

National News

Tennessee black caucus: Remove Klan statues

The Black Caucus of the Tennessee State Legislature passed a resolution at their 19th Annual Legislative Retreat in Memphis Nov. 18-21, calling for the U.S. government to remove the statue of Ku Klux Klan founder Albert Pike from Judiciary Square in Washington, D.C. and the state government to remove a bust of Klan leader Nathan Bedford Forrest from the state capitol. The resolution will be presented to the full state legislature when it reconvenes in January.

The resolution read in part:

"Whereas both Albert Pike and Nathan Bedford Forrest were among a small group of Confederate generals who held several meetings in Nashville, at the Maxwell House Hotel, to form the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan; and

"Whereas Pike was the chief judiciary officer of the KKK, and the Grand Dragon of the KKK for Arkansas; and Forrest was the Imperial Wizard of the KKK; and

"Whereas these statues are an affront to the citizens of the state of Tennessee, the United States, and anyone who has ever looked to the United States as a bastion of freedom, and especially to those who risked or gave their lives for freedom:

"Therefore the Black Caucus of the Tennessee State Legislature hereby calls for the immediate removal of the Albert Pike statue from federal property, and the removal of the bust of Nathan Bedford Forrest from the Tennessee State Capitol Building."

Roanoke daily calls for sentencing reform

The Roanoke, Virginia *Times and World-News* of Nov. 17 ran an editorial on the sentences of 25 to 39 years meted out to four associates of Lyndon LaRouche, reflecting the political heat on Judge Clifford Weckstein, who upheld the sentences on Nov. 4. The paper, a virtually family-run outfit of Judge Weckstein, which never ad-

ressed the fact that the defendants were innocent, tried to let the judge off easy, by editorializing that legislators who wrote letters to Weckstein requesting sentence reduction should rather change the sentencing and jury rules they complained about. The editorial also points out that these legislators are responsible for Weckstein's reappointment, which comes up at the end of 1994.

The editorial read in part: "Did 12 Virginia legislators overstep the bounds of propriety recently when they asked Roanoke Circuit Judge Clifford Weckstein to further reduce long prison sentences for four followers of Lyndon LaRouche?"

"Yes.

"But did they raise good questions?"

"Yes again. . . .

"Would the sentences have been any different, and by how much, if it had been a different judge? Another jury? A city other than Roanoke? A different year? Absolute consistency is doubtless impossible, but can sentencing be made fairer and more consistent than now is the case?"

"Definitely.

"The 12 legislators weren't asking the wrong questions; they were simply asking them in the wrong forum. If they don't like the rules of Virginia's criminal-justice system, it is they—far more than ordinary citizens, judges or juries—who have the power to change those rules."

Bishops take stand against abortion

A pastoral statement mobilizing Catholics against abortion will be issued next year by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, it was announced at the bishops' semi-annual meeting held in Washington in late November. The statement will be timed to come out with a new encyclical from Pope John Paul II next year, and will also address such issues as euthanasia and the civil rights of immigrants, Cardinal Roger Mahony, chairman of the NCCB Committee on Pro-Life Activities, said on Nov. 16 according to AP. This will be the first such statement from the bishops in nearly 20 years, and is

intended to mobilize all churchgoing Catholics for lobbying against abortion.

In addition, the Nov. 16 *Washington Post* reported on a "strongly worded statement" at the previous day's session "denouncing growing hostility toward immigrants": "As pastors, we are deeply concerned about the growing hostility toward immigrants evident now in some parts of society and even, sad to say, supported by some public officials," said the statement by the NCCB committee on migration. The *Post* article quoted recent statements from California Gov. Pete Wilson and state Treasurer Kathleen Brown to this effect. A "very virulent plague" of antagonism toward immigrants was denounced by committee chairman Archbishop Theodore E. McCarrick of Newark at the session.

Waco investigator criticizes FBI tactics

Harvard University psychiatrist Alan Stone refused to go along with the Justice Department's independent group of experts, whose report exonerated Attorney General Janet Reno and the Federal Bureau of Investigation for their handling of the confrontation with the Branch Davidians at Waco, which ended in the deaths of at least 80 members of the group. Stone insisted upon interviewing his own witnesses, and filed his own 46-page report in late November.

Although Stone's report goes along with the line that leader David Koresh led the Branch Davidians to "mass suicide," he is highly critical of the FBI's "noose-tightening tactics. . . . When the FBI thought they were at last taking control, they had in fact totally lost control of the standoff."

Stone asks how Attorney General Reno, if it were true that her main concern were for the Branch Davidian children, could have approved the "noose-tightening" and the use of CS gas. Stone attributed Reno's "ill-advised decision" to approve the final assault to FBI misinformation. Stone pointed to the FBI's choice of CS gas, which, he said, has been documented to produce "choking, chest pains, gagging, and nausea" even in a healthy, adult male. He added: "It is difficult

to believe the U.S. government would deliberately plan to expose 25 children, most of them infants and toddlers, to CS gas for 48 hours."

