

National News

Baltimore teachers sue to stop privatization

The 8,500-member Baltimore Teachers Union filed suit on Dec. 3 challenging the legality of the city's contract with Education Alternative, Inc., which privately operates seven elementary and middle schools under its "Tesseract" program. The suit argues that the contract violates the charter, which requires that the city maintain control over public schools.

The privatization venture, now in its second year of a five-year phase-in, is charged with discriminating against thousands of students, because Tesseract schools receive more city money per pupil than most other public schools in Baltimore. The suit also seeks to abort pending agreements that would give Education Alternative control of financial management, security, maintenance, and other non-teaching functions at two of the city's new "enterprise schools," which is part of a separate experiment in school-based management.

Irene Dandridge, the union's president, stated that the Tesseract contract provides "absolutely no public accountability for schools."

Norfolk jail found rife with AIDS, TB

In mid-December, a group of inmates from the Norfolk, Virginia city jail filed suit against the Norfolk City Sheriff for having permitted dangerous health conditions in the jail. On Dec. 22, they underlined the urgency of their suit with the following public statement:

"Today the sixth reported death this year in the Norfolk city jail occurred, as an inmate died in the holding room before appearing in court. He died from complications from tuberculosis, and he reportedly had AIDS.

"This inmate had been in the hospital for at least a few weeks before being brought

back to the city jail the night before his court appearance. He was put in a cell block area on floor 8A which is overcrowded—with approximately 75 people in an area built for 25; he was breathing with great difficulty on a mattress on the floor, with no sheets. He arrived at approximately 7 p.m., and was removed sometime after midnight.

"It was obviously known to the prison authorities that this man had a full-blown case of tuberculosis; yet he was put in an overcrowded area of other prisoners, some of whom have AIDS and some of whom have shown positive for TB by skin tests. This is a recipe for a health disaster.

"It is also further evidence of reckless disregard of jail authorities for the health of city inmates. Inmate and civil rights activist Roy Perry has previously released a statement which we emphasize here—that these policies are murderous not only to jail inmates, but to the community at large. The city jail, through deliberate neglect, is becoming an incubator for infectious diseases, which are being returned into the community, as untreated and untested inmates return home. We urge the public to demand action to rectify this situation, or suffer the consequences of a kind of biological holocaust."

Illinois Dems in furor over LaRouche slate

The Illinois Board of Elections' unchallenged inclusion of 21 associates of Lyndon LaRouche on the March 15 Democratic primary ballot has sparked hysteria within the anti-LaRouche faction of the state's Democratic Party. According to the *Chicago Tribune* and *Chicago Sun-Times* on Dec. 21, party leaders dropped plans to challenge the validity of the LaRouche associates' petitions for ballot status, after they concluded that doing so "could end up in a costly and unsuccessful legal fight, especially since the courts have favored challenged candidates in recent decisions."

Instead, according to Illinois State Democratic Party Chairman Gary LePaille, the party will concentrate on "exposing the candidates and their extremist views," and will

"inform voters about the 'real' Democratic candidates." To that end, party leaders have set up a toll-free "anti-LaRouche hotline."

Responding to LePaille's statements, Gerald Pechenuk, a spokesman for the LaRouche-allied candidates, congratulated the party bosses for "their wise decision not to waste time and money on a futile challenge." However, Pechenuk took issue with LePaille's characterization of LaRouche's views as "extremist," remarking that nowhere does LePaille explain just which views he considers to be "extreme." Pechenuk asked whether LePaille now considers Vice President Albert Gore an extremist because of Gore's recent echoing of LaRouche's attacks against the International Monetary Fund for its destructive policy toward Russia.

The anti-LaRouche faction within the Democratic Party fears a repeat of the March 18, 1986 primary, when LaRouche associates won nominations for lieutenant governor and secretary of state. Now as then, they are also readying convenient excuses in case of another victory, such as that voters may mix up the names of LaRouche Democratic gubernatorial candidate Sheila Jones with the anti-LaRouche candidate for lieutenant governor, Sheila Smith.

Clinton proposal tilts toward natural gas

A new report from the Clinton White House, titled "Domestic Natural Gas and Oil Initiative," completely ignored widespread pleas from domestic oil producers to use an import tariff to prop up the plummeting price of oil, and proposed instead to aid oil and gas producers by simply reducing the cost of production. The report's only mention of the problem of cheap foreign oil occurs in the context of proposing to study the effects of oil imports on domestic production.

The *Houston Chronicle* noted on Dec. 9 that the report reverses the traditional emphasis of oil over gas production, and pointed out that the value of domestic gas production exceeded the value of oil production for the first time ever in 1993. "Even the

title of the 37-page document . . . illustrates the emphasis on gas in the title by reversing the traditional reference to it from oil and gas to the gas and oil business," the *Chronicle's* Washington correspondent reports.

Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary has been a strong advocate of increased natural gas use as the basis of U.S. energy policy.

Spannaus hails firing of Spagnolo

Virginia Governor-elect George Allen announced on Dec. 6 that he intends to replace Joseph Spagnolo, the controversial state superintendent of public instruction who has promulgated a variety of New Age brainwashing schemes that go under the rubric of "outcome-based education." The move follows Gov. Douglas Wilder's decision in September 1993 to cancel the state's proposed OBE program, the Common Core of Learning.

Spagnolo will be replaced by William Bosher, who as school superintendent of Henrico County, which includes the state capital, Richmond, has been a vocal fighter against OBE. Following Governor Wilder's move in September, Bosher issued a statement which demanded that not only the Common Core, but the whole World Class Education Initiative of which it is a part, and which is still intact, be changed by taking the following steps: 1) focus on standards for subject area content; 2) develop an evaluation system that reflects desired standards; 3) remove reference to values and attitudes; 4) provide localities technical assistance; and 5) conduct public hearings.

Allen's appointment was immediately hailed by Nancy Spannaus, an associate of Lyndon LaRouche, who competed for the governor's chair in the November elections as an independent. In a Dec. 8 release, Spannaus said that "two of my major campaign efforts—ending the Common Core and getting rid of Dr. Spagnolo—have now been achieved." Now Virginians will be free of Spagnolo's "persistent manipulations of the public on behalf of New Age education. It is to be hoped that many of Dr. Spagnolo's

key staffers will also leave the Department of Education." However, Spannaus cautioned that "we must avoid the trap of trying to use mere bureaucratic means to subvert New Age education, by just granting local control. Such an approach lends itself to turning schools over to local businesses, and letting them turn our children into the equivalent of indentured servants. We didn't establish our public education system to serve such a purpose."

Spannaus said she plans to run for U.S. Senate, and that she will put a focus on stopping the codification of OBE on a national level through the Education 2000 bill, which is now on the agenda for this year.

Michigan judge claims Nazi law as precedent

On Dec. 13, Wayne County Circuit Court Judge Richard Kaufman ruled that the 1927 *Buck v. Bell* U.S. Supreme Court decision, which upheld the forcible sterilization of certain women on grounds of genetic "feeble-mindedness," is proof that there exists a constitutional right to suicide.

The infamous *Buck v. Bell* decision was the inspiration for the Nazis in Germany to adopt their racial purification laws following Hitler's rise to power in 1933.

Kaufman took up the issue of the law's constitutionality after defense attorney Geoffrey Fieger asked the court to dismiss charges that serial killer Jack Kevorkian violated Michigan's assisted suicide ban in the Sept. 9 death of Donald O'Keefe, 73. Kaufman ruled that Michigan's assisted suicide ban is "unconstitutional and overbroad with respect to a person's liberty interest in committing rational suicide," and determined that suicide is a "fundamental right" based on how other rights (e.g., the *Roe v. Wade* abortion ruling) were determined: Suicide is historically rooted in our tradition and is part of "our collective conscience."

Kaufman argued that suicide has been part of western tradition from the time of Plato, the Romans, the Stoics; he also cited Tertullian's opinion that Jesus Christ's death was a suicide.

Briefly

● **THE MALTHUSIANS** are just as wrong today as Parson Thomas Malthus was 200 years ago, said NASA Administrator Daniel Goldin, writing in the newsletter of the Aerospace Industries Association. "Where the old parson erred," he wrote, "and where America's space program holds a key, is the application of science and technology."

● **WALTER ANNENBERG**, the publishing billionaire, announced on Dec. 16 that his private foundation will grant \$500 million over the next five years to "educational reform" efforts such as the New Age outcome-based education (OBE). The grant will go to three main institutions: the Coalition of Essential Schools, headed by TheodoreSizer; the New American Schools Development Corp., formed by the Bush administration to push OBE; and the Denver-based Education Commission of the States.

● **INFANT MORTALITY** of African-American infants in inner-city areas is more than double the average for white infants, according to a report from the National Commission to Prevent Infant Mortality. The rate is 17.6 deaths per 1,000, as opposed to the national total average of 8.9.

● **KIRK BLOODSWORTH**, 33, who spent nine years in a Maryland prison before DNA genetic evidence cleared him of a 1984 rape-murder charge, was pardoned on Dec. 22 by Maryland Gov. Donald Schaefer. Bloodsworth will now negotiate financial compensation from the state for the years he spent in prison, two of them on death row.

● **ONE-THIRD** of all homes and businesses in Washington, D.C. were without water on Christmas Day, after an ancient water main burst. The nation's capital city has 1,300 miles of water mains, most of which are "nearly 100 years old," according to the *Washington Post*. The city currently has no plans to renovate or replace its water mains.