Eighteen months after scoring a landmark legal victory in California Superior Court and reclaiming five of the only progressive radio stations in the United States, Pacifica Radio supporters and board members are attempting to formulate a new set of national bylaws. But talks collapsed in late July amid waves of bitter retribution.

Three out of five Local Station Advisory Boards (LABs) rejected the proposed bylaw draft, known as “Draft B.” The climactic vote came Monday night in Los Angeles, with the KPFA LAB voting down the draft by a margin of 12 to 11. The next evening’s meeting of the WBAI-LAB provided the final nail in the coffin to Draft B. WBAI (99.5-FM) listeners who spoke out at the meeting voiced support of the draft by a margin of 15 to 3; the Local Advisory Board rejected it 2 to 12, with one member abstaining.

PACIFICA NETWORK AT ODDS OVER DIVERSITY AND DEMOCRACY

Democratization at Pacifica

Founded in the late 1940s by a small group of radical pacifists, listener-sponsored Pacifica operates high-powered FM stations in Berkeley, Los Angeles, Houston, Washington, D.C., and New York that can reach a potential audience of more than 20 million people in the tri-state area. Throughout most of the 1990s, the network was engulfed in a power struggle between community-minded activists and a politically centrist corporate-backed elite who had seized control of the Pacifica National Board (PNB) and fired or banned many Pacifica employees. In January 2002, the long struggle seemed to come to a dramatic end, with a combination of political and monetary pressure, listener lawsuits and protest marches forcing out the corporate PNB members.

In handing down the settlement that ended the activists’ lawsuit against the PNB, Alameda Superior Court Judge Ronald Sabraw ordered that an Interim Pacifica National Board and Local Advisory Boards be created to revise the Pacifica bylaws and supervise elections for Local Station Boards in each of the five station areas. Once formed, the station boards will select a new Pacifica National Board.

For the last 18 months, though, attempts by the interim board to formulate a set of bylaws and election rules for the station boards have come to naught. In its most recent board meeting on June 26, the interim board was unable to agree on a formal bylaw proposal, and the matter was referred back to Judge Sabraw. On July 8, Sabraw ruled that one potential draft of the bylaws, “Draft B,” had made sufficient progress to be voted upon by all five LABs. The resulting rejection by the listener boards on Draft B moves the bylaws drafting process into uncertain territory.

Despite its seemingly technical nature, this disagreement exposes fundamental rifts within the Pacifica community. The main point of contention is over racial representation: namely, how to ensure that local stations, their station boards and the national board include the full spectrum of historically under-represented minority groups.

The two primary drafts, A and B, both contain language mandating the creation of
Thoughts on the murder of Sakia Gunn: Looking at her life from the Von the Christopher St. Piers

By J. K. Jaffe

The Christopher Street piers took a lot different than they did eighteen years ago, when I slept on them after I ran away from home. The cement and barbed wire is now replaced by grassy lawn and tables and chairs alongside the grayish water. Technically I didn’t run away from home, I ran from high school. Some friends and I started a gay student group at my uptown New York school in 1993 after the big gay march on Washington. We called it Visibility, title did we realize how visible we’d be.

When most of my allies graduated the following year, I recovered the fall after that spotlight. I was name-called, threatened and chased home numerous times; my locker was defaced and my home prank-called; and near the end of my senior year, a crowd of boys tried to run me over, swerving to swerve at me in the shoulder of the road, shouting “Dyke!” as I hastily scaled a nearby tree.

As I was eighteen, eight years later, mourning Sakia Gunn, a 15-year-old dyke brutally murdered May 11 in Newark had anything changed?

There are the obvious differences. Sakia Gunn was a poor black teenager, targeted and killed; I was a middle-class suburbanite who eventually escaped to college. But both of us were punished for an unwillingness or inability to hide who we were.

Gunn’s friends had just come back to Newark from a late night hanging out in Greenwich Village, probably on the pier—frustrating for a boy, home. There’s a war going on right here, and most of its soldiers can’t go AWOL to Manhattan or San Fran.

It’s possible that people just didn’t hear about the murder or its community response. Much has been said about the racism behind the corporate media’s burying of the story. Black people are killed in this country and it’s rarely made news unless shot more than forty times. If they kill each other, heck, they’re just doing the state’s work, and what’s news-worthy about that?

Plus this isn’t the sort of story the mainstream gay community tries to trumpet. Matthew Shepard, white, pretty and Midwestern, was a palpable symbol, but a black butch dyke might skew our P.R. in Dubuque. They might think we all look like that, and then they’ll never let us get married.

The struggle won’t move forward in any useful way until we realize the true scope of its dimensions. This is cause not for despair but hope. It means we must be all inclusive, and to live, and to flourish. But first we need to start with those most in danger: young, poor, genderqueer queens of color. If the world is not safe for everyone, it’s not safe at all.

Comment by Marilyn Hacker

Thanks for keeping Sakia Gunn’s name in our minds, and for your pertinent and necessary analysis.

Comment by Garuda

The West Village, despite the efforts of RID and some in the queer establishment, is a place where it’s at least okay to be queer, if not trans, or a person of color. The murder of Sakia is disturbing. How many of us go to the West Village from much less accepting (if not outright intolerant) neighborhoods, and find some sense of empowerment there? And how many of us go to our neighborhoods, whether by PATH or by subway, and feel an even more rapid disempowerment? The brutality that one can face is just as bad as that which happened to Sakia Gunn in Newark.

From my interviews in and around the West Village, I heard a lot of disappointing things. Almost across the board, those who were not participating in the march and vigil were able to identify the incident that they read in the papers—but they weren’t able to identify the person. It’s as if we accept our own mistreatment as the norm, unchallenged. One can argue that the people I talked to didn’t know Sakia Gunn personally—but how many people in New York know people in Laramie, Wyoming?

All the safe spaces in the world can’t save us if we still have to go home off of trains and deal with the armed prejudice of the world.
WHEN THEY CAME FOR THE QUEERS...

I WENT SHOPPING

BY SUZIE DAY

Congratulations, lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgendered person! After all your hard work, policies, rainbows, flags and civil suits, the U.S. government has decided to take you seriously. Suddenly you have been snatched from your home and, believe it or not, even from your lover even had time to sew the name tags onto your jockeys, off you went — to camp. Yes, finally, they’ve come for the queers!

Your first few days in detention can be the hardest. Adjusting to the barbed wire, the bad food, the leadership decor will likely cause you to wonder what experience has come to be known as the “GET-ME-OUTTA-HERE” syndrome. Take a minute to pat yourself on the back, queer person. Pastor Niemoller got to stay out of camps for years because he didn’t speak up — and so did you! All the while the feds kept rounding up Arabs and Muslims and South Asians, and passing laws annulling personal liberties, YOU, as a fellow war on Iraq as “not gay enough,” and going to Pottery Barn.

