

National News

Most private-sector workers get no pension

Only 43% of U.S. employees in the private sector retire with a pension from their lifelong work, according to a 1993 report, entitled "Pension & Health Benefits of American Workers," published by the Pension and Welfare Benefits Administration of the Department of Labor. As a result, many older workers are forced to take jobs, often working well into their 70s, just to survive.

The private sector employs 85% of the U.S. workforce. In private firms employing 24 or fewer workers, only 18% are covered by a pension plan. Social Security payments, even for a couple when both receive benefits, average only \$15,072 per year. With no private pension, many elderly persons cannot make ends meet. Of the current population of Americans who are 65 or older, 3.7 million, or 12.3%, report that they are still working.

NASA looking toward manned Mars mission

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration announced on March 5 that, for the first time since the 1960s Apollo program, the agency's human exploration program is working with planetary scientists on unmanned space missions. Dr. Wesley Huntress, NASA associate administrator for space science, said that the "joint effort is a sign that NASA is acquiring the information that will be needed for a national decision, perhaps in a decade or so, on whether or not to send humans to Mars."

Two NASA spacecraft will be launched to Mars during the flight opportunity in the year 2001. One will be a small orbiter, to be launched that March; and the second a small lander, which will lift off the following month. Two unmanned spacecraft, launched for Mars in 1996, will arrive this July and September; and a 1998 mission will send a lander to the Martian south pole. Japan is

also scheduled to send a spacecraft to orbit the red planet in 1998.

The Mars Surveyor 2001 lander will deliver a small, advanced rover to the surface, which will be able to collect rock and soil samples up to 50 miles from the lander, to be returned to Earth by a future robotic mission. It will also test equipment to extract carbon dioxide gas from the Martian atmosphere that can be used in rocket fuel during later manned missions.

The Mars Surveyor 2001 orbiter will use the atmosphere of Mars in an aerocapture maneuver, to slow itself down enough to be captured into orbit around Mars. It will take remote measurements of the planet, and also provide radio relay to Earth from the lander on the surface.

Sweeney launches drive for right to organize

AFL-CIO President John Sweeney has called for organized labor to go out and organize more workers into unions, particularly those in the lowest-paying jobs. Speaking at the first of 13 planned regional AFL-CIO organizing conferences, in Seattle on March 26, Sweeney declared, "We must tell the stories of these workers and thousands like them, and make the right to organize the civil rights issue of the last few years of this century."

Sweeney reminded the gathering of more than 700 union activists from throughout the Northwest, that just a few thousand more votes in November 1996 would have defeated Newt Gingrich and many of his followers; he declared that the new organizing drive would help ensure their defeat in 1998. He also announced the formation of a "new solidarity and rapid response team called 'Street Heat,'" to quickly mobilize thousands of workers to win contract campaigns and counteract the activities of union busters.

"The truth is that in this most advanced and supposedly civilized of industrial democracies, you lose all your rights when you try to join or form a union," Sweeney said, noting that 10,000 workers lose their jobs every year simply for trying to organize a

union. He called upon the activists to "roll out the heavy artillery" by shifting funds and resources into organizing. "If the labor movement is to be a strong and effective voice for workers and their families, the shouting starts here . . . right here in Seattle."

McCaffrey: Drugs won't be legalized, 'period'

Gen. Barry McCaffrey, director of the White House Office of National Drug Policy, told a meeting of the World Affairs Council in Washington on March 26, that "the American people aren't going to legalize drugs, period. I mean, you can watch the Gallup polls. You can talk to people that go to churches and work hard, and police officers. It's just not going to happen. The poll numbers are up to 85% or higher. We're not going to add another repertoire of psychoactive substances to America. We're not going to accept more dazed, drugged, stoned behavior."

McCaffrey made his remarks in response to a question from *EIR*, about speculator George Soros's funding of the California and Arizona referenda to legalize marijuana for "medical" use. "Now, having said that," McCaffrey continued, "a lot of Americans have been exposed to illegal drugs. Who knows what the number is! Fifty to 72 million have used marijuana, cocaine, whatever, and have walked away from it. It scared them. . . . Remember, this stuff killed 100,000 people in the '90s, cost us \$300 billion. And so we ended up with, by and large, a country that rejects drug abuse."

"Now, there's a lowered threshold. The baby boomers—you know, if you're white and you're 36 to 45, I think the chances are well over 60% you've used an illegal drug sometime in your life. So, that being the case, that age group is grappling with, 'What do we do about it? What do we tell our kids? What do we think about it?' And there's been a lot of confusion. I think the drug legalization forces have focussed on that confusion."

