

National News

No 'Miracle' in Texas Education

A cornerstone of Texas Gov. George W. Bush's campaign is what he refers to as "the Texas miracle" in education, claiming that he has made the most fundamental advances in school reforms "in a generation." But an article by John Mintz in the *Washington Post* on April 21, titled "An Education 'Miracle,' or Mirage?" gives a rather different picture.

"Texas's standardized test-drilling inflates children's scores and turns some Texas schools into drab factories for test preparation," according to Mintz. On top of that, teachers face an "accountability" system under which their careers and pay rise and fall depending upon how well their students do on this single test.

"The Texas miracle in education is a myth," said Walter Haney, a Boston College researcher who studies test statistics. Texas schools, he said, have some of the nation's highest dropout rates, and the system of accountability that Bush touts helps drive tens of thousands of students, mostly minorities, to quit school each year—a loss that in turn boosts test scores, he said."

The *Post* continues: "Some education experts and teachers say the emphasis on tests also undermines educational quality. Teachers whose careers depend on raising minority pupils' test scores often neglect such activities as creative writing, literature, and science labs, these specialists say."

Massachusetts Fears Spread of Virus

Massachusetts health officials have begun to trap mosquitoes in an effort to screen them for West Nile encephalitis. Fearing that the virus, which can pass from birds to humans via mosquitoes, may migrate to the state this summer from New York City, where it struck last year, the Department of Public Health has designated nine new mosquito-monitoring sites to open this summer in the cities of Boston, Lynn, Fall River, Law-

rence, Framingham, Worcester, Springfield, Greenfield, and Pittsfield. These sites are in addition to 18 other trapping sites that already exist in central and eastern Massachusetts.

Apart from testing mosquitoes and birds, the Department of Public Health plans to initiate a public education program to alert residents, and involve them in eliminating the mosquitoes' breeding grounds: standing water in empty tin cans, discarded tires, trash cans, bird baths, wading pools, and clogged roof gutters.

Falwell Mounts Voter Registration Drive

Rev. Jerry Falwell has announced that his organization will spend \$18 million to register up to 10 million religious voters in time for the November elections, according to a report by Sean Scully in the *Washington Times* on April 15. The effort is expected to benefit the campaign of George W. Bush.

Falwell stated that this was intended to counter Sen. John McCain's (R-Ariz.) criticism of the role of the "religious right" in politics.

Falwell, founder of the now-defunct Moral Majority, has his new organization, People of Faith 2000, mailing voter registration guides to some 200,000 churches on his mailing list.

Although Falwell states that he personally supports George "Dubya" Bush, he says the effort will be non-partisan, because People of Faith 2000 will not endorse any candidate. "It is my experience that most people of faith in this country vote pro-family, pro-life, and that will mean George W. Bush," Falwell told the *Times*.

Houston Hispanics Warned on Rights

The Mexican consulate has released 50,000 fliers, warning Hispanics in Houston not to speak to police without a lawyer, the *Houston Chronicle* reported on April 20. This extraordinary action follows several

shootings of Hispanics, and charges that witnesses have been coerced into signing statements.

This is the second time the Mexican government has warned Hispanics and Mexican citizens about law enforcement in Houston. In May 1999, the government considered issuing a travel advisory warning about Houston, following questionable police shootings of two Hispanics, in September 1997 and July 1998.

The consul general's human rights lawyer, Gilberto Valverde, told a press conference that the consulate released the fliers "so the people can know their rights. There are many Mexicans here, and we wanted them to understand that they can remain silent." The leaflet states that a witness to the shooting of Jaime Santiago Cruz by Houston police on March 5 "was induced under threat of imprisonment to sign a white paper in the police department. He did not know its purpose."

While the Houston Police Department is reported to be angered by the circulation and posting of the fliers, the *Houston Chronicle* and local television report that Hispanics are happy to receive the information. One person who speaks only Spanish told a reporter, "I know I have rights, but I'm still afraid of police. It's good to have this information."

Studies Show Video Games Make Killers

Professor Karen Dill of Lenoir-Rhyne College in North Carolina, has co-authored two studies which demonstrate that interactive video games make children more aggressive, and are more harmful than violence on television or in movies. According to an article by Tracy McVeigh in the *London Observer* on April 23, Dill said that the games, such as "Doom" and "Quake," "are very engaging and require the player to identify with the aggressor. In a sense they provide a complete learning environment for aggression."

Studies were done on occasional users, who were shown to be harmed psychologically; and of those who are already habitually aggressive, who "may be especially vul-

A CONGRESSIONAL delegation, led by House Banking Committee Chairman Jim Leach (R-Iowa), attended hearings at the Russian State Duma (Parliament) in April, on money laundering. Others who were invited included Bank of New York Chairman Thomas Renyi, and representatives of the FBI, the Federal Reserve, and other U.S. agencies.

