

National News

Riverboat gambling bill sunk by Virginia House

The Virginia House of Delegates on Feb. 13 rejected a bill to introduce casino gambling in the state, by a vote of 69-28. The resounding margin of defeat has reportedly killed the scheme for the foreseeable future, as even proponents of the measure have conceded.

Casino-style gambling has been defeated in several states over the past few months, as the negative effects on the population and the economy have become painfully obvious. Last November, Washington state voted down a proposal to open casinos on Indian reservations. Casino projects have gone bankrupt recently in New Orleans and Mississippi. In Massachusetts, four out of five local referenda rejected casino gambling last year; and the scheme was defeated in cities in Rhode Island, Michigan, and Wyoming.

Nevertheless, Americans spent more on gambling in 1994, than they did on recorded music, movie tickets, video games, live entertainment, and sporting events combined, according to the gaming-industry consulting firm of Christiansen/Cummings Associates. A national pro-gambling lobby has recently been established, called the American Gaming Association, headed by former Republican Party Chairman Frank Fahrenkopf, Jr.

State Dept. puts focus on environmental issues

The State Department announced on Feb. 14, that Secretary of State Warren Christopher has issued a memo to all undersecretaries and assistant secretaries, declaring that "environmental issues ought to now be a focus of our diplomacy."

Press Secretary Nicholas Burns reported that Christopher has "asked our bureaus to take at least seven important steps. First, to integrate environmental and population goals into their work; second, to incorporate environmental issues into trip preparations; third, to include these initiatives in all of our conversations with foreign leaders; fourth,

to designate a deputy assistant secretary responsible for global affairs issues; fifth, to incorporate the bureaus in our ongoing global environmental programs . . . ; sixth, to have each of our embassies overseas designate a senior officer responsible for leading that mission's environmental team; and last, to try to focus public attention on this issue, on ways that environmental issues contribute to the overall health and security of the United States."

Burns added that Christopher "plans to be personally engaged on this in making this a big part of our foreign policy. For instance, environmental issues will be one of the major issues in our trip to Latin America in just a couple of weeks; and the secretary will also be making a major environmental policy speech in early spring."

Burns was asked by *EIR*'s Bill Jones, "Can you give an indication why that is occurring now? As far as I know, global warming this year has not been quite as warm as people have thought, especially in this area. Have you discovered that the ozone hole has gotten bigger, or is there some specific reason for why this is now becoming a major issue?"

Burns repeated that Christopher "felt personally very strongly that it was high time for the United States to publicly declare, for the first time, that international environmental issues should be core, vital issues for American foreign policy."

Green Scissors Coalition: 'Cut off the future now'

The Green Scissors Coalition, a fascist amalgam of environmentalists and Conservative Revolutionists, held press conferences in 60 American cities on Feb. 15, to issue their latest demands for shutting down "wasteful government programs." Their targets include many of the most crucial infrastructural and scientific development programs funded by the federal government.

The coalition was created three years ago by James Dale Davidson, founder and chairman of the National Taxpayers Union; and Friends of the Earth, an umbrella organization for environmentalist saboteurs serving Britain's Prince Philip. Leaders of the

coalition also sport such names as Jill Lancelot, Gawain Kripke, and Phil Knight—conveying a touch of the old feudal magic.

Gawain Kripke, of Friends of the Earth, told a press conference at the National Press Club in Washington that "environmentalists actually have a lot in common with fiscal conservatives who are trying to balance the federal budget. We are united by the belief that Americans should not borrow from the future. Future generations should not be burdened with unbearable fiscal debt."

This year's Green Scissors' hit list includes funding for the Tokamak fusion reactor; the advanced light-water nuclear reactor; the plutonium pyro-processing program (essential to the next generation of liquid-metal nuclear reactors); deep-water oil and gas drilling; the Boll Weevil eradication program; the Wellton-Mohawk irrigation project in Arizona; and the Three Gorges Dam project in China.

Gov't report links money laundering and gambling

A Government Accounting Office (GAO) report claims that the rapid spread of legalized gambling across the nation, has expanded opportunities for illegal money laundering, according to an Associated Press wire Feb. 14. The GAO undertook the study at the request of Sen. Sam Nunn (D-Ga.). Nunn, the ranking Democrat on the Senate Governmental Affairs Subcommittee on Permanent Investigations, said he was "concerned that we do not have adequate resources in place to regulate these rapidly growing areas of the legal gaming industry, to prevent illegal money laundering."

The GAO cites gambling casinos as the prime target for money laundering, because they handle more than 80% of money bet legally nationwide. As a partial safeguard, the report recommends considering federal limits on casino transactions.

