

National News

California levees failed to meet U.S. standards

The devastating floods in northern California are a direct result of the failure to construct flood-control systems, meeting the standards of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, according to the Jan. 7 *San Francisco Examiner*. Breaks in northern California's 6,000 miles of dikes and levees have occurred in 23 places in 42 counties. Given the sodden condition of the levees, the danger remains that more of them will break.

The *Examiner* also cited the crippling effect of environmentalist regulations, on efforts to maintain the levees. For years, the Corps of Engineers told local flood control boards "to clear vegetation and wildlife from levees. Trees could interfere with emergency repairs, while the burrowing of beavers and squirrels into the banks could cause them to fail during floods. . . . At the same time, other federal and state agencies would forbid destruction of wildlife habitat on the levees."

Striking truckers target Brits' control of Giant

Teamsters on strike against Giant Food demonstrated Jan. 8 outside the British Embassy in Washington, D.C., protesting plans by the chain's controlling British company to hire non-union workers. The demonstration was blacked out by the *Washington Post*, but the Teamsters' anti-British theme drew considerable attention from the press in London.

The Jan. 9 London *Guardian* ran a story, headlined "U.S. Teamsters target Britain," reporting that "Britain's Embassy in the United States was besieged yesterday, by hundreds of striking U.S. truck drivers from the famous Teamsters union, accusing the Sainsbury's supermarket chain, of waging war on American jobs. Equating Lord Sainsbury with the British royal family, a Teamsters spokesman, Andy Banks, said: 'Sainsbury's are re-fighting the battle of 1812, when the British army ransacked Washing-

ton, except this time, they are ransacking our jobs.'

"Milking the anti-British theme, the union yesterday aired a radio advertisement, with the sound of horses' hooves: 'The British are coming again,' the voice-over warns, before blaming Sainsbury's for taking money from U.S. workers, while giving more than £30 million to the National Gallery in London. A huge Stars-and-Stripes waved in the throng at the embassy gates yesterday, helping to stir the spirit of American independence."

In an account laced with snide comments from British Embassy officials, the *Guardian* also complained that "union officials said a delegation could soon visit Britain." One of the strikers told the paper, "We don't like the thought of a Brit firm coming in here, and messing with our jobs. We're still kind of sensitive about Brits."

The London *Times* also reported the Teamsters' protest against "what they described as the destruction of jobs in the United States by Sainsbury's. Britain's largest retailer, which controls 54% of stock in Giant Food, has been accused of trying to replace lorry drivers for the chain in Washington."

The British company is owned by the Sainsbury family, led by Baron John Davan Sainsbury, a member of the House of Lords; and his brother Sir Timothy, a member of the House of Commons and the Privy Council. The Sainsbury brothers have been leaders in the Thatcherite drive to deregulate the British economy. Their father, Baron Alan Sainsbury, was in 1939 a Fellow of the Eugenics Society, which promoted Nazi "race science," and since the 1980s has participated in the "World Government" group within the House of Lords.

Governor would end welfare with forced work

Republican Gov. Pete Wilson of California released his proposed \$64.6 billion budget Jan. 9, which would chop an additional \$550 million from welfare assistance by cutting off recipients who fail to find jobs within 12 months. Describing welfare recipients as prone to "idleness," "promiscuity," and "il-

legitimacy," Wilson declared that "we're going to end welfare's warehousing of people who don't want to work."

Going far beyond the recently imposed federal guidelines, Wilson's proposal would entirely eliminate Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), and replace it with a new state program called the California Temporary Assistance Program. He also demanded the repeal of a state law requiring counties to provide General Assistance to the neediest among the poor. All aid would be denied to legal immigrants who arrived in the United States after Aug. 22, 1996.

All able-bodied welfare recipients, regardless of whether they have children or other dependents, would be cut off from benefits after 12 months. If they have failed to find work after the first six months of benefits, their benefits would be cut by 15%. Single-parent families could continue to receive partial benefits after the 12-month cutoff, but only if the parent works at least 36 hours per week. More than 50% of all welfare mothers who are single parents, however, do not have a high school diploma; and 17 of California's counties have official unemployment rates above 11%.

Wilson also proposes to cut the rolls by promoting adoption of the children of single-parent welfare mothers, and to train caseworkers to "offer" adoption as an alternative to unwed mothers. Linda Lewis, the executive director of the Association of Children's Services, told the *Los Angeles Times*, "I find it shocking that we would be talking about adopting children instead of providing support for their parents to raise them. . . . The idea that we could provide adoption services for poor families, and we can't provide . . . medical assistance, or employment assistance for them to afford families, is reprehensible."

