

National News

Bush nominee for comptroller rejected

The Senate Banking Committee rejected the re-nomination of Robert Clarke as Comptroller of the Currency for a second five-year term on Nov. 6 on a 12-9 straight party-line vote.

The fight to reject was led by committee chairman Sen. Don Riegle (D-Mich.) who charged Clarke with refusing to curb banking excesses including profligate real estate loans, and with pushing the discredited policies of "forbearance" and "deregulation" which contributed to and exacerbated the cascading insolvencies of the nation's banks.

Other Democrats accused Clarke of too stringent regulation that has resulted in the credit crunch, echoing bankers and some administration officials who blame too much regulation for banks' demise.

The denial of the Clarke appointment is one of the few times that a sitting nominee has not been reconfirmed. The administration has no list of nominees, and no one is clamoring for the job, meaning that this office, which oversees nearly 4,000 national banks, could be essentially rudderless for months, at a time when the banking collapse is accelerating.

'Bush Democrats' lost big in Virginia election

If Democrats think that the victory of Sen. Harris Wofford (D-Penn.) over former Attorney General Richard Thornburgh means that any Democrat can win in 1992, the election results in Virginia's state legislature Nov. 5 demonstrate that, to the contrary, any candidate who supports George Bush's economic policies will go down to defeat.

The Virginia GOP had its greatest success in 100 years because of "Bush Democrats" Gov. Douglas Wilder and Attorney General Mary Sue Terry. In fact, the erosion of Democratic support was even greater than Republican seat gains show, because Dem-

ocrats had shaped the 1990 redistricting to the maximum disadvantage of Republicans.

Three of seven candidates who affiliated themselves with Lyndon LaRouche polled 16%, 17%, and 20% of the vote for state House and Senate seats.

In the Virginia Senate, the Republicans increased their seats from 10 to 18, of a total of 40 seats. Republican challengers defeated seven Democratic incumbents, all of whom were close to Wilder. Many of the incumbents who lost had been in office over 20 years.

In the House of Delegates, Republicans increased their seats from 40 to 42 out of 100, with one race still undecided. Republicans defeated three long-term Democratic incumbents, and won 9 of 13 seats in which there was no incumbent.

The decision of Wilder and Terry to cancel the social security tax deduction from Virginia state taxes was the major issue upon which Republicans campaigned.

Terry told statewide newspapers Nov. 8 that the numerous Democrats who lost around the state "didn't run good campaigns, and that's why they got their tails beat."

Ballot initiatives bypass legal scrutiny

European press coverage of Initiative 119 in Washington State, which would have allowed physician-assisted "suicide," highlighted the insane process of "ballot initiatives" which bypasses all the argument and legal scrutiny that a legislature would give a bill. Initiative 119 was defeated, in large part, due to the "LaRouche in '92" campaign against euthanasia.

The Nov. 5 *London Independent* noted that laws are kept deliberately simple in order to ensure that they are easier to "sell" to the television-oriented voter. For two years after a ballot initiative is passed, the legislature can only amend it by a two-thirds majority. The paper detailed the loopholes in Initiative 119:

1) The physicians involved were not required to be specialists in terminal illness: an eye doctor could have put patients to

death. 2) There was no requirement to notify authorities or the patient's family. 3) There is no residency requirement. People could come from all over the world to die—making it a potentially lucrative business. 4) Doctors would have been immune from prosecution. 5) There was no requirement to determine if the person asking for death is suffering from depression. 6) There was no protection from mis-diagnosis.

"Doctors are always under intense pressure to cut costs, which are spiralling in the U.S. health system," the paper noted, and added that there is no provision to ensure that neither the patient nor doctor is pressured by outrageous medical costs.

Michigan court throws thousands off welfare

A Michigan appeals court upheld in early November the "legality" of terminating its general assistance welfare program. The effect of the decision will be that 83,000 people will be immediately cut off from their average \$144 a month benefits, and that thousands will soon be evicted from their meager apartments and welfare hotels into the cold.

Michigan's governor and many Republicans have insisted that the state should not support "able-bodied" people, and that they should go to work—in a state crippled by depression and plagued by high unemployment fueled by the collapsing auto industry.

Weld pushing new workfare program

The administration of Gov. William Weld of Massachusetts is preparing a proposal for a new workfare program that would require most welfare recipients to "participate" or face a loss of benefits. The new program would replace former Gov. Michael Dukakis's Employment and Training Choices ("ET"), a nationally touted program whose hallmark was voluntary participation.

