

# INSHORT

By Joel Bleifuss

## Campaign tales

Political wags in California are speculating that Willie Brown, speaker of the State Assembly and as such one of California's most powerful Democratic politicians, has accepted the position of Chairman Jesse Jackson's presidential campaign with an eye toward delivering convention delegates to Mario Cuomo next summer in the event Jackson does not gain the nomination. There is also speculation that Brown would not mind moving on to a nice job in some future Cuomo administration. Brown has denied these reports in at least one press conference, but he is not a man known for consistent candor with the press. In Illinois last fall, before the death of Mayor Harold Washington, talk had it that Washington, who endorsed Jackson early, had plans to throw his support to Paul Simon in the event that Jackson did not have enough votes for the nomination. With Washington gone, Brown is in a stronger position to wheel and deal, should he choose to do so.

## Rich get richer

Who received average raises of \$104,140 in 1986? The 38 corporate executives of the 19 companies that over the last three years were responsible for laying off 20,140 Massachusetts workers. According to the New England Equity Institute in Boston, in 1986 (the last year for which data is available) the raises brought the average yearly salary of these 38 executives to \$843,263—\$1,252,579 if long-term compensation is taken into account. Tom Gallagher, director of the public policy institute, says that these figures are "part of a growing national trend toward increased economic security at the top and increased economic insecurity at the bottom."

## Golden profits

"Right now, you can feel the excitement in the air," says Dr. Thomas Prose. "We're on the verge of something very simple, very cheap, yet very, very big." He is talking about the potential profits to be squeezed from urine collected in men's porta-potties. Prose sits on the board of Enzymes of America (EOA), a Michigan company that harvests protein from outhouse urinals. According to *Science for the People*, EOA separates 10 of the 40,000 different proteins found in male urine and sells them to drug companies. EOA is a horizontally diversified concern. The company collects its urine from men attending outdoor concerts, festivals and sports events. This is done through EOA's subsidiary, Porta-John, the largest portable-toilet company in the world. To meet the demands of this growth industry, Porta-John is set to expand its Washington, D.C. operations in an effort to cash in on the flow from political demonstrations and the capital's Fourth of July celebration.

## Remember the Maccabees

On December 30 in downtown Berkeley, the New Jewish Agenda, International Jewish Peace Union and people from the Kehilla Community Synagogue, including Rabbi Burt Jacobson, sponsored a "Jewish Demonstration/Vigil Against the Killings of Palestinian Protesters by Israeli Authorities." Joshua Nessen of the American Committee on Africa reports that the 50 people taking part in the candlelight vigil "made it clear that there is a long-standing Jewish heritage that stands in direct opposition to the U.S.-backed repression of the Israeli state." As a flyer distributed by the demonstrators put it: "Last week, on Chanuka, we celebrated the victory of the Maccabees over Hellenistic occupation. The lesson this has always taught us, and which we teach to our children, is that steadfast adherence to one's freedom and people will have the power to overcome even superior arms. In the face of this lesson, we recognize that the demand of the Palestinians for their national self-determination will not be suppressed by increasingly repressive measures to pacify the population."

## The real criminal walked

The three crew members of the Navy munitions train that on September 1, 1987 ran over Brian Willson are suing their victim. They accuse Willson of consciously disregarding their rights and feelings by allowing the train to hit him. The men want compensation for the humiliation, embarrassment, mental anguish, emotional and physical distress and loss of earnings that they suf-



Karen Parker-Leans

## Interior Department proposes mining Hawaii's seafloor

The Department of Interior plans to open for underwater mining purposes 6.65 million acres of seafloor surrounding the Hawaiian and Johnston Islands, a U.S. territory 375 miles southwest of Hawaii. And Hawaiian ecologists fear this ocean mining would wreak environmental havoc.

The aim of this federal proposal is to develop a domestic source of cobalt, a military strategic mineral used in the manufacture of jet engines, tools and dies, magnets and stainless steel. Currently the U.S. consumes one-third of the world production of cobalt. All of this cobalt comes from foreign sources including Zambia and Zaire.

The Department of the Interior believes the existing supply of cobalt will be depleted by the first half of the 21st century. It fears that if the U.S. does not develop domestic cobalt sources the nation will face serious cobalt shortages. The mining would also produce nickel, manganese and possibly platinum.

The mining process would use an ocean dredger to remove cobalt rich crust from the seafloor at depths of between 2,600 and 7,900 feet. This raw material would then be pumped to a ship, the minerals separated out, and the remaining sediment dumped back into the ocean.

