

National News

New Age kooks consulted on balanced budget talks

House Budget Committee Chairman John R. Kasich (R-Ohio) enlisted the aid of Doug Hall, a New Age consultant who manages a team of "trained-brain" consultants, to run a recent Hill seminar to explore innovative approaches to the balanced budget amendment, according to the *Washington Post*. Hall brought 15 "consultants" to the House Budget Committee office on Jan. 9 to lead a dozen committee staffers and consultants in a Nerf gun fight and other "creativity-inducing" games, such as "Mind Dumpster," "Pass the Buck," and "666." Among the ideas the group came up with, according to the *Post* account: a national bingo lottery to pay for Medicare, renting out Air Force One for bachelor parties, and moving the U.S. capital every four years like the Olympic Games, with cities bidding on the privilege.

The Hill event was such an embarrassment that not one Democrat on the committee showed up, and at the last minute, Kasich himself was a no-show, claiming that he had pressing business to attend to.

Mensa newsletter spouts eugenics propaganda

A furor has erupted over the publication of eugenics articles in the newsletter of a California chapter of the Mensa Society, a group whose members claim to have very high IQs.

Jason Brent, an attorney and member of the Los Angeles chapter contended that Hitler's greatest crime was in giving the idea of a master race a bad name, since his "actions prevent a rational discussion of the creation of the master race." Brent, who is Jewish, contended that his remarks were "half in jest. . . . I was trying to start a debate within Mensa about the need for population control and how we allocate scarce resources." Brent continued, "I'm ready to take my lumps, but when you're considering

the survival of the species, the fact that someone killed 6 million or 20 million people pales by comparison."

Jon Evans, another Mensa member, wrote that "the vast majority [of homeless people] are too stupid, too lazy, too crazy, or too anti-social to earn a living." He added, "Most of the homeless should be done away with, like abandoned kittens." He commented on the infirm that "a piece of meat in the shape of a man but without a mind is not a human being."

Nikki Frey, editor of the newsletter, told the *Los Angeles Times*: "I would not print anything I thought was truly harmful or offensive. . . . I didn't think it was harmful; I don't think it's even that offensive: Nobody wants to have a deformed child."

Va. legislature gives governor cold shoulder

Virginia Gov. George Allen (R) delivered his annual State of the Commonwealth Address to empty chambers on Jan. 11, after the Democrats, with their bare majority, adjourned the Senate one day earlier, ostensibly over a rules fight. Allen, a darling of the "Conservative Revolution," delivered his "vision" of a "leaner" (and meaner) Virginia government from his conference room—detailing \$400 million in wide-ranging service cuts in 1995, increased spending to build prisons, and \$2.1 billion in tax cuts over five years. He repeatedly made populist appeals to taxpayers as "the forgotten Virginians." He said that he is guided by the "fundamental philosophy" that "people know better how to spend their hard-earned money than does government."

In the weeks leading up to the annual speech, which normally opens the General Assembly, over 1,000 Virginians, of all political persuasions, had lined up at hearings across the state to denounce both Allen's proposed budget cuts and tax cuts. This unprecedented outpouring of opposition clearly buoyed the Democratic leadership, which has generally let Allen's offensive roll over them since November.

Even the generally mild Democratic Lt.

Gov. Donald S. Beyer, Jr. took the gloves off in his televised response to Allen's address—the first time a lieutenant governor has delivered a public response. Much of what the governor has proposed, Beyer began, "I stand against. . . . We must be lean, but not cruel. . . . Are we now promising a rose garden, but also congested roads, poor health, eroding schools and jobs that have fled the state?"

President blasts tire firm for strike-breaking

President Clinton attacked tire-maker Bridgestone-Firestone on Jan. 13 for "flagrantly turning its back" on U.S. labor tradition by hiring replacement workers, and urged the company to return to the bargaining table with its striking workers. The company, based in Nashville, has hired 2,300 replacement workers to operate its three plants, and says its plants would be operating seven days a week by mid-January.

"When companies replace their workers under these circumstances," said Clinton, "they sow seeds of distrust and resentment which can extend far beyond their company, undermining labor-management relations across the land." He said he has long supported legislation to prevent companies from hiring permanent replacements for strikers, and that Bridgestone-Firestone's actions show "exactly why this protection is necessary." The company is owned by the Bridgestone group of Japan, where this form of strike-breaking has long been illegal.

Clinton downplays flap over war commemorations

Pressed by the media at his joint press conference with Japanese Prime Minister Tomichi Murayama, as to whether he will invite Japan to a reenactment of Japan's World War II surrender 50 years ago, President Clinton today downplayed confrontation. "There will be a number of commemora-

tions throughout the Pacific, but we have not yet decided precisely what I will do and how we will do it," he said.

