

National News

HMOs break New York consumer rights laws

Health maintenance organizations (HMOs) regularly break New York's Consumer Bill of Rights Law, according to a report on "HMOs versus The Law," from the Public Advocate for the City of New York. One year after passing its groundbreaking law to assure that HMOs disclose basic information about their plans to the public, "virtually every one of the HMOs surveyed" failed to comply with the law, 83% of the time.

In the Advocate's report, HMOs lied, gave misinformation, or didn't know their accreditation status with the National Committee for Quality Assurance; 65% of the time, HMOs couldn't say what percentage of their doctors were board-certified. Many could only be "reached" by voice mail, and would not return calls, making them inaccessible to patients.

Wolf challenged to repudiate hate campaign

Rep. Frank Wolf (R-Va.), the sponsor of the Freedom from Religious Persecution Act (H.R. 2431), which would impose sanctions against nations accused of religious intolerance, has been put on the spot because of his silence in the face of a hate campaign that has reared its head against the projected move of an Islamic Academy funded by Saudi Arabia, from Fairfax County, to Loudoun County, in his district in northern Virginia. LaRouche Democrat Nancy Spannaus, who is running against Wolf for Congress, challenged her opponent to speak out against the hate campaign.

"What we have seen erupt in opposition to the Islamic school is the most despicable kind of racist and religious hate campaign. Wild charges are being thrown around without a shred of truth. Muslims are being vilified as terrorists, in the same manner that the racist Jewish Defense League vilifies Palestinians," Spannaus said. "One would expect senior political and community leaders to come forward to calm the passions, and iso-

late the hate campaigners. But Congressman Frank Wolf has been silent on this matter."

Spannaus pointed out that Wolf, "as a member of the international board of referents of Christian Solidarity International, which is virtually run by [Deputy Speaker of the British House of Lords] Baroness Caroline Cox," has "lent his name to similar kinds of vilification against Muslims all around the world." CSI, whose U.S. base is in Front Royal, also in Wolf's district, "is an intelligence agency which uses the cover of 'Christianity' to stir up revolt, and even partition, in nations which are targetted for destruction by the British Empire. Sudan and China have thus been prime targets, although by no means the only ones," continued Spannaus.

"Will Congressman Wolf come forward to condemn such ignorant bigotry? Will he join, in the spirit of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., with those who call for collaboration by people of all religions and races, in creating a just and prosperous society, with those who call for judging people by their character, not their race or creed?"

New Hampshire weighs tax on speculators

A bill which would put a 1% excise tax on securities sales, in order to fund education in New Hampshire, introduced by Rep. Bill McCann (D-Dover), has been cleared for introduction by the state legislature's Rules Committee. It will now go to the budget office, to estimate potential revenues; it is expected to be brought before the Finance Committee by February. McCann estimates that the bill would generate revenue in the range of \$300 million per year or higher.

On Jan. 21, McCann told the weekly newspaper *New Federalist*, "I think the bill will accomplish two major policy goals of the state. It will put a tax on speculation, which will hopefully discourage the speculation in the future, but, in the short term, will provide a funding mechanism to be available to provide revenues for the cities and towns to help meet the adequacy requirement of our Supreme Court decision."

That decision, issued on Dec. 17, outlawed the property tax as a basis for funding

state schools, and struck down the state's definition of educational adequacy, ruling that providing an "adequate" education is a state responsibility, not a local one.

An earlier effort to tax speculation, introduced by Rep. Roland Hemon (D-Dover), had been rejected by the Finance Committee last year. A 1% tax on derivatives transactions was proposed by Lyndon LaRouche in 1994, both as a revenue measure and to dry up speculation. Both McCann and Hemon have signed the call to President Clinton seeking LaRouche's exoneration.

American bishops seek end to Iraq sanctions

Fifty-four American Catholic bishops have issued an open letter to President Bill Clinton, calling for an immediate end to UN sanctions against Iraq and U.S. support for those sanctions, the Jan. 24 *Washington Post* reported. The call was released in conjunction with the beginning of a hunger strike against the sanctions by a number of the bishops.

In 1993, the U.S. Catholic Bishops issued "The Harvest of Justice Is Sown in Peace," in which they spelled out the criteria for the assessment of the morality of the use of sanctions. "We find that after seven years, the sanctions against Iraq violate these criteria," the bishops said.

"Sanctions have taken the lives of well over 1 million persons, 60% of whom are children under five years of age. The 1991 bombing campaign destroyed electric, water, and sewage plants, as well as agricultural, food, and medical production facilities. All of these structures continue to be inoperative, or function at sub-minimal levels, because the sanctions have made it impossible to buy spare parts for their repair.

"This bombing campaign, together with the total embargo in place since August 1990 was, and is, an attack against the civilian population of Iraq. Such counter-population warfare has been unequivocally condemned by the most authoritative teaching body of the Catholic Church, The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965).

"Independent agencies continue to document the devastating impact sanctions are

having on the civilian population. These include the United Nations' own World Health Organization (WHO) and the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO). In 1996, Unicef reported that 4,500 children were dying monthly. . . .

