

# National News

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## Virginia inmates present Classical concerts

The Staunton Classical Chorus, made up of inmates at Virginia's Staunton Correctional Center, performed two Christmas concerts at the facility's interdenominational services. The 12 members of the chorus at the medium-security prison presented their program to some 60 inmates, who greeted the music with enthusiasm. The group was formed last spring by two inmates to introduce Classical music to the prison population, using the method of *bel canto* (beautiful) singing. The project transformed the chorus members, each of whom has expressed his surprise, his joy, and his gratitude, in his own way, over the months.

The high points of the concerts were the Prisoners' Chorus from Beethoven's opera *Fidelio*, and "Jesu Joy of Man's Desiring" by J.S. Bach, with a solo violin accompaniment, which made a deep impression on the audience, as did the canons "Dona nobis pacem" and "Im Arm der Liebe." Other choral works included: Mozart's *Ave Verum Corpus*, and the Priests' Chorus from *The Magic Flute*; a Schiller poem, "Selig, durch die Liebe Götter," set to music for three men's voices by Franz Schubert; the Chorale from Bach's cantata *Wachet auf*; and "Va pensiero" from Verdi's opera *Nabucco*. A solo tenor sang "Comfort Ye, My People" from Handel's *Messiah* and Schubert's "Ave Maria," and a baritone sang "Quia fecit mihi magna" from Bach's *Magnificat*.

In his brief comments, one of the chorus organizers explained that the importance of Classical music is not that it is "relaxing," but rather that it stimulates the individual's highest impulses to make the world better.

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## Ohio welfare cuts hurt children and the economy

A new study by the Council for Economic Opportunities in Greater Cleveland describes the horrendous situation facing welfare recipients who have been forced off

the rolls, and the effect the cuts are having on the Greater Cleveland economy. George Zeller, senior researcher of the council, reported that the number of families leaving welfare is greater than the *total* number of jobs created in Cuyahoga County, not all of which go to welfare recipients. "We are throwing people off welfare regardless of whether they have work," he said. As to the effect on the economy, Zeller said, "We have taken \$1.42 billion a year out of the economy compared with just four years ago. This represents 3% of the total aggregate income of Cleveland alone. Some counties have lost as much as 14% of their income stream."

A study of persons one year after leaving welfare, prepared by Case Western Reserve University's Center on Urban Poverty and Social Change, found that 46% had no annual income at all and 56.3% had income less than the \$4,344 provided by welfare. Two-thirds of people who are on welfare are children, Zeller emphasized. Cutting them off from any income "is a tough way to empower a community."

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## Dereg hits San Francisco with eight-hour blackout

A blackout left 1 million residents of the San Francisco area without electricity for eight hours on Dec. 9, giving Bay area residents a dark glimpse into the future of California's deregulated electrical industry. The blackout hit during morning rush hour, stranding thousands of commuters on the Bay Area Rapid Transit, and shutting down the Pacific Stock Exchange and San Francisco International Airport.

Spokesmen for Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E) were quick to blame "human error," citing a repair crew that had improperly grounded a power line. In fact, the city of San Francisco is serviced by only one electrical transmission corridor, leaving the city with no backup. A proposal to build a second transmission corridor has been blocked for years because the multimillion-dollar cost would leave the utility uncompetitive.

Before dereg, California's utilities could be ordered to add plants and transmis-

sion lines. All decisions on adding capacity were based, by law, on projected demand. With deregulation, all decisions for new construction are determined by "free market" competition, among electricity providers. And, new capacity? Banish the thought; one PG&E spokesman suggested that future blackouts could be prevented if utilities could sign up customers for "interruptible lower-cost power," and thus, lower demand.

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## LaRouche plaintiffs score 'New Dems' arrogance

Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr. and seven of his supporters—all plaintiffs in a Voting Rights Act suit against the Democratic National Committee, former DNC Chairman Donald Fowler, and four state parties—countered efforts to have their suit dismissed in a filing in Federal court in the District of Columbia on Dec. 11. The suit was brought in 1996, when Fowler used his power to exclude LaRouche, then a Democratic Presidential pre-candidate, from the Democratic national convention. LaRouche garnered almost 600,000 votes in the primaries, and won delegates in Virginia and Louisiana, whom Fowler refused to seat.

The defendants had argued for dismissal by arrogantly contending that First Amendment protections exempt political parties compliance with the Voting Rights Act: Since the DNC and Fowler are not listed as "covered jurisdictions" in the Voting Rights Act regulations, they are not required to submit their party rules for approval to the courts or the Attorney General. Moreover, they argued that the state defendants—from Virginia, Texas, Arizona, and Louisiana—also have no obligation to follow the Voting Rights Act (despite the fact that they are "covered jurisdictions"), because they were following the national party rules.

The LaRouche papers asserted that "a far graver potential for discrimination can hardly be imagined than the nullification of votes . . . by a flick of the chairman's pen." Contrary to the claims of Fowler et al., it is the plaintiffs, who "are not interlopers into the Democratic Party," whose rights have been "trampled" on. They continue:

“LaRouche’s co-plaintiffs span the spectrum of Party adherents, from Mrs. Whitaker who for 44 years has participated in elections and personally experienced blatant discrimination in voting in the past, to Joel Dejean and Maria Elena Milton who have been Democratic candidates for public office, to Eloi Morales, a Vietnam Veteran who became an active Democrat because of LaRouche’s candidacy.”

