

National News

Charter schools blocked by Michigan judge

Michigan Circuit Judge William Collette ruled recently to prohibit the state of Michigan from funding charter schools in a suit brought against the state, according to a Nov. 3 article in the *Washington Post*. Under the Michigan Education Reform Act sponsored by Gov. John Engler, the state was preparing to establish charter schools, which are a small step away from privatization.

Judge Collette ruled that a public school must be under the immediate, exclusive control of the state in order to constitutionally receive state funding, and must be open to all students. The suit alleged that the charter school plan was tantamount to spending state money on private education. Charter schools can be started by any number of institutions or groups and are free of the regulations which govern public schools. They can set their own hours and yearly schedule, and can set their own education agenda.

Massachusetts has approved 15 applications for charter schools, New Mexico 26, California 100.

Elected reps call for LaRouche's exoneration

The names of over 300 elected and government officials from around the world appeared in an Open Letter to President Clinton on Nov. 4, calling on the President to exonerate Lyndon LaRouche. The letter was published as a full-page ad in the *Washington Post*.

Those signing the ad, purchased by the Schiller Institute, include 103 sitting state legislators from 31 states and eight current MPs in Canada. The European signers included sitting parliamentarians from the European Parliament, Armenia, Austria, Bosnia, France, Hungary, Italy, Poland, San Marino, Slovakia, Switzerland, and Ukraine. Ibero-American countries represented were: Brazil, Colombia, Mexico,

Panama, Peru, and Venezuela. The call is also endorsed by current parliamentarians from: Algeria, Australia, India, Iraq, Jordan, Malaysia, Niger, Pakistan, Sudan, and Taiwan. Former Presidents of Argentina and of Panama are also endorsers.

In Virginia, five LaRouche associates are serving sentences of up to 77 years as part of the frameup that also jailed LaRouche from 1989 to 1994. The *Lynchburg News Advance* targeted City Councilman Junius Haskins, who signed the ad, noting that "Haskins' political opponents may use the ad to brand him politically. But Haskins, who was elected to council as an independent, but who is often identified as a Democrat, said his involvement in the ad shouldn't be seen as support for LaRouche. Rather, he said, he sees it as a questioning of the legal process that jailed LaRouche for five years."

The article quotes from the ad, notably the part which states that the government "knew at all relevant times . . . that Lyndon LaRouche and his co-defendants were innocent of the false charges for which they were convicted."

Vast rise in violent crime termed a myth

According to a front-page article in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* on Oct. 30, the allegation of skyrocketing rates of violent crime in America today—which is driving the neo-conservative fear-mongering to build prisons and implement capital punishment—is a myth. The article by David Zucchino, a Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter for the *Inquirer*, was reported in the *Washington Post*.

Zucchino wrote that violent crime has actually decreased between 1973 and the present; what has increased is the use of guns and the number of black youths who are killed. He provided the following statistics:

From 1973 to 1992, aggravated assault and robbery went down 11%; burglary, larceny, and auto theft went down 30%; rape went down 28%; and homicides dropped 9% between 1980 and 1992. By contrast, the homicide rate for black youths between the

ages of 15 and 24 increased, rising from 60 deaths per 100,000 in 1950 to 140 deaths per 100,000 in 1990. The rate for white males has remained steady at close to 20 per 100,000 during the '80s and '90s.

Since the incarceration rate for blacks is more than seven times that of whites, the *Post* account concluded that it is young black males who "have every reason to feel unsafe, whether it is because they face death or incarceration."

Minnesota fines 'toxic' athletic shoemaker

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency and the office of Minnesota Attorney General Hubert "Skip" Humphrey have fined California shoe manufacturer L.A. Gear, Inc. \$70,000, because the company did not warn consumers that two types of athletic shoes contain one-half gram of mercury in an electric switch that activates a small light in each shoe, and therefore that the shoes cannot be disposed of as garbage.

Both agencies cited alleged violations of trade, consumer protection, and environmental protection statutes, according to the November-December issue of *Enviroline*. Minnesota law requires such labeling, because any mercury is considered hazardous. As a result of the case, the Minnesota governor signed a law banning the sale of apparel that contains mercury.

Barr pushes new prison study for neo-cons

The neo-conservative American Legislative Exchange Council held a press conference in Washington, D.C. on Nov. 4, featuring Bush Attorney General William Barr, to plug a new study allegedly proving that rising incarceration rates cuts the rate of crime. The fact that incarceration rates have had no effect on crime has been an embarrassment for the neo-conservatives, who advocate building more prisons—and often as not are tied to those who have financial interests in private prison management companies.

Barr endorses prison privatization, as does the study.

