

National News

Soros gang plots further legalized-dope referenda

Having bought ballot victories in 1996 drug-legalization referenda in Arizona and California, George Soros and the British Mont Pelerin gang are planning to expand their "medical-use" hoax to additional states in 1998. "Arizonans for Drug Policy Reform," which flooded Arizona's media with propaganda paid for by Soros, continues as a central player in the drive to legalize the "medical" use of dangerous narcotics.

The pro-dope "Reform" group is headed by John R. Norton, a Conservative Revolutionary who also chairs the Goldwater Institute—founded by Arizona's Congressman "ValuJet" John Shadegg as an offshoot of the Mont Pelerin Society. Norton attacks the war on drugs as a failed strategy, and trumpets "medicalization" as a way to cut spending on drug programs. "We believe [Arizona's] Proposition 200 offers a new paradigm for drug control."

According to one of the consultants hired by the "Reform" group, they hope to use additional state referenda to force the adoption of drug legalization as national policy.

Pioneer 10 spacecraft ends 25-year mission

The 570-pound Pioneer 10 spacecraft celebrated its 25th anniversary on March 2, at a distance of 6.2 billion miles from Earth. Pioneer 10 was launched by NASA in 1972 on a mission to explore Jupiter, the nearest of the giant gaseous planets. No spacecraft had ever before crossed the asteroid belt between Mars and Jupiter, and scientists did not know whether rocks or grains of sand would damage the spacecraft. Pioneer 10 made the crossing nearly unscathed, thus opening the way for the two Voyager spacecraft: the Galileo mission now observing Jupiter and its moons, and the launch later this year of the Cassini mission to Saturn.

In December 1973, Pioneer 10 made its

fly-by past Jupiter. Using its 11 scientific instruments, it studied the ultraviolet and infrared radiation and charged particles around Jupiter, and took the first close-up photos of its largest moons. Using a gravity assist from Jupiter, Pioneer 10 became the first spacecraft to attain a solar-system escape velocity. Since its planetary encounter at Jupiter, Pioneer 10 has been travelling on a mission to try to find the heliopause, "the end of the Solar System," where the flow of hot gas from the Sun bumps into the interstellar medium. Along the way, the spacecraft has been recording the intensity of galactic cosmic rays.

Over the years, however, Pioneer 10's nuclear-isotope electric power source has diminished, to the point that its current signal received on Earth is equal to 8 watts. NASA Associate Administrator for Space Science Wesley Huntress announced Feb. 27 that Pioneer 10's mission will cease at the end of March, because the signal has finally become too weak to report significant scientific data.

Fight looms over plan to unionize workfare

The AFL-CIO's recent call, to unionize welfare recipients herded into "workfare" jobs, has directly challenged the prevailing interpretation of the 1996 welfare reform law. The federal legislation, like that of most states, denies that persons on workfare are employees—and thus has sanctioned replacing unionized workers with welfare victims, who are paid even less than the minimum wage. The policy issue affects hundreds of thousands of welfare recipients nationwide.

The front line of the battle is currently focussed on New York City, where 35,000 welfare recipients have already been herded into workfare in municipal services. They are working at jobs previously performed by unionized workers, sweeping streets, cleaning parks, and working as hospital aides; but they are receiving as little as \$68.50 in cash and \$60 in food stamps every two weeks, for their 26 hours of work per week.

The resolution passed Feb. 19 by the

AFL-CIO Executive Council declares, "In dealing with the new legal and political climate posed by the federal welfare reform legislation, the goals of the AFL-CIO are to protect existing collective bargaining and work relationships, and to extend the benefits of union representation to workfare recipients who are placed in public or private jobs." The bankrupt moguls of Wall Street replied on Feb. 21, in the lead editorial of their favorite mouthpiece, the *New York Times*, under the headline "Don't Unionize Workfare." Dropping all pious claims about the liberating nature of workfare, the *Times* declared, "it would be a mistake to organize welfare workers into a union, because what they are doing does not amount to a job."

The *Times* editorial hailed the New York City workfare scheme as a "potential model" for the nation, and called for "union cooperation," despite union concerns "that over the long run, the cheap labor provided by the workfare program will make it harder for the union to win pay increases for its rank-and-file members."

The U.S. Department of Labor is currently determining, whether welfare recipients working in public jobs in lieu of benefits, are in fact "employees" covered by federal labor laws, and therefore entitled to unionize. The Feb. 20 *Washington Post*, citing "confidential" draft documents, claimed that the department had concluded that the Fair Labor Standards Act does apply to workfare participants, but that the decision is yet to be approved by the White House.

CFR says drug fight must shift to cutting demand

The New York Council on Foreign Relations released a report Feb. 26 calling for a fundamental shift in anti-drug policy, from interdiction and destruction of supplies, to so-called "demand reduction." The recommendations of the CFR task force amount to a blank check for the financiers of the international drug cartel, and a global free-trade policy for drug-trafficking.