But, oblasti, oblasta, times change. You must have known that, sooner or later, your unnatural life would be seen as a terrorist threat to our American way of life. Here’s a few survival pointers for your time behind bars!

1. KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

Ever notice how scientific breakthroughs are simplifying our workday lives? It’s the same with the law! To save you time and effort, America’s hardworking leaders have gotten rid of all those antiquated rights to “due process” and “assemble,” and redistributed new, improved legal protections! Here are a few of your new “rights”!

• Now that you’re all locked up with no place to go, it would be silly to make you feel even worse by telling you the reason for your arrest. That’s why the government is keeping your arrest worse by telling you the reason for your arrest.

2. WRITE YOUR JAILHOUSE MEMOIRS

Due to the plethora of recent terrorist arrests, it’s easy to feel lost in the crowd. But this is America, and you have free speech, so why not begin your prison memoirs? Did you land for, example, in a cell with some college professors? A group of activist nuns? A bunch of rowdies from the International Socialist Organization? Describe.

Or perhaps you’re lucky enough to do hard time with a celebrity detainee! Think of being able to observe, up close and personal, the intimate bathroom secrets of Susan Sarandon, the Dixie Dixies or Michael Moore! This is the stuff that best sellers are made of, so you may want to start looking around for a detained editor from Random House.

3. GIVE THE GOVERNMENT THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT

You, as a queer detainee, may have terrorist traits of which you are unaware. For instance, have you ever attended a lecture against fossil fuels? Left an extra-large tip at a French restaurant? Perhaps you forgot you did these things. Trained “detention professionals” are there to help.

Due to the recent dismantling of the United Nations and the Geneva Convention is now old hat — so due to one has to bother about whether you’re receiving your 2,000 daily calories, or even the minimal necessities to sustain life. Dedicated prison staff will be on hand to keep you sleep- and food-deprived, with the lights burning 24/7, until you can work through your terror “problem.” Who knows? You may even come to feel that detention is for your own good! It’s a queer world, queer person, and stranger things have happened.

• Before you were detained, you had the quick and efficient tapping of your telephone and email — without the government violating your private life by telling about it. When this right was first implemented in 2001, it was unfairly used mainly on Muslim dissidents. But thanks to our democratic principles, it now applies to everyone, regardless of race, sex, religion, or — with a tip o’ the hat to the Vice President’s lesbian daughter — sexual orientation.

• Under the 2003 PATRIOT Act II, you have the right to lose your American citizenship and face deportation if you are a member of, or have aided, an organization deemed by our government to be “terrorist.” So let’s hope your lifetime membership in P-FLAG checks out!

“TAKE AWAY THE RIGHT TO SAY ‘FUCK’ AND YOU TAKE AWAY THE RIGHT TO SAY ‘FUCK THE GOVERNMENT.’”

LENNY BRUCE’S TRIALS CONTINUE

BY F. TIMOTHY MARTIN

During the fifties and sixties few comedic performers dared to include such a line in their routines. Most were too busy peddling one-liners and cheap slapstick. But Lenny Bruce was not one who cared much about conforming to convention.

His outrageous comic routines and social criticism served as the guiding inspiration for modern comedy. They also made him the constant target of an Orwellian thought police intent on persecuting him for a routine that would raise few eyebrows today.

Now, nearly 40 years after his death, the likes of Robin Williams, Nat Hentoff, Margaret Cho and other prominent entertainers and First Amendment legal experts have protected it. Shame on New York City, which still bars from the stage Bruce’s routine on Muslim dissidents. But thanks to our democratic principles, it now applies to everyone, regardless of race, sex, religion, or — with a tip o’ the hat to the Vice President’s lesbian daughter — sexual orientation.

The 1957 Supreme Court obscenity case Roth v. United States proved disastrous for a free-speaking comic like Bruce.

In the court’s decision, Justice William J. Brennan, Jr. wrote, “This Court has always assumed that obscenity is not protected by the freedoms of speech and press... Implicit in the history of the First Amendment is the rejection as a matter of public policy of any attempt to foreclose, by legislation or by public opinion, any and all discussion of any subject whatsoever.”

As a result, Bruce was dragged in front of at least 30 presiding judges throughout the country during his short career. The charges never stuck — that is, until he reached New York in 1964.

It was there he was charged and convicted, despite Allen Ginsburg, Susan Sontag, Gore Vidal and other leading intellectuals intervening on Bruce’s behalf. Ultimately, the pressure of defending against such absurdity led him into deep depression, culminating in his death by drug overdose on Aug. 3, 1966, at the age of 40.

In the liberalizing years that followed, most forgot that Bruce was never exonerated. Others, like the New York Times, mistakenly reported that his case had in fact been cleared.

“Is this the state of New York saying what it did in 1964 was wrong and setting the record straight,” says Ronald Collins, co-author of The Trials of Lenny Bruce: The Fall and Rise of an American Icon. “This was a man who was victim. Whether or not you like his comedy, whether or not you think it’s insightful or silly, the First Amendment should have protected it. Shame on New York City for not respecting that.”

Whether we watch another musician get “Dixie-Chicked” or see an actor like Tim Robbins barred from the Baseball Hall of Fame, Bruce’s legacy remains a prescient reminder that the protection of free speech rights is an ongoing struggle.

Bruce well understood the illogic of his accusers.

“I’ve been accused of bad taste,” he said. “And I’ll go down to my grave accused of it and always by the same people, the ones who eat in restaurants that reserve the right to refuse service to anyone.”
IN BRIEF

Bloomberg, what can we say? While Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi has forced an independent community television center in Caracas to shut its doors. The July 10 decision to close Catia TV by Caracas Mayor Alfredo Pena has been ignored by most Western media outlets, although the move has caused the attention of some European press watchdogs. Venezuela’s large commercial TV networks are fiercely anti-Chavez and supported a failed coup attempt against the democratically elected president in April 2002. Nettvwatch.com calls Catia TV “a community television station that is not merely at the service of the community but, rather, is directed by the local people.” The residents of Caracas’ impoverished neighborhood of East Caracas, where the station broadcasts, conduct all Catia TV’s programming, interviews and editing.

