

National News

Clinton hopes for good relations with Iran

"I hope . . . the day will soon come when we can enjoy, once again, good relations with Iran," President Clinton said in a greeting to the world's Muslims, issued on Jan. 28 on the occasion of Id Al-Fitr, the celebration for the end of the holy month of Ramadan. Though in the past President Clinton has acknowledged Muslim festivities and invited Muslim-American leaders to the White House for celebration—the first President to do so—this is the first time he has directly addressed his greetings to the Iranians. It is also the first time in nearly two decades that an American President has greeted Iranians in this way.

"To the people of Iran," the President said, "I would like to say that the United States regrets the estrangement of our two nations. Iran is an important country, with a rich and ancient cultural heritage of which Iranians are justifiably proud. We have real differences with some Iranian policies, but I believe these are not insurmountable. I hope that we have more exchanges between our peoples and that the day will soon come when we can enjoy once again good relations with Iran. . . ."

"On behalf of all Americans, I want to extend my personal greetings to the entire Muslim community, in the United States and around the world."

Karla Faye Tucker is executed in Texas

Karla Faye Tucker, 38, was put to death in Texas on Feb. 3 for the pick-ax murder she committed in 1983. The execution drew international attention for two reasons. Tucker was the first woman to be put to death in Texas since 1863, and only the second woman to be executed in the United States since the death penalty was reinstated by the Supreme Court in 1976. More important was Tucker's religious conversion while in prison, and her rehabilitation from a drug-

dependent criminal to a model prisoner. If anybody should be spared execution because of having changed in prison, opponents argued, Karla Faye Tucker should be.

Tucker's fate could have been decided differently in three ways. Texas Gov. George W. Bush could have independently stayed the execution for 30 days. But Bush is seeking reelection this year and is also mooted as a Republican Presidential contender in 2000; and Bush's famous father, Sir George, is a knight of the British Empire.

The Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles, largely comprised of Bush appointees, could have commuted her sentence or reprieved her, based on her rehabilitation. The Board instead voted 16-0, with two abstentions, against Tucker's requests for commutation of sentence or reprieve.

Tucker's fate also lay in the hands of the U.S. Supreme Court, most of whom were appointees of Presidents George Bush and Ronald Reagan. That court is under the philosophical misguidance of Justice Antonin Scalia, an outspoken proponent of the death penalty, in defiance of the teachings of the Catholic Church, to which he claims to be an adherent. Even the intervention in the Tucker case by Pope John Paul II and the Catholic bishops of the United States seeking clemency for her, failed to dissuade the justices, who turned down her two appeals without comment.

The high cost of cutting health care

Los Angeles County's attempt to bring health care costs down by preventing caesarean births, resulted in \$48 million in legal costs, the *Los Angeles Times* reported on Jan. 29. For about a decade, from about 1985 to 1995, doctors at county hospitals sought to prevent costly caesarean-section deliveries by developing policy guidelines that mandated attempted vaginal delivery by nearly all women who came to public facilities to have their babies.

Since 1992, the county has paid out \$24 million to settle 49 claims involving women or children who were killed or injured by failure or delay in performing caesarean sec-

tions. No one denies that the policy was mandated out of strictly budgetary concerns. It has now been revealed, three years later, that this policy resulted in so many deaths and injuries, that the practice ceased in 1995.

In a related story, the same newspaper reported on Jan. 30 that the state of California plans to begin denying subsidized prenatal care to tens of thousands of illegal immigrant women on March 1. The approximately 70,000 existing recipients who lack legal immigration status will be removed from the rolls as of April, said a spokesman for Gov. Pete Wilson.

Wilson wants to cut the \$84 million a year which the state allegedly pays out on prenatal aid for undocumented women. Critics point out that the aid reduces the health threats to mothers and children, and helps curb the incidence of preventable diseases.

African-American paper hit by arson attack

The offices of the *Jackson Advocate* of Jackson, Mississippi, one of the nation's oldest and most outspoken African-American newspapers, were firebombed on Jan. 26. The arsonist broke through the front door, doused the office with gasoline, went back outside the building, and threw two Molotov cocktails. The bombing left the newsroom a charred shell. Flames melted computers and copiers, with damage estimated at \$100,000.

According to an article published in the newspaper *New Federalist* on Feb. 2, this is not the first time that the *Jackson Advocate* and its courageous publisher, Charles Tisdale, and editor Ali ShamsidDeen, have been the target of threats and violence. On Jan. 23, a death threat was made to Tisdale on his weekly radio show.

The *Advocate* has a tradition of publishing the truth, regardless of consequences. As Tisdale said after the bombing, "Some people can't stand the light of day and scrutiny of a newspaper—a newspaper is supposed to tell the truth, and that's what we do."