"In fact, only 53% of money received [under the 'oil-for-food' Resolution 986] for the sale of oil is available to Iraq. Thirty percent of the money realized from the oil revenues is paid to Kuwait, and a sizeable amount covers various costs of the UN expenses in Iraq. The food and medicine for Iraqi children, and the rest of the civilian population, from Resolution 986, are constantly delayed. . . .

"Mr. President . . . the sanctions are not only in violation of the teaching of the Catholic Church, but they violate the human rights of Iraqi people, because they deprive innocent people from food and medicine, basic elements for normal life. We call for the immediate cessation of sanctions against Iraq."

Reno withholds report on Contra drug-running

Over the objections of Justice Department Inspector General Michael Bromwich, Attorney General Janet Reno has ordered him to keep secret indefinitely, his report on how the department dealt with people and allegations described in California's *San Jose Mercury News* exposé alleging that the CIA allowed the Nicaraguan Contras to finance their operations by bringing highly addictive crack cocaine into U.S. ghettos. It is the first time that an Attorney General has invoked provisions of the Inspector General Act that allow a report to be withheld. In a letter to Bromwich, Reno said her decision was prompted by "law enforcement concerns unrelated to the ultimate conclusions reached in your report."

Although the *Mercury News* exposé was important, Lyndon LaRouche and this news service have amply proven that all the Contra operations, including knowledge of cocaine smuggling, were run from the White House Special Situation Group under then Vice President George Bush, not the CIA as such.

Bromwich's 400-page report, "A CIA-

Contra Crack Cocaine Controversy: A Review of the Justice Department's Investigations and Prosecutions," is the product of a 15-month investigation. Bromwich said in a statement. "I disagree with her decision," adding: "It is her decision to make under the law. I . . . must abide by it."

Bromwich evaluated the potential risk of damage from public release of his document as less harmful than Reno believed, and he objected because the open-ended secrecy "could last many months," said one Justice official. The CIA Inspector General's report is not covered under Reno's order, and is expected to be released shortly.

Gov. Bush on hot seat over Tucker execution

The execution of Karla Faye Tucker in Texas, scheduled for Feb. 3, can be stopped only by Gov. George W. Bush or the Parole Board. If executed, Tucker will be the first woman put to death in Texas since the Civil War, and only the second woman in the U.S. since executions resumed in 1976. Tucker admits her guilt in a horrendous double murder in 1983, and expresses deep remorse for it. But during her 14 years on Death Row, she has changed from a drug-dependent criminal to a Christian convert, and her prison record and work with other inmates testify to her successful rehabilitation.

The fact that she is a born-again Christian, in a state with a strong Christian political movement, puts Bush, who hopes to run for President, in a bind. Even televangelist Pat Robertson is pressuring Bush to have mercy on her.

Anti-death penalty activist Sister Helen Prejean, who has been helping lead the opposition to Tucker's execution, told the weekly *New Federalist* on Jan. 21: "I don't think George Bush is an exception. I think most politicians fit his description. They're scared. He's scared. He's scared not to be for the death penalty. He's scared it will hurt him politically. So he'll let Karla die, or he'll let other people die just because politically, that enhances his position." Nonetheless, she explained, the inherent vengefulness of the death penalty is beginning to turn Americans against it.

VIRGINIA'S outgoing Gov. George Allen (R) has proposed balancing the state budget by shutting down Piedmont Geriatric Hospital for the mentally ill, and by counting Medicaid funds that won't exist. The state's acting head of the Department of Mental Health pointed out that there are no adequate facilities for patients who would be removed from the hospital.

THE U.S. PRISON and jail population increased nearly 6% in 1997, from an estimated 1.6 million to more than 1.7 million by June 30, leaving 1 in every 155 U.S. residents behind bars, the Justice Department said on Jan. 18. According to the Sentencing Project, on a per-capita basis, the United States is now second only to Russia in its rate of incarceration.

AN ANTI-SCIENCE mob crawled out of the woodwork to denounce Sen. John Glenn, 76, for seeking to fly on the Space Shuttle. The neo-conservative Cato Institute whined that Glenn's flight was "NASA's version of bread and circuses," and advocated the privatization of space flight.

HARRY WU, a self-styled Chinese dissident, denounced China's efforts to develop, rather than economically collapse like post-communist Russia, during a speech at Rice University in Houston on Jan. 22. He also attacked the Clinton-Jiang summit. Wu asserted that the devastation in Russia is not as bad as Beijing reports, and that it is "Communist propaganda" to say Russia is collapsing.

THE ANTI-DEFAMATION League's Abe Foxman is pressuring Metropolitan Books not to publish a book refuting Daniel Goldhagen's "collective guilt" diatribe, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*. The new book, *A Nation on Trial: The Goldhagen Thesis and Historical Truth*, is co-authored by Ruth Bettina Birn, a war crimes specialist in the Canadian Justice Department, and Norman Finklestein, a New York writer.