COMMUNITY TV SHUT DOWN IN VENEZUELA

A Venezuelan mayor opposed to the rule of President Hugo Chavez has forced an independent community television center in Caracas to shut its doors. The July 10 decision to close Catia TV by Caracas Mayor Alfredo Pena has been ignored by most Western media outlets, although the move has caused the attention of some European press watchdogs. Venezuela’s large commercial TV networks are fiercely anti-Chavez and supported a failed coup attempt against the democratically elected president in April 2002. Nettvwatch.com calls Catia TV “a community television station that is not merely at the service of the community but, rather, is directed by the local people.” The residents of Caracas’ impoverished neighborhood of East Caracas, where the station broadcasts, conduct all Catia TV’s programming, interviews and editing.

AMERICAN INDEPENDENT JOURNALIST TO FACE TRIAL IN INDONESIA

William Nessen, an American freelance journalist who traveled with rebels in the Indonesian province of Aceh and documented the early stages of the Indonesian military’s brutal offensive against the rebels, will stand trial later this month in Indonesia, ostensibly for visa violations. He faces five years in prison. Nessen was arrested in June, after he gave himself up to Indonesian military authorities.

Since the invasion of Aceh began in May, the Indonesian government has aped Pentagon media tactics during the Iraq war, “embedding” hundreds of journalists with Indonesian army units. At the same time, they have cracked down hard on “unaccredited” reporting by foreign and local journalists.

CANADIAN JOURNALIST BEATEN TO DEATH IN TEHRAN

On July 17, Iran’s government admitted that listeners, managers and reporters at Pacifica Radio struggle to resolve their internecine conflicts, independent media producers around the world are facing far more serious threats to their programming and, sometimes, their lives. What follows is a survey of attacks on independent journalism earlier this month.

INSET:

LET BYLAWS BE BYGONES: KPFR’s Local Advisory Board considers proposed bylaws July 21 in Los Angeles. In a dramatic 12-11 vote, the board voted down “Draft B” sending Pacifica’s governance into legal limbo. INSET: Opposition to Draft B was strongest in some cities.

PACIFICA DEMOCRACY

continued from cover

committees of inclusion that will “monitor the diversity of both station programming and the voting in consultation with Draft A support boards.” The difference between the proposals is that Draft A gives the committees of inclusion additional powers, such as permission to add up to five unelected members to station boards if elections do not produce an “adequately diverse” board. The difference between the proposals is that Draft A gives the committees of inclusion additional powers, such as permission to add up to five unelected members to station boards if elections do not produce an “adequately diverse” board. The difference between the proposals is that Draft A gives the committees of inclusion additional powers, such as permission to add up to five unelected members to station boards if elections do not produce an “adequately diverse” board. The difference between the proposals is that Draft A gives the committees of inclusion additional powers, such as permission to add up to five unelected members to station boards if elections do not produce an “adequately diverse” board. The difference between the proposals is that Draft A gives the committees of inclusion additional powers, such as permission to add up to five unelected members to station boards if elections do not produce an “adequately diverse” board. The difference between the proposals is that Draft A gives the committees of inclusion additional powers, such as permission to add up to five unelected members to station boards if elections do not produce an “adequately diverse” board.

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BUSH SHOPS FOR MILITARY BASES ON AFRICA TOUR

By KEVIN J. KELLEY

Plans for a strong but selective U.S. military commitment in Africa comprised a key sub-theme of President George W. Bush’s recent visit. Failing to get the full Pentagon public relations treatment, however, members of the president’s entourage assessed African governments’ attitudes regarding Washington’s aim of establishing a military presence in several sub-Saharan nations.

The brief stopover at Entebbe, for example, likely included discussions on broader and ongoing US access to military facilities inside Uganda. Pentagon officials recently made changes in plans expanding existing arrangements with Uganda and five other sub-Saharan nations that now allow refueling of military aircraft.

Some 1,800 American soldiers are now stationed in Djibouti at a rudimentary camp that may be seen as a prototype for the “family of bases” that Marine Corps Gen. James Jones says the Pentagon plans to establish throughout Africa.

As many as 5,000 U.S. troops could be stationed at “forward operating bases” in parts of the sub-Saharan region, The New York Times reported. U.S. Special Forces may meanwhile be sent to more lightly equipped nations such as Chad, where they proceeded to move military aircraft.

That military operation after 18 soldiers were killed in an ambush in Mogadishu in 1993. President Bill Clinton quickly abandoned that operation in January 1995 after members of the president’s entourage assessed African governments’ attitudes regarding the U.S. military presence.

The Bush administration now believes it can see them.

But the president still wants the new U.S. military commitment to Africa to be made squarely on American terms. In accordance with this vision, American troops have been stationed in Uganda to enforce U.S. national security and to protect U.S. investments in strategic resources, notably oil. Washington does not intend to become heavily involved in efforts to quell local conflicts in Africa.

American strategic thinkers continue to be influenced by the failure of the U.S.-led intervention in Somalia a decade ago. President Bill Clinton quickly abandoned that military operation after 18 soldiers were killed in an ambush in Mogadishu in 1993. Since then, the Pentagon has been firmly opposed to inserting forces into chaotic situations in countries of little or no strategic importance to the United States.

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THE ANTI-WORKER ECONOMY

THE RECESSION’S OVER, WE’RE TOLD. SO WHY ARE SO MANY OF US STILL OUT OF WORK?

BY ERIC LAURSEN

Haldane Associates, a gritty New York “career management firm,” announced early last month that “a growing number of job hunters are willing to accept positions for which they are clearly overqualified.” But don’t despair, once and future investment bankers. “A taking a step down doesn’t have the same connotation,” says a somnolent Haldane chair Jerry Weinger. “A surprising number of people are in the same position, and many have managed to climb back up the career ladder.”

Nice to hear if your resume includes an MBA or a JD, but the rest of us are more likely to be the consequence of new figures released from Washington early this month, when the Bureau of Labor Statistics placed the national unemployment rate at 6.4 percent.

Economists aren’t like the rest of us, though, and strangely enough, there was still a lot of debate about this month about what kind of an economy we’re really living in. On July 18, the National Bureau of Economic Research declared that the recession lasted only from March to November of 2001. For mysterious reasons, this privately funded, right-leaning think tank, one member of the NBER’s committee on economic cycles would say only that it had decided to “demote” unemployment as a factor in its calculations. Instead, it leaned on the fact that the gross domestic product has grown each quarter since November 2001, a statistic that doesn’t necessarily imply prosperity for workers.

AGRI MOUTH

This “jobless recovery” — the second in the last 12 years — is affecting workers in every industry and at every level of income, as Haldane Associates reminds us.

Formerly high-growth sectors like services and technology aren’t cushioning the blow this time around. One member of the NBER’s committee on economic cycles would say only that it had decided to “demote” unemployment as a factor in its calculations. Instead, it leaned on the fact that the gross domestic product has grown each quarter since November 2001, a statistic that doesn’t necessarily imply prosperity for workers.

