

# National News

## Firings and hirings at State Department

Secretary of State Warren Christopher abruptly fired Stephen A. Oxman as Assistant Secretary of State for European and Canadian Affairs, and will replace him with Richard Holbrooke, a career Foreign Service officer who has been ambassador to Germany for only eight months, according to the *New York Times* on June 14. Oxman is a close friend of President and Mrs. Clinton. The *Times* said that the decision was made after Christopher and Deputy Secretary Strobe Talbott, with strong support from the White House, concurred that a change was necessary. An unnamed senior official said, "There was a sense that given the complications of this job—not only with Bosnia policy, but with other places as well—that we could do better."

At the National Security Council, Jennone Walker was recently replaced as the top West European specialist, and will begin language training in preparation to become ambassador to the Czech Republic next year.

## Churches in uproar over 're-imagining' covenant

Several Protestant churches that helped underwrite a November 1993 pagan conference on "Re-Imagining Christianity" have been thrown into an uproar, after word of the goings-on at the Minneapolis event got out. In April, the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. had to cut \$2.4 million from its mission spending and 1995 budget because of canceled contributions, after it gave \$66,000 to support the Minneapolis covenant. The church's annual general assembly, which convened in early June, has been dominated by controversy over the conference; more than half of the 114 resolutions that have been proposed deal with the meeting.

The United Methodist Church has also been torn by controversy over the event; the church's bishops have had to set up a task force to deal with the "doctrinal ferment"

stemming from the conference.

The churches' concern was hardly misplaced: Over 2,000 women and only 83 men attended the event, which was organized primarily by the Minneapolis Council of Churches to "reconsider" the relationship of women to Christianity. Opening each session, a participant would raise her arms and chant: "Bless Sophia, dream the vision, share the wisdom dwelling deep within." A pagan liturgy was offered which included a "communion" of milk and honey, accompanied by the following invocation: "Our maker Sophia, we are women in your image. With nectar between our thighs, we invite a lover, we birth a child; with our warm body fluids we remind the world of its pleasures and sensations."

## 'Jewish Bulletin' prints rebuttal from LaRouche

The *Jewish Bulletin* of northern California in early June ran a letter to the editor from Lyndon LaRouche, which said the following:

"In the course of your May 27 article, your writer includes a paragraph devoted to spreading the assertion that I attacked Fort Detrick [the U.S. Army biomedical laboratory in Frederick, Maryland] as creating the infectious agent responsible for AIDS, and for implying that this epidemic was in some sense a 'Jewish plot.'

"In fact, I repeatedly and publicly denounced the relevant East German source for the false assertion that the infectious agent was a Fort Detrick biological warfare concoction and denounced Herbert Romerstein, then of the U.S. Information Service, for fostering the spread of the Fort Detrick fable.

"My views on this matter were stated repeatedly, from 1983 through 1988, in readily available sources such as the weekly news magazine *EIR*, and in my political campaign literature. During more recent times, it has been shown repeatedly in statements issued by my 1990 and 1992 campaigns that my views of this matter developed over the 1983-86 interval are my views still today.

"No person investigating my views on any matters could have failed to consult

those sources. Therefore, the relevant portions of your published article were written and published in reckless disregard for the truth. A public retraction is required."

## 'Mr. Ethics' D'Amato makes killing in stocks

Self-appointed ethics czar Sen. Alfonse D'Amato (R-N.Y.), the big critic of Hillary Clinton's disclosure of profits made through futures investments, acknowledged on June 16 that he made \$37,125 in one day in an initial public offering of a stock last year, according to the *Washington Post* on June 17. The windfall profit came through the Lake Success, New York, Stratton Oakmont, Inc. brokerage firm, which took public UTS Computer Marketplace Inc. stocks. D'Amato bought 4,500 shares at \$4 and quickly sold when it reached \$12.25. The Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) has been concerned about initial offerings because they are rarely available to average investors.

D'Amato, the ranking Republican on the Senate Banking Committee which writes regulatory legislation of Wall Street activities and oversees the SEC, was given at least \$11,000 in campaign contributions in 1992 from Stratton Oakmont. This year three executives with the firm were sanctioned by the SEC after being accused of manipulating stock prices and engaging in deceptive sales practices. A D'Amato spokesman said the campaign has returned \$8,000, which represents contributions by those individuals being investigated by the SEC.

## Waco defendants get maximum sentences

On June 17, Federal District Court Judge Walter S. Smith sentenced five of the seven Branch Davidian defendants to maximum 40-year sentences for their role in a shoot-out near Waco, Texas in February 1993, in which ten people died. The judge ignored pleas for leniency from the defendants and the foreman of the jury that convicted them.

Smith reduced two others' sentences, as he said they were the only ones to show any remorse, according to the *New York Times*.

