

National News

Bloomberg Seeks Toll Tax To Fix New York Deficit

A New York City \$4.5 billion budget deficit has to be plugged. New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg is pushing his Mussolini-styled toll tax on public city streets as part of the solution, which is due to start April 1.

Supporters of Bloomberg's plan flocked to Albany (the New York state capital) March 11 "to lobby lawmakers on the proposal," according to the March 14 *New York Sun*. The sweetener is a \$354 million grant from the Federal government if the toll plan is adopted by March 31.

The Democrats' tax plan is in opposition to Bloomberg's toll-tax scheme. While incoming Gov. David Patterson (D), at his first press conference, demurred on the toll plan, saying he's still looking at it, the *New York Daily News* reported March 14 that two of his advisors, Bill Lynch and Luther Smith, have been pressing legislators to adopt the scheme.

Nancy Pelosi Walks When Felix Rohatyn Talks

Less than 24 hours after fascist investment banker Felix Rohatyn's Senate hearing appearance on March 11, on "The Condition of Our Nation's Infrastructure and Proposals for Needed Improvements," Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi held a press conference to dictate an early schedule for the House to take up the "national infrastructure bank to develop public-private investments," the *Congressional Quarterly* reported March 13.

Pelosi is calling for the House to take up Senate Banking Committee chairman Sen. Chris Dodd's infrastructure bill (S. 1926), which has been promoted by Rohatyn. Dodd's bill calls for a National Infrastructure Bank, which would, after initial funding by government appropriations, fund its programs by issuance of government-guaranteed bonds to private investors, leaving the taxpayers holding the bag.

CQ reported that Pelosi met "with experts." Premier vulture fund leaders of global

privatized infrastructure, such as Goldman Sachs, attended the press conference at Pelosi's side. "It's a high national priority and the Speaker understands this point," said Robert D. Hormats, vice chairman of Goldman Sachs.

Report Shows Saddam Had No Ties to al-Qaeda

A report produced on behalf of the U.S. military by the Institute for Defense Analysis finds—once again—that Saddam Hussein did not have ties to al-Qaeda. This provides more evidence that one of the central justifications for the invasion of Iraq was a lie. This report was based on 600,000 pages of captured Iraqi documents, making it particularly sensitive. According to Warren Strobel of McClatchy News Service, the study found that Hussein used terrorism against domestic enemies inside Iraq, and that he supported Palestinian rejectionist groups, but found no documents indicating a "direct operational link" between the regime and al-Qaeda.

On March 12, the Pentagon abruptly cancelled a plan for broad release of the report, which would have made the authors of the study available to reporters for interviews, and allowed its posting on the Internet. Anyone who wants a copy must now request it from U.S. Joint Forces Command.

Oregon Health Insurance Turned Into a Lottery!

Through its Oregon Health Plan, the state of Oregon has only enough money to serve 24,000 out of 130,000 low-income adults who lack private health insurance. There are 600,000 people overall in the state who do not have health insurance.

So, the state has decided to randomly select 24,000 individuals, out of the 91,000 low-income adults who have asked to enroll in the plan, which served 100,000 people before budget cuts slashed the number of enrollees. Names will be drawn in batches of 3,000 each, until 24,000 people have been chosen.

As one official who manages the Com-

munity Clinic of Bend, admitted to the *New York Times*, "Using a random process to decide who gets healthcare is a sign of profound desperation." The lottery idea emerged from a consensus among state officials and advocacy groups that "small steps can help."

Hearing on War Powers Act Held in House

The first hearing on H.J. Res 53, "The Constitutional War Powers Resolution," was held March 13 by Rep. William Delahunt (D-Mass.), chair of the Subcommittee on International Organizations, Human Rights and Oversight of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs.

After a panel of constitutional experts which included former Congressmen David Skaggs and Mickey Edwards, co-chairs of the Constitution Project's War Powers Initiative, Rep. Walter Jones, a seven-term Republican from North Carolina, and author of the resolution, gave an impassioned presentation, including a description of his profound change in view of the Iraq War, including the over 7,400 personal letters he has written to the families of those who have lost their lives in Iraq.

Jones stated: "Article 1, Section 8 of the U.S. Constitution grants the Congress sole authority to declare war. In 1793, James Madison said, '...The power to declare war, including the power of judging the causes of war, is fully and exclusively vested in the legislature....'"

Jones pointed out that the last time Congress declared war was in 1942, but Presidents of both parties have since engaged in numerous conflicts without the express consent of Congress.

The most important change initiated by Jones is to stipulate when congressional approval is required. Under the previous, 1973, resolution, the President could act in any instance without prior congressional approval. Under H.J. Res. 53, the President may authorize the use of the Armed Forces prior to congressional approval *only* in case of 1) an armed attack upon the U.S.; 2) an armed attack on the Armed Forces outside the U.S.; or 3) an evacuation of U.S. citizens.