The orgy of annual cash betting in casinos has grown from \$117 billion in 1984, to \$407 billion in 1994—with 60 riverboat operations launched from 1991 through March 1995. American Indian tribes set up

237 gaming operations, including 119 casinos, in the decade ending March 1995. Though federal laws require reporting of cash exchanges of \$10,000 or more, a gambler can now buy slightly less than \$10,000 in chips; do little or no gambling; and redeem the chips for a casino check without any record of the transaction.

Stanley Morris, director of the Treasury Department's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network, said the department wanted to focus on the reporting of transactions, rather than on placing limits on them. Individual states should make decisions on curbing transactions, said Morris, who claimed the report failed to prove "that prohibited transactions do in fact deter money laundering to any appreciable extent."

Teachers rate computers over classics by 3-to-1

A new study by the Public Agenda Foundation, based on a poll of 1,164 secondary school teachers, claims that 72% believe that training in "computer skills and media technology" is "absolutely essential," while only 24% think as much of "classic works from such writers as Shakespeare and Plato." Other vacuous categories of "learning priorities"—such as good work habits, practical job skills, dealing with social problems, and good citizenship—were also rated above education in the classics.

The title of the Public Agenda report is *Given the Circumstances: Teachers Talk About Public Education Today*. According to co-author Steve Farkas, "Computer skills emerge from the pack because the teachers connect that with survival in the real world." After all, says a Savannah, Georgia, teacher quoted in the report, "that's where the money is going. Somebody has to be able to work these computers, and the curriculum needs to reflect that."

Only 21% of the teachers selected "an excellent academic education" as the factor which could determine career success—a third-place finish behind "persistence and inner drive" at 42%, and "knowing how to deal with people" at 32%.

The Public Agenda Foundation was set

up in 1975, by opinion-manipulator Daniel Yankelovich, and Trilateral Commission member Cyrus Vance. Funding sources for *Given the Circumstances* include the Carnegie Corp., the Rockefeller Foundation, Philip Morris, the National Education Association, and the American Federation of Teachers.

AFL-CIO sets agenda for more political influence

At its annual meeting in Bal Harbour, Florida, the AFL-CIO Executive Council announced plans Feb. 19 to build union membership, particularly in the South; and to organize support for pro-labor candidates in the 1996 elections. The number of unionized workers in the United States has been dropping steadily for the past decade, and is now below 15% of the workforce.

AFL-CIO President John J. Sweeney said the new strategy is aimed at developing "a culture of organizing" within each union—similar to the one he created prior to his election last October. During 15 years as president of the Service Employees International Union, Sweeney was able to nearly double its membership to 1.1 million members.

Sweeney announced that the AFL-CIO will make good on its pledge to expand organizing efforts, because that is the only way to reverse the decline in real wages which most Americans have experienced over the past two decades. "We cannot bargain decent contracts for our members, nor can we obtain public policies that protect working families, unless we can build a substantially larger labor movement," Sweeney said.

Next year, the AFL-CIO will increase its spending on union organizing, focussed on the largely unorganized Southern states, to more than \$15 million, compared to \$2 million a year ago. For this year's Congressional elections, the AFL-CIO is planning to pour \$35 million into a campaign to support pro-union candidates. Union leaders intend to target 75 Republican-held House seats, train 100 activists as political organizers in each Congressional District, and deploy 2,500 activists in key districts during the final six weeks before the elections.

Briefly

WORK IN SPACE moved ahead, with the Feb. 20-21 launchings of a Russian Soyuz spaceship and America's Space Shuttle—bound for the Mir, the Russian-built international space station. The latest missions, which include deploying the Italian Space Agency's tethered satellite system, bring the total of men in space to 12—four each from the United States, Europe, and Russia.

WHITEWATER prosecutor Kenneth Starr has new indictments, charging two board members of a small Arkansas bank with fraudulently funneling \$12,000 to Bill Clinton's 1990 gubernatorial campaign. Starr's Bush-league case relies on testimony against the two men by the bank's former president, previously indicted on five felony counts—who cut a deal with Starr for a sentence of two years' probation and a \$1,000 fine.

MARYLAND has become the first state to abolish prison courses for high-school equivalency diplomas, and for vocational training in auto repair, carpentry, and other skills. Gov. Parris Glendening (D) has ordered them eliminated, effective May 1, claiming the cuts were needed to preserve public programs for those not in jail. Last year, 3,700 Maryland inmates enrolled in these courses.

EDUCATIONAL SPENDING priorities are also off the mark at the University of Maryland. According to the *Washington Post* Feb. 21, its "parking office" has a \$5 million budget—and squeezes \$2 million a year from students and staff "through parking enforcement," including \$1 million for meter violations.

CATO INSTITUTE hack Doug Bandow blames Abraham Lincoln for the "mass death and destruction" of the Civil War, and for "the oppressive leviathan state with which we must contend today." In the Feb. 17 *Washington Times*, Bandow said that the "peaceful separation" of the Confederacy in 1861 "might have resulted in justice for blacks sooner than did coercive union."