National News

Kucinich Proposes Infrastructure Bank

Rep. Dennis Kucinich (D-Ohio) appeared before the House Budget Committee on Feb. 14, to seek support for legislation he is proposing to establish a "Federal Bank of Infrastructure Modernization." This bank would issue zero percent loans to states and municipalities to rebuild their infrastructure. The bank would be capitalized by holding a portion of the Treasury securities currently held by the Federal reserve. He said the volume of the loans could be regulated depending on economic need. "During times of economic slowdown, the Federal Bank of Infrastructure Modernization could make more loans available to spur investment," he said.

Kucinich motivated support for his bill by pointing out the long-running decline and disrepair of infrastructure in the United States. He noted that the American Society of Civil Engineers reported, last year, that to repair and upgrade the highway system would cost $1.6 trillion. In addition, there are estimates of $127 billion to repair and renovate schools, and $1.3 trillion to maintain and operate drinking water and waste water systems.

Iraq Violence Increases Calls for U.S. to Leave

The explosion of sectarian violence in Iraq since the Feb. 22 bombing of the Shi'ite shrine in Samarra is fueling pressure in Washington for the withdrawal of U.S. troops. Rep. John Murtha (D-Pa.) appeared on CNN's "The Situation Room" on Feb. 27, to reiterate his call for a U.S. withdrawal from Iraq. He said the Iraqis have to settle things themselves, starting with addressing problems such as water supply, electricity, and oil production. "Unemployment's 60%," he said. "There's no way they're going to settle this by talking about it."

Murtha noted that "the Iraqis have more confidence in their police and their army than they do in the United States Army. We have become the enemy; and our troops, unfortunately have become the target." As for the argument that U.S. troops are needed to restore calm, "I don't know why anybody thinks that we're going to be able to contain this violence. We're caught between two factions inside the country fighting for supremacy."

Murtha's renewed offensive reflects a growing concern within the military and the intelligence community that, under the Cheney-Bush leadership, the Iraq debacle is spinning so dangerously out of control as to threaten the very ability of U.S. forces to withdraw without substantial casualties.

Lyndon LaRouche made this point in supporting, again, Murtha's call. On Feb. 28, LaRouche also called for the removal of U.S. Ambassador in Baghdad Zalmay Khalilzad. He said Khalilzad has become an embarrassment to the U.S.A., a strategic threat to the region, and a personal threat to the safety of U.S. soldiers.

Murtha's bill to mandate withdrawal has at least 99 co-sponsors among Democrats. Murtha is calling for a six-month timetable, warning any longer increases the vulnerability of U.S. troops.

Dubai Ports Deal: Another Cheney fiasco

The plan to sell management of U.S. ports to Dubai Ports World (DPW), a government-controlled corporation in the United Arab Emirates, is blowing up in the face of President Bush. While most of the public outcry has been on the issue of port security, an investigation by this news service has revealed a direct connection to Bush's controller, Vice President Dick Cheney. One of the directors of the other company involved, Peninsular and Orient Navigation Company, is Britain's Baroness Liz Symons, a close friend of the Cheneys.

The 160-year-old P&O is the old Dope, Inc./British East India/Opium War outfit that has long been associated with the dirtiest operations of the British Empire. Now, through Cheney's friend Baroness Symons, it is involved in the takedown of security at U.S. ports.

Symons is a key figure in the Fabian Socialist networks in the British establishment which actually function as the controllers of the U.S. neo-con movement. Her husband, Phil Bassett, head of intelligence in Prime Minister Tony Blair's office, was a key figure in promoting the September 2002 fake Iraq dossiers, which were used to help launch the Iraq War.

The whole ports deal is now blowing up in Cheney's face, with a bipartisan revolt in the Congress against it. On Feb. 27, Sen. Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.) introduced legislation that would require a 45-day investigation of security concerns raised by the deal, and then give Congress the right, within 30 days, to disapprove the deal. The bill has a dozen co-sponsors, including five Republicans. Sen. Susan Collins (R-Me.), a co-sponsor on the Schumer bill, followed up with a resolution to disapprove the deal, outright. A bill similiar to the Schumer bill has been introduced in the House by Rep. Peter King (R-N.Y.) with 80 co-sponsors, including 32 Republicans.

Nearly 100 Have Died in U.S. Custody Since '02

Almost 100 detainees have died in U.S. custody in Iraq and Afghanistan since August 2002, according to a report issued by Human Rights First, formerly the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights. According to the military's own classification, one-third of these are suspected or confirmed homicides. It is probable that up to half of the deaths were homicides. In eight to 12 cases, the prisoner was tortured to death, yet only half of these cases have been prosecuted; and the longest prison sentence was only five months.

That the torture policy comes from the top, specifically from Vice President Dick Cheney, was reiterated by Col. Larry Wilkerson (ret.), formerly Chief of Staff to former Secretary of State Colin Powell. Wilkerson made this point in a recent interview with *Salon* online.