Pro-life demonstrations under greater attack

The U.S. Senate voted 69-30 on Nov. 16 to outlaw peaceful protests at abortion clinics, thus mounting a more extreme attack on the right of free speech than even the racketeering laws have achieved against pro-life activists.

The bill was passed with "sweetener" amendments that ban protests at anti-abortion family counseling centers, and applies the same penalties to those who protest religious events. The measure was expected to pass the House, and be signed by the President before the legislative recess.

In a related development, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms is surveilling the activity of anti-abortion protesters. ATF chief Magaw recently told the *Washington Times* that the bureau will continue to "monitor" religious groups, as it did the Branch Davidians, under color of controlling illegal weapons. The ATF has joined with two pro-abortion groups to offer a \$100,000 reward to anyone providing information about acts of violence at abortion clinics.

Denver editor hails victory against OBE

The electoral victory of three Littleton, Colorado candidates for school board, campaigning against outcome-based education (OBE), "proves that with the proper candidates, the movement toward a vague, 'skill-oriented' curriculum can be stopped in its tracks," wrote Vincent Carroll, editorial page editor of the *Rocky Mountain News* in a Nov. 18 commentary in the *Wall Street Journal*.

Carroll calls the Nov. 2 election of the candidates the "most significant vote" in-

volving education, more significant than the defeat of school vouchers in California. The new school board members of Littleton, a middle-class suburb of Denver, defeated the Littleton school establishment, which had tried to impose OBE in the city. All 15 elementary school principals had released an open letter to voters denouncing the anti-OBE slate. But the margin of victory was nearly 2 to 1.

Although the school board candidates were smeared as "stealth agents of the religious right," wrote Carroll, "It so happens . . . that OBE has critics from across the political spectrum." Carroll argued that the major problem with OBE is the assumption of a "supposed dichotomy between knowledge and skills" which is "most certainly false. . . . Good teaching was never a matter of merely dishing out facts."

Principal sacked for allowing school prayer

A Jackson, Mississippi high school principal was suspended by public school administrators for allowing students to recite morning prayers over the public address system, according to the Nov. 19 *New York Times*. Students, who had voted overwhelmingly for prayer recitation and were upset over the firing, countered by staging a sit-in and holding prayer meetings. Parents and citizens have called local officials to support the principal, and religious groups have issued statements of support, including a resolution by 1,100 Southern Baptists.

The "offending" prayer asks "Almighty God" to "bless our parents, teachers and country throughout the day. In your name, we pray. Amen." The prayer was read by the president of the student council at the beginning of each school day in hopes of calming tensions in the school, which has recently been plagued with unrest and violence.

Recent Supreme Court rulings allow only limited "nonsectarian, nonproselytizing" forms of prayer at graduation ceremonies, and even that is being contested by the American Civil Liberties Union.

Briefly

● **THE CIA** helped smuggle at least a ton of cocaine worth \$20 million into the United States, allegedly in an effort to infiltrate Colombian drug cartels, former Drug Enforcement Administration head Robert Bonner revealed on the Nov. 21 CBS program "60 Minutes." Bonner said the DEA had refused to approve the operation, which the CIA ran in conjunction with the Venezuelan National Guard, making it illegal.

● **THE EXECUTION** of Lloyd Schlup on Nov. 18 was stayed by Missouri's governor, pending a hearing on the overwhelming evidence of his innocence. Schlup was convicted of killing a fellow prison inmate, although a prison videotape showed him in the food line when the stabbing took place. Altogether, 23 prisoners and guards have stepped forward to testify on his behalf.

● **JACK KEVORKIAN** killed his 20th victim, but was not arrested, on Nov. 23. At 8:23 a.m., Royal Oak, Michigan police received a call reporting that "there had been a medicide" at the residence of Kevorkian. "Medicide" is the euphemism for murder by a physician, under cover of medical treatment. This is the fourth murder he has committed since Michigan enacted its weak law against so-called assisted suicide.

● **THE CULT** Resource Center, the Portland, Oregon affiliate of the Cult Awareness Network, held a desultory conference on Nov. 19 at Portland Community College. Organizers expected 100, but only 50 of the most devoted showed up. The moderators were so fearful of discussion that only written questions were allowed. By the end of the day, attendance had dwindled to 20.

● **THE RAINBOW** Curriculum will continue to be taught in New York schools, said a spokesman for Schools Chancellor Ramon Cortines. "Children of the Rainbow" was created by former Chancellor Joseph Fernandez, who was ousted by parents opposing promotion of homosexuality.