The Department of the Interior and state of Hawaii have jointly issued a Draft Environmental Impact

Study (DEIS) that outlines the project's goals and potential impact on the marine ecosystem. The state of Hawaii supports the project as the "latest step toward a marine minerals industry" that would provide employment, diversify the economy and increase the islands' level of technology.

But its critics attack the DEIS as woefully incomplete and wholly inaccurate. Denver Leaman, ocean mining coordinator for Greenpeace Hawaii, says that the DEIS is filled with "wishful thinking." His group wants the project postponed for at least five years.

Greenpeace also wants a heavily-fished seafloor tract adjacent to the big island of Hawaii removed from consideration for the project. Hawaii's Department of Land and Natural Resources and the National Marine Fisheries Service have also called for the area's removal from the proposal.

After analyzing the government's report, marine biologist and environmental activist Debby Dalton concluded: "There are many environmental concerns which the DEIS does not satisfactorily answer, many conclusions which seem to contradict available data, and far too many conclusions drawn on little or no known data." The deep-sea mining process involves dumping sediment at the rate of seven tons a minute. Dalton believes this sediment fallout would endanger coral (a staple of the Hawaiian economy) along with many species of fish and marine larvae. The miles-long sediment plume would cut water visibility in half, affecting the fishes' ability to feed. The DEIS states that the min-

ing would at best reduce the number of skipjack and yellowfin tuna by 46,000 and 15,000 a year respectively, cutting into Hawaii's profitable long-line fishing industry. And the report acknowledges that the impact on the fish population could be much worse.

As part of the proposal an on-land cobalt refinery would be built on one of three sites: Ewa, Oahu; Kawaihae; and Puna, on the big island. According to Leaman, "People are worried that [the cobalt smelter] would open the door for heavy industry. Once you put the geothermal lines from the generation site to the industrial area...then you now have electricity available, you've got the zoning changed and that would tend to attract more heavy industry."

Leaman wants instead to diversify the area's agriculture economy which would maintain the region's tropical identity and thereby preserve the tourist trade.

Legal questions surround the proposal as well. The Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act authorizes the secretary of the interior to administer mineral exploration and development on the Outer Continental Shelf. It does not specify U.S. territories like the Johnston islands as open to development, only states and state coastal waters. "I see it as a move by the administration to get a precedent for ocean mining and offshore leasing in the United States inside the Exclusive Economic Zones," says Leaman. "The Department of the Interior is claiming authority under a very gray area."

The public comment period for the proposal will close February 8. A final environmental impact study



will then be sent to Secretary of the Interior Donald Hodel for his consideration. According to the former federal co-chairman of the project,

## Toys for Rambo's boys

Paramilitary is in—and America's manufacturers of toy guns and non-powder firearms (like BB guns) know it. Facsimiles of hunting rifles and Old West six-shooters have been supplanted in the toy market by replicas of machine guns and large-caliber handguns. And although a big hit with young consumers, "look-alikes" are increasingly being recognized as a public-safety hazard.

Similar in weight and scale to real guns, the new paramilitary non-powder firearms are hard to distinguish from their more deadly counterparts. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) estimates that each year 3–3.5 million non-powder firearms are sold in the U.S.—mostly to children under 15.

Daisy Manufacturing leads this paramilitary parade with its non-powder Softair guns. These working replicas fire plastic pellets at low velocities. The ad copy for an Uzi replica proclaims, "So accurate in detail, you'll swear it's the real thing!" The pitch for another Daisy replica reads "Made famous in the motion picture *Rambo: First Blood, Part II*...has the look and feel of the real thing."

Although often viewed as toys, any non-powder firearm is hazardous—no matter what it looks like. In 1980 and 1981, 45,557 children and young adults were injured by non-powder firearms, while only 39,698

Robert G. Paul, the actual mining would follow exploration and development and would not take place until the next century. Despite the

injuries stemmed from powder guns such as handguns, rifles and shotguns. Yet, although the CPSC has the power to ban or order modifications to hazardous products, in this case it refuses to take action. The reason is depressingly familiar. Admits one CPSC staff member, "As I see it, airguns are clearly a stepping stone to the real thing. If we suggest that we're going to remove a part of the market, we're going to have every NRA [National Rifle Association] member writing us a letter."

