

National News

Bay Area Rapid Transit workers win strike

Some 2,600 union workers at Bay Area Rapid Transit in greater San Francisco won a week-old strike for higher wages and against the system's two-tier wage system, after walking off the job on Sept. 7 when talks broke down. The strike, by train mechanics and operators belonging to Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1555 and Service Employees Local 790, caused massive commuter nightmares. Local 2993 of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, representing station agents and train operators, honored the picket lines.

The decision to strike was inspired by the Teamsters' recent victory over a two-tier wage system at UPS, which denied benefits to "part-time" workers (some working as much as 37-hour weeks); BART employees hired during the past two years—nearly a quarter of the system's workforce—were paid less than their veteran counterparts for doing the same work, a concession won by management in 1994 negotiations. After the Teamsters' victory against UPS, transit union leaders decided to try to win equality in wages for their workers. They rejected a management offer that includes a 3% annual pay raise over three years, demanding 5% and wage equality.

Friends worldwide toast LaRouche at 75 years

Friends of Lyndon LaRouche internationally gathered in celebration, and presented him with a *Festschrift* book of greetings, thoughts, and fond remembrances, on his 75th birthday on Sept. 8. In presenting him the *Festschrift* in Washington, D.C., Schiller Institute Vice President Marianna Wertz told him: "This *Festschrift* radiates the love that the writers have for you, and for all that you have done for them, and for the world." The 250-page book included a prayer for him from Mother Teresa, which she composed shortly before her death.

The festivities were opened by Helga

Zepp LaRouche, who described her husband as the "most beautiful soul and the most outstanding individual of our time." The opening toast was offered by the internationally renowned baritone William Warfield, who led the gathering of about 150 in singing "The Battle Hymn of the Republic." Jozef Miklosko, who had been vice premier in the first post-communist government of Czechoslovakia, served as master of ceremonies. Recalling his visit to LaRouche in prison, he said that five years in jail was a long time: "It was necessary to suffer, but we are now stronger. . . . You drank of your cup, your Gethsemane."

Musical gifts of Classical songs, including numerous Negro Spirituals, and instrumental pieces were performed by artists ranging from an eight-year-old violinist to members of LaRouche's generation, such as accompanist Sylvia Olden Lee and William Warfield.

In LaRouche's impromptu remarks, he challenged all those present to be artists, in the sense of knowing how to reach into the mind of another person, and to bring forth within that person an idea which he or she needs. "We have to all be artists in that sense," LaRouche told the celebrants. The *Festschrift* was testimony to LaRouche's own artistry in that sense, containing contributions from more than 130 individuals, from every continent. State legislators, members of parliament, former congressmen, artists, economists, and religious figures were among those who expressed their appreciation for LaRouche's historical role in current history.

Virginia prison business open for slave labor

Virginia's Gov. George Allen (R), and his hand-picked Republican successor for the November elections, Attorney General Jim Gilmore, are shamelessly promoting the favorable business climate of "Virginia Correctional Enterprises" (VCE). Nancy Spannaus, the LaRouche Democrat running for Congress in Northern Virginia's 10th C.D. against incumbent Frank Wolf, blasted the two for pushing a "Nazi policy of slave labor for all Virginians. . . . It was precisely this

inducement of getting the cheapest labor possible, that the Nazis used to bring industry behind the prison walls, as at Auschwitz. Eventually they cheapened their labor costs, by working their prisoners to death."

Spannaus's charges are confirmed by VCE's promotional literature, which boasts: "They have miles of razor wire and foreboding walls and towers. Yet the doors to Virginia prisons are wide open to business. And here's what successful joint venture companies are finding inside.

"Over 380,000 square feet of production space with 138,000 more planned. Sophisticated equipment, particularly in wood, metal, and textile manufacturing. And willing, experienced workers who actually compete for jobs." So-called employer benefits include: "No benefit package (retirement pay, vacation pay, sick leave, medical benefits); builds a consistent qualified work force; on-call labor pool (no car breakdowns, no babysitting problems); option of hiring job-ready ex-offenders and minimizing costs." Elsewhere, the promo directly compares costs for inmate versus non-inmate labor.

And then, for the sake of all those like Frank Wolf, who professes shock over international sale of products made by prison labor in countries such as China, but remains silent about the gross human rights violations in Virginia's justice system, VCE boasts to its would-be business partners, that "all products of our joint venture will be yours to distribute domestically or internationally."

Pat Robertson worms his way into Catholic Church

In response to a sycophantic interview with Keith Fournier, president of the Catholic Alliance in the *Arlington Catholic Herald* of Aug. 28, a reader blasted the group as a front for Pat Robertson's Christian Coalition. Fournier, who lives in the Arlington, Virginia diocese, was recently installed as a deacon in the parish where Supreme Court Associate Justice Antonin Scalia is a prominent member.

An international lawyer who travels extensively in Ibero-America wrote to the *Her-*

TEXAS EXECUTED its 26th victim on Sept. 9, setting a record for the year, already. James Carl Lee Davis last year won a stay of execution after challenging a new Texas law streamlining death row appeals. The law was expected to shorten the stay on death row from an average nine years to as little as three. The case had all but halted executions in the state.

