

# National News

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## Alabama resurrects chain gangs for prison inmates

The state of Alabama displayed its brazen "experiment" in reviving prison chain gangs to the national media on May 3. Front-page coverage in the Richmond, Virginia *Times-Dispatch* the next day featured a huge color photo of one gang, showing only black prisoners—as if to invoke the image of a return to slavery.

Alabama officials note, however, that their chain gangs are "politically correct," being comprised of the exact three-fifths ratio of black prisoners to the state's total prison population, in an attempt to avoid any charges of racism. More than 300 medium-security prisoners have been assigned to the "experiment" so far. They were herded out in shackles for press interviews, wearing white uniforms emblazoned with the words "CHAIN GANG," before being marched off to pick up trash and cut grass on state highways.

Several prisoners were quoted in the *Washington Post* and the *Times-Dispatch*, complaining of their degrading treatment. A bill is pending in the state legislature to outlaw the practice, and the American Civil Liberties Union has promised to sue.

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## Kemp seeks D.C. E-zone on 'Hongkong' pattern

Jack Kemp, the former football quarterback who now heads "Empower America," was touted in the May 1 *Wall Street Journal* for his role in promoting a "radical enterprise zone" scheme for Washington, D.C.—to beat what the *Journal* characterized as "fiscal waste and festering urban problems."

The *Journal* reported that ex-Congressman Kemp (R-N.Y.) leads a coalition backing an "experimental" proposal for a "Hongkong on the Potomac." The scheme calls for selling off government assets to private financiers, freezing property taxes to benefit real estate speculators, and elimi-

nating the graduated income tax to benefit the wealthy in general.

Billed by the *Journal* as "the Republican enterprise guru," Kemp was instrumental in drawing President Reagan's administration into the disastrous deregulation policies of the 1980s. But, according to knowledgeable observers of Washington municipal politics, the key figure behind the current scheme is *Washington Post* owner Katherine Graham.

During a barrage of high-profile attacks against Washington Mayor Marion Barry, the *Post* has quietly pushed the candidacy of one Terrance Golden, for a seat on the financial control board which is to be appointed by President Clinton. Senior D.C. political sources say Golden is in effect Graham's player, to help clear the field for Kemp's privatization and looting drive.

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## Eco-lunatics push weeds over U.S. construction

A huge uproar has erupted in California in the past few weeks, as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Forest Service—pressured by the Nature Conservancy and an army of Prince Philip's other environmental groups—seek to list five weeds as "endangered species." The weeds allegedly grow only on top of limestone deposits in the San Bernardino Mountains.

An endangered-species listing would mean that all limestone mining in the area would have to cease. Limestone is the source of calcite (calcium carbonate), which is used to make cement and hundreds of other critical products. The mining area which the environmentalists want shut down has been the major producer of high-grade limestone in the entire western United States for the past 40 years. Closing this area to mining would have a devastating impact on the construction, chemical, and pharmaceutical industries. Without these mines, limestone would have to be imported from China or Australia.

In a series of hearings in California, field botanists, geologists, and paleontolo-

gists have testified that the claims that the weeds are an "endangered species" are scientifically fraudulent. Don Fife, representative of the National Association of Mining Districts, testified on April 26 that "junk science" was used to argue the plants are endangered. Fife, who led the fight against the California Desert Protection Act of 1994, noted that "10 of the 14 references, on the first page of the U.S. Forest Service listing package, are unpublished, in-house, self-serving reports . . . based on information and localities that the U.S. Forest Service staff maintain must be kept secret."

Fife said the environmentalists have "ignored creditable evidence submitted to them that the plants in question [have] been found growing on non-limestone [sites]." Fife told *EIR* that these weeds were "found only in limestone mines, because that's the only place they looked for them."

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## Confederates see slavery rising again—in prisons

State officials in Texas and Virginia seem bound to wrap themselves once again in the "Stars and Bars," the flag of the old Confederacy modeled on the British empire's own banner. In both states, the drive is growing to replace free labor with prisoners working in virtual slavery.

The Texas AFL-CIO *Labor News* for April 1995 ran a three-page feature entitled "Prison Labor Threatens Jobs of Law-Abiding Citizens." Texas AFL-CIO President Joe Gunn has committed the trade unions to fighting bills pending in the state legislature, which would extend the push for slave-labor. He cited the case of Wackenhut Corp.'s private prison facility at Lockhart, which employs prisoners at minimum wage to make computer circuit boards and optical lenses—both normally union jobs. Gunn denounced the policy as "absolute indentured slavery."

In Virginia, Gov. George Allen's "Lady Do-Rightly" wife Susan has been leading a project using female inmates at Pocahontas Correctional Unit, to process "salvageable"

food for food banks and to grow food for the needy. Public Safety Director Jerry Kilgore told the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* on April 28 that seven work camps will be operating across the state in June. He added that, "hopefully, we will have a factory behind every prison fence."