Far more common than non-powder firearms are plastic-molded toy guns. In addition to M-16s, AK-47s, Uzis and KG-9 machine pistols, Daisy—self-proclaimed leader in the field—offers replicas of silenced Ingram MAC-10 machine pistols (favored by the cocaine cowboys of southern Florida), .30-caliber bolt-action machine guns, and electronic bazookas.

According to the International Association of Chiefs of Police, what makes look-alikes so appealing—that they look *just like* real paramilitary guns—is what makes them uniquely hazardous. As the use of real paramilitary weapons in crime and gang activity has increased, police are far more likely to assume that look-alikes in innocent hands are in fact real firearms—a terrifying situation that is becoming increasingly common.

In addition, gun-control advocates note that the use of a paramilitary airgun can only increase the chance that the owner will eventually upgrade to the real thing. The federal

criticism, both Leaman and Paul expect the project to be approved by the end of this year, possibly with some modification. —Marc Shaffer

Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms reports that more than 500,000 semi-automatic paramilitary weapons are in civilian hands. The vast majority of these were purchased this decade.

As the result of the increasing number of incidents involving look-alikes, city and state governments have begun to restrict their availability and use. Since September Burbank, Santa Monica, and Los Angeles, Calif. have banned the sale of look-alike toy guns. Washington, D.C., Boston, and Atlanta are considering similar measures. As of January, in California it is now a misdemeanor to brandish a look-alike in a threatening manner and a bill to restrict production and distribution was recently introduced in the state legislature. On the federal level, Rep. Mel Levine (D-CA) has introduced a bill requiring that look-alikes be marked in such a way as to make them readily identifiable. A similar bill has been introduced in the Senate by Sen. Robert Dole (R-KA). Reacting to civic and police concerns, last September Daisy began marking each of its look-alike toys with an "international orange" stripe. And in December Toys-R-Us, the nation's largest toy retailer, announced that it will no longer sell realistic-looking toy guns.

Whether special markings and regional sales bans will have any real impact remains to be seen. But until an effective solution is reached, both police and public will continue to be at risk.

—Josh Sugarman

## Two mysterious deaths in Honduras

Tegucigalpa, Honduras—Two mysterious deaths this month have been attributed to the Honduran army by the chief human rights group here, substantiating charges of a deteriorating human rights situation.

On January 4 Honduran army soldiers were spotted carrying a body into a local hospital. The dead man was Joselito Aguilera Cordova, a young man who had been active in student politics before being forcibly recruited into the Honduran Special Forces. Although the army originally claimed Aguilera had died of a heart attack, a photo released later indicated that he had been severely beaten.

According to the president of the Honduran Committee in Defense of Human Rights, Ramon Custodio, Aguilera feared that he might be subject to reprisals or punishment from the army. In mid-December Aguilera reportedly deserted from the army. Custodio said at a press conference that Aguilera had told the rights group last November that military intelligence agents had held him for questioning about a trip he took to Nicaragua.

Aguilera's sister said after the killing that the army warned her not to talk about the condition of her brother's body, which she says was swollen from beatings.

The morning after Aguilera's corpse was discovered, a military officer was machine-gunned down at a bus stop in Tegucigalpa. The officer, Jose Isais Vilorio Barahona, was due to testify to the Inter-American Court on Human Rights on January 18 about Battalion 316, a military intelligence group allegedly responsible for Honduran disappearances.\*

His assailants reportedly threw a banner over his body bearing the emblem of the leftist Popular Liberation Movement, known as the *Cinchoneros*. Later that day a letter claiming the slaying on behalf of the *Cinchoneros* was delivered to a Tegucigalpa newspaper.

But Custodio called into doubt the authorship of the crime. He said the Honduran left had the most interest in the testimony of Vilorio, whom a defector from Battalion 316 had described as the unit's personnel officer.

Custodio gave "more responsibility for the plot to the Honduran Minister of Foreign Relations Carlos

Lopez Contreras, and Procurator (equivalent to the U.S. attorney general) Ruben Dario Zepeda, who has dedicated himself to spreading the rumor of a supposed leftist conspiracy in Honduras."

"Who are those who gain the most by the silence of the witness?" asked Custodio. "The accused: the Honduran state and armed forces."

According to the rights group's latest report, extrajudicial executions in Honduras rose from 119 in 1986 to 263 in 1987. There were 22 "forced or involuntary disappearances" in 1987, while none were reported in 1986, the report said.

Custodio charged that last October, the Honduran government had prevented Vilorio and two other officers implicated in disappearances from testifying before the Inter-American Court of Human Rights based in San Juan, Costa Rica.