The proposed new program, called

"Mass Jobs," would have a workfare or community service component for people who are not participating in training or job placement services, according to state Welfare Commissioner Joseph Gallant. Its so-called target groups would include specific types of single parents on the state's welfare rolls: those under 24 with no high school diploma or equivalency certificate, those whose youngest child is 16 or 17, and those who have received Aid for Families with Dependent Children for at least 36 of the previous 60 months. In addition, Mass Jobs would serve two-parent families who went on welfare after exhausting their unemployment benefits.

Sanctions are threatened against welfare recipients. Currently, 65% of the AFDC caseload and two-thirds of the 25,600 people enrolled in Mass Jobs are in the targeted groups.

The new program comes at a time when resources are down dramatically. The Mass Jobs budget for the current fiscal year is \$76.4 million, down 25% from the \$101.4 million ET budget of two years ago. Within that, money for child care is down 18%. Funds for training, education, and job placement services have been cut by one-third.

As outlined by Gallant, Mass Jobs would serve volunteers first, then fill remaining slots with other AFDC recipients from the targeted groups. Anyone who is deemed to be ready for a job would be required to look for work. If a client in one of the targeted groups refused to participate, the department would cut the parent's benefits but supposedly leave the child's allotment untouched.

U.S. Army to use irradiated foods

The U.S. Army announced at a conference in October in Boston, Massachusetts, that it plans to use irradiated foods to feed its troops. Gen. William Tuttle, Jr., the commanding officer of the Army Materiel Command, said he had notified the U.S. Department of Agriculture that the Army wants to incorporate irradiated foods into the military subsistence program.

As part of a post-Persian Gulf war review, Tuttle said, the Army had decided to ask the Food and Drug Administration for an extension of the approval of low-level irradiated poultry to include other fresh meats and fish, and for new approvals for radiation sterilization of meats, poultry, and fish. The sterilized products, properly packaged, can be shipped without refrigeration, enabling the Army to supply field troops with tasty, non-casserole main dishes.

Food irradiation got its start as an Army research program during World War II, but the Army program was shut down in 1980 just as it was on the verge of commercial application, and its pioneering research staff was dispersed to various USDA laboratories.

Post-Christian era in U.S., says Buchanan

"America has entered a post-Christian era," columnist Patrick Buchanan wrote in a commentary in the Nov. 4 *Washington Times* which condemned euthanasia and the "death with dignity" movement.

"Men and women who disbelieve in God and the immortality of the soul are no longer willing to live by the old beliefs," he wrote. "They want the right to abort unwanted children, to put their terminally ill parents out of their misery, to take their own lives, when they, and no one else, decide it is a time to die. They intend to make themselves the gods of their own destiny. And if the law refuses to give them the freedom to do as they demand, more and more will—like Dr. Jack Kevorkian in Michigan and Derek Humphry at Hemlock—do as they wish, and let the law try to apprehend and prosecute them.

"The number of those who reject traditional morality, claiming it is rooted in superstition, now is legion. Thirty years ago, there was a national debate over whether a woman carrying a Thalidomide child should be permitted to have an abortion. The woman had to fly to Sweden to get it. Now there are 1.5 million legal abortions yearly in the United States; and abortion is, for a large segment of America, a valid form of birth control."

● **KURT SCHMOKE**, the mayor of Baltimore and infamous for his advocacy of drug legalization, announced in early November that schools will close for one week as part of budget cuts. Other cuts include the disbanding of 13 fire companies, cutbacks in library hours, and some museum closings for a period of two weeks in January.

● **AMELIA ROBINSON**, author of *Bridge Across Jordan*, was the featured speaker Nov. 7 at Loyola University in Maryland. University President Father Sellinger presented her with an award and praised her for her contributions to the civil rights movement.

● **DAN QUAYLE**, head of the National Space Council, is recommending that a non-NASA (i.e., political) person be selected for the agency's number two post, the Nov. 4 *Aviation Week* reported. Many observers believe that filling the position in this way in 1985 contributed to the Challenger Space Shuttle disaster.

● **AMENDMENTS** to the Clean Air Act have classified the de-icing fluid used by the airlines as a "hazardous air pollutant," the Nov. 4 *Aviation Week* reported. Airports are "scrambling to cope with the pollutive impact by collecting, recycling or disposing of the fluid," while the Federal Aviation Administration searches for ethylene-glycol substitutes.

● **ANITA HILL**, the professor who charged Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas with sexual harassment, has received the Ida B. Wells award from the National Coalition of Black Women.

● **MUCH OF IOWA** has been declared a disaster area as a result of a late-October ice storm, the Nov. 5 *Des Moines Register* reported. All but five counties were declared disaster areas after last summer's wet weather, drought, then early frost. Interstate Power reported that close to 100 miles of power lines were down.