Maurice Strong unveils his 'True Brit' agenda

Arch-environmentalist Maurice Strong, the leading Canadian spokesman for the British oligarchy's Club of the Isles, presented the agenda for 1997 for his "Earth Council," in a speech at the National Press Club in Wash-

ington Jan. 8. Bloated by his ranking as a heavyweight in the World Bank, Strong complained that, during the 20 years before the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, the Earth's population increased by 1.7 billion people, and "we may not survive this crisis. . . . Life has been a very ephemeral phenomenon on Earth. . . . It may not continue forever."

Strong's agenda for 1997 is to intensify the genocidal policies of the 1992 Earth Summit under a new name: the RIO+5 Forum, scheduled to be held in Rio in March. Strong told the National Press Club that "while many dedicated individuals and organizations are remaining true to the Earth Summit's promise . . . many governments have failed to live up to their pledges."

Strong's Earth Council has just released a report on the devastation humanity has allegedly suffered for its failure to destroy itself for the sake of the environment. The report claims (and gloats) that more than 100 nations are worse off today than 15 years ago, that 60% of humanity lives on less than \$2 a day, and that 1.3 billion people have incomes of less than \$1 a day.

Strong announced that further disasters lie ahead, including water shortages and "a climate-driven crisis in the insurance industry"—due to weather disasters he attributes to the hoax known as global warming. Strong boasted that the Earth Council comprises "several thousands of civil society organizations, which we represent at a global level." He added, "Al Gore is interested in the environment; the previous Congress hasn't been as much . . . but the new Congress will be more friendly."

When a Canadian reporter joked about the power of Canadians in Washington, Strong replied, "Canadians have infiltrated Washington since 1812. In 1812 we infiltrated the whole thing; we even burned the Capitol."

Winter wheat acreage is lowest since 1978

The current crop area for U.S. winter wheat is the smallest since 1978, according to the latest figures released by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The final estimate of

this crop year's planting indicates that only 48.2 million acres of winter wheat were planted in the autumn of 1996—a shortfall of over 3 million acres against the projected estimate of 51.4 million acres. When the statistics were released, wheat prices shot up, in anticipation of a smaller harvest early this summer.

Despite this apparent rationale for higher prices for wheat futures on the commodities exchanges, it is clear that the major grain cartels—Cargill, Louis Dreyfus, Continental, Bunge, Grand Metropolitan (Pillsbury)—are conducting the same maneuver they employed during the 1995-96 crop year. The companies have sucked in as much grain from the farmer as they can at low prices, and now will control supplies and drive prices up.

AFL-CIO monthly blasts Wall Street speculators

The January issue of the AFL-CIO's magazine *America & Work* calls for intensified union organizing to put a stop to Wall Street financiers' destruction of the U.S. economy. The cover story, titled "Chain Saw Reactions: What Happens When Wall Street Speculators Call the Shots," features a graphic of a big chain saw cutting through a crowd of people, and bears the subtitle, "Wall Street speculators are pushing America down the low road. Only we can stop them."

The feature sets forth an agenda around which to mobilize working families "to reverse public policies that exacerbate the power imbalance" between labor and Wall Street. High on the list of targets are the Federal Reserve and free trade: "To accommodate financial markets, the U.S. government, primarily through the Federal Reserve, restrains economic growth. The result is chronically slack labor markets, which reduce workers' bargaining power. . . . As a result of free trade policies, including NAFTA, corporations are free to put high-wage workers in the United States in direct competition with low-wage labor in other countries—further eroding workers' power and living standards."

VIRGINIA Gov. George Allen's privatization orgy includes plans to turn more than \$600 million worth of state programs over to corporate profiteering. The biggest prize, at \$500 million, is road construction and maintenance; \$120 million in prison contracts would also be handed to companies that prey on budget deficits, and specialize in brutal cost-cutting. In Ohio, the Corrections Corp. of America will soon open a private prison in Youngstown (next to decaying steel mills and shut-down auto plants), which will house up to 1,000 prisoners shipped in from other states.

ONE-THIRD of Ohio's 42,881 bridges are badly deteriorating, according to a computer analysis of state highway records conducted by the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*. One in seven bridges is rated "structurally deficient" for the condition of its deck, support, foundation, or culverts.

JACK KEVORKIAN can kill at will, says the new prosecutor for Oakland County, Michigan. Despite the recent ruling in Federal District Court in Detroit, that the Constitution provides no protection for "assisted suicide," all charges pending against Kevorkian in ten of his murders have been dropped, because it would be "a waste of time and taxpayer money to pursue him."

MICROSOFT chairman and computer guru Bill Gates has obviously had more bytes than he can chew. In the Jan. 13 issue of *Time*, Gates declares, "I don't think there's anything unique about human intelligence. . . . All the neurons in the brain which make up perceptions and emotions operate in a binary fashion. We can someday replicate that on a machine."

FEDERAL RESERVE Board member Lawrence Lindsey, a Bush appointee, announced his resignation Jan. 10. With the appointment of another board member to head the President's Council of Economic Advisers, President Clinton now has two vacancies at the Fed to fill immediately.