White House Policies

Washington is not helping. “Bush has played all his cards and the economy is still not doing very well,” says Larry Mishel, president of the Economic Policy Institute and co-author of its annual volume, The State of Working America. The Federal Reserve has reduced its benchmark discount rate to the lowest level in decades. The Treasury Department has allowed the dollar to lose value, hoping U.S. manufacturers sell more goods overseas. And the Reserve has reduced its benchmark discount rate to the lowest level in decades.

How did we get here? Many high-tech industries overproduced in the 1990s and had too few buyers for their products. That can take a long time to work its way through the economy. There’s also an American businesses’ increasing capacity to outsource jobs and even entire lines of production to low-wage countries — something that was much harder for them to do in the days of the early 1990s.

Today, when it finds itself in a revenue crunch, management can lay off workers who do everything from make auto components to create software programs to staff credit-card call centers and send their work to Mexico, India or the Philippines.

Some Bush policies, in fact, are working directly against the need for recession relief. This year, the individual states faced a combined shortfall of $100 billion due to the collapse of their tax revenues. Bush’s original tax cut package included no extra money for the states, though the governors were asking for $60 billion. In the final package that Bush signed they got only $20 billion. As a result, school budgets are being slashed, city and state office staff are doubling as janitors, and Medicaid recipients are facing big cuts in benefits.

The solution: Put people to work.

Organizing Workers

“If someone gave me $2 trillion to spend, we could hand checks to workers to build things,” says Mishel. “States and school districts are cutting back even though they have things they need done and know how to do them. Instead, we’re throwing money away by reducing taxes on dividends and capital gains and increasing tax cuts for the rich.”

But many of the forces that keep workers from participating in economic growth are now hard-wired into the American political system. Labor laws and court decisions make it ever harder for workers to organize unions. This needs to be reversed, Mishel says.

But first, workplaces themselves will have to become less threatening places for people. Barbara Ehrenreich, author of the service-sector Nickel and Dimed, is arguing for an employee’s bill of rights that would, for example, stop bosses from forcing employees to attend anti-union indoctrination meetings while freeing organizers out of such meetings. Workers can also support unionization drives by their brothers and sisters in low-wage countries. And of course, they must keep pressuring U.S. companies not to use sweatshop labor to drive down domestic wages.Stubbornly low wages and high unemployment in the United States are a political as much as an economic problem. As with any other political problem, the solution is to organize.

THE REAL UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

6.4%, 10.6%, OR MORE?

BY VASILISA HRABASKY

Unemployment is just one measure of how bad the economy is. Underemployment, which tends to rise and fall in lockstep with actual joblessness, completes the picture.

The “underemployed” include part-time workers who are looking for full-time jobs and people who have given up looking at all. White U.S. unemployment rose to 6.4 percent in June, the underemployment rate now stands at 10.6 percent, the highest since September 1994, according to estimates by the Economic Policy Institute. Also left out are people working part-time (as little as one hour/month) and the homeless, who often suspend job searches to deal with the daily challenges of finding shelter.

The official unemployment figures do not accurately reflect the population looking for work. When you add discouraged and marginally attached workers to the official unemployment rate, it rises to 7.4 percent. Add in part-time workers who say they want more work and the rate jumps to 10.6 percent (see box). And that still leaves out the homeless. At last count on June 17, 2003, the NYC Department of Homeless Services estimated that there were 38,453 homeless in the city alone, a big increase from 27,799 in 2001. Nation-wide, the estimate was 3.5 million. Who says the country is no longer in a recession? (Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics)

THE ANTI-WORKER ECONOMY

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Haldane Associates, a gritty New York “career management firm,” announced early last month that “a growing number of job hunters are willing to accept positions for which they are clearly overqualified.” But don’t despair, once and future investment bankers. “A taking a step down doesn’t have the same connotation,” says a somnolent Haldane chair Jerry Weinger. “A surprising number of people are in the same position, and many have managed to climb back up the career ladder.”

Nice to hear if your resume includes an MBA or a JD, but the rest of us are more likely to be the consequence of new figures released from Washington early this month, when the Bureau of Labor Statistics placed the national unemployment rate at 6.4 percent.

Economists aren’t like the rest of us, though, and strangely enough, there was still a lot of debate this month about what kind of an economy we’re really living in. On July 18, the National Bureau of Economic Research declared that the recession lasted only from March to November of 2001. For mysterious reasons, this privately funded, right-leaning think tank, one member of the NBER’s committee on economic cycles would say only that it had decided to “demote” unemployment as a factor in its calculations. Instead, it leaned on the fact that the gross domestic product has grown each quarter since November 2001, a statistic that doesn’t necessarily imply prosperity for workers.

A Grim Outlook

This “jobless recovery” — the second in the last 12 years — is affecting workers in every industry and at every level of income, as Haldane Associates reminds us.

Formerly high-growth sectors like services and technology aren’t cushioning the blow this time around. One member of the NBER’s committee on economic cycles would say only that it had decided to “demote” unemployment as a factor in its calculations. Instead, it leaned on the fact that the gross domestic product has grown each quarter since November 2001, a statistic that doesn’t necessarily imply prosperity for workers.

White House Policies

Washington is not helping. “Bush has played all his cards and the economy is still not doing very well,” says Larry Mishel, president of the Economic Policy Institute and co-author of its annual volume, The State of Working America. The Federal Reserve has reduced its benchmark discount rate to the lowest level in decades. The Treasury Department has allowed the dollar to lose value, hoping U.S. manufacturers sell more goods overseas. And the Reserve has reduced its benchmark discount rate to the lowest level in decades.

How did we get here? Many high-tech industries overproduced in the 1990s and had too few buyers for their products. That can take a long time to work its way through the economy. There’s also an American businesses’ increasing capacity to outsource jobs and even entire lines of production to low-wage countries — something that was much harder for them to do in the days of the early 1990s.

Today, when it finds itself in a revenue crunch, management can lay off workers who do everything from make auto components to create software programs to staff credit-card call centers and send their work to Mexico, India or the Philippines.

Some Bush policies, in fact, are working directly against the need for recession relief. This year, the individual states faced a combined shortfall of $100 billion due to the collapse of their tax revenues. Bush’s original tax cut package included no extra money for the states, though the governors were asking for $60 billion. In the final package that Bush signed they got only $20 billion. As a result, school budgets are being slashed, city and state office staff are doubling as janitors, and Medicaid recipients are facing big cuts in benefits.

The solution: Put people to work.

Organizing Workers

“If someone gave me $2 trillion to spend, we could hand checks to workers to build things,” says Mishel. “States and school districts are cutting back even though they have things they need done and know how to do them. Instead, we’re throwing money away by reducing taxes on dividends and capital gains and increasing tax cuts for the rich.”

