

National News

Baltimore grand jury calls to legalize dope

A Baltimore grand jury is recommending that doctors be allowed to give cocaine and heroin addicts allotments of their favorite drugs, and that marijuana be "decriminalized." The grand jury's report was not made public, but was leaked to the *Baltimore Sun* which made a headline story of it on Feb. 9. Mayor Kurt Schmoke, a national leader of the pro-drug lobby, had testified to the grand jury and said he was pleased with their findings. The grand jury also heard testimony about the pro-drug laws in the Netherlands.

Arnold S. Trebach, president of the Drug Policy Foundation, hailed the report and hoped it would "have historic impact."

The latest grand jury contradicts one empaneled in 1993 by Baltimore Judge Kenneth L. Johnson. That earlier grand jury recommended a special prosecutor to investigate whether corruption was responsible for the fact that only lower-level drug arrests were taking place, while drug wholesalers and money-launderers are being directly protected. Judge Johnson's grand jury was attacked as "runaway," "rogue," and "amateurish" by Schmoke and the *Sun*. Schmoke suggested that Johnson, not the drug dealers, should be investigated.

Italian daily blasts attacks on Clinton

The Italian daily *La Repubblica* wrote that the "intolerant right-wing" neo-conservative revolution in the United States is aiming to "cancel the America of Roosevelt and Kennedy," through scurrilous attacks on President Bill Clinton, in its Feb. 6 issue. The daily gives a refreshing, accurate picture of the American political landscape, painting Clinton as under attack by an "intolerant" right which is making "brutal" budget cuts against the elderly, children, hospitals, and "the numerous forms of public assistance with which America, since

Kennedy and Johnson, has conducted the 'war on poverty.'"

The article depicted the so-called social programs of the Conservative Revolution as transgressions against any standard of social justice, and suggested that their proponents give no better rationale for cutting public assistance than that it is "liberal."

La Repubblica opined that Clinton showed a "rare moment of firmness" in his response to the Mexico crisis, which was necessary to avoid incalculable damage to the American economy, adding that his firmness shed light on the inability of many members of Congress to understand the connection between American interests and the rest of the world.

The paper also chronicled the attacks on Clinton, from two videotapes, "The Clinton Chronicles" and "Unanswered," which seek to prove that Clinton is a thief and was involved in the death of Deputy White House Counsel Vincent Foster, to House Speaker Newt Gingrich's attacks on Mrs. Clinton. *La Repubblica* characterized the attacks as underhanded, misleading, and well financed.

Virginia lawmakers battle over prison-building

In the final 10 days of its legislative session, which ends on Feb. 25, the Virginia legislature was embroiled in a battle over whether, where, and how to build the 27 prisons that are required over the next decade as a result of parole abolition ("Proposal X") and harsher sentencing measures passed last September. Three busloads of citizens from Wythe County descended on Richmond on Feb. 15 to protest plans to put the state's first private prison in their area, which Corrections Corp. of America plans to begin constructing within two months. Another delegation came from Northampton County, to express concerns that the 1,200-inmate prison scheduled for there would cause water shortages.

Del. William Robinson (D-Norfolk), a civil rights leader, introduced legislation that would give a locality's governing body

a virtual veto over plans to place a prison there. If passed, it would stymie Gov. George Allen's plans to binge on building private prisons, which can be sited where they are unwanted, as long as local zoning ordinances allow.

The *Richmond Times-Dispatch* reported on Feb. 16 that five private prison firms are "scouring" the state for prison sites in anticipation of state plans to authorize construction of six private prisons for 5,000 inmates later this year. Most are expected to be built in the deeply depressed coalfields region of far Southwest Virginia. Andrew Chafin, executive director of the Cumberland Plateau Planning District Commission, in Southwest Virginia, is quoted that they would "much prefer a manufacturing or high-tech industry, but the area's dire economic distress makes a prison look good."

Getty Museum acquires two Rembrandt paintings

The J. Paul Getty Museum in Malibu, California, announced that it had acquired two early paintings by the Dutch artist Rembrandt Harmensz van Rijn (1606-69), which went on view on Feb. 21. *The Abduction of Europa*, a scene from Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, was painted in 1632, and the Old Testament episode, *Daniel and Cyrus Before the Idol of Bel*, was painted in 1633. At the time he painted these two scenes, Rembrandt was in his mid-20s and already a very successful painter of Biblical and historical subjects, based in Amsterdam.

Although portraiture was the mainstay of Rembrandt's production, these two pictures reveal him as a master storyteller. *The Abduction of Europa* is one of his few landscapes, and the only one securely attributed to the master in the United States.