At the CFR's Washington press conference, task force member Everett Briggs, former deputy assistant secretary of state for

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inter-American affairs in the Carter administration, insisted that the drug problem is simply a function of demand. "Demand," he said, "has turned what was once a cottage industry into a lucrative global business." He claimed that efforts to destroy production, and interdict trafficking, have only resulted in relocating production centers and trafficking routes, without reducing the flow of drugs. "As long as there's a demand," he said, "production will be lucrative."

Task force chairman Mathea Falco, who was Carter's assistant secretary of state for international narcotics matters, declared that "interdiction will never succeed in making a real difference" in the availability of drugs in the U.S. Her suggested alternatives include "strengthening democratic institutions" in producer countries—not only against corruption by the drug cartels, but also against the military forces deployed against them. A strategy to target "big-time financial flows," Falco admitted, would involve those in "the highest levels of politics and finance." The CFR report, however, gives comfort to the money-launderers, by declaring that "there are difficult social, political, and legal challenges inherent in imposing a strict financial reporting regime on capital flows in democratic societies, where expanding international trade, economic development, and prosperity are believed to depend upon a free flow of global capital."

Bosnian Cardinal appeals to U.S. for leadership

Addressing the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Washington on Feb. 21, Archbishop of Sarajevo Cardinal Vinko Puljic emphasized the crucial role the U.S. government must play in securing peace and reconstruction for war-torn Bosnia-Herzegovina. "In 1994 we were in the middle of a brutal siege; today the war has stopped and we are enjoying at least a semblance of peace," Cardinal Puljic declared. "The new situation is due, in large measure, to U.S. diplomacy, reconstruction aid, and troops."

He warned, however, that, "just peace remains a distant dream. Despite all those killed, raped and forced from their homes

... too many leaders in Bosnia and Herzegovina—with tacit or open support of outside powers—are still preaching a politics of partition, chauvinistic nationalism, and ethnic hatred." Cardinal Puljic emphasized, "Unless more is done soon, the partition of Bosnia will be cemented, and the extremism and extremists that brought us war will become further entrenched."

The Catholic bishops of Bosnia-Herzegovina "firmly believe that it is possible and essential that we rebuild a democratic, multi-ethnic, multi-religious, united country. . . . This can be achieved, however, *only if the U.S. government* and the international community take more decisive and credible action to implement the civilian aspects of the Dayton Accords." Those measures, he said, "must be coordinated with economic reconstruction, which is vital to a return to a normal life and society, where we are no longer dependent upon outside assistance."

Privatizers' toll road heading for bankruptcy

The Dulles Greenway, the 14-mile private toll road from Washington's Dulles Airport to Leesburg, Virginia, once touted as the model for highway privatization schemes by the financial circles associated with George Bush and Wall Street, could financially collapse by the end of March. Sources in the financial community report, that desperate discussions are continuing to try to fashion a rescue package for the \$326 million project, whose investors are a year behind in their debt payments and whose yearly revenues can't pay even one fiscal quarter's debt service.

The Greenway was hatched in the mid-1980s as a prototype scheme for private road infrastructure by a group linked to a taskforce on privatization run through networks of then-Vice President George Bush. Whereas the original state plan to extend the Dulles Toll Road from metro Washington to the airport would have been finished in 1991, and cost \$175 million, the privatized white elephant cost \$326 million, when it opened, four years behind schedule.

GOP LEADERS, weary from ravine about President Clinton's fundraising, adjourned Feb. 20 for several days of stroking party fatcats in Palm Beach, Florida. Top contributors (at least \$175,000 over four years) had a chance "to meet and talk informally with party leaders, foreign dignitaries and special guests." Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott said it was "the American Way." Newt Gingrich got to meet with Britain's Margaret Thatcher.

CREDIT CARD DEBT is burying nearly 60 million U.S. households, now paying over \$1,000 annual interest on an average debt of \$6,000, the Consumer Federation of America reported Feb. 25. "The typical household with these debt burdens has an annual disposable income of about \$20,000, and credit card debts of more than \$10,000," the report states.

FOOD STAMP CUTOFFS began Feb. 22, for the first wave of unemployed adults without children, who have used up their three-month allotment under the Welfare Reform Act. Able-bodied and partially disabled persons, ages 18-50, are eligible for food stamps for only three months in any three-year period.

PRESIDENT CLINTON issued orders Feb. 20, prohibiting HMOs from limiting what doctors may tell Medicaid patients about available treatments. The action extends his previous order regarding Medicare patients, to the 36% of Medicaid recipients whose health care is already controlled by HMOs.

THE GENIUS OF LEONARDO da Vinci is on display at Boston's Museum of Science through Sept. 1. The exhibition of more than 200 of his works, as "Scientist, Inventor, Artist," is the largest and most comprehensive ever assembled, and includes dozens of interactive models of his inventions. Boston is the only U.S. stop on the exhibit's tour.