
National News

O'Neill Says Iraq War Won't Affect Economy

Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill denies that war with Iraq could have a significant effect on the U.S. economy, the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* reported on Oct. 22. O'Neill told the paper's Editorial Board that the U.S. economy was so large and resilient, that the issue of the economic cost of a possible war with Iraq hasn't been a consideration in discussions of the President's National Security Council, of which he is a member. He said that he was "dumbfounded" when people asked him whether the United States can afford a war with Iraq, since "it suggests that freedom, individual liberty have a price."

O'Neill claimed that despite the gyrations of the stock market, the economy is in good shape, with some sectors booming, such as home construction and auto, even though others, such as the semiconductor and telecommunications industries, are being wiped out.

Port 'Cooling-Off' Period Stays Hot

The dispute between the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) and the Pacific Maritime Association (PMA), which shut down all West Coast ports for ten days in late September, has entered a new, escalated phase, since the ports were reopened under a Taft-Hartley injunction on Oct. 8. On Oct. 23, the PMA filed charges with the Department of Justice, alleging that the union is engaged in a slow-down. The charges, which could result in fines against the union or even jailings of its leadership, are that the ILWU is violating the terms of the injunction, brought at the request of the Bush Administration, which mandates an 80-day "cooling-off" period, during which work at the docks was supposed to resume at a "normal" pace.

The union responded to the PMA filing, with its own charges, that the decline in pro-

ductivity following the lockout, is due to mismanagement by the PMA—which is refusing to collaborate with the union's attempts to unsnarl the logistical nightmare that the lockout caused—and by its long-standing policy of ignoring shortages of needed infrastructure and skilled labor.

In addition, in a letter to U.S. Deputy Assistant Attorney General Shennen W. Coffin, union attorney Richard Zuckerman stated, that the tone of the Justice Department's demand for information from the union, demonstrated "a lack of impartiality." The union has charged the Bush Administration and the PMA with hostility toward the union. The ILWU sent a letter to U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft, asking him to direct the White House to release the names of individuals who attended meetings over the Summer with the Administration regarding the dispute. The union maintains that it was unfairly excluded from these meetings, and that the Administration heard only one side of the dispute.

Meanwhile, the AFL-CIO announced that International Vice President Richard Trumka is sitting in on meetings among the ILWU, the PMA, and a Federal mediator, to express the concern of the labor movement and to add "accountability to the talks."

Heavy Cannabis Use Linked to Schizophrenia

Structural brain-imaging equipment is being used for the first time to examine the effect of cannabis (e.g., marijuana) on the brain, ABC Online reported on Oct. 4. New research by the Hunter Center for Mental Health Services and the University of California has revealed that smoking cannabis can create the same effects on the brain as a schizophrenic episode. The Center's senior registrar in psychiatry, Martin Cohen, claimed that the research shows that cannabis use heightens the likelihood of developing a mental illness. "It's suggesting that there's a common underlying pathology and that is then translated into an increased risk of adolescents that use cannabis developing schizophrenia," he wrote, noting that "people who use cannabis heavily, develop cog-

nitive deficits, thinking problems, which are really similar to the negative symptoms of schizophrenia."

"Anecdotal thinking that cannabis is a fairly inert substance—you get stoned and then perhaps a few weeks later you pick up, and your thinking sort of recovers again—is actually getting mitigated against by this emerging body of evidence," wrote Cohen.

New Strategic Command For 'Global Strikes'

The United States on Oct. 1 activated a new U.S. Strategic Command (StratCom), which will combine the functions of the old Strategic Command and the U.S. Space Command, *Aviation Week & Space Technology* reported on Oct. 14. The new command, which is said to have the responsibility for "global strike" operations, was established just one week after President Bush announced his new pre-emptive strike doctrine. StratCom was activated the same day as the U.S. Northern Command.

StratCom is under the command of Adm. James O. Ellis, Jr., while Rear Adm. James D. MacArthur, former director of operations of the Space Command, is now director of space operations. The command is based at Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska.

StratCom's new mission statement not only covers its nuclear, conventional, space and "non-kinetic" roles, but also states that it is "prepared to assume emerging missions." According to Admiral MacArthur, this would include "global strikes," including the ability to hit targets anywhere in the world within hours or minutes, deploying nuclear, conventional or non-destructive means. Obviously with Iraq in mind, MacArthur said, "Under certain circumstances, and coordinated with the regional combatant commander," B-2 or B-52 bombers carrying conventional air-launched cruise missiles, or ships armed with Tomahawk cruise missiles, "could be apportioned and allocated to Strategic Command for a specific, well-defined mission. It could very well be a pre-emptive, independent global strike." He also said ICBMs could be fitted with non-nuclear warheads.