

# National News

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## Privatizers attack patent law protections

A fight in Congress over plans to weaken U.S. patent law and privatize the Patent and Trademark Office is brewing, with bills on both sides of the issue having had hearings in the House Judiciary Committee. Patent rights were guaranteed to inventors by the framers of the U.S. Constitution, and such protections are key in fostering a high rate of scientific and technological changes in the economy.

H.R. 400, introduced by Rep. Howard Coble (R-N.C.), would privatize the patent office, allowing appointed officers to be selected from corporations, and would reduce protection time. It would also make a key change to the patent challenge process, whereby the challenger would get access to all the information about the patent and be involved in the decision in the patent office hearings. This would allow big corporations to challenge small inventors, and effectively steal their discoveries. H.R. 400 would also make it mandatory to publish in full all patent applications after 18 months, regardless of whether they have been accepted or not, which would also make theft easier.

In opposition to this bill, Dana Rohrabacher (R-Calif.) has introduced a bill to restore patent law to the way it had been for over 100 years, before the 1994 General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade made a change in the patent laws, cutting back the length of protection. His bill, H.R. 811, is still in the Judiciary Committee, while H.R. 400 has been reported out of committee, but is not yet scheduled for further action.

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## Black farmers plan march on Washington

John Boyd, Jr., national president of the Virginia-based National Black Farmers Association, has called on all people who are concerned about the food crisis and loss of family farms to join him at the Department of Agriculture in Washington, D.C. on April 23, to protest continuing discrimination

against black farmers. He will lead the protest with his mule, to symbolize the broken promise of "40 acres and a mule" for every American, he said.

Invited speakers include Rep. Bennie Thompson (D-Miss.), Rep. Maxine Waters (D-Calif.), Rep. Eva Clayton (D-N.C.), and House Speaker Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.). Boyd had testified in March before a Congressional subcommittee about the plight of black farmers, and announced the demonstration then.

Boyd told *New Federalist*: "This is not just a black problem, this is a small farmer problem that has been occurring all across this country." Noting that the cartels direct agriculture policy, he pointed to the insanity of cartel farmer Frank Perdue getting \$17 million recently to build a processing plant in North Carolina. "Here is \$17 million that could have been used to keep the small family farmer on the farm."

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## Gingrich attacks China in speech to GOPAC

In a speech to GOPAC on April 7 in Washington, D.C., House Speaker Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.) compared the United States to the Roman Empire, and suggested that China is attempting to corrupt the United States in the same way that the Roman Empire was corrupted.

"The United States is today to the world what the Roman republic became to the Mediterranean world. We are the only superpower. We are the center of economic, political, diplomatic, and military influence," Gingrich said.

"When Rome defeated Carthage, the republic and its senate found themselves the center of power in the Mediterranean world. However, their institutions were not strong enough to withstand the influx of wealth from throughout their world. . . . Throughout the Mediterranean, rich businessmen and governments came to believe that they could bribe the Roman senate. Sending lobbyists and offering bribes to Rome became the easiest and most profitable route to wealth and power for many local leaders.

"Today the United States faces the first real experience of the challenge that con-

fronted the Roman Republic. The real core of the current investigations is not about campaign finance or about politics in any normal American sense . . . [but] the penetration of the American system by foreign businesses and foreign governments seeking to corrupt the very process by which we govern ourselves."

Gingrich then declared: "If it is proven that the Chinese Communists were trying to funnel money into a Presidential defense fund, then the Roman model of foreign corruption will indeed be raising its head within the American system."

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## Ex-CIA head promotes disarmament at UN

At a UN press briefing on April 9, former CIA Director Adm. Stansfield Turner called for creating public pressure to promote nuclear disarmament. The press conference was held in connection with representatives of 180 nations gathered at the UN to discuss the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, for the first review process since its indefinite extension in April 1995.

Turner argued that the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, which was introduced by former President George Bush, and mainly supported by Republicans, was in danger of being scrapped. He said he was alarmed by the outcome of the recent Helsinki summit between Russian President Boris Yeltsin and U.S. President William Clinton.

"We need to find a new process," Turner said, and proposed that President Clinton initiate a program of "strategic escrow" which would remove warheads from operational weapons, and place them in storage, where they could be observed. All Clinton has to do is to order that the United States take down 1,000 warheads, under the eyes of Russian observers, and then ask the Russians to do the same, he said. This could then be followed by other "slices" of warheads, he said.

"We don't know what is going to happen in Russia in the next 10 years. We don't know what is going to happen in China in the future," he said.

Turner, who was CIA Director under Democrat Jimmy Carter, was joined by Aus-

tralian Ambassador Richard Butler, who convened the Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons in the summer of 1996.