But many of the forces that keep workers from participating in economic growth are now hard-wired into the American political system. Labor laws and court decisions make it ever harder for workers to organize unions. This needs to be reversed, Mishel says.

But first, workplaces themselves will have to become less threatening places for people. Barbara Ehrenreich, author of the service-sector Nickel and Dimed, is arguing for an employee’s bill of rights that would, for example, stop bosses from forcing employees to attend anti-union indoctrination meetings while freeing organizers out of such meetings. Workers can also support unionization drives by their brothers and sisters in low-wage countries. And of course, they must keep pressuring U.S. companies not to use sweatshop labor to drive down domestic wages. Stubbornly low wages and high unemployment in the United States are a political as much as an economic problem. As with any other political problem, the solution is to organize.
To revive the faltering economy, the Bush administration has resurrected Reagan’s discredited supply-side economics. The theory is that the wealthy will use their lavish tax cuts, thereby both pulling the national economy out of its stall and filling government coffers.

The reality, then and now, is far different. The wealthy, being wealthy, tend to save additional income. The money they do spend is mainly on luxury goods, palatial homes and foreign vacations. In other words, it is actually harder to help in any case. There are currently too many plants making too many goods – be it cars, cells phones or computers – so new investments will do little to get the economy going again.

To Big Tax cuts are a wonder of highly popular $1 billion jobs under his watch. Over the next decade, the rich will add an average of $200 billion a year to their treasure hoards. The Pentagon, intelligence agencies and homeland defense have also hit the jackpot, garnering $100 billion a year in new funding.

The result? The Republic’s spend-and-burn fiscal policies have pushed the federal budget deep in the red, with an estimated $475 billion deficit next year.

The Democrats, meanwhile, have replaced the Republicans as the party of austerity, blasting Bush over the record deficit. There is nothing wrong with running a deficit, however. Classical Keynesian economics calls for “priming the pump” during a recession by spurring demand and consumption through increased government spending. The Democrats’ solution is tax cuts and credits aimed at the middle class and low-income workers. While helpful, the few hundred dollars a year per taxpayer they propose doesn’t amount to much.

A bolder approach would be to advocate public works programs on the scale of the New Deal. The money is certainly there. Recall the tax cuts and military increases, eliminate the costs of occupying Iraq and Afghanistan ($5 billion combined per month) and you have a quick $360 billion. The need is there, with more than 20 million Americans in search of work. And there are plenty of public works demands: new schools, clinics and hospitals, parks, toxic waste cleanup, reforestation programs and wetlands reclamation, and housing. Hell, you can even throw in a high-speed national rail network. Some million people could be hired for $25,000 a year, costing $200 billion annually. The real unemployment rate would be reduced by 4 percent. Then there’s the multiplier effect: the workers would pay taxes to local and state governments, which would likely rehire laid-off workers, and lower-income workers spend almost all their income on local goods and services, boosting regional economies. A $300 billion-a-year public works program would get the economy roaring again, increasing the GDP by as much as six percent.

The numbers:

• One study pegged the average cost of building an 86,000-square-foot public school at $8.5 million. For $25.5 billion a year a 3,000 similar-sized schools could be built.

• A new library addition with a shelving capacity of almost 100,000 items in the town of Newport, Rhode Island cost $7.24 million. For $14.5 billion a year 2,000 such libraries could be built.

• In Australia, a 200-bed public hospital was recently built for U.S. $7.24 million. For $14.5 billion a year 2,000 such libraries could be built.

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In Homer’s Iliad, King Agamemnon uses the abduction of his sister-in-law Helen as a pretext to mobilize his fellow Greeks into launching a disastrous 10-year war against the Trojans. Heads of state have been goading, misleading and deceiving their fellow citizens into war ever since; U.S. presidents being no exception.

JAMES POLK: MEXICAN-AMERICAN WAR (1846-1847)

When Texas joined the Union in 1845, President James Polk ordered the army to move to the Rio Grande River, 150 miles south of the Mexican border. Additional American troops under Col. Ethan Allen Hitchcock wrote in his diary, “We have not one particle of right to be here... It looks as if the government sent a small force on purpose to bring on a war, so as to have a pretext for taking California and as much of this country as it chooses.” When Mexican guerrillas ambushed an army detachment shortly thereafter, Polk had his excuse. “War exists, notwithstanding all our efforts to avoid it,” he told Congress. “We are called upon by every consideration of duty and patriotism to vindicate this country as it chooses.”

When the U.S.S. Maine blew up in the Havana harbor in February 1898, William Randolph Hearst saw an opportunity. Other leading newspapermen had already provided a dime novel of war propaganda for the Spanish-American War, but Hearst needed a newsman to cover the war. In April 1898, William Randolph Hearst had agreed to pay Hearst the younger, headed Hearst the newspaper empire. Having purchased the San Francisco Examiner for $100,000, Hearst managed to help set off a literal explosion of jingoism – a canard that saw me landed on the shores of Cuba “as jaunty as a real soldier, while all the time my heart was in my boots and I was cursing the day that saw me landed on the shores of the tragic isle.”

The circulation of the Journal soared to 1.5 million and that of the World as high as 2.4 million. Journalistic jingoism – atrocity stories, lurid illustrations, marching-on-editorials – excelled the country. The newspapers and magazines that had already done so much to promote and prepare the American public for war in 1898 ensured that whitewashed reports and propaganda for Cuba independent- and for war with Spain.

Lyndon B. Johnson: VIETNAM WAR (1964-75)

On Aug. 2, 1964, President Lyndon Johnson ordered the U.S. destroyers to open fire on two North Vietnamese PT boats that had reportedly violated the U.S. coastline. The North Vietnamese government denied the charge, and the Johnson administration justified the attack on the pretext of preventing a possible North Vietnamese attack on South Vietnam. The PT boats were not part of a larger force, and there was no evidence that they had violated the U.S. coastline. The Johnson administration used the PT boats incident as a pretext for escalating the war in Vietnam.

Ronald Reagan: CENTRAL AMERICA (1980s)

During the 1980s, the U.S. pumped billions of dollars of arms into Central America, fueling a civil war that left over 200,000 people dead. The Sandinistas had turned Nicaragua into a “dictatorship of the poor” by providing social services and economic opportunities to the poor. Reagan administration officials used the Sandinista government as a focal point of U.S. intrigue. On election night 1984, the TV networks were abuzz with reports of satellite photos of myths and prophecies in Nicaragua that could contain Soviet MIG fighter planes. Reagan administration officials were too busy to look into the reports. The Sandinista government was then overthrown in a military coup led by General Violeta Chamorro.

