

National News

Law journal cites Bush's evading Contra charges

The Nov. 4 issue of the *National Law Journal*, reviewing the history of the use of Presidential pardons, recounts the fact that "two weeks before leaving office," President Bush pardoned six of the so-called "Iran-Contra" defendants, including former Defense Secretary Casper Weinberger. "Scheduled to testify at Mr. Weinberger's trial a week later," the law journal notes, "Mr. Bush would have been cross-examined about the truthfulness of his own statements on Iran-Contra."

Shutting down any further legal investigation and prosecution of his cronies in the affair, Bush stated in his declaration of pardon, "The common denominator of their motivation—whether their actions were right or wrong—was patriotism." And, decreed Sir George, all of them "had already paid the price," of "depleted savings, lost careers [and] anguished families . . . grossly disproportionate to any misdeeds or errors of judgment."

Former diplomat says U.S. knew Contras ran cocaine

Robert White, U.S. ambassador to El Salvador under President Carter, told the Women's Democratic Club in Washington Oct. 29, that there is no doubt that the Nicaraguan Contras "brought huge amounts of cocaine into the United States" during the 1980s. "I also believe people in the Central Intelligence Agency and people in responsible posts in government knew about this and looked the other way."

White said that charges of CIA involvement in launching the crack cocaine epidemic in Los Angeles "remain unproved" and are probably overstated. But, he added, if the CIA's internal review "includes, as it should, Contra drug-running into Florida and other cities, the results of the investigation could be and should be dramatically different." Even more dramatic, as *EIR* has docu-

mented, would be an investigation of the role of then-Vice President George Bush, independently of the CIA, in directing Contra cocaine-trafficking into the United States.

In response to a question, White also said "that open hearings are an excellent idea, and I worry very much that this internal CIA investigation . . . will answer very narrow questions and will not treat of the legitimate concerns of . . . the black community, because as Jack Blum pointed out, in this country we have a particular definition of the cocaine problem; and that is, if you are an addict you only get in trouble if you violate the law by stealing money in order to feed your habit. If you're a doctor or a lawyer with ample resources, then you are not a problem, by the definition of our society. . . . I think there is a need for a catharsis, to find out indeed what were our officials doing during this cocaine import by the Contras and people associated with them during the 1980s."

Federal judge defends Medicare against HMOs

In a victory for Medicare recipients against managed-care systems, U.S. District Court Judge Alfredo C. Marquez ruled in Tucson, Arizona, Oct. 30, that Medicare patients enrolled in Health Maintenance Organizations are entitled to immediate hearings whenever they are denied medical services.

Judge Marquez rejected arguments from the Clinton administration, which had joined the HMO industry in arguing that Medicare patients are on their own once they join HMOs. The judge declared that, when HMOs deny services to Medicare patients, they are acting for the federal government—because the government pays for covered services. Thus, their decisions amount to government action; and beneficiaries are entitled to "due process of law," including full notice of adverse decisions, and meaningful opportunity to challenge the denial of care.

Four million of the nation's 38 million Medicare beneficiaries are currently in HMOs; and more recipients, especially those who are poor, are being offered the option every week, by states seeking to cut

costs. Ironically, the court decision may contribute to this trend, according to the *New York Times*, because elderly people will feel assured that they can join HMOs, without losing the rights available to patients in the traditional Medicare program, which costs more to join.

In his decision, Judge Marquez reviewed a number of cases in which HMOs had been asked to reconsider decisions denying care. "HMO reconsideration approximates a 'rubber stamp' of the initial denial," he said. "This has grave consequences, because an HMO denial may mean the enrollee will go without medically necessary service."

NASA involves students in tests of Mars rover

Approximately 200 students in the Tuba City, Arizona school system were invited to take part beginning Nov. 1 in NASA field tests of a Russian-designed Mars rover. The remote-control tests were conducted on the Navajo Reservation near Flagstaff, which has a terrain similar to Mars.

Using computers in their schools, the students were allowed to navigate the rover *Marsokhod*, which is equipped with a robotic arm to pick up rock and sediment samples. The rover's stereo video cameras could also send live images to scientists at the NASA Ames Research Center in California. At the Ames "mission control station," Russian engineers from the Lavochkin Association in Moscow, who developed the rover, are working with several Navajo students along with NASA specialists. NASA scientists were scheduled to conduct their own tests with the rover Nov. 4-9; another educational outreach activity with Arizona school students was set for Nov. 12.

Dr. Carol Stoker, a planetary scientist from Ames, considers the Navajo Indian reservation an excellent analog for Martian terrain, and a good choice to "give a community that is not extensively involved in space exploration a first-hand, up-close and personal kind of experience with NASA scientists in the field." Stoker commented: "You'd think that going out into the middle of a desert, people there would not necessarily be inter-

Briefly

REGISTERED NURSES charge that managed-care systems are endangering their patients, according to the Nov. 1 issue of the *American Journal of Nursing*. Of 7,355 nurses responding to a survey, 40% said their medical center was replacing registered nurses with unlicensed assistants, more than half reported an increase in patient and family complaints, 73% said they had less time to provide basic nursing care.

