

National News

Elderly are crowding bread lines in some states

In Arizona, Texas, Florida, and other states with high populations of retired people and where more than 25% of the population have no medical insurance, many elderly have resorted to food donation centers. Debbi Ennis, a director of the West Side Food Bank, in Surprise, Arizona, told the *Washington Times* of April 11: "These are people who cannot afford food if they experience an illness and have to buy medicine, or if their car breaks down and has to be repaired, or if there is some kind of unexpected housing expense, like a leaking roof or a break-in. Then they are in serious trouble." A study by the Urban Institute documented that 2 million elderly Americans have had to make such trade-offs.

Doug O'Brien, a policy director at Second Harvest, the largest non-profit food donation clearinghouse, said that more than 21 million people sought food aid through its services last year. The clearinghouse provides grocery items for individuals; uncounted millions are helped through other food banks and soup kitchens. He said, "We are finding a great deal of pain and anxiety and some instances of malnutrition. Hunger is disguised in this country. It's not like it is in North Korea, where people have to eat grass, or in West Africa, where they just waste away. It's not life-threatening in most cases. But it is a serious, insidious problem that affects many Americans."

Singer and Kevorkian: a tale of two killers

Peter Singer, the "alpha male" of the animal liberation movement and advocate of human rights for great apes, will teach bioethics at Princeton University, according to the April 10 *New York Times*. The Oxford-trained Singer wrote *Animal Liberation*, in 1973, where he argued that human beings cannot be assumed to be superior to animals, and that raising animals for food or research is

slavery. Singer has worked with Britain's Prince Philip and Richard Dawkins on the great apes project, which seeks equal rights for apes. A Benthamite utilitarian, Singer advocates killing disabled or seriously ill human beings: "When the death of a disabled infant will lead to the birth of another infant with better prospects of a happy life, the total amount of happiness will be greater if the disabled infant is killed."

While Singer was elevated to his post, a Michigan judge sentenced self-proclaimed "obitriatrist" Dr. Jack Kevorkian to 10-15 years in prison for murder, on April 14. Kevorkian admits to having killed 130 people since 1990 in his crusade to make "physician-assisted suicide" legal.

Last Sept. 17, Kevorkian videotaped himself giving a lethal injection to Thomas Youk, who suffered from amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, or Lou Gehrig's disease. CBS then broadcast the video on "60 Minutes," in order to spark "debate" about such killing. During sentencing, Oakland County Circuit Judge Jessica Cooper told Kevorkian: "You had the audacity to go on national television and show the world what you do, and dared the legal system to stop you. Well, sir, consider yourself stopped."

Food poisoning strikes Marianas sweatshops

On March 25, food poisoning struck down more than 1,000, mostly Chinese, employees of the L&T garment factory on the island of Saipan, in the U.S. territory of the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas (C.N.M.I.). L&T is one of several garment factories on Saipan owned by Hong Kong businessman Willie Tan, who is the dominant figure in a contract labor system that brings immigrant laborers to Saipan to work below minimum wage for 12-14 hours a day.

A lawyer for Tan's holding company suggested that the outbreak was the result of sabotage, because L&T is a defendant in a Federal class-action suit in Saipan and California. However, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's West Coast regional director, Frank Strasheim, was

quoted in various press saying that this was not the only such incident at L&T. He reported that OSHA received complaints of food poisoning in March which hit at least 50 workers. Several other garment factories on Saipan have also been cited by OSHA for unsafe drinking water, contaminated with *E. coli* and fecal coliform bacteria.

OSHA calls this outbreak the largest occupational-related case of food poisoning that they have ever investigated. Local C.N.M.I. television charged that the L&T food poisoning was "only the tip of the iceberg."

Assembly to scrutinize Virginia prison industry

During its legislative session that concluded in April, the Virginia General Assembly approved a resolution for a joint subcommittee to study the state's prison industries, especially their effect on small businesses and other private business. The prison industry system has been wracked with scandal, implicating both the previous Governor, George Allen, and his Attorney General (now Governor) Jim Gilmore.

There has been one Federal prosecution so far, and extensive litigation regarding the prison furniture program. Massachusetts businessman Edward Dohner pled guilty in Federal court to illegal transport of prison-made goods across state lines. Even though Virginia prison officials were involved in the illegal scheme, none is being prosecuted for his role in that operation.

The bill to create the special commission was sponsored by Del. Jerrauld Jones (D-Norfolk), a leader in the Legislative Black Caucus, and a signer on the appeal to exonerate Lyndon LaRouche. According to sources, Jones and other sponsors were able to get it through because, as a joint resolution, it did not require Gilmore's signature.