Tisdale is a signer on the call to President Clinton to exonerate Lyndon LaRouche, and has collaborated with the Schiller Institute

HILLARY CLINTON, speaking at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland on Feb. 2, noted that “there has been a great deal of useful conversation here” about how to manage crises such as that in Asia, including “even suggestions as to what could be done to create more of a global regulator atmosphere, along the lines perhaps of a new Bretton Woods.”

DEFENSE SECRETARY William Cohen testified before the House Banking Committee on Jan. 30, and underscored the danger to national security posed by the Asian financial crisis. He said that national security cannot be separated from economic policy: Some people have had the false idea that once the Cold War was over, economic concerns could be separated from security concerns.

FORMER MAYOR of Boston and ambassador to the Vatican Raymond L. Flynn announced his campaign for governor of Massachusetts on Jan. 29. “The Democratic Party is currently in danger of being dominated by the socially elite and of being controlled, like the other party, by the power of big money campaign contributors,” he told supporters.

SEN. TED KENNEDY (D-Mass.) on Jan. 27 introduced a new bill to increase the minimum wage from the present \$5.15 an hour to \$6.65 over the next three years, and then index it to inflation thereafter. Kennedy pointed to the fact that the minimum wage, at the current level, is worth less in terms of buying power than it was in 1968.

INFLUENZA or pneumonia killed at least 798 people in Los Angeles in December 1997. According to the Los Angeles County Health Services Department, this is a 20% increase over the 667 deaths in December 1996. County hospitals were overwhelmed with patients seeking treatment, as a new flu strain, “A-Sydney,” swept through the country.

on a number of initiatives. During 1996 and 1997, Tisdale and others in Jackson joined with the Institute in a series of town hall meetings to expose the role of George Bush in the Contra running of crack cocaine. Tisdale was one of the few newspaper publishers in the nation courageous enough to break with the standard coverup blaming the CIA for running the crack, instead running full-page ads for the town meetings which documented the role of Bush and his “secret government” in the Contra drugs-for-guns trafficking.

Tisdale has accused city officials of “creating the climate where this arson could take place.” He was referring to ongoing battles with the City Council, and particularly Council President Louis Armstrong.

Tisdale’s office has been vandalized or bombed more than 20 times since he took over the newspaper in the late 1970s. However, while in past periods, it was Ku Klux Klansmen who did the dirty work against newspapers like the *Advocate*, more recently the FBI, Justice Department, and private foundations tend to employ “black-faced” nationalist agents, and organizations like the Anti-Defamation League, to do the job for them.

Asian crisis ‘threatens 1.1 million U.S. jobs’

The Economic Policy Institute, a labor- and Democratic Party-linked think-tank, has released a report on expected U.S. job losses from the Asian financial crisis. Institute economists Robert Scott and Jesse Rothstein, along with Chairman Jeff Faux (who is also an economics adviser to House Minority Leader Richard Gephardt), gave a briefing on Jan. 23 at their office, on the report they were releasing, “Asian Crisis Threatens to Destroy 1.1 Million Jobs.”

They said the crisis would hit the manufacturing sector hardest, with an expected job loss of 1.1 million if the U.S. trade deficit rises by \$100 billion as a result of increased Asian imports. They attribute the expected rise in imports to International Monetary Fund conditionalities which will reduce consumer demand in Asian economies, and spur

increased exports of manufactured goods. The states hardest hit with job losses will be California, Texas, New York, Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania.

The economists’ chief polemic was a warning to the Federal Reserve not to raise interest rates to slow down the economy, since higher unemployment is right around the corner.

Their policy recommendation was deflation, with economic stimulus packages for the Asian economies. They were told by a reporter from this news service, that, because of the magnitude of the debt crisis, a policy that didn’t include bankruptcy protection for the productive sector, and debt write-down on a large scale, would lead to hyperinflation. In response, Scott argued that IMF restructuring of the banking sector (which they don’t disagree with) is different from governments spending money on economic stimulation.

Greenspan: Asian crisis will cut U.S. wages

Federal Reserve Board Chairman Alan Greenspan told the Senate Budget Committee on Jan. 29 that the Asian financial crisis could prove very helpful in slowing down the U.S. economy. “First, it is clear that the U.S. economy has been exceptionally healthy,” he affirmed. Second, he said, the financial difficulties of our Asian trading partners “will be showing through here in reductions in demand for our exports and intensified competition from imports. All of this suggests that the growth of economic activity in this country will moderate from the recent brisk pace.”

“Third,” he said, “such a moderation would appear helpful at this juncture. . . . Pressures in the labor market likely contributed to the acceleration of wages in recent months. . . . The likelihood that we shall be seeing some lower prices on imported goods as a result of the difficulties in Asia may afford some breathing room from inflation pressures. But they will not permanently suppress the risks inherent in tightened labor markets.”