PAULA JONES'S lawyers were allowed by a Federal judge to withdraw from her sexual harassment suit against President Clinton on Sept. 10. The two cited "fundamental differences of opinion" with their client. A third, Daniel Traylor, technically still in the case, said months ago he was quitting. In June, he cited inconsistencies in her account, including the fact that she made no mention of the President's alleged "distinguishing characteristics" until four months after Traylor joined her team.

SUSAN MCDUGAL'S family called for her release from prison on Sept. 7, saying the victim of White-water prosecutor Kenneth Starr is a "political prisoner." She has been held for contempt of court for a year now, because she refused to lie to Starr about Bill and Hillary Clinton. "Kenneth Starr is lower than a worm, and he'll never get any higher," said her father James Henley.

UNITED AUTO WORKERS opposed Congressional fast-tracking of the North American Free Trade Agreement expansion, in the August issue of the union's journal *Solidarity*. The UAW cited the loss of 420,000 U.S. jobs, a near-quadrupling of the trade deficit with our NAFTA partners, collapsing U.S. wages, and a steep rise in cocaine smuggling across the Mexico-U.S. border.

OLIVER NORTH, drug runner turned charismatic, has been on the stump in Virginia for the Conservative Revolution ticket headed by Republican Attorney General James Gilmore. Gilmore is being opposed by Democratic Lt. Gov. Don Beyer.

ald: "Catholic Alliance . . . was founded by the Rev. Pat Robertson in an effort to reach under the American bishops and create a Catholic mirror image of the Christian Coalition. . . . Catholic readers should be aware that he is using his huge business empire to finance an aggressive campaign to convert Catholics in Latin America. . . ."

"Deacon Fournier himself was Reverend Robertson's loyal lieutenant for almost six years and went directly from that position to become president of Catholic Alliance." The letter further denounces the Christian Coalition for using pro-life and pro-family postures to seduce Catholics into buying Republican neo-liberal economics, "based on the so-called Protestant work ethic, whereby wealth is a sign of Divine favor. Deacon Fournier does his 'mirror-image' routine by echoing that Catholic Alliance stands for life, family (so far so good), 'liberty' (economic libertarianism), and 'genuine compassion' (welfare spending cuts)."

Robertson, meanwhile, arranged an out-of-court settlement in the lawsuit by his failed African diamond-mining venture against an equipment manufacturer. The settlement spares Robertson from having to publicly account for the diamond operation at a trial, the Sept. 10 *Richmond Times-Dispatch* reported. "Airplanes sent by Operation Blessing, Robertson's tax-exempt humanitarian organization, were used almost exclusively for the for-profit diamond venture, two pilots who flew the planes have said," wrote the daily.

London Times pushes new Scaife attack on Clinton

The Sept. 13 *Times* of London promotes a new, book-length attack on President Bill Clinton, with the following lead-in: "The death of Vincent Foster returned yesterday to haunt President and Hillary Clinton in a new book rebutting all official claims that the former deputy White House counsel killed himself."

What the *Times* is pushing is Chris Ruddy's latest opus, *The Strange Death of Vincent Foster*. Rupert Murdoch's flagship publication identifies Ruddy as "a journalist who has devoted his career to Foster's death

. . . since July 1993," omitting that Ruddy was picked up by Richard Mellon Scaife's *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*, after the former's single-minded obsession with the Foster case resulted in his forced resignation from Murdoch's *New York Post*. At the *Post*, Ruddy reportedly refused to work on any other story. Scaife, a leading U.S. financier behind Britain's Get Clinton operation, gave Ruddy a place to nurture his fixation, and get paid for it.

Author of Pan Am exposé cops plea in cover-up

In an action that smells of continuing cover-up around the Pan Am 103 bombing, Lester Coleman, a former U.S. intelligence agent and informant, pled guilty to five counts of perjury on Sept. 11 in Federal court on Long Island. According to press accounts, Coleman, a co-author of the book *Trail of the Octopus*, told the court that he had lied when he had said that lax Federal agents allowed a bomb to get aboard the Pam Am 103 flight in December 1988. Coleman had submitted an affidavit in 1991 as part of a lawsuit filed by families of many of those killed in the bombing.

Filmmaker Alan Francovich produced a documentary, "The Maltese Double Cross," in 1994, based in part on Coleman's account. Both Coleman and Francovich refuted the "Libya did it" cover story, which was concocted by circles around George Bush and Margaret Thatcher in 1991, to justify letting Syria off the hook. Part of their reason was to protect the Syrian drug-running apparatus which overlapped the Oliver North gun-for-drugs networks overseen by Bush; it was also part of the wooing of Syria, as part of the buildup to isolate Iraq from the Arab world, leading into the Thatcher-Bush Gulf War.

Coleman was indicted in 1993 for perjury, but was only arrested in 1996 when he entered the United States from Europe where he had been living. An investigator in the same civil suit, Juval Aviv, was also indicted in 1995, in what Aviv called retaliation for his work on the case. Francovich died suddenly in an airport in Texas earlier this year, with the only witnesses being U.S. Customs agents.