

# National News

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## 'Free trade zone' proposed for Mexican border

Abelardo Valdez, the White House chief of protocol under the Carter administration, has proposed a 200-mile "free trade zone" along the U.S.-Mexico border. Valdez submitted his proposal to the United States Trade Advisory Committee in the Special Trade Representative's office.

In the past, similar proposals have found strong opposition in both countries on the basis that they would make the border a center of illegal activities.

In an op-ed published in the *New York Times* April 5, Valdez straightforwardly asserts that such a zone would be expanded to "include a greater part of each country's territory or the entirety of both countries. If productive, it could be expanded to include not only the United States and Mexico but also Canada and other countries of Latin America and the Caribbean."

Valdez states that this "little Hong Kong" "could be the first step toward creation of a North American equivalent of the European Common Market," a scheme persistently rejected by the Mexican government as a natural resources-grabbing plan.

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## Teamsters' Sheeran blasts Justice Department

Frank Sheeran, the president of Teamsters International Local 326 in Wilmington, Delaware, held a press conference April 8 to expose what he called the "collusion" of federal officials in a "vicious campaign" against him and the union. "Through its vast resources, the government has conspired and acted in collusion to force me to undergo double jeopardy in a determined effort to oust me as a responsible and outspoken union leader. Working hand in hand, the U.S. Department of Labor, the federal judiciary, and the FBI strike force have very

cleverly mounted this personal vendetta. . . . I'm here today to put these agencies on notice that I am not going to give in without a fight and without exposing their vicious tactics."

In February 1980, a Philadelphia jury found Sheeran innocent of all charges, including murder and embezzlement, stemming from a Justice Department (DOJ) indictment. Charles Allen, a convicted felon now in the Federal Witness Protection Program, provided the evidence. The government then moved to invalidate the union local election that re-elected Sheeran by more than a three to one margin. Meanwhile, the DOJ indicted Sheeran again on slightly different charges.

The FBI has now "warned" Sheeran that a murder contract has been taken out on him by organized crime, and proposes that he confess to his alleged crimes and testify against other unionists in exchange for FBI protection.

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## Yippie finds some well-placed defenders

Abbie Hoffman, a cofounder of the Youth International Party (Yippies), attempted last week to get out of a five-year maximum jail sentence for selling cocaine and jumping bail. Hoffman solicited character witnesses among prominent citizens. Although the effort did not rescue him from a three-year sentence, of which one year will definitely have to be served unless he receives a pardon from New York Governor Hugh Carey, the petitioners for Hoffman were notable.

The list included former Attorney General and NORML supporter Ramsey Clark; libertarian William F. Buckley, also a NORML supporter; Bishop Paul G. Moore, Jr. of the Episcopal Diocese of New York; Dr. Benjamin Spock; and Rabbi Alexander Schindler, president of the American Union of Hebrew Congregations and former president of the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations. Michael Dooley, senior editor of the *Los Angeles Times*,

who wrote that he considers Abbie "a great American patriot. . . . Cocaine is so prevalent out here, it's not even punished."

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## Philadelphia strike no victory for labor

Philadelphia transit workers ended their 19-day strike April 3 when the management of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transit Authority (SEPTA) retracted its demands to hire part-time workers and institute written tests of maintenance employees.

The strike was hardly a victory for labor, however, as the Transit Workers Union accepted a 14 percent wage increase over two years, an offer that was lower than the 16 percent first proposed by SEPTA. While business in the downtown area suffered significant losses, the shutdown of the system's deficit-ridden daily operations helped SEPTA alleviate its \$16 million budget shortfall.

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## Charles Percy 'changes mind' on paraquat

In an April 8 meeting with Fausto Charis Romero, president of the Colombian Antidrug Coalition, an aide to Sen. Charles Percy (R-Ill.) reported that the senator—author of the amendment banning the use of foreign aid funds for purchase of the herbicide paraquat—has now "changed his mind." Percy, according to the aide, "no longer opposes the use of paraquat and will not obstruct a paraquat-spraying program." A day before the meeting, two subcommittees of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs unanimously passed the Foreign Assistance Act for FY 1982, including an amendment to repeal the Percy Amendment. The new amendment, introduced by Georgia congressman Billy Lee Evans, also stipulates that funds already allocated to Colombia for combatting the drug trade could be used for purchase

of paraquat. The bill passed on April 7 and will go to the full House for discussion shortly after the Easter recess.