Smith had reinstated convictions for using firearms in a violent crime that were at first dismissed until prosecutors appealed, despite post-trial comments by several jurors that they hadn't fully understood all the charges. Jury foreman Sarah Bain wrote Smith on May 11, saying that jurors had not intended to convict the defendants on the disputed gun charges and that she was incredulous of the sentencing guidelines: "Even five years is too severe a penalty for what we believed to be a minor charge." Alternate juror Mary Pardo said, "The judge disregarded the jury's intentions. They said there wasn't a conspiracy to murder agents, and today the judge said there was and sentenced as if there was. He ignored the jury's conclusions."

Smith said in court he had never received Bain's letter and complained of his office being besieged by an "obviously organized" telephone campaign from around the country pleading for leniency on behalf of the defendants. Smith spoke to reporters and visitors before the sentencing, cynically saying that his options were limited by recent changes to federal guidelines: "In an earlier era . . . judges could actually weigh relative culpability and exercise discretion in formulating appropriate sentences."

## Kenneth Adelman calls on Clinton to revive SDI

Former Reagan Arms Control and Disarmament Agency head Kenneth Adelman called for a rapid buildup of the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) in a signed commentary in the June 17 issue of the *Washington Times*. Under the headline, "Revival Signals for SDI," Adelman indicated that some Republicans are organizing bipartisan support for the SDI within the Clinton administration. "Today's crisis . . . calls for a realistic Clinton initiative, that depends, not on a dictator's good will, but on Democrats' good technology," he wrote. "Had not Ronald Reagan initiated the SDI in the face of the Soviet threat, Bill Clinton would have initiated it in his post-Soviet world. . . ."

"One exceptional Democrat, House In-

telligence Committee Chairman Dan Glickman [D-Kan.], recently reversed his opinion. Because of North Korea's advancements . . . Glickman advocated we reconstitute a vigorous SDI program. . . .

"The moral attraction of SDI remains strong. Rather than attack the North Korean nuclear facility—an exercise of huge risk—the U.S., Japan, South Korea and other high-tech countries would begin building protection from missiles. Rather than contemplate mega-deaths, we would plan measures to save mega-lives.

"The global opportunities for SDI Jr. are even greater than for SDI Sr. a decade ago. Then, the spread of ballistic weapons to the Third World was hypothetical. Now it's a fact of international life."

## Justice Powell comes out against death penalty

Retired Supreme Court Justice Lewis F. Powell Jr. became the second justice this year to reverse himself and publicly oppose the death penalty, according to the *Washington Post* on June 10. Following retiring Justice Harry A. Blackmun, who pronounced the death penalty a failed "experiment" on Feb. 22, Powell is quoted in a new biography saying, "I have come to think that capital punishment should be abolished." Unlike Blackmun, however, Powell's reason is not philosophical opposition to capital punishment, but a more pragmatic approach: The death penalty "brings discredit on the whole legal system," Powell is quoted, because the vast majority of death sentences are never carried out due to complex appeals.

What is most significant politically in Powell's decision is the fact that he says he would have changed his vote in *McCleskey v. Kemp*, the 1986 case in which opponents of capital punishment argued that statistics showed a pattern of racial bias in sentencing, and, therefore, the death penalty was unconstitutional. Powell cast the deciding vote against this argument. A key section of the 1994 Crime Bill under debate in Congress would make it possible for death penalty appeals to make this argument as part of the basis for winning a new trial.

## Briefly

● **THE ANTI-DEFAMATION** League of B'nai B'rith (ADL) continues to be at the center of a Los Angeles Police Department investigation into corruption and illegal spying, according to the *Los Angeles Times* on June 10. An internal LAPD investigation is under way to determine whether LAPD officials compiled confidential information about residents which was turned over to the ADL.

● **NASA Administrator Dan Goldin** joined Rosa Parks and members of the Congressional Black and Hispanic Caucuses to honor the 30th anniversary of the signing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 on June 15. The master of ceremonies was astronaut Col. Guy Bluford, who was the first African-American in space.

● **ORTHODOX RABBI** Don Feder attacked the Anti-Defamation League's newly released book-length report, "The Religious Right: The Assault on Tolerance and Pluralism in America," in a *Boston Herald* commentary on June 16. Feder characterized the report as "an attempted political assassination." He wrote that "the document it has fashioned discredits not the religious right, but itself."

● **A LYNCH-MOB** atmosphere dominated the last of three "town meetings" of Virginia Gov. George Allen's Commission on Parole Abolition and Sentencing Reform, whose members include William Barr and Henry Hudson. "In Colonial days you didn't have 'three strikes, you're out'; it was 'three strikes, you're dead,'" said one speaker to loud applause. Others called for "warehousing" people whom "you're never going to rehabilitate."

● **L. DOUGLAS WILDER**, former governor of Virginia, officially announced his independent candidacy for U. S. Senate on June 19. Wilder, a Democrat and the nation's first elected black governor, is now the fourth contender for Democrat Chuck Robb's seat.