Two bills were also introduced in the Virginia Senate regarding the practice of importing inmates from other states to fill up Virginia's prisons. Neither bill passed. One, sponsored by State Sen. Stanley Walker, would have put a one-year morato-

rium on housing out-of-state prisoners. The other, by Sen. Yvonne Miller, stressed that, in 1994, after the Republican Allen administration had pushed through its "no parole" and "three strikes and you're 'in' " for life, the Commonwealth committed millions of dollars to the construction of new prisons. These now have empty beds, leading Virginia to scramble for other states to send their inmates there, and pay for it.

Workers strike at Newport News

On April 5, some 9,200 Newport News Shipbuilding hourly workers, represented by the United Steel Workers, struck over wages, pensions, and healthcare. Newport News is the only U.S. shipyard that builds nuclear aircraft carriers. The workers haven't had a pay raise since 1993. The company offer included no pension increase for current retirees (who get about \$400 a month), a decrease in its contribution to health insurance from about 90% to 80%, and an unacceptably low wage increase. If protracted, the strike could impinge on the Navy's ability to build, service, and repair aircraft carriers.

General Dynamics has made a bid to acquire Newport News; the move is vociferously opposed by the AFL-CIO, which claims that the merger will cost thousands of jobs and create a "dangerously narrow defense infrastructure."

'Cheap' TMD missile defense costs skyrocket

The theater ballistic missile defense (TMD) under development by the Navy could have a cost overrun of up to 50%, the director of the Navy's Office of Theater Air Warfare told the April 6 *Washington Post*. The Navy is developing a high-altitude interceptor missile system to place on its Aegis destroyers and cruisers. The program had been projected to cost \$913 million through 2005, but could require an additional \$420 million, according to new Navy estimates. The Navy

is saying that unless more money is appropriated, the program will have to be delayed or killed.

The "kinematic" systems, launched under George Bush as a post-Cold War defense against so-called "rogue states," are both militarily incompetent and politically provocative. But, they are favored by Conservative Revolution outfits, such as the Heritage Foundation, which has called for "faster, cheaper" ballistic defense based on the Navy's Aegis system. Meanwhile, the Army's ballistic missile interceptor, THAAD, had its sixth test failure on March 29, missing its target by as much as 100 feet.

The Defense Department's modified ballistic missile defense program will go ahead with deployment of whichever system is ready.

FEC broke, may delay matching funds payout

According to the *New York Times* "Political Briefing" on April 18, the Federal Election Commission (FEC) may come up short of the cash to pay matching funds to Presidential candidates. The *Times* said that only 10% of U.S. taxpayers checked off the box authorizing the government to take \$3 from tax revenues for Federal matching funds. In 1976, some 30% of taxpayers authorized the checkoff. As a result, it is expected that there may be no more than \$20 million available on Jan. 1, 2000, for the first round of payments, which could amount to as much as \$65 million. FEC spokesman Ian Stirton said that in the worst case, candidates may be repaid their matchable expenses from future checkoffs; this means that candidates might have to take the documentation they submit to the FEC for matching fund eligibility and use it to get bank loans, which presumably will be reimbursed when the FEC finally coughs up funds.

This, the *Times* admits, would represent a big advantage for so-called big fundraisers like Al Gore and George Bush, who will be less dependent on the matching fund money for the wave of Super Tuesday primaries in February and March.

JEFFERY L. PICKERING pled guilty on April 15 to threatening to kill the President. One of the five charges carries a mandatory 10-year sentence. Pickering admitted to planting the pipe bombs behind the Oregon Air and Space Museum on June 12, 1998, one day before the President arrived to meet with families of victims from a fatal high school shooting in nearby Springfield.

HENRY KISSINGER was indicted for crimes against humanity by LaRouche activists on April 19, while was basking in a book signing at the Nixon Library in Los Angeles.

VIRGINIA executed Carl Hamilton Chichester, on April 14. Virginia had planned to execute seven men between March and April; three have been killed. In a rare move, the U.S. Supreme Court stayed one execution, because of extensive evidence of the man's innocence. Two eyewitnesses to the crime say that Chichester didn't do it, but jurors were never told about them. Two jurors later submitted statements to Gov. Jim Gilmore, that they would not have convicted Chichester, had they heard all the testimony.

GEORGE ALLEN, former Republican Governor of Virginia, announced on April 13 that he would challenge Democratic Sen. Chuck Robb in 2000. Allen backed "Son of a Bush" Oliver North's Senate bid against Robb in 1994. Robb has given every indication that he intends to run for re-election, but this race will be more difficult than 1994.

THE JUSTICE Department announced on April 9, that it was joining a civil lawsuit against Columbia/HCA, and Curative Health Services, Inc., for defrauding the Medicare program. The Justice Department has ongoing criminal investigations of Columbia/HCA. The suit was first filed in 1998 by Joseph Parslow, the chief financial officer at a Columbia/HCA hospital in Fort Myers, Florida.