THE FLORIDA Supreme Court voted on April 15 to void most of a new law—for which Gov. Jeb Bush (R) had campaigned—intended to speed death penalty appeals, unanimously finding that parts of the law, passed in January, violate the separation of powers clause in the state Constitution. Only the judicial branch of government has the power to make court rules, the justices concluded.

SEN. JOHN McCAIN (R-Ariz.) arrived in Hanoi on April 25, ahead of the 25th anniversary commemoration of the end of the Vietnam War. McCain took part in a ceremony to repatriate the remains of six U.S. servicemen, and will visit the Hoa Lo Prison, where he spent five years. McCain and his wife and son were swamped by well-wishers in a walk around the central lake in Hanoi. He has been an advocate of rebuilding U.S.-Vietnamese ties.

SEN. JOHN KERRY (D-Mass.) has been asked by the UN to travel to Phnom Penh, Cambodia, to try to reach a compromise on the near-to-last sticking point on a tribunal for senior Khmer Rouge officials, which concerns the power of the prosecutors to indict. The UN has rejected Cambodia's insistence that indictments must be issued jointly by the Cambodian and foreign co-prosecutors.

AL GORE took a "states' rights" position on the case of Elian Gonzalez, reports columnist Jack Newfield in the *New York Post* on April 25. "Gore took the states' rights position that local law superseded Federal law in this case," he writes. Newfield likens this to the "Southern segregationist strategy" of the 1960s.

nerable to the aggression-enhancing effects of repeated exposure to violent games," said researcher Craig Anderson.

A recording left behind by Columbine High School shooters Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris said that the mass murders they would commit would be just like the video game "Doom," to which they were addicted.

The *Observer* cites the case of two British parents who may use the new findings to sue video-game manufacturers. Their 17-year-old son is in reform school for battering his best friend with a wooden staff, inflicting brain damage. The youth said, "It was like I wanted to smash him dead, like in a computer game." For four hours a night he was a player of "Doom," and of "Carmageddon." In the latter, the player wins points by running people over with a car.

A 14-year-old boy is quoted explaining how children can get violence-enhancers over the Internet for "Quake," and they can scan in the faces of their teachers, and "cut off their heads and kick them around or use them as head [sic] grenades to explode another person."

Pentagon Official: Delay NMD Decision

Pressed by an irrational, Congressionally set timetable mandating that by this summer, President Clinton must make a decision on whether or not to deploy a National Missile Defense system, the Pentagon has been promising that the June test scheduled for the ground-based interceptor system will provide the needed data for the Presidential decision. But Philip Coyle, head of the Pentagon's Directorate of Test and Evaluation, is cautioning against any "rush to judgment."

In remarks to *Space News*, reported on May 1, Coyle warned that experience from previous tests indicates that data analysis could take longer to complete than the 30-day turnaround the Pentagon is promising the President. "The final post-test analysis briefing for integrated test-4, which was executed on Jan. 18, took place on March 16," he said. More time will be needed to allow the President to make an informed decision, Coyle believes. The next test, scheduled for

June 26, has been delayed from April 26, to allow time for engineers to fix a damaged coolant system aboard the interceptor.

In the past few weeks, the Pentagon has revised the projected program cost for the kinetic kill system, from \$12.7 billion to \$20.2 billion, in 1991 prices. President Clinton has stated that the potential threat and the cost of the system, in addition to technological readiness, will determine his decision.

Meanwhile, the NMD program continues to come under attack. *Aviation Week* reported on April 24 that Arms Control Association head Spurgeon Keeny, Jr. states that supposed threats from North Korea and other "rogue states," which are being used to rationalize an NMD deployment decision, are "preposterous." Keeny states that NATO allies are confused and troubled by the program, which seems unnecessary and provocative; Russian officials see the North Korea "threat" as a clumsy excuse; and "China dismisses the North Korean threat as a transparent ruse to deploy a system directed at China."

See Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr., "When Andropov Played Hamlet," *EIR*, April 21, 2000, for a cogent commentary on the issue.

McCaffrey To Be Hit with Propaganda Attack

Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy Gen. Barry McCaffrey (ret.) is about to be hit with a character assassination by Seymour Hersh in *New Yorker* magazine, according to an April 18 *Washington Post* article entitled "Drug Czar Up in Arms over Gulf War Inquiry." The article, by Howard Kurtz, says that Hersh is interviewing people who charge that the U.S. 24th Infantry Division, under McCaffrey's command, committed war crimes during the 1991 Persian Gulf War.

McCaffrey is unpopular in certain Washington circles, particularly at the State Department, where he has contradicted Secretary Madeleine Albright on drug policy, especially after she wrote an article defending peace negotiations with the FARC narco-guerrillas in Colombia.