

National News

Transcripts of Cheney's Meetings Suppressed

Contrary to its standard practice, the White House has not released the transcripts of two town meetings on Social Security privatization held by Vice President Dick Cheney on March 24, one in Battle Creek, Michigan, and the other in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. This was reported by the Center for American Progress, which says that press coverage of the events may suggest the reason.

In Battle Creek, Cheney was joined on the stage by Rep. Joe Schwarz (R-Mich.), who said before the event that "he was not convinced that allowing personal retirement accounts will help solve the problem." Schwarz also said that he and the White House have "some disagreements on how we get there," when it comes to Social Security reform.

At the Pittsburgh event, at LaRoche College, Cheney faced skeptical questioning, according to local press reports. "Cheney pointed to the experience of federal workers who have the option of placing part of their retirement savings in somewhat similar accounts," the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* reported on March 15, adding, "Kim Miller, a resident of Mt. Lebanon, "said that she had been a federal employee and invested in the Thrift Savings Plan, 'and I didn't do well at all.'"

Wolfowitz Attacked Nuclear Desalination

Among the many crimes of outgoing Deputy Secretary of Defense and incoming World Bank Chairman Paul Wolfowitz, was his doctoral dissertation—an attack on nuclear desalination. This technology is the cornerstone of Lyndon H. LaRouche's Oasis Plan for a Middle East peace.

According to *The Rise of the Vulcans: History of Bush's War Cabinet*, by James Mann, Albert Wohlstetter, Wolfowitz's

mentor for his dissertation, urged him to write on this subject. This was in the late 1960s, when Wohlstetter had just returned from Israel, where he had seen documents on a proposal by the American construction and engineering firm Kaiser Engineers, to build a nuclear desalination plant in Israel. Wohlstetter, according to the story, feared that such a project would lead to nuclear proliferation among the Arab states, as well as Israel.

Mann writes, "Wolfowitz's doctoral thesis amounted to an extended argument against the idea of nuclear powered desalting stations, on the grounds that the benefits were exaggerated and the risks of nuclear proliferation were too great. He wrote about the difficulties of conducting effective international nuclear inspections, the risk of clandestine diversion of nuclear materials and the dangers of helping a nation to improve its technological and scientific capability in the nuclear sciences."

EIR will have more to say on this subject in a forthcoming issue.

Dismantling Amtrak Is Not 'Reform'

On March 28, the National Association of Railroad Passengers (NARP) delivered a letter to Transportation Secretary Norman Mineta, challenging the Administration's "reform" of the Amtrak budget and agenda. According to the letter, "NARP welcomes an intelligent discussion aimed at developing an intercity rail network" for the nation. . . . If this Administration is truly serious about improving intercity passenger train service," it needs to reform "the environment in which Amtrak operates rather than dismantling [it]. It is not necessary to burn the village to save it. A modern rail passenger network will not emerge from the ashes of Amtrak. . . .

"Without Amtrak, we lose the ability to operate over the nation's rail network. . . . We also risk losing infrastructure, rolling stock, equipment, facilities and a skilled workforce that will cost billions to replace—

if it can be replaced at all."

In fact, the national passenger rail network has already been stripped to the bone, leaving vast swaths of the United States with no viable transport system except for highways. Rural America has been especially hard hit in this regard.

An NARP officer told *EIR* that Administration officials complain about NARP's criticism of "the plan," rebuking anyone who criticizes it without reading it first. Only one problem: The plan is nowhere published! As with Social Security privatization, the Bush Administration has not made its "reform" plan for Amtrak available, except to propose zero dollars and state that bankruptcy is its way to "reform."

In 2003 the Bush Administration submitted to Congress a bill, which, if one is to infer from it what is planned, there would be a transfer of "all planning responsibilities to the states," despite the fact that "most travel crosses state lines and interstate commerce is a constitutionally mandated federal responsibility," the NARP letter states.

NARP has detailed plans for what, how, and where to focus development of the nation's rail service.

Senator Reid Reissued Call for 'Marshall Plan'

Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) told the U.S. mayors earlier this year, that he was reintroducing his "Marshall Plan for the U.S." package that he had shelved after the terrorist attacks of Sept 11, 2001. Indeed, he made it part of his answer to Bush's 2005 State of the Union message.

According to an earlier address to the mayors in October 2001, that package had included \$5 billion for investment in highways and bridges, \$5 billion for transit systems, and \$16.2 billion for rail systems, including enactment of the "High Speed Rail Investment Act." Conference of Mayors President Marc H. Morial of New Orleans sent a letter to every member of Congress expressing support for Senator Reid's package.