

National News

L.A. County starts its budget-cutting plunge

Los Angeles County, accelerating its slide into bankruptcy, sent out 1,848 layoff notices to county employees on July 17. This was the first wave of layoffs, dictated by an austerity plan which calls for eliminating at least 10,000 jobs from the county's workforce of 86,000. Of those laid off, 1,782 were with the Department of Public Social Services, which oversees many programs providing assistance to the poor.

The county government also decided to close Olive View Medical Center, the only county hospital in the densely populated San Fernando Valley, in order to chop another \$300 million from the budget. Olive View currently handles 81,000 emergency room visits a year. More cuts in health care are expected, to balance a \$665 million deficit in the county Health Department's budget.

Clinton urges economic strategy for equality

During his July 19 speech at the National Archives in Washington, President Clinton suggested that civil rights could not be safeguarded simply by legislation, especially without an economic strategy to lift people out of poverty.

Addressing the issue of affirmative action legislation, which some in Congress wish to do away with entirely, the President declared that it "does not mean—and I don't favor—the unjustified preference of the unqualified over the qualified of any race or gender. It doesn't mean—and I don't favor—numerical quotas. It doesn't mean—and I don't favor—rejection or selection of any employee or student solely on the basis of race or gender without regard to merit."

The legal tool called "affirmative action," Clinton said, emerged as a "middle ground" between "two unacceptable paths. One was to say, simply, that we declared discrimination illegal, and that's enough. We saw that that way still relegated blacks

with college degrees to jobs as railroad porters, and kept women with degrees under a glass ceiling, with a lower paycheck. The other path was simply to try to impose change by leveling draconian penalties on employers who didn't meet certain imposed, ultimately arbitrary, and sometimes unachievable quotas. That, too, was rejected out of a sense of fairness."

What is needed, Clinton said, is an economic strategy "that reverses the decline in wages and the growth of poverty among working people. Without that, women, minorities, and white males will all be in trouble in the future." He added that it is "wrong to use the anxieties of the middle class to divert the American people from the real causes of their economic stress, the sweeping, historic changes taking all the globe in its path, and the specific policies, or lack of them, in our own country which have aggravated those challenges."

Farrakhan calls for march in Washington

At a press conference in Washington, D.C. on July 19, Nation of Islam Minister Louis Farrakhan and the Rev. Ben Chavis, former chairman of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), announced plans for a "Million Man March for Atonement," to take place in the nation's capital on Oct. 16. The march leaders also met to discuss preparations with Mayor Marion Barry and other city officials.

Although the *Washington Post* and other media sought to portray the march as a "black only" affair, Minister Farrakhan made it clear, at an evening meeting of over 300 organizers for the event, that it was open to all. "I'm not going to stop anyone from attending this march," Farrakhan said. "I just want to be sure that there are a million black men there, no matter *who* else shows up."

Elaborating on the theme of atonement, Farrakhan declared, "Black men are in trouble. There was a time when no black man would be allowed to have a gun. Now, they flood the communities, so much so that our own leaders call for the National Guard to

come in and slaughter their own people, to bring order. . . . We have become estranged from God, and therefore, estranged from ourselves. We must atone, that we may, then, atone with God, atone with one another. This is to bring men from all over the world together, at a time when the world has seen us in the image of 'Boyz in the Hood,' 'Menace 2 Society,' 'New Jack City,' and other popular films."

Farrakhan emphasized that all the men in the march "should register to vote. I hope that they will register 'Independent.' There are 8 million blacks that are not registered. . . . We intend to work out an agenda for our people. Never again should any politician be able to take us for granted." Of the need to exert a moral force in political affairs, Farrakhan said, "African-Americans are in the most powerful position of any minority in the world. . . . We could say to our government, 'No more will we be the articulators of a foreign policy that we do not formulate.' Thus, we can ease the burden on the people of Africa, the Mideast, and South America."

Among the clergy supporting Farrakhan's initiative is the Rev. James Bevel—formerly director of direct action for Dr. Martin Luther King; 1992 candidate for vice president on the independent ticket headed by Lyndon LaRouche; and chairman of the Declaration of Independence Co-Signers' Convention. Bevel, who co-formulated the idea of the March for Atonement with Minister Farrakhan, attended the evening organizing meeting on July 19.

Clinton hears Catholic critics of welfare bill

President Clinton met with officials of Catholic Charities and two U.S. Roman Catholic Bishops on July 12 to discuss their objections to some of the so-called welfare reforms currently proposed in Congress. According to a Catholic News Service wire on July 20, Clinton told the group he would veto the final bill if it resembles the legislation already passed by the House.

The House bill, H.R. 4, contains several of the provisions Catholic Charities most

strongly opposes, including plans to turn funding for federal programs, such as food stamps and family assistance, into block grants to the states, and to penalize welfare mothers who have additional children.