Barr, who co-chaired Virginia's commission to abolish parole (see *EIR Feature*, Oct. 21), and is now an adviser to the ALEC Foundation, wrote the foreword to "Report Card on Crime and Punishment," which creates a "criminal incarceration rate" to prove, as Barr wrote, that "increasing prison capacity is the single most effective strategy for controlling crime." ALEC's new "criminal incarceration rate" is derived by dividing the number of prisoners by the number of crimes reported in the FBI's annual Crime Index.

Alvin J. Bronstein of the American Civil Liberties Union National Prison Project denounced the study as "voodoo criminology," according to the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*. Dr. Christopher Baird, of the National Council on Crime and Delinquency, said, "This is one more version of the same overly simplistic type of analysis that has been periodically rehashed since the Reagan administration. It is not research; no serious study of crime would analyze its relationship to punishment without considering other measures of social change."

Energy Sec'y O'Leary: I'm not being replaced

Speaking at a National Electricity Forum in Washington on Nov. 1, Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary sought to "scotch the rumors" about her being replaced. "I'm not going anywhere," she told over 800 utility industry and regulatory representatives. O'Leary has opposed the Clinton administration's nuclear foreign policy initiatives for North Korea and Ukraine, and has presided over the continued takedown of high-technology civilian energy R&D in the department's budget.

There is no doubt O'Leary has felt some heat because of her approach. A recent issue of the newsletter published by Fusion Power Associates reported that Department of Energy R&D programs have declined fivefold since 1978, and that in response, O'Leary formed a "Task Force on Strategic Energy Research and Development" to carry out a review of DOE programs. Former Depart-

ment of Energy fusion official Steve Dean, who heads Fusion Power Associates, has been appointed to the 31-member task force. He reported that at its first meeting on Oct. 12, members suggested that the DOE needed to see programs through to completion, "rather than ramping programs up and down based on their current political popularity." These have been described as "technologies du jour." The only increase in energy R&D funding under O'Leary's tenure has been for environmental programs.

Washington celebrates Friedrich Schiller Day

Washington, D. C. Mayor Sharon Pratt Kelly issued the following proclamation on Nov. 8, declaring Nov. 10 Friedrich Schiller Day:

"Whereas, November 10, 1994, marks the 235th anniversary of the birthday of the great German poet, Friedrich Schiller; and

"Whereas, poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world and the literary works of this universal poet inspired multitudes of people to give their actions in life the direction toward the good; and

"Whereas, the poetry and plays of Friedrich Schiller defied every man's right to seek freedom from oppression and became a rallying symbol for the United States on the eve of the Civil War and were regarded by Union supporters as an expression of universal freedom and the nobility of man; and

"Whereas, Friedrich Schiller's poem 'Ode to Joy,' which reads in part, 'All men shall become brothers,' as set in Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, has emerged as the new international hymn of political freedom; and

"Whereas, the universal truths embodied in the poetry and drama of Friedrich Schiller continue to maintain a precious bond:

"Now, therefore, I, the mayor of the District of Columbia, do hereby proclaim November 10, 1994, 'Friedrich Schiller Day' in Washington, D.C., and call upon all the residents of this city to join me in honoring this universal poet, who continuously strove to uphold the dignity of men with his art."

Briefly

● **THE U.S. AGENCY** for International Development is subsidizing a program to pump millions of condoms into Haiti ostensibly to curb AIDS. The program is being operated under the "benevolence" of one Phil Harvey of North Carolina, who runs a mail-order business in "sex toys" and pornographic videos. Harvey is under investigation by the Justice Department.

● **JIM WYRICK**, the LaRouche Democrat who ran against Republican incumbent Jennifer Dunn in Washington State's 8th Congressional District on Nov. 8, won 33% of the vote. Although Wyrick was the Democratic Party nominee, the local party organization had issued a statement urging Democrats not to vote in the 8th CD race.

● **JEB BUSH** told ABC interviewer Sam Donaldson, "I love my father so much, I would kill for him," during a "Prime Time Live" interview on Nov. 3.

● **MANUEL NORIEGA** refuted Oliver North's account of their 1986 meeting, in which North lied that he lectured the Panamanian general on drugs. Noriega, imprisoned since December 1989 in Miami, told CNN, in an interview broadcast on Nov. 4, that North had spread out a map of Nicaragua and pointed to specific targets that he wanted Noriega and the Panamanian military to "sabotage."

● **CUYAHOGA** County, Ohio, which includes the city of Cleveland, lost \$14.6 million in early November after it sold county-held bonds at a loss to bail out the collapsed county run "SAFE" investment fund. Cuyahoga's new financial advisers think the county may have to lose another \$116 million. The fund invested on behalf of about 90 other government entities.

● **AMELIA** Boynton Robinson's three-act musical drama, "Through the Years," will be performed in Washington on Nov. 26 by the Schiller Institute. The veteran civil rights activist wrote the play in 1936.