## States seek to delay food stamp cutoff

April 1 was the deadline, set by the 1996 federal welfare reform act, for the cutoff of a million legal immigrants from the federal food stamp program. About half the \$54.6 billion in six-year savings in the welfare bill came from denying food stamps and disability aid to legal immigrants. Governors in 34 states and the District of Columbia have announced that they will take advantage of an option in the law that allows them to keep legal residents in the program until Aug. 22, but the delay affects only those who were receiving food stamps on Aug. 22, 1996, when the welfare law was signed. Legal immigrants who have applied for benefits since that date are not eligible, and have been turned away. However, states can extend their own benefits to replace the federal benefits, to the extent to which they have money to do so.

Advocates for the poor and immigrants filed suit in New York and California in early April to block the law, charging that denying benefits to legal immigrants was unconstitutional.

## IISS, Cato predict Persian Gulf conflicts

On April 8, Lawrence Tal, a research fellow at London's International Institute of Strategic Studies, told an audience at the Cato Institute in Washington, D.C., that border conflicts were going to characterize instability in the Persian Gulf in the short to medium term. He said the causes of border disputes have little to do with lines on maps, but rather are exacerbated and militarized as the result of internal economic and political pressures within the countries involved. He said that Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait was the result of such pressures, calling it a "raid on the banks" to help recoup the costs of the

1980-88 Iran-Iraq War.

Tal laid out four possible conflict scenarios for the Gulf. The first one is a re-igniting of the Iraq-Kuwait conflict, which he described as "cyclical, due to Iraqi belief that Kuwait is part of Iraq." The second is the Iran-Iraq conflict, which could result from a shift in the balance of power which convinces the stronger side to press its claims in the border areas. The third is around the Gulf island of Abu Moussa, which Iran occupied militarily in 1971 in the aftermath of British withdrawal from the region, and the last is a current territorial dispute between Qatar and Bahrain. Qatar, he said, has appealed to the International Court of Justice at the Hague, but Bahrain does not recognize the Hague's jurisdiction, and Saudi Arabia is backing Bahrain in the dispute.

Such "predictions" are usually to be read as statements of intent by geopoliticians. In fact, there is a process of reconciliation going on between most of the nations in the Gulf, notably Saudi Arabia and Iran.

## PBS's Frontline takes aim at Salinas networks

In a development that holds promise for further action against the networks of drug kingpin George Bush, the Frontline program of the Public Broadcasting System (PBS) ran a feature story on the international drug-trafficking and money-laundering ring of the Mexican Salinas family, on April 8.

While the emphasis was on the case of Raúl Salinas, the older brother of former Mexican President Carlos Salinas, the show raised the question as to what the former President and member of the Dow Jones board might know. Carlos Salinas, pictured in the show giving a sombrero to President Bush, refused to be interviewed on the record.

Frontline interviewed Dr. Valentin Roschacher, the Swiss national police chief of the Central Office for Narcotics, who is in charge of investigating Raúl Salinas's bank accounts, and who stated that the \$100 million Salinas had in Swiss bank accounts, was mostly from drug trafficking. Citibank's role in setting up Raúl Salinas's finances was also mentioned in the special.

## Briefly

**REP. FRANK WOLF**, a board member of Christian Solidarity International and promoter of destabilization of China and Sudan, was confronted by a truth squad from the FDR Political Action Committee, at town meetings he held in his Virginia district in early April. Wolf's hypocrisy was especially highlighted by his lack of concern for the foreign invasion of Sudan, and for human rights violations in his own district, namely, the case of Lyndon LaRouche.

**PRESIDENT CLINTON** could "govern much as Franklin D. Roosevelt," if he's faced with a "national crisis of undisputed dimensions," writes former Labor Secretary Robert Reich in his new book on the Clinton Presidency.

**TWO PROSECUTORS** in the Lost Trust case, a South Carolina federal sting which has been overturned by 4th Circuit Judge Falcon Hawkins, have filed personal notices of appeal in the case. The federal authorities have preserved their right to appeal, as well.

**REP. TOM DELAY** has reintroduced his bill for radical deregulation of the electric utility industry. Delay, a Republican from Texas, is widely thought to be interested in doing favors for the nation's largest private energy company, the Texas-based Enron Corp.

**WHITE HOUSE** spokesman Mike McCurry, under pressure from the press to explain why there were 200 articles written attacking Webster Hubbell, if there was no scandal, reminded the journalists: "Allegations appearing in print is different from something being true. You know, I think some people in this room have a little hard time remembering that . . . it's not the same thing."

**THE TOKAMAK FUSION** Test Reactor at Princeton University was shut down on April 3, at the conclusion of its final experimental run. Funds to continue its operation were dropped from this year's budget.