GOV. GEORGE ALLEN of Virginia grudgingly commuted the sentence for death-row inmate Joseph Payne to life imprisonment Nov. 6, on the eve of Payne's scheduled execution for murder. Allen complained that the public campaign for clemency by Payne's attorneys—backed by another man's confession to the crime, appeals from the murder victim's family, and jurors' affidavits repudiating their verdicts in the trial—was "a very poor and wrong approach."

LEGALIZING MARIJUANA for medical use is "a stalking horse" for general use of dangerous drugs, White House anti-drug coordinator Gen. Barry McCaffrey declared Nov. 7. McCaffrey told NBC Today that the claims behind referenda approved in California and Arizona were "a hoax," and that Arizona's measure apparently backed "the use of heroin, methamphetamines, LSD, and other drugs—again, for allegedly medical purposes."

THE AFL-CIO Executive Council will announce its agenda for the new Congress and the Clinton administration on Dec. 16. President John Sweeney says its meeting will take place at a "relevant" site, instead of the Bar Harbour, Florida watering hole resorted to by his predecessor, Lane Kirkland.

THE GLOBAL SURVEYOR spacecraft was launched from Cape Canaveral Nov. 6, beginning its 10-month cruise to Mars to undertake an orbital geological study. NASA plans a manned landing by 2020.

ested in space exploration. However, what I found is that there is a tremendous amount of excitement about space travel. It was just like I'd walked into the next building back at Ames and was talking to a bunch of rocket scientists."

GOP official predicts new Starr indictments

William Bennett, the vice chairman of the Dole campaign, declared Nov. 3 on CNN's "Late Edition," that Whitewater special prosecutor Kenneth Starr would issue new indictments aimed at President Clinton after the elections. Former New York Gov. Mario Cuomo demanded to know, "where is the legal proof?" and told Bennett that "you haven't been able to show it for four years." Bennett insisted nonetheless, "Well, we will show it to you then within a few weeks or a few months. There will be indictments."

Later in the broadcast, Bennett complained about "what we heard this morning on another network, which is that if Clinton is elected, we may see . . . Ken Starr get fired, the independent counsel get fired. But you can sure anticipate a lot of trouble. There will be a lot of hearings. There will be a lot of committees. There will be a lot of indictments, and who knows what else."

Virginia sees welfare jobs in ousting illegals

Virginia hopes to lead the nation in implementing a joint federal-state program to place people on the unemployed or welfare rolls into jobs previously held by illegal aliens, the *Washington Times* claimed Nov. 3. The scheme is based upon a joint operation by the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) with state agencies.

INS officials will notify Virginia's Department of Social Services and Employment Commission of job openings created by raids on work-sites where "illegal aliens" have been employed. The names and addresses of the employers will be entered in Virginia's jobs data base, and social workers

will process "qualified" people to apply for these jobs.

Robert Metcalf, Virginia secretary of health and human services, claims that 333 illegal aliens were found in jobs which could have been filled by people who were on welfare or were unemployed. "It's a new source of jobs for people," he says. The "new" jobs will also feed into Virginia's workfare program, which currently includes about 90,000 persons who must find jobs in the private or the public sector—or have their assistance cut off.

INS Commissioner Doris Meissner says that the federal government's objective is to eliminate places where illegal aliens can work, and "to reduce the magnet of illegal employment [by] conducting work-site enforcement operations that create opportunities for qualified legal workers." During the last year, INS agents conducted 51 work-site raids in Virginia and removed 333 illegal aliens from jobs. Nationwide, 14,000 illegal workers were picked up in 4,900 raids.

FBI official admits role in Ruby Ridge cover-up

A senior FBI official pleaded guilty Oct. 30 to obstruction of justice, by concealing and destroying documents regarding an internal review of the 1992 shootout instigated by federal agents at Ruby Ridge, Idaho.

E. Michael Kahoe, the former chief of the FBI's violent crimes section, admitted preventing U.S. prosecutors from obtaining the "after action report" they needed, to prepare for the murder trial of Randy Weaver. Kahoe particularly did not want Weaver's lawyers to obtain access to the report. Weaver's wife and young son were shot to death by federal agents; Weaver was later acquitted of murder charges in the shooting of a U.S. Marshal.

Prosecutor Eric Sitarchuk said Kahoe has agreed to cooperate with an ongoing probe into whether FBI officials engaged in wrongdoing or a cover-up. Sitarchuk said Kahoe destroyed the report of the internal review, because the "FBI had problems with the Weaver case" and did not want prosecutors or the defense to know it.