

National News

Bush spokesmen threaten defectors

Spokesmen for George W. Bush have been issuing threats to wavering defectors among Congressional Republicans, according to the Feb. 18 issue of the Washington newspaper *Roll Call*, which covers Congressional affairs. Deputy Majority Whip Rep. Roy Blunt (R-Mo.) is reportedly warning that the Bush campaign won't forget or forgive any GOP lawmakers who desert Bush now.

Another unnamed Bush aide says, according to *Roll Call*: "The Members [of Congress] who are weak-kneed, we notice those things. Members who start to cut and run, we're not going to forget that. . . . It's during adversity you find out who your friends are. All of a sudden we have a bunch of Members who are wavering. We're keeping an eye on that."

Rep. Pete King (R-N.Y.) told *Roll Call* that a number of Congressmen are considering switching their endorsements. King said that in his case, the straw that almost broke the camel's back, was the Texas Governor's visit to ultra-fundamentalist Bob Jones University in Greenville, South Carolina, where officials made remarks that King interpreted as anti-Catholic. "I would say that a number of Members of Congress in New York and 15 to 20 local officials are considering switching their endorsement," said King.

Clinton promotes partnership with Iran

In an interview with CNN on Feb. 14, President Clinton was asked about U.S.-Iranian relations. He responded that he had said previously that "the United States had not been entirely blameless in the past, in our relationship with Iran, but that we wanted a good relationship with Iran; that we did not support and did not condone anyone who would support terrorist actions, and that we had some difficulties with Iran."

"I think that one of the best things we could do for the long-term peace and health of the Middle East," the President said, "is

to have a constructive partnership with Iran. And I'm still hoping that that can materialize. . . . I think that the estrangement between these two countries is not a good thing. I think it would be better if we could have a relationship."

Many of the Parliament candidates who won in the Feb. 20 elections favor a "dialogue of civilizations," including rapprochement with the United States.

State Department meets Chechnya parliamentarian

U.S. State Department officials met on Feb. 14 with the deputy chairman of the Chechnya Parliament, Seilam Beshayev. As opposed to previous meetings with Chechen officials, which were held away from the State Department building, this was held within the Department itself. The Russian government protested the move.

When asked about these developments on Feb. 16, State Department spokesman Jamie Rubin said that "it is appropriate for us to receive a wide range of information from Russia. We have very carefully calibrated our contact to not give the impression that it has changed our view on the recognition of Chechnya, which has not changed."

"We're concerned about the situation in Chechnya. We need to get a wide range of information, and if the Russian government wants to avoid people seeking out specific individuals to get information, they would be well advised to provide the necessary accreditation to journalists to go down there and tell the world what's going on in Chechnya. . . . and then we could have less of a need to seek information from sources they might not wish us to seek to."

A Russian diplomat told *EIR* that Chechen "foreign minister" Ilya Akhmatov had attempted to meet with U.S. officials in Washington several weeks ago, but received only low-level meetings with State Department officials at his hotel. He did, however, have a lengthy discussion with geopolitical maniac Zbigniew Brzezinski, who, through his position at Georgetown University's Center for Strategic and International Studies, helped arrange for the visit. They reportedly discussed how to stop Russia oil from

dominating the Caspian region, and how to make the pipeline from Georgia to Turkey the key transit route for Caspian oil, avoiding Russian territory. Akhmatov, travelling on a Russian passport, received his U.S. visa from the American embassy in Baku, Georgia.

U.S. missile defense not ready to deploy

On Feb. 14, the Defense Department's Director of Operational Testing and Evaluation, Philip E. Coyle, released his annual report on Pentagon programs. According to news reports, the evaluation states that "undue pressure has been placed on the [National Missile Defense] program to meet an artificial decision point." The report added that the current timetable would require a deployment decision to be made this summer, before full analysis could be made of the next test, which is scheduled for May. "This is driving the program to be 'schedule' rather than 'event' driven," the report states, and "this pattern has historically resulted in a negative effect on virtually every [weapon] development program" in which it has occurred. Coyle did not specify what he thought a more reasonable timetable would be.

According to the law passed last year by a veto-proof vote in the Congress, President Clinton must determine this summer whether the National Missile Defense program should be deployed. After the last test, which did not complete a successful intercept of its target, both supporters and opponents of the system began calling for the President to delay making a decision, to complete the test program and leave the decision on deployment to the next President.

Testifying before Congress the week before, Defense Secretary William Cohen stated that he would be ready to make a recommendation to the President on deployment by the deadline in June. On Feb. 15, responding to the Coyle report, Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Gen. Henry Shelton denied that the Pentagon was moving too fast on the NMD program, while admitting that the fast track the program is on has a "very

high degree of risk, in terms of getting it right.”

While the law passed by Congress states that the President will make a decision to deploy as soon as the system is “technologically ready,” President Clinton has insisted that it must not only be ready, but the threat must warrant the system, and it must be reasonable in cost.