"I know there's a debate going on in Japan about this whole issue now and how it should be handled," he said. "I can only say that the last three leaders of Japan have expressed in the sincerest terms their regret about the war. We have had a remarkable relationship, a partnership and a growing friendship with Japan, and I would hope that we could mark this year by saying this is something that civilized nations can never permit to occur again. But looking toward that future and what our responsibilities and what our opportunities are in the future by working together to change the world for the better, that is what I think we should do, and I hope that all these areas of cooperation we're mentioning today, will be at the forefront of what people in the world think about the United States and Japan."

Prison overcrowding, privatization protested

The sheriffs of Portsmouth and Virginia Beach, Virginia filed suit in Circuit Court on Jan. 11 to force Virginia's Department of Corrections to comply with state law that requires felons sentenced to three years or more to be moved from a local jail to a state prison within two months of being convicted. Since the administration of Gov. George Allen (R) abolished parole, and Virginia has the lowest parole rate in the nation for those still eligible under the old law, jails in the state have suffered massive overcrowding.

The Virginia Beach jail, certified to house 563 inmates, now holds 913. The Portsmouth jail, certified for 197, now holds 518. Of those, 84 are state felons.

On Jan. 9, hundreds of Wytheville residents took to the streets to protest a plan by Corrections Corp. of America to build a "private" medium-security prison in their town; CCA is hoping to make a profit from Allen's new prison-building regime. More than 100 people forced the Wythe County Board of Supervisors to move its meeting to a larger place. More than 300 filled a high school au-

ditorium to hound the Town Council later that night. Countering arguments that the private prison would mean jobs for the area, Chuck Lacy, a former member of the Virginia General Assembly, said: "This is not what we are looking for to answer our economic development problems. We don't need more \$6.50 jobs. That's just \$13,000 per year."

Species Act endangering astronomical observatory

Two astronomers and one environmental scientist from the University of Arizona have written a hard-hitting attack on the spectrum of environmentalist and "indigenous" operations against Arizona's Mt. Graham International Observatory, in the Nov. 17 issue of *Nature*. The article was entitled "Endangered Telescopes or Species?" by Bruce Walsh, Roger Angel, and Peter Strittmatter. The science press has been editorially silent over the years-long battle to build and install telescopes at the observatory. As recently as Aug. 11, *Nature* had carried "neutral" coverage of the latest legal effort launched by the well-heeled green organizations.

The authors argued that the Mt. Graham experience "raises serious questions as to the appropriate application of the Endangered Species Act," stating, "The costs to the Endangered Species Act, up for reapproval next year, and to the credibility of environmental organizations, might be even higher" than the cost of fending off scurrilous attacks.

The Apache Survival Coalition responded with a letter to the editor in the Dec. 15 issue, objecting that the article "ignores the views of Native Americans about our Mother Earth." But *Nature's* editorial rebutted those assertions. The coalition does not represent the Apaches, it said, whereas the representative Apache Tribal Council has taken a neutral stand. It reports that the coalition "has been sending hate mail to all and sundry" to block the observatory, and a recent coalition flyer went so far as to claim "that the building of the telescope is comparable with the Holocaust."

Briefly

● **THE ARMY WAR** College's Dr. Stephen Pelletiere concluded that economic development is the first priority in any plan to establish lasting peace in the Middle East, in a recent white paper analyzing the problems in the Gaza Strip. He cited very high unemployment among Palestinian youths, and stressed that unless that problem is addressed with economic development, no political solution in the region is viable.

● **THE PHILADELPHIA** *Inquirer* editorialized against efforts by the family of Martin Luther King, Jr. to oust the National Park Service from operation of the King Center in Atlanta on Jan. 15, the anniversary of King's birth. The Park Service has been attempting to cut the family out of all deliberations on landmarks and memorials in memory of the civil rights martyr.

● **BOB DOLE**, the Senate Majority Leader, announced the creation of a presidential exploratory committee on Jan. 13. "I haven't officially thrown my hat in the ring, but you could say that this is a first step. I will formally announce my decision in late March or early-April." Dole has topped the field in early polls of Republican contenders.

● **WARREN CHRISTOPHER** and Al Gore met recently to discuss merging the Agency for International Development, U.S. Information Agency, and Arms Control and Disarmament Agency under the control of the State Department. At present, the agencies take guidance from the secretary of state, but are funded separately from the department.

● **MADELEINE ALBRIGHT**, the U.N. ambassador, began gearing up to pressure the U.N. Security Council to continue the murderous economic embargo against Iraq on Jan. 10, displaying satellite photographs of Iraqi equipment which she alleged were stolen Kuwaiti property, two days before the council is scheduled to conduct a 60-day review of the sanctions.