Long before the Civil War, slavery had proven to be so ruinous economically, that Virginia's slaveowners could only try to cut their losses by "breeding" slaves to sell on the open market in the Deep South. Today, under Governor Allen, the state prisons and county jails are bulging beyond current legal and budget limits. Another 154 Virginia inmates were flown to Newton County Detention Center in Texas on May 2, bringing the total number of Virginia inmates in Texas to over 450.

## Arthur Clarke attacks Sagan's 'Nazi' smear

Reviewing the latest bit of scientific fakery by Carl Sagan, prominent science and science-fiction writer Arthur Clarke blasted him for referring to Wernher von Braun, the pioneer of America's space program, as a "Nazi-American."

Clarke's review of Sagan's book *Pale Blue Dot*, in the June issue of *Sky & Telescope*, charged that Sagan "does my late friend Wernher von Braun a grave injustice. . . . Wernher's scarcely disguised contempt for the Nazis often put him in serious danger. He was probably lucky to have escaped execution after being arrested and jailed by Heinrich Himmler. . . . Wernher agonized over the moral issues involved for the rest of his life. However, his position was no different from that of all patriotic scientists and engineers in time of war."

The British author concludes his review, "As Carl rightly says, von Braun 'more than anyone else, actually took us into space.' He was also a warm and delightful human being, sincerely admired by all those who knew and worked for him—whatever their national origins. I hope, therefore, that the next edition of *Pale Blue Dot* will rectify this posthumous insult to one of the greatest

men of our age."

Arthur Clarke's intervention into this revival of "Nazi" smears against von Braun and other German scientists in the U.S. space program comes at a crucial time. The 50th anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps has been used as an opportunity by some in Germany to repeat lies and slanders previously cooked up by the Anti-Defamation League, the Office of Special Investigations of the U.S. Department of Justice, and the former East German Stasi.

## Washington Post runs edited rebuttal on D.C.

The May 6 issue of the *Washington Post* printed a letter from *EIR* contributor Anton Chaitkin, attacking the paper's lying propaganda campaign to force the administration of Mayor Marion Barry to surrender control of the city's finances. The *Post* omitted the first paragraph of the text, which follows:

"As the Big Mac-style financial control board has been put through, the *Washington Post* has tried to justify the imposition of ruinous austerity on the national capital by the constant repetition of an old lie about D.C.'s history.

"The April 18 *Post* reiterates the propaganda of pro-Ku Klux Klan elements who took down the city's government structure in 1874. The *Post* says the 1871-73 regime 'had run up huge cost overruns' and 'Congress felt hoodwinked.' The governor of the city, Alexander Shepherd, was 'charged' with financial improprieties, and city officials were 'negligent, careless, improvident, unjust, oppressive, and illegal.'

"Shepherd and others were cleared of these false charges, which were brought by former Confederate politicians. But the pro-civil rights regime, which had made Washington, D.C. into a modern city, was destroyed. It was replaced with all-white rule, racial segregation, and political tyranny which lasted for 100 years—a misrule justified, as is the financial control board, only by the lies told then and now."

## Briefly

● **DR. GARY S. BECKER**, 1992 Nobel Prize-winner in economics, called for legalizing "certain" drugs, at a forum sponsored by the Federal Reserve of Richmond and held at the Fed's office on May 9, according to the March 10 *Richmond Times-Dispatch*.

● **THE WHITEWATER** probe was puffed up again by the *Washington Post* in a front-page story on May 3, suggesting that Special Prosecutor Kenneth Starr is meticulously investigating \$800,000 in campaign loans to Bill Clinton's gubernatorial reelection campaigns. Starr has obtained plea-bargain agreements from six minor players indicted in the probe, one of whom has been in protective custody for over a year.

● **THE GLOBAL WARMING** hoax was reheated in the May 1 *New York Times*, with the claim that sea levels may rise as much as 150 feet when (and if) the East Antarctic Ice Sheet melts. The new doomsday theory was proposed during a contentious meeting at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute in Massachusetts, says the *Times*, while acknowledging that the leading oceanographers are skeptical of the claim.

● **VIRGINIA'S** Republican Party seems to have ensnared itself in the Confederate flag it has been waving in recent months. Party officials mailed out 6,000 invitations to attract African-Americans to a May 5 rally in one of Richmond's largest arenas—but only six people showed up, according to the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*.

● **TAX REVOLT** Rep. Mel Hancock (R-Mo.) attacked the federal government on April 14, following the Oklahoma City bombing, for "causing this feeling of frustration." He added that the terrorists "could have proved their point, if they had to do it, by planting a bomb on the weekend when that building was vacant," the *Joplin Globe* reported on April 15.