George Bush, Sr.: GULF WAR I (1991)

In October 1990, a 15-year-old Kuwaiti girl, identified only as Nayirah, appeared in Washington before the House of Representatives’ Human Rights Caucus. She testified that Iraqi soldiers had invaded Kuwait that Aug. 2, raped hundreds of babies from hospital incubators, and killed them.

Media investigations outside groups including Amnesty Interna- tional found no evidence for the incubator story. As for Nayirah, it was later revealed that she was the daughter of the Kuwaiti ambassador to Washington and that her fabricated testimony was coached by PR giant Hill & Knowlton.
By Mike Burke

As the Bush administration comes under increasing criticism for its escalating military operations in Iraq, Human Rights Watch reports that women are often afraid to leave their homes as rapes by the U.S. occupation forces are increasingly common. One official told the New York Times, “I’ve got my own ‘Most Wanted’ list. The aces in my deck are Paul Bremer, Donald Rumsfeld, George Bush and Paul Wolfowitz.” Another added, “I used to want to help these people, but now, I don’t really care about them anymore.”

The Bush administration reacted to the comments by trying to downplay the problem but by balking at the soldiers’ demands and the journalist who broadcast the report. The soldiers face possible court martial and the journalist was threatened with a less American dam nor for the Americans,” Sadr said. “We are neither for Sad-dic Moqtada al Sadr. The Najaf-based cleric has protested the U.S.-formed Iraqi governing council appears to be quite similar.

The reaction of Iraqis in Iraq to the American presence appears to be quite similar. On July 19, over 10,000 Shiite Iraqis protested in Baghdad and Najaf after rumors that the U.S. would arrest cler-cio Moqtada al Sadr. The Najaf-based cleric has protested the U.S.-formed Iraqi governing council and has said he will form an independent Islamic army. “We are neither for Sad-dam nor for Americans,” Sadr said.

The Bush administration has been making attempts to put a less American face on the occupation. First they tried to get Indian troops to commit 17,000. India said no. Then there were reports the U.S. corporation Kroll would train a private Iraqi army. And now there is talk of occupation forces who will try to train a 7,000-strong Iraqi militia to help police the area.

Security has been a major problem. Human Rights Watch reports women are often afraid to leave their homes as rapes and abductions are on the rise. Workers for aid organizations are also being targeted and killed, hampering humanitarian efforts. The World Food Program—which says that nearly Iraq’s entire population of 27 million needs food aid—has had difficulty transporting food because supply trucks and storage sites are being attacked and looted. The Christian Science Monitor reported on July 6 that grenades struck the WFP office in Mosul while in Kirkuk a warehouse was attacked.

Throughout, basic necessities such as electricity and water have become luxuries. London’s Daily Mirror describes the scene in Baghdad: “Fifth and sewage swamp footpaths, and many streets are still covered in debris from ‘shock and awe’ bombing raids. ‘Scores of homeless children lie by the roadside killing time and themselves by sniffing glue. It is hard to find affordable food and water. Electricity is available for just a few hours a day.’

As for the homeless children, The New York Times reported yesterday how the U.S. military mistakenly attacked an orphanage for a jail and ‘freed’ dozens of children with no families. Many of the children have yet to be located. As for the U.S. soldiers, many of them sound just as lost as they long for their homes.

Just listen to 28-year-old Eric Holt, a Reserve Infantry-man from New York state. Stationed in Baghdad he told the London Independent: “We didn’t win this war, not at all. I don’t know what I’m doing here.”

Y’all come vote now. Ya hear? (In honor of Buddy Ebsen)

END OF ILLUSIONS: Thousands of Iraqi civilians have been detained by U.S. forces.

WHAT IS THE COST OF WAR?

Since the war in Iraq began, the mounting costs of war have forced the U.S. to make the following sacrifices in the name of God and country:

- 9.8 million additional children could attend Head Start
- 29.7 additional million children could get a year of health care
- 1.32 million additional schoolteachers could be hired for one year
- 1.8 million additional four-year scholarships at public universities
- 17.3 million additional cars could be converted to use natural gas
- 990 thousand additional affordable housing units built

These figures were calculated on July 20. At that time, the total cost of the Iraq war was about $69.3 billion. www.costofwar.com

WHERE CAN I GET MY COPY OF THE INDYPENDENT?

LOWER EAST SIDE
Bluestockings Books
172 Allen

EAST VILLAGE
May Day Books
155 First Ave. (than 9 & 30)

SOHO
Housing Works
126 Crosby St.

WEST VILLAGE
LGBT Center
213 W. 13th

UNION SQUARE
Revolution Books
9 W. 19th St.

CHELSEA
Chelsea Sq. Diner
23rd and 9th Ave.

HELL’S KITCHEN
Second Ave Laundromat
55th and 9th Ave.

UPPER EAST SIDE
Huntington Book
68th & Lex, USG Office

UPPER WEST SIDE
Labyrinth Books
112th St. near B’way.
Kim’s Video
114th and B’way

WILLIAMSBURG
Clovis Books
N. 4th St. & Bedford Ave.

WASHINGTON HEIGHTS
Monkey Business
187th St. & F, Washington

ASTORIA
Broadway Natural Foods

HARLEM
Riverside Church
W. 120th & Claremont

Strictly Roots Restaurant
123rd St. & ACP Blvd.

Harlem Tenants Council
1 W. 129th, Suite 209

COBBLE HILL
Trinket Restaurant
Atlantic & Clinton

WOODSIDE
Queens Pride House
6703 Woodside Ave.

DOWNTOWN BROOKLYN
Soft Skull Press
7 Bond St. & State

STATEN ISLAND
Muddy Cup Coffee House
398 Van Duzer

BUSHWICK
Make the Road by Walking
301 Grove St.

TRIBECA
In the Black
King & Varick

TIMES SQUARE
Chashama Theatre
335 W. 42 & B’way

He drank like a fish while he drove all night. But that didn’t matter ‘cuz his daddy bailed him out. DUI, that is. Criminal record. Cover-up.

Well, the first thing you know little Georgie goes to Yale. He can’t spell his name but they never let him fail. He spends all his time hangin’ out with student folk. And that’s when he learns how to snort a line of coke. Blow, that is. White gold. Nose candy.

Come November 7, the election ran late. Kin folks said “Jeb, give the boy your state!”

“Don’t let those colored folks get into the polls.” So they put up barricades so they couldn’t punch their holes.

Chads,that is. Duval County. Miami-Dade.