The report noted that the New Jersey Department of Human Services has found that the state's 18-month-old "family cap" program, which eliminates subsidies for newborn children of women on welfare, has not reduced out-of-wedlock births. The department also found that the rate of abortions had increased among women on welfare, while it declined during the same period among other segments of the population.

Bishop Joseph M. Sullivan of Brooklyn, New York, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops' liaison to Catholic Charities, declared after meeting with Clinton, "It is possible to 'end welfare as we know it' without destroying the basic income support the federal government provides for America's neediest families and children. . . . The question is whether we are a national community caring for its least members, or a nation of individuals isolated from one another's needs."

Murdoch set to launch new magazine in D.C.

Australian media mogul Rupert Murdoch, whose myriad outlets frequently spread British propaganda and disinformation, has invested \$3 million to underwrite a new Washington magazine called *The Standard*. The *New York Times* reported on July 23 that the magazine will hit the stands shortly after Labor Day. It will be edited by William Kristol, who was former Vice President Dan Quayle's chief of staff, and whose father Irving is often called (among other things) the inventor of neo-conservatism.

Murdoch is scheduled to appear before the House ethics committee on Aug. 8, to answer questions about his company's lucrative book deal with House Speaker Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.). The same week, Republican lawmakers will be trying to push through a telecommunications bill, which includes provisions which would let the media baron buy still more TV stations and newspapers in the United States. The *Times*

reported that Murdoch contributed \$100,000 as one of nine honorary chairmen of a fund-raising dinner held in June for House GOPers.

Murdoch will also sponsor a dinner in August for Senate Commerce Committee Chairman Larry Pressler (R-S.D.), the leading backer of proposals to ease restrictions on foreign ownership of U.S. media. Murdoch already has 20-25% ownership stakes in a string of U.S. television stations, which reach roughly 35% of the population.

New wave of threats from eco-terrorists reported

A pattern of threats of violence by environmentalists against loggers and government officials has recently been reported in Idaho—and the pawprints of Britain's Prince Philip are all over it.

Idaho's *Lewiston Morning Tribune* reported on July 19 that several area offices of the U.S. Forest Service, as well as the Idaho County Sheriff's Department, received threatening letters the previous week, demanding a ban on logging in the Cove-Mallard timber sale region of the Nez Perce National Forest. The letters also warned that trees there had been implanted with ceramic spikes—an eco-terrorist tactic designed to shatter chainsaws on contact, and maim the loggers using them.

On July 11, eco-terrorist Ric Valois was arrested for blocking a logging road by chaining himself to a gate. According to the July 12 *Idaho Free Press*, he told the federal judge during his arraignment in Boise that "some people were going to get hurt, others were going to die, and that the ballistic vests worn by law enforcement officers were not going to be sufficient because they will or could be shot in the head."

Valois is a close associate of Jake Krelick, a leader of the self-professed terrorist group Earth First! and co-founder and present head of the Native Forest Network. Among the founders of NFN in 1990 were Earth First!, the Rainforest Action Network, and the Australian Conservation Foundation. ACF was founded in 1963 by Prince Philip, who also served as its chairman from 1971-76.

Briefly

● **ALAN GREENSPAN** must be reappointed as Federal Reserve chairman, the *Baltimore Sun* decreed in a July 20 editorial. Echoing Greenspan's own lunatic defense of the financial system currently plunging the world toward catastrophe, the *Sun* praised his "upbeat assessment of the economy" as "a prescription for an ideal 'soft landing.'" The *Sun* warned President Clinton not to dump Greenspan, whose term as chairman expires next year.

● **LOW-INCOME HOUSING** in the United States is in critically short supply, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities reported on July 24. An unprecedented lack of affordable housing is forcing many poor families to spend at least half their incomes on rent. Based on the 1993 Census, the study found there were only 6.5 million low-rent units available, for more than 11.2 million low-income renters—the widest gap on record.

● **THE UNABOMBER** "is surely alone, burning with resentment, one man against the world," the *Washington Post* declared on July 20, while denouncing the FBI for investigating possible links of eco-terrorist or anarchist groups to the bombings. Such groups are non-violent and merely "oppose the economic machine that is devouring the planet," the *Post* ranted.

● **RUPERT MURDOCH'S** *New York Post* on July 20 printed Margaret Thatcher's lying letter supporting an end to the Bosnian arms embargo. Alleging her "horror" over Serb atrocities, Thatcher omitted her own government's role in initiating them, and British obstruction of U.S. and NATO efforts to end them.

● **WASHINGTON** Mayor Marion Barry rejected on July 25 demands by the D.C. financial control board that he eliminate 5,600 municipal jobs. The proposal, he said, "is not scientific." The *Washington Post* called Barry's response a "mockery," "an insult," and "pompous."