Daniel and Cyrus Before the Idol of Bel shows King Cyrus, who has just asked his trusted Hebrew adviser Daniel why he does not honor the deity Bel, whose statue looms dimly in the background. Daniel has replied that he worships the living God, not an idol. The king points to the offerings of food and

Briefly

wine he believes the idol consumes each night. With one hand against his chest signifying his respect, Daniel gently points out to the king that bronze statues don't eat, and it begins to dawn on Cyrus that he may have been duped.

The Getty Museum now owns four paintings by Rembrandt, and 11 Rembrandt drawings, the most important group in America.

South Dakota may tax medical services

The South Dakota legislature debated a bill that was proposed by Governor Janklow in mid-February which would tax medical services. The plan to impose a 4% tax on medical services is being denounced by doctors, dentists, hospitals, and other health care providers. It is part of a plan to raise \$120 million in additional revenue for the state so that Janklow can cut property taxes 30%.

Janklow also wants to boost the state's share of video lottery profits, cut the state budget, and repeal the sales tax exemption on a variety of goods to make up the revenue to local governments to offset their loss of property tax revenue. The tax on medical providers was denounced at a hearing on Jan. 9 by Representative Nemecek: "To me it's like hitting a man when he's down, or kicking him in the teeth when he's down," he said. "It's a tax on sick people. I just don't know why anybody would want to tax sick people who are already having a lot of bad luck."

IRS targets five black churches in Virginia

According to an Associated Press wire in the Feb. 8 *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) warned five black churches in Norfolk that they could lose their federal tax exemptions because of political activity during the 1994 Virginia Senate campaign.

The warnings were made public by U.S. Rep. Owen Pickett (D), who received the

warning in a letter from IRS Commissioner Margaret Milner Richardson. In the letter, Richardson admitted that the IRS agents' visits to the churches did not follow normal IRS procedures, which require a reasonable belief that an organization has violated the tax code before such a visit.

While the IRS did not release the names of the churches, due to privacy laws, the Rev. Dr. Raymond Dean, pastor of a 1,700-member Baptist church in Norfolk, went public. Dr. Dean, whose church heard candidate Nancy Spannaus, a LaRouche associate, address them during both the 1994 Senate and 1993 gubernatorial campaigns, is quoted: "I said, 'Wait a minute, how can you say that about our church? When have you visited and asked Pat Robertson's church?' Had she [Richardson] visited the church of [the Rev. Jerry] Falwell, Liberty Baptist in Lynchburg? I said, 'I don't understand how those guys are openly and boldly and publicly entertaining political people and you haven't visited them.'"

Food irradiation gets boost from Tampa daily

The *Tampa Tribune* editorialized on Feb. 6 for food irradiation after two years of hostile coverage. The Florida daily's editorial, "Get the Bugs Out of Meat Inspection," noted that the new meat inspection policy of the U.S. Department of Agriculture leaves out a "simple, readily available means of eliminating contamination"—food irradiation.

Although previously hostile to the nation's first food irradiation plant in nearby Mulberry, the *Tribune* editorial put the issue sharply: "The much-maligned irradiation process kills bacterial disease in poultry. . . . But because irradiation subjects food to low—and absolutely safe—levels of radiation, it has met panicky public resistance. . . . How ridiculous. Irradiation kills the bacteria that kills people. Yet, because of baseless claims, stores avoid irradiated food while selling meat and poultry that poses a far greater (though still minute) health threat."

● **RIVERBOAT CASINO** gambling is finished in Virginia for 1995. Facing sure defeat, Del. Jerrauld Jones (D-Norfolk), the pro-labor spokesman whom the gambling interests used to push their supposedly pro-job proposal, withdrew his proposal on Feb. 5, in the face of opposition from restaurateurs, church groups, and horse-racing interests.

● **PENNSYLVANIA'S** Republican legislators are reported to be pushing anti-crime and other legislation in coordination with the Gingrich cabal in Washington. On Feb. 8, State Sen. Melissa Hart announced a bill which would allow the use of evidence obtained through defective search warrants.

● **THE OHIO STATE** Teachers Pension Fund has sent out a letter announcing that it has lost \$8 million because of the decline in value of investments in Mexico. State pension funds, universities, and government agencies were allowed to invest up to 10% of their holdings in foreign markets, according to a law passed two years ago, ostensibly to allow investment in Israel bonds.

● **DAN QUAYLE**, the former vice president who was considered among the front-runners for the GOP nomination, announced on Feb. 10 that he will not run for President, citing an inability to raise the needed \$20-25 million. Speculation is rife as to whom this will benefit most.

● **AMBROSE** Evans-Pritchard, the Washington correspondent for London's *Sunday Telegraph* newspaper, gave his approval to the presidential ambitions of Sen. Phil Gramm, calling the Texas Republican "the sole candidate for the right-wing of the party," the dominating force in Congress, and who is "controlling much of the grass-root machinery." Evans-Pritchard has led the attacks against President Clinton, including giving wide coverage to Larry Nichols, who has made physical threats against the President.