As for the homeless children, The New York Times reported yesterday how the U.S. military mistakenly attacked an orphanage for a jail and “freed” dozens of children with no families. Many of the children have yet to be located. As for the U.S. soldiers, many of them sound just as lost as they long for their homes.

Just listen to 28-year-old Eric Holt, a Reserve Infantry-man from New York state. Stationed in Baghdad he told the London Independent: “We didn’t win this war, not at all. I don’t know what I’m doing here.”

Y’all come vote now. Ya hear? (In honor of Buddy Ebsen)
WORKER-OWNED COMPANY CHALLENGES SWEATSHOP MODEL FOR MANUFACTURING CLOTHES

By Tony Pecinovsky

My friend shops at the GAP. Like most people, she’s heard the stories about Indonesia, El Salvador and Cambodia. Or the Honduran factory workers forced to take pregnancy tests and get abortions. But these campaigns have not changed her shopping habits. Why? She just doesn’t see other options. Stylish, sweatshop-free alternatives to GAP fashion have come by – a shortcoming that undermines the anti-sweatshop movement. Those in the garment industry with marketing clout of a juggernaut like GAP, so few people even know that they exist.

One alternative to sweatshop-produced clothing is Sweat-X, an employee-owned and unionized garment manufacturer founded in 2001. Sweat-X has created what it calls a “sweat-free” model. By incorporating values like union representation, living wages and transparent decision-making processes into its model, Sweat-X offers an example for other “sweat-free” manufacturers.

Sweat-X believes that “consumers are an untapped resource [able] to drive industry change,” at the same time acknowledging that consumers have “historically had few choices they could trust.” Sweat-X is not the only company taking this approach. American Apparel and No Sweat also do business with the well-being of workers in mind.

American Apparel says it is in a process of “redefining the American dream.” The company’s mission statement says, “A global division that bought only union-made clothes and not too often the apparel industry has participated in the suppression of the poor. The challenge... is to establish new ways of doing business that are efficient and profitable without exploiting workers.”

No Sweat claims to be the “world’s first socially responsible apparel manufacturer.” Most garment manufacturers operate on a closed-source model, hiding their manufacturer from consumers to get the same cut-rate labor prices, and from consumers who take offense to sweatshop labor.

With companies like these providing consumer alternatives, the challenge is to get the word out. This is where the 13 million-member AFL-CIO can play a strategic and mutually beneficial role. As one of the only progressive labor federations, the AFL-CIO can lend support to the growing labor movement that is taking on this responsibility by backing fashionable sweatshop-free alternatives.

If the AFL-CIO turns its attention to marketing union-made clothing, it will be able to put substantial economic pressure on corporations that use sweatshops.

The United Auto Workers (UAW) has demonstrated how effective this sort of pressure can be. With 500,000 active and 700,000 retired members, the UAW has created a solid bloc of people who buy only union-made cars. By giving discounts and incentives to UAW members when they buy union-made cars, the UAW has proven that buying union-made products can equal job security for union members.

Imagine a 13 million-member consumer bloc buying union-made clothing. What would make one hell of a dent in GAP’s market share. But without AFL-CIO support, it is just a dream.

So my friend continues to shop at GAP. I can criticize, but I can’t blame her. Until an AFL-CIO-backed labor manufacturer begins selling fashionable clothes, where else are we going to find cool khakis, summer tees and cargo shorts?

LEARNING THE BASICs: Crystal Cirilo reads to Helena Sanchez (L) and Amaries Serrano (R) in a Spanish Harlem class. PHOTO: Emily Baron

PROPOSED BILL THREATENS THRIVING CHILD EDUCATION PROGRAM

By Chris Flischer

A bill currently before the House is threatening hundreds of federal workers as the Bush administration supports a massive “overhaul” of the highly successful 20-year-old Head Start program, a child development program for low-income preschool children.

The bill includes a pilot program to allow up to eight states to take over administration of Head Start from the federal government and combine it with existing state preschool programs. Opponents fear that federally challenged state governments may be tempted to siphon money from Head Start to satisfy other financial needs. It would also exempt states from complying with current federal Head Start standards.

President Bush claims that by providing funding through direct block grants, individual states will be able to streamline Head Start with other childhood education programs. But insiders working within the program disagree with the move.

“The Board of Ed here is in a lot of trouble and the quality of the support that the students receive is very poor. We provide so much support to the family, that’s why it’s so successful for the students,” says Rita Prats, a program director of the East Harlem Council for Human Services. “Coming together with another educational institution would be detrimental.” She says that other programs might have different, less effective, modes of assessment that Head Start would be forced to use.

In an attempt to chill criticism of the proposed changes, the Department of Health and Human Services sent a letter to Head Start programs across the country in early May threatening teachers, parents and volunteers with civil action or jail time for speaking out against the measures.

The Bush administration withdrew the letter on July 2, only after the National Head Start Association filed a First Amendment lawsuit.

Prats is concerned by talk of a more advanced curriculum.

“In terms of our curriculum, we make sure that when our students go to kindergarten, they know how to read and write,” she says. “And now [the government] wants us to assess which, is a big mistake. They call it an assessment, but in reality, it’s a test... for children four years old, I saw the test... Prats says.

Advocates of the program claim that the administration’s attempts to define Head Start on educational criteria severely undermines the value of the additional services that it provides to both the child and his or her family.

Founded at a high point of the civil rights movement in 1965, Head Start aimed at breaking the cycle of poverty by improving the development of low-income children, addressing medical, dental, emotional, and nutritional needs while meeting educational goals.

The children have their breakfast, lunch and a snack,” says Prats. “I have to say, you see some of the children eat and you can tell that they don’t have that much at home. This really makes a difference.”

Children are given only fresh and frozen food as opposed to canned food, and both parents and children are educated on good nutritional habits. A possible cut in funds might force many programs to forgo nutrition education in order to pay the salaries of certified teachers.

The bill before the House has generated outrage among child educators. Though most would agree that raising standards is sometimes necessary, Head Start advocates say that the means for doing this would be undercut by moving funds to the states and, thereby, removing nation-wide standards for the program.

So far, 20 million children have graduated from Head Start. Studies indicate that graduates of the program are less likely to need special education or repeat a grade, have lower delinquency rates and go on to higher education more frequently than their non-Head Start counterparts, and are also less likely to be charged or convicted of a crime.

“This could be the beginning of the dismantling of Head Start,” says Prats. “And the ironic thing is that Head Start is a program that is proven to work!”

BUSH TO WORKING PEOPLE: KISS UGLY WAGE SAY GOODBYE

By Tony Pecinovsky

Up to 8 million people may lose their overtime pay while being forced to work longer hours and maintain uncertain work schedules if proposed changes to the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) are approved.

