill, which revises the post-Watergate Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA), gives the government more powers to spy on Americans in the U.S. and abroad. It allows the government to bypass the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court, and collect large amounts of communications and data without having to obtain a specific warrant. And, the bill gives immunity to the

telecommunications companies that cooperated with the Cheney-directed illegal surveillance program starting in 2001.

Many members of Congress—including Obama before his conversion—opposed the latter provision on grounds that the 40 or so lawsuits now pending in federal courts were the only way to discover what the Administration actually did under its so-called "Terrorist Surveillance Program." Many observers and investigators believe that the program was much broader and deeper than has been admitted, collecting massive amounts of telecommunications data regarding innocent Americans, and then using "data-mining" techniques to attempt to find patterns of activity.

During the Presidential primary campaigns, Obama had vowed to oppose any bill giving immunity to the telecommunications companies, and had pledged to support a filibuster to block passage of any such bill. Obama has since abandoned that pledge, just as he has changed so many other positions in recent weeks.

Sen. Hillary Clinton voted against the surveillance bill, as did 27 other Senators, including Judiciary Committee chairman Patrick Leahy.

LaRouche: Bush Medical Cuts Mean U.S. Genocide

The ongoing cutbacks in health care on the state level, and, most importantly, in the crucial Federal Medicare and Medicaid programs, are tantamount to genocide, declared Lyndon LaRouche July 8. The responsibility for this crisis has to be laid directly at the feet of the Bush-Cheney Administration, as well as those leading Democrats who have done little to reverse it.

There must be immediate action, LaRouche said, to prevent this dangerous, national crisis from escalating. Medicare and Medicaid are an essential part of our health care system; and it is an act of genocide to let them go. As these programs are allowed to deteriorate—for example, by cutting back payments to providers way

below cost—people are left to die.

LaRouche added, "*The health care policies of the Bush Administration have killed more people than the war in Southwest Asia.*"

There is no excuse for what amounts to genocide, in the name of "fiscal responsibility."

Possible War with Iran Dominates House Hearing

Whether a pending House resolution actually calls for war on Iran, was the topic of a contentious hearing in the House Foreign Affairs Committee July 9. House Concurrent Resolution 362, which calls for a petroleum embargo against Iran with interdiction and inspection of ships, was the real topic of the hearing. The tension displayed during the hearing clearly reflects the intense debate which has broken out in the past couple of weeks about a possible Israeli and/or U.S. attack on Iran.

In his opening statement, Rep. Gary Ackerman (D-N.Y.), who introduced the resolution along with Rep. Mike Pence (R-Ind.), spent his entire time denying that the resolution calls for war with Iran.

"Nothing could be further from the truth," Ackerman protested, launching into a sophisticated explanation that the resolution doesn't actually require a naval blockade.

The first to attack the war plans was a Republican, Rep. Ron Paul of Texas (although Rep. Lyn Woolsey (D-Calif.) had previously raised Seymour Hersh's exposure of the Bush Administration's \$400 million fund for covert operations to destabilize Iran's leadership). Paul, noting that there is no evidence that Iran is developing a nuclear weapon, and that Iran has the legal right to enrich uranium, charged that "we're willing to risk World War III."

A parallel hearing in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee the same day was in total contrast to the House hearing, with all those Senators participating urging the Administration to engage in dialogue with Iran.