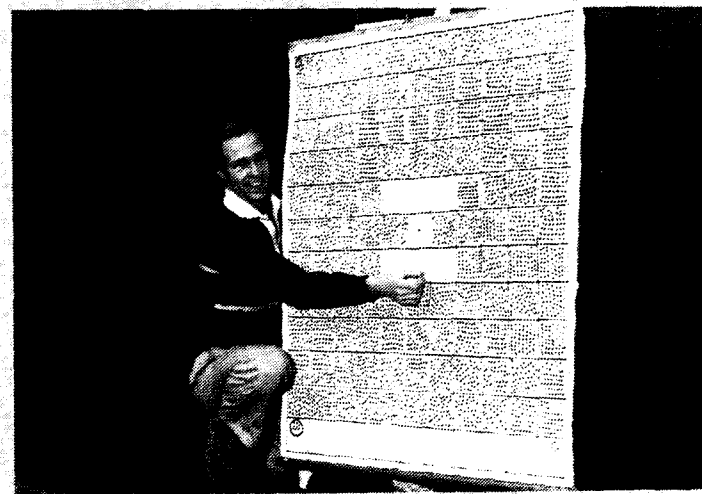
But a military spokesman, Col. Roberto Suarez, resounded that the court had not followed the proper procedure in requesting their appearance. Suarez rejected Custodio's charges that the military was responsible for the killing, saying "Custodio lied for his friends of the ultra-left."

—Peter Shinkle and Dennis Bernstein

fered after cutting off Willson's legs with their train. Lost in all this fuss is the U.S. Navy. Last November the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Investigations studied the accident. At that time the U.S. Navy provided the committee members with a file on its own internal investigation. But according to Kathy Bodovitz of the *San Francisco Chronicle*, missing from this report were the recommendations of Capt. Stanley Pryzby, the Navy's official investigator. He had recommended removing the Concord Naval Base commander from his post, suspending from one to four months the security manager who ordered the train out of the base with the comment "You might as well let them go ahead. We're going to have a confrontation sooner or later," and suspending for one month the train's conductor and engineer who saw the protesters on the tracks but made no attempt to stop. Pryzby harshly criticized the train's three crew members for clearly exceeding the speed limit of five miles per hour. He estimates that when they hit Willson the train was going between 12 and 16 miles per hour. Rep. George Miller (D-CA) is concerned about what the accident portends for our nation's military capability. "They couldn't deal with one man, with notice, sitting on the railroad tracks in a suburban community. It raises fundamental concerns about command and control."

## Can it happen?

"Is nuclear war between the U.S. and USSR a serious possibility in the near future?" The Center for War, Peace, and the News Media in New York put this question to 23 reporters who cover the national security beat for major news organs. John J. Fialka, a *Wall Street Journal* staff reporter in London, votes aye. "Yes," he says, "It is a serious possibility in the near future." As far as Norman Black, the Associated Press's Pentagon correspondent, is concerned, it is impossible. "There is nothing to suggest it from a military standpoint." Michael Mecham, congressional editor of *Aviation Week and Space Technology* (a trade publication of the military-industrial complex), comes down from the ozone with a historical perspective. "I do not worry about nuclear war," he says. "I think it is a narcissism in our generation. Every generation had their version of nuclear war. Rome destroyed Carthage totally. The Greeks eliminated the Trojans. What happened before is just as bad as what would happen to us." And Rick Inderfurth, ABC news' national security correspondent, gives one of the more thoughtful answers. "With 50,000 nuclear weapons in the world today tied into computers, there is always the potential that something could go wrong," says Inderfurth. "I do not feel that the U.S. or the USSR has any intension of striking the other, but the possibility exists that others could start a conflict and draw the U.S. and the USSR into it."



## Only 5,820 to go

If the INF Treaty is fully followed by the U.S. and the USSR, the two countries would have reduced their nuclear megatonnage by 3 percent in three years. To celebrate this coming event, peace activists in Burlington, Vt, got together last month to help Jim Geier block out 180 dots on his "nuclear dot chart." The chart now contains only 5,820 dots. These dots represent the 17,460 megatons of nuclear fire power in the Superpowers' arsenals, or in more understandable terms the equivalent to the explosive power of 5,820 World War IIs. The INF treaty, as Jesse Jackson pointed out, represents "one small step for mankind, one giant leap for Ronald Reagan."