The Bush Administration has labeled these new changes as “family-friendly,” while labor groups charge it would not end up benefiting workers. The Bush Administration claims its plan would aid more low-income workers. Under current law, only workers who make under $8,000 are guaranteed overtime for working more than 40 hours in a week. If approved, the cap would rise to just over $22,000. But many of those job classifications, like fast food employees, gas station clerks and retail sales people, are already covered.

On the negative side, any workers – the Economic Policy Institute estimates 8 million, the Labor Department says only 644,000 – making between $22,100 and $65,000 will lose their overtime benefits and almost no one earning more than $65,000 will be eligible anymore for overtime.

On July 10, the House voted 213-210 to back the proposed changes. The Senate will be soon be taking up the measure.
I n a stunning 24-hour period on July 22 and 23, the Republic- an-controlled U.S. Congress voted to overturn a key provision of the Federal Communications Commission’s new media ownership rules.

Also on June 22 a federal judge rebuked Attorney General John Ashcroft and dropped the top two charges against embattled civil rights attorney Lynne Stewart. The decision may force the Justice Department to stop arresting people for providing “material support” to designated terror organizations. The events marked a surprising trifecta of victories for civil libertarians and media reformers.

Patriot Act

On July 21, the House voted 309 to 118 to stop the Justice Department from secretly searching homes, confiscating evi- dence and bugging computers. Over the past two years 47 of these “sneak and peek” searches have been carried out.

“The fact that almost all Democrats voted for the provision, and over half the Republicans did, showed the Justice Department for the very first time since the U.S.A. Patriot Act was passed, that there is massive discontent with the anti-civil liberties provisions in that bill. I think it was a great victory,” Rep. Bernie Sanders (I-VT) told the nationally syndicated program Democracy Now!

“Hopefully, this is the first trickle in a flood of Patriot fixes,” said Rep. David Obey (D-WI), who sponsored the bill.

FCC & Media Ownership

On July 22, the House voted by an astonishing 400 to 21 margin to block the Federal Communications Commission from approving deals that would give stations a reach of more than the current limit of 35 percent.

“The lopsided House vote poses a major threat to President Bush, who has vowed to veto any bill that overturns the new FCC rules, which were lobbied for by major media organiza- tions including Rupert Murdoch’s News Corp. and the Tribune Co. But if the bipartisan support remains, the House could easi- ly overturn Bush’s veto.”

“The government is listening and will fix its flawed policy so citizens can get accurate, free-flowing information — the lifeblood of democracy,” said Rep. David Obey (D-WI), who sponsored the bill.

Lynne Stewart v. John Ashcroft

And on July 22, federal judge John Koeltl tossed out the two main charges against attorney Lynne Stewart who was charged with abetting a terrorist organization by serving as the attorney for Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman.

Stewart was accused of providing material support in the form of “communications equipment” and “personnel” to the Islamic Group. She had faced 40 years in prison.

Most importantly Koeltl questioned how the Ashcroft Just- ice Department was enforcing the “material support” law that bars individuals from giving any form of assistance — even unknowingly — to a group connected to a terrorist organization.

Koeltl ruled the reading of the law was so vague that the gov- ernment could criminalize the mere use of telephone and any defense attorney representing a terrorist suspect could be subject to criminal prosecution.

“the government’s evolving definition reveals a lack of prosecutorial standards that would permit a standardless sweep that allows policemen, prosecutors and juries to pursue their personal predilections,” Koeltl ruled.

The government claimed that she had illegally helped the blind Sheikh to communicate with his followers by holding a press conference where she read a statement of his. The govern- ment gained much of its evidence by secretly monitoring conversations between Stewart and her client, a practice once unheard of in the legal world.

Stewart had been one of Attorney General John Ashcroft’s most high profile indictments and the July 22 ruling marks a rebuke to his 9-11 practices.

“it’s a major victory at a time we don’t see too many victo- ries for our side,” said Stewart.

NEWS

IN BRIEF

THE “WE-HAVE-TO-WIN-CAUSE- WE-CAN’T-LOSE” ARGUMENT

“If we can’t be successful here, we won’t be successful in the global war on terrorism. That means it’s going to be long, it’s sometimes going to be bloody, and we just have to stick with it.”

Gen. John Abizaid, the new chief of the U.S. Central Command, speaking to reporters in Baghdad on July 20.

REEBOK ROBS THE CRADLE

First there was LeBron James, the 18-year-old basketball sensation who signed a $13.8 million marketing deal with Nike. Then Nike signed Friedy Ada, a 14-year- old from South Dakota, to an estimated $1 mil- lion contract. Not to be outdone, Reebok has signed 3-year-old Mark Walker. Decked out in Reebok gear, the toddler from Missouri is featured on a film on the company’s website sinking baskets using an adult-sized basketball. Reebok has reportedly spent $2 million to feature Walker, and plans to display him on television. And it only cost Reebok a promise to pay his future tuition costs.

RECORDING INDUSTRY BRINGS DOWN THE HAMMER

According to the July 15 Mercury News, “The music industry is going after 871 federal subpoenas in the past month to go after people illegally trade music over the Internet.” The companies are seeking $150,000 per week from virtually every major internet service provider. Having been stymied by a feder- al court ruling last month that file-swap- ping sites like Kazaa and Grokster could not be held liable for copyright infringe- ment by their users, record companies are threatening civil suits against individ- uals with fines of $150,000 per stolen song. Congress is racing to the rescue, but of the record companies, H.R. 2752 would make uploading just one copyright- ed song to the public a crime. The penal- ties could include five years in prison, a fine of $250,000. But smart swappers are keeping ahead of the heat by migrating to sites like Freenet that offer anonymity.

BUSH FIGHTS AIDS FUND

In its war against AIDS, the White House is trying to kill off the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. A meeting in Paris on July 16 ended with no new funding being offered to offset a current shortfall of $400 million and an even larger gap for the next cycle beginning in October. In attendance was Health and Human Services Secre- tary Tommy Thompson who reportedly stated that the United States “had done enough for now.” Enough appar- ently includes Bush’s request to Con- gress in May to cap annual U.S. contri- butions to the fund at $200 million.

BIG BRO’ IS TRACKING YOU

Three residents in Boulder, Colorado recently discovered sophisticated satel- lite tracking devices attached to their cars, according to the Boulder Weekly. Two of the individuals, Mike Nicosia and Rod Coronado, are animal rights activists. Both say they have been fre- quently targeted of government surveil- lance, but were still surprised to find the estimated $2,000 devices attached to the rear bumpers of their cars. Coro- nado says he plans to auction his device on eBay and give the proceeds to Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty.
WE Waited For A Spring That Never Came. Live The Hell Out of This Summer.