As *EIR* has emphasized, the NMD program is a throwback to the incompetent missile-defense policies promoted in the 1980s by Lt. Gen. Daniel Graham (ret.), as a counter to Lyndon LaRouche’s concept of the Strategic Defense Initiative. See Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr., “Congress Revisits the ABM Treaty,” *EIR*, Aug. 20, 1999.

Michigan paper features Rep. Vaughn on LaRouche

A front-page article in the Feb. 18 *Michigan Citizen*, the state’s most prominent black newspaper, features State Rep. Ed Vaughn’s support for Democratic Presidential candidate LaRouche, under the headline “Ed Vaughn’s Support of LaRouche Stuns Detroiters,” with a picture of State Representative Vaughn. The article by Nkenge Zola, which is accompanied by an interview, reads as follows:

“After a life-long immersion in American, African-American, and African politics, 4th Legislative District Rep. Ed Vaughn has decided to risk the wrath of the Democratic Party and support Lyndon LaRouche for President of the United States. Both Vaughn and LaRouche are Democrats. Vaughn’s reputation has been that of a progressive.

“His bookstore on Dexter Avenue was a gathering place for black activists throughout the civil rights and black power movements in the sixties and seventies. A member of Detroit’s Pan African Congress, Vaughn was known as ‘Mwalimu,’ a Kiswahili term for respected teacher.

“Lyndon LaRouche has long held the reputation of being a fanatic. Vaughn says that is a fabrication of those in political and economic control of the U.S. An economist, LaRouche first ran for President in 1976. Born in 1922, he served five years of a fif-

teen-year sentence on Federal conspiracy charges. The Lyndon LaRouche website lists supporters from around the world, including bass-baritone William Warfield.”

London paper attacks ‘poisonous’ G.W. Bush

“Bush Reveals His Poisonous Colors,” is the headline of a nasty attack on “Dubya” by Washington-based British neo-conservative Andrew Sullivan, writing in the *Sunday Times* of London on Feb. 21.

Sullivan is irate about the Bush campaign’s use of “push-polling,” whereby a supposedly “independent pollster,” in this case in South Carolina, asks leading questions that spread venom against Bush’s opponent, John McCain. This is emblematic, he writes, of “Bush’s lame excuse for a candidacy,” which has unleashed a barrage of what New York columnist William Safire has denounced as “religio-political sleaze.”

Sullivan writes that “Safire is understating the case. Like his father before him, Bush combines inarticulate high-mindedness in office, with ruthless demagoguery on the campaign trail.” Writing the day before the Feb. 19 South Carolina primary, Sullivan says that if Bush should win, it would be “a pyrrhic victory. The ugliness of his tactics, his willingness to consort with the most unsavory characters in a notoriously unsavory state, and the sheer vacuousness of his message, have revealed him to be not merely hollow, but also malicious and unwise. . . . By panicking in South Carolina, Bush has essentially wrecked his candidacy.” All his claims to be a “moderate” and a “compassionate conservative . . . are now gurgling down the plug-hole.”

Sullivan concludes: “In the past few weeks, Bush has gathered around him, with uncanny efficiency, the unprincipled lowlife who have poisoned the Republican Party for a decade or more. You can tell a lot about a person by who his friends are. If these hatchet men and bigots are Bush’s friends, then deliver us speedily unto his enemies.” In this context, McCain’s nomination as Republican candidate has become “not merely desirable but imperative.”

HEAVY INTERNET users become socially isolated, according to a Stanford University study. Investigator Norman Nie said, “The more hours people use the Internet, the less time they spend with real human beings.” A 1998 study by Carnegie Mellon University likewise found “small but reliable declines in social and psychological well-being” among heavy Internet users. Critics tried to debunk that study by claiming that the subjects were only depressed, because they lived in Pittsburgh.

GEORGETOWN University in Washington, D.C. announced on Feb. 17 that it will sell a controlling interest in its hospital and medical network to a partnership controlled by Med-Star, Inc., which owns non-profit Washington Hospital Center and five other hospitals in the Washington, D.C. and Baltimore region. Georgetown’s elite medical and nursing schools and medical research programs will remain with the university.

THE FBI will open an office in Budapest, Hungary in March, which will be particularly focussed on Russian organized-crime groups which operate out of the city. One target is expected to be Semyon Mogilevich, a Russian organized-crime figure who has figured prominently in the Bank of New York case. This will be the first working office of the FBI abroad where agents will have the right to carry weapons, and to make arrests in conjunction with Hungarian authorities.

INDEPENDENT truckers from Pennsylvania, Maryland, and New Jersey drove their rigs into downtown Washington, D.C. on Feb. 22 to protest the soaring fuel prices that have forced many of them to a standstill. The costs of fuel and tolls to truckers have doubled since May, while the rising cost of home heating fuel is causing a crisis for homeowners along the Atlantic Seaboard. About 500 truckers participated in the demonstration.