

bestos removal, garbage collection, welfare dependency, and time behind bars.

Proposition 38 would open the doors to children left behind by public schools today and tomorrow. Just the opportunity to attend smaller and safer private schools may well cut the dropout

rate as much as one-sixth, since a sixth of those who have dropped out say they did so at least in part because they are afraid to attend their neighborhood public high school or its associated continuation school. But even if these children so damaged by the public school system do not all return to

high school, Proposition 38 promises to avoid damaging more children in the future. School choice would place more children in safe schools, where their families see value and the children feel they belong. And that is the way to lower the state's real dropout rate.

DBS

Something is Amiss

Clinton's youthful loathing for the military bears rotten fruit today.

by Leon McKinney

MEMBERS OF the U.S. armed forces have not flooded the President Bill Clinton fan club," began August 14's St. Louis *Post-Dispatch* lead editorial, with marked understatement. The editorial admitted that military personnel resent "Mr. Clinton's youthful maneuvering to avoid going to Vietnam" — usually the jumping-off point for a standard *Post-Dispatch* lecture on how past and present armed forces types should let bygones be bygones and forgive Clinton his "youthful maneuvering." But this time the *Post-Dispatch* took a different tack, concluding that because the military dislikes Clinton and, therefore, presumably would not lie to protect him, refutations by Pentagon brass of George W. Bush's GOP convention charge that two U.S. Army divisions were not combat-ready deserve our respectful assent. "Something clearly

is amiss," intoned *P-D's* editors, but with Bush, not with the Army.

After eight years of Clinton, can we thus assume our military leaders would tell the truth if it reflected badly on this administration? Looking at it another way, what chance is there that an honest, out-spoken, and loyally-patriotic top military man *could* remain so near the top after eight years of Clinton? And what, conversely, are the chances that, under this president, that *his* Secretary of Defense, William Cohen, *his* Joint Chiefs of Staff, and *his* top civilian and uniformed Pentagon brass believe their duty to country outweighs the call, when it comes, to cover for Bill Clinton?

Reach your own conclusions, but first off, George W. Bush and Dick Cheney are right: Clinton has decimated the military. In 1981, Reagan's first year, 2.12 million uniformed personnel were in the military; in George Bush's first year (1989), there were 2.17 million. With the collapse of the Soviet Empire, President Bush re-

duced the number of uniformed military personnel a reasonable amount — 16 percent — from the 1987 peak of 2.21 million to 1.85 million by the end of 1992. But Clinton, who says all the reduction was done by President Bush and his Defense Secretary Dick Cheney, actually ordered a further 25 percent cut to 1.39 million.

Budgets tell the same story. In constant 2000 dollars, the national defense budget went from \$274 billion in 1981 to a peak of \$393 billion in 1989, then down by 12 percent to \$347 billion in 1992, again reflecting the collapse of the Soviet Empire. And again, Clinton lies when he implies all the cuts were done before he showed up — he chopped another 20 percent, to bottom-out at \$276 billion in 1998.

After Bush's speech, the Pentagon quickly trotted out someone to say that the two divisions Bush mentioned, though they had indeed previously been declared not combat-ready, were now just fine. It was all a "temporary" problem due to "scheduling questions" (*i.e.* we couldn't move the two divisions quickly enough to fight a war). But other, more concrete evidence is emerging. Consider the plight of our Air Force, which Clinton orders into action at the drop of ... well, you finish it. Under Clinton, the average age of Air

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Force fighters has doubled, from 7 to 14 years; the average age of all Air Force aircraft has increased by 40 percent, from 15 to 21 years. Worse, the "mission-capable rate" — the percentage of aircraft capable of flying — has slumped from 83 percent right after Desert Storm, when we flew aircraft to their breaking points, to 73 percent right before Kosovo. The Air Force budget has been cut by 30 percent from \$100 billion in 1990 to \$70 billion. The same story holds for the other services as well.

Unfortunately, the problem with our military goes beyond numbers and dollars. Since January 1993, I've talked with a hundred or more active-duty and retired military officers, ranging from lieutenants to lieutenant generals. They all despise Bill Clinton, recalling his draft-dodging, leading anti-war protests on KGB-sponsored bus tours of Europe, and writing the University of Arkansas ROTC commander that he identified with baby boomer brats "loving their country but loathing the military."

THE FIRST week of Clinton's first term didn't do much to dispel the atmosphere of mutual loathing. Three-star Lt. Gen. Barry McCaffrey, who served with distinction on four combat tours, including Vietnam twice, was walking out of the White House southwest gate and said "good morning" to a young woman entering the gate; she replied, "I don't talk to the military!" Since McCaffrey and his people couldn't identify the woman as a specific White House employee, Clinton declared the snub never happened, even though it was quickly de-

termined that the woman was a Hillary staffer — an early taste of Clinton's brazen lying. Clinton's people immediately recognized the potential damage, and *hesto presto*, we saw photos of Clinton jogging



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with McCaffrey, followed a few months later by McCaffrey's promotion over more senior candidates to head the U.S. Southern Command and became the youngest four-star Army general ever. McCaffrey continued to toe the Clinton party line about the snub and was rewarded in 1996 with the directorship of the White House's Office of National Drug Control Policy, where he gets to pretend he's leading the national war on drugs while surrounded by *Clintonistas* who for three years refused to undergo security background investigations that included drug testing. Some say these folks were doing drugs every weekend. Who knows? One thing

is sure — McCaffrey is not popular with the military folk I talk to.

CLINTON LEARNED from the McCaffrey episode that he could buy off some military brass with promotions. The brass, in turn, learned that playing ball with Clinton earned them puff pieces in their former mortal media enemies the *Washington Post* and *New York Times* and invitations to Georgetown cocktail parties. Generals and admirals who didn't play ball saw their careers stalled, and retired in droves; those who threatened to go public with what they knew about our disintegrating military and Clinton's abuses of power were threatened with loss of their pensions and benefits. After eight years of Clinton versus our military (including his Chinese espionage-and-missiles-for-campaign-cash scandal), it appears what remains is in large measure a corps of generals and admirals who salute and say "Yes, Sir!" when ordered to bomb Sudan and Afghanistan the day of Monica Lewinsky's grand jury testimony, to bomb Iraq to stave off an impeachment vote, to bomb Kosovo when the scope of Clinton's treason with China begins to become clear.

Soldiers complaining about their commanding officers is an ancient and honorable tradition, but today we see something different: from enlisted maintenance personnel sweating underneath F-16 fighters to generals sitting at desks within the Pentagon's air-conditioned maze, there's a thinly veiled consensus that America's top generals and admirals have betrayed the people they command. "Something is amiss" indeed. ■



Al Gore, Country Boy

The Democrat National Convention featured the usual attempts to impress the American people with the “Star Power” of the Democrat Party. One speech in particular, given by Al Gore’s Harvard roommate and movie star friend, Tommy Lee Jones, was notable for some curious content. Now many of you may know that

**Al Gore’s secret past
— so shocking to
refined tastes —
probably had to come
out. But who thought
one of his best friends
would expose it?**

Tommy Lee Jones is a native Texan and purportedly owns a working cattle ranch. What probably came as a big surprise to most conservatives, and as an absolute shock to the liberal DNC delegates, was that their presidential nominee was once a gun-toting country hillbilly.

Jones’ remarks included some rem-

BY DENNIS HOLLINGSWORTH