"Now, I think also there's been a way to lower the threshold by saying, 'Is smoked pot desperately needed by America's ophthalmologists and oncologists?' . . . Well,

this one's intellectually one of the few easy things in the drug problem. . . . We have a reasonably bright lad, Dr. Harold Varmus, who's the NIH director—Nobel prize laureate—he apparently knows what he's doing. Why don't we let him look at the alleged claims of medical benefits for smoked pot? And if they are found to stand clinical trials, to be subject to peer group review, if the Food and Drug Administration deduces it as a legitimate and effective drug, make it available to the American medical establishment. . . .

"It's a free country. Let's debate it. Do you want marijuana—or in the case of Arizona, Proposition 200, heroin, methamphetamines, and LSD—do you want them widely available in your neighborhood, in your school system, for your workforce? If you do, you ought to form the argument and see if you can persuade the American people. Most of us are adamantly opposed to that. . . . And I think we're going to remain opposed to the legalization of marijuana."

Noriega details how Bush framed him

Gen. Manuel Noriega, the former Panamanian leader still held as a prisoner of war in the United States, aired his own charges against ex-President George Bush during a March 19 interview on CBS-TV's worldwide Spanish-language cable network, CBS Telenoticias. The U.S. invasion of Panama, Noriega said, and his being taken as a prisoner of war by the United States, was the result of a conspiracy mounted by George Bush, "because I was no longer the 'yes man' " the United States wanted in Panama.

"It was no longer convenient for them for me to continue leading the Republic of Panama, because I was not useful to their plans. We are talking about the United States, about the U.S. 'establishment' of George Herbert Walker Bush. We are talking about that system, about Iran-Contra," Noriega declared, according to a transcript published on March 22 by *Noticias* of Argentina.

Noriega also cited the Pittsburgh *Post Gazette's* investigative report "about the

false witnesses, the paid witnesses, the witnesses in the protection program. There were witnesses serving three life sentences, who were let free solely because they testified against General Noriega."

Weather Service links deaths to cutbacks

The *Seattle Times* claimed on March 25 that ongoing cuts in the budget of the National Weather Service may have played a role in the Feb. 12 deaths of three Coast Guardsmen. On that day, the Coast Guard launched a rescue boat from La Push, Oregon, to attempt to rescue a distressed boat during a storm. The 44-foot Coast Guard lifeboat capsized repeatedly, and three Coast Guardsmen drowned. A weather buoy, 300 miles off Astoria, Oregon, which normally provides hourly information needed to warn of advancing storms, was out of service.

Due to the Contract on America's budget-cutting lunacies, the National Weather Service was prevented from making needed repairs on the weather buoy. As a result, before it departed, the crew of the Coast Guard rescue lifeboat was given a faulty forecast, about the ocean storm conditions it would be entering.

On Jan. 18-19, a frost caused \$300 million of crop damage in Florida. Farmers did not learn of the approaching frost, because Florida's agricultural weather forecasting service had been shut down—one of the casualties of a \$3 million cut in National Weather Service forecasting services. On Feb. 19, four top officials of the National Weather Service released an internal memo, obtained by the *Los Angeles Times*, which states, "We believe strongly that these decisions are ill-advised and will increase the risk of unnecessary deaths, injuries and damage. As career civil servants with many years of commitment to public safety . . . we cannot in good conscience be silent about this."

The National Weather Service recently announced further personnel cuts, in order to reduce its fiscal year 1997 budget by another 8% to \$321.8 million, a cut of \$27.5 million from its fiscal year 1996 level.

SAM NUNN, the former U.S. senator, announced during a March 30 interview on ABC-TV, that he will be taking the place of the late Paul Tsongas as head of the Concord Coalition—to continue its drive to destroy the government at all costs. Nunn praised Ross Perot for having the "courage" to tell the American people that they have to accept austerity.

CORPORATE NEWSPEAK continues to eliminate "firings" and "lay-offs" from the English language. Recent examples, cited in the March issue of the United Auto Workers *Solidarity*, include GM of Canada's "lean concept of synchronous organizational structures," Procter & Gamble's "strengthening global effectiveness," Bell Labs' reporting employees "involuntarily separated from the payroll," and Stouffer Foods' offering "schedule adjustments" to work zero hours for no money.

DEXTER KING, youngest son of Dr. Martin Luther King, does not believe that James Earl Ray killed his father. When Ray denied the crime during a recent meeting, Dexter King reportedly said, "Well, as awkward as this may seem, I want you to know that I believe you, and my family believes you, and we are going to do everything in our power to try and make sure that justice will prevail."

ANTONIN SCALIA, the Robespierre of the Supreme Court who puts "popular opinion" above the U.S. Constitution, has "a small boomlet" behind him, to become the next Republican Presidential nominee, according to Conservative Revolution propagandist Thomas Sowell.

HILLARY CLINTON addressed the Parliament of Uganda on March 28, at the final stop of her six-nation tour of Africa. She said that her husband had asked her to make clear his commitment "that he will come to Africa during his second term as President."