## Gore to run meeting of ‘anti-corruption’ mafia

Vice President Al Gore is the leading organizer for a conference to subvert the nation-state, under the guise of combatting “corruption,” according to the Dec. 7 *Wall Street Journal*. The *Journal* hails Gore’s outrageous performance at the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation meeting in Kuala Lumpur as the model for a global anti-corruption campaign, crowing that when “Gore last month took the bold step of criticizing the government of Malaysia on its own turf, and calling for a campaign in Asia ‘to root out corruption and cronyism,’ the shock waves went round the world. . . . In Asian countries, Gore was denounced. . . . Back home, political observers took note of one of Gore’s biggest moments yet on the world stage.” Gore told the *Journal*, “This conference will bring together many of the world’s top anti-corruption experts with leaders from all around the world to organize a new global effort to fight corruption where it does the most damage—among key justice and security officials.”

The article also quoted Nancy Boswell, the Washington representative of Transparency International—an “anti-corruption” gestapo founded by Britain’s Prince Philip and headed by former World Bank official Peter Eigen, who described its bizarre “Corruption Perceptions Index” that rates 85 countries.

Gore’s antics in Malaysia earned him bad press in Russia, among Transparency’s top ten most “corrupt” countries. On Nov. 18, *Vremya’s* Yevgeni Antonov made a pun on Gore’s name—*gorye* in Russian means “disaster” or “misfortune”—and described

him as as an awkward and shallow personality, whose intellect makes him unfit for the U.S. Presidency. “As it appeared impossible to make Gore popular domestically, the Democrats decided he’d be better in foreign policy,” continued Antonov. “For that reason, he tried to play the role of a ‘teacher of democracy’ in Kuala Lumpur.”

## Sweeney: Don’t privatize Social Security system

Speaking at the Dec. 8 White House Conference on Social Security, AFL-CIO President John Sweeney strongly opposed any attempt to privatize Social Security. “Strengthening the system demands reasoned, responsible changes—not phony schemes railroaded by extremists to ‘save’ the system by scrapping it,” Sweeney said. A week earlier, at a press conference of the recently formed New Century Alliance against Social Security privatization, Sweeney said that this opposition will be “the most aggressive grassroots campaign in the history of the AFL-CIO.”

He debunked the privatization proposals under debate at the White House conference: raising the retirement age to 70 or older would cause hardship to those in physically demanding jobs, and workers of color, who have lower life expectancies; cutting Social Security’s guaranteed benefits (one major proposal cuts them 48%, another reduces the maximum guaranteed benefit to \$410 per month); reducing or eliminating cost-of-living adjustments, hits workers with the longest life expectancies, especially women. Sweeney said that private investment accounts would entail “dramatically higher costs (paid for out of workers’ benefits) to finance a likely unworkable system of 140 million private accounts.”

The changes that Sweeney supported include utilizing part of the projected Federal operating budget surpluses, if necessary, to make up the shortfall after 2013; raising or eliminating the cap on income subject to the FICA tax (forcing the rich to pay more); or indexing the tax rate to account for increasing life expectancy.

**THE ‘RAGIN’ CAJUN,’** James Carville, arrived in Israel on Dec. 14, to advise Labor Party leader Ehud Barak in the upcoming elections. Carville earned his nickname as the “ragin’ Cajun” when he was Clinton’s outspoken campaign adviser in 1992. Carville has been unrelenting in his defense of the President against the efforts of GOP friends of Likud’s Benjamin Netanyahu to oust Clinton.

**THE FEDERAL ELECTION** Commission on Dec. 10 rejected a proposal by its staff that would have required President Clinton to repay \$7 million and Republican Presidential candidate Bob Dole to pay back \$17.7 million to the government for “issue ads,” that were paid for with “soft money,” but had promoted the candidates.

**THE WHITE SUPREMACIST** Council of Conservative Citizens (CCC) semi-annual convention was keynoted by Rep. Bob Barr (R-Ga.), according to the Dec. 11 *Washington Post*. Barr, a former U.S. Attorney, has been a leading figure in the “Get Clinton” operation on the House Judiciary Committee. On Dec. 16, the *Post* revealed that Sen. Trent Lott (R-Miss.) had praised the CCC in 1992. Lott is now Senate Majority Leader.

**THE CENTRAL** Intelligence Agency, Defense Intelligence Agency, and National Security Agency kept extensive files on Princess Diana, according to a Freedom of Information Act suit by “APB News.” While the surveillance was, in part, to provide security for the Princess, several news accounts report that U.S. agencies may have passed personal information to the royal family.

**FORMER VIRGINIA** Governor George Allen announced on Dec. 6 the formation of an exploratory committee for the U.S. Senate seat now held by Democrat Chuck Robb. Accompanied by Sen. John Warner (R), Allen made a populist appeal to 400 cheering Republicans proclaiming a platform of tax cuts, welfare reform, parole abolition, and job creation.