Charris told aides of several senators and congressmen with whom he met during his two-day visit to Washington, D.C. that the House initiative and similar legislation under discussion in the Senate must be supported by the entire Congress in order to translate President Reagan's commitment to wiping out the international drug trade into a reality.

In his meetings with Republican and Democratic representatives, Charris described how the paraquat ban had severely affected the Colombian government's ability to halt the drug trade. He also emphasized that Colombia requires aid not only to repress the drug trade but also to industrialize the country. Charris's meetings in Washington were the last leg of an international tour that included six European nations.

## Liberals mount campaign against Watt, Edwards

In an April 5 editorial, the *New York Times* blasted Interior Secretary James Watt for his national park policy, which allegedly favors private concessionaires, concluding that the secretary "does not sound like a man to be trusted." On April 7, the *Times* ran an op-ed by the acting director of Ralph Nader's Critical Mass group challenging Energy Secretary James Edwards' claim to have a mandate to eliminate solar and conservation programs in favor of nuclear power.

The April 6 *Washington Post* carried a feature by Dennis Collins titled "The Canaan Struggle," which details the seven-year fight over construction of a hydroelectric dam in the Appalachia region of West Virginia. The article highlights the fact that while at the Federal Power Commission in 1977, James Watt overruled his own staff and a commission review judge in granting a license for construction. The article also accuses Watt of undercutting a proposal by the Interior Department that would have

purchased the disputed acreage for a national wildlife refuge, and announced that "conservationists throughout the country" are posed to go after Watt if he proceeds with the project.

The next day, the *Post* ran an article by National Audubon Society chief Russell Peterson which termed Reagan's energy program "environmentally harmful." Peterson, former head of the Council on Environmental Quality, proposed a phaseout of nuclear power and a commitment to solar power.

The suggestion of "conflict of interest" has been thrown against both secretaries since their nominations. Toby Moffett (D-Conn.), an avid opponent of nuclear energy has used the House subcommittee on Environment, Energy and Natural Resources to probe numerous nominations under the rubric of the conflict-of-interest provisions of the Ethics in Government Act. Secretary Edwards told a National Press Club gathering that he was "having a hard time" filling Department of Energy posts because "good men are assumed to be crooks or cheats." Moffett is an affiliate of the Institute for Policy Studies, which helped set up the environmentalist movement in the U.S.

## OTA implicated in Global 2000 plan

The release of a new report by the congressional Office of Technology Assessment will be part of the next phase of Global 2000 efforts, report sources in Washington. The OTA report, scheduled for early June, deals with "the population crisis in the developing sector" and will propose that Congress take "stark and drastic action." Ostensibly, the report will focus on new contraceptive technology and making it available in the developing sector.

"We have to be very careful about how we say things," commented an OTA spokesman, "but we are going to have to present information that will make people believe that whole sections of the world must be written off. . . . It takes a while to translate this into policy."

## Briefly

● **JOE HAUSER**, the government's key witness in the Brilab sting is going to be put through the wringer during cross examination in the New Orleans Brilab trial. One of the defense attorneys was quoted recently on Hauser: "Hauser's the name of the case. . . . You go to bed with a guy like Hauser and you get up with roaches on you. That is what the government did." A recent exposé showed that Hauser had passed a polygraph test in 1974, successfully answering a question denying that he ever paid bribes to union officials. While under oath in the Houston Brilab case, however, Hauser testified that he couldn't get along in the labor union insurance business without paying off labor union officials.

● **BERKELEY**, California has instituted a compulsory course in draft dodging, according to the *New York Daily News*. The two-week course will require students to learn how to avoid prosecution, and how to file for conscientious objector status. It is included as part of students' history and civics courses.

● **CLUB OF ROME** U.S. vice-chairman Elizabeth Dodson Gray announced this week that she would soon initiate a campaign to defend the rights of stupid people. "Our technological-patriarchal society has a deep bias in favor of intellectuals and against stupid people," she said. "This needs to be reversed."

● **CARNEGIE-MELLON** University has released a study that forecasts that 30 percent of white women in the U.S. who were 24 years old in 1978 and 20 percent of the corresponding non-white females "will remain forever childless." Throughout most of the century the rate had been 10 percent. The university is funded by the Carnegie Endowment, which is a foundation calling for reduced rates of economic and population growth.