

SCHOOLS

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ulated everything from on-campus soda machines, company logos on athletic scoreboards, television ads on Channel One or commercial stations shown in classrooms, to corporate gifts and grants such as McDonald's poster contests and Pizza Hut's Book-It program.

Current laws were weak, varied and offered little guidance to schools boards, superintendents and principals, the report said.

Company representatives have defended their contracts and sponsorships, saying they provide valuable resources and a high-profile commitment to an embattled public education system.

Channel One, a daily news broadcast

that offers free television sets and satellite dishes to schools reserving reserve time for students to watch the show, earns high ratings from teachers, says Eileen Murphy, spokeswoman for Primedia, Channel One's parent company.

She said ads on the show are approved by a committee of educators. "We have never had a complaint," she said.

Critics of these commercial arrangements wonder about the role and influence of private entities on public education.

"Even though predatory commercial advertising has been growing for years, few state legislatures and school boards have done their job to protect children," said Gary Ruskin, director of Commercial Alert, a Washington consumer watchdog group started two years ago by Green Party presidential hopeful Ralph Nader.

Clinton to aid poor nations

BY ANNE GEARAN
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — President Clinton said Thursday the United States has a moral responsibility to help well-meaning poor nations get out from under crushing debt, and asked religious leaders to help him lobby Congress for more money.

"If you want people to organize themselves well, run themselves well, and build a future, we've got to do this," Clinton said at his annual White House breakfast gathering for leaders from all faiths.

Clinton listed Latin American and African countries where he said responsible governments are making good-faith efforts to improve lives but face a debt burden largely incurred by previous, corrupt regimes.

The debt payments rob those countries of capital that could be invested in education, health care

and other improvements, Clinton said, echoing an argument made by leaders of many poor nations along with Pope John Paul II.

"I think it is a moral issue," Clinton said. "How can we sit here on the biggest mountain of wealth we have ever accumulated, that any nation in all of human history has ever accumulated, and not share that wealth?" he continued.

"We're not just throwing money away. We're only giving this money to people who not only promise to, but prove they are able to, take all the savings and invest it in the human needs of their people."

Congress largely approved Clinton's request for money to forgive some debts directly owed to the United States. Congress balked at underwriting loans funded by several countries through the International Monetary Fund or other international

lenders.

In May, Uganda became the first poor country to qualify for millions of dollars in debt relief under a program called the "highly indebted poor countries" initiative.

Clinton and leaders of other rich nations support the debt relief program for 40 of the world's poorest nations while critics say the program is slow and doesn't provide enough relief.

Rich nations' response to international debt was a theme of protests during last year's World Trade Organization meeting in Seattle and at this year's International Monetary Fund and World Bank gathering in Washington.

Clinton noted such dissent and said he "doesn't buy it."

"I think that it is very much in the interest of America to have big, large-scale debt relief," Clin-

"We will not be intimidated. We will not give in to violence, to blockades, to threats."

In Germany, where fuel taxes are slated to rise at the start of the year, Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder was targeted by angry protesters when he visited the northern city of Schwerin.

They blockaded the city center with trucks and tractors as the chancellor arrived by helicopter.

Schroeder warned that the protests would only hurt Germany's economy.

"Drop this dangerous game, because it could threaten the growth and employment prospects we currently have," he said.

But Germany's national truckers association called for new protests later this month to slow traffic on the autobahn.

Belgian Prime Minister Guy Ver-

hofstadt also refused demands Wednesday for a fuel-tax rebate for the trucking industry, even as protests expanded in Belgium to major freeways and border points.

In Britain, the Petrol Retailers' Association reported that 9,000 filling stations were without fuel, with little relief in sight. On Wednesday, police escorted dozens of fuel tankers past protesters' barricades, but progress on restoring deliveries was uneven.

Some tanker drivers refused to cross protest lines, and there were two reports of bricks being thrown through the windshields of tanker trucks.

"Our decision is we are fighting a battle which is going well. If we leave now then everything we have done will be for nothing," said Mark Williams, a spokesman for the protesters.

Blair has been granted emergency

powers to cope with the crisis, but has made it clear he expects the oil companies to take steps of their own to restore fuel supplies.

The prime minister met Wednesday with Malcolm Brinder, chief executive of Shell, and John Manzoni, head of British Petroleum.

Despite the widespread problems caused by the protests, a poll commissioned by the British Broadcasting Corp. suggested that nearly 80 percent of those surveyed supported the actions, and 90 percent wanted cuts in the fuel tax.

But the survey of 514 adults conducted by telephone Tuesday evening, with a margin of error of 4 percentage points — also suggested that public backing for protests would drop dramatically if essential services were hit.

VIOLENCE

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FTC Chairman Robert Pitofsky said he had asked his staff to look at whether the agency could sue entertainment companies for child-targeted marketing of material that industry rating systems say may be unsuitable for kids.

"We're not going to sit around forever and wait for self-regulation, but given a period of time, let's see if we can find some progress there," Pitofsky said. "If we don't, then I think we ought to go to law enforcement and possibly legislation."

Valenti and other entertainment executives said any government crackdown would be unwelcome and unconstitutional. While Valenti pledged that Hollywood would stop targeting kids with ads for violent, R-rated movies, he balked at suggestions that the 32-year-old movie rating system should be changed or enhanced.

"I'd be reluctant to get rid of something that works for some mystical, one-size-fits-all proposal," Valenti said.

The focus on media and the children was to continue Thursday, when federal regulators were scheduled to devise new rules covering the obligations of TV networks to youths. Broadcasters currently are required to deliver three hours of educational children's shows each week and must abide by certain advertising safeguards, in exchange for free use of the nation's airwaves.

The Federal Communications Commission was expected to expand that requirement, since broadcasters have been given additional digital channels worth tens of billions of dollars. The FCC also plans October hearings to examine the amount of sex and violence on television networks.

Music industry representatives at Wednesday's Senate hearing strongly rejected suggestions that they should go beyond their current rating system, which warns parents of "explicit lyrics" but does not include any more information.

"We don't have pictures. We don't have nudity. We don't have blood," Goldberg said. "All we have is words, and all we can do is label the curse words."

Sen. John Breaux, D-La., suggested that companies should lose their tax exemption for marketing that targets an audience younger than that recommended by voluntary industry rating systems.

But Hilary Rosen, president of the Recording Industry Association, said that would just cause the industry to drop all of its rating systems rather than risk being penalized.

GORE

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going to approach it with respect to anybody concerned, based on the evidence and the law."

One of the call sheets to Fowler suggested language he could use in a call to the lawyer.

"Sorry you missed the vice president," states the call sheet.

Prior to the preparation of the Dec. 13, 1995 call sheet, another document shows Gore, was asked to call Umphrey and solicit a donation.

"Republicans and others have had this material for more than 1,000 days and no one thought this was interesting until 1,000 hours before the election," said Gore spokesman Jim Kennedy.

A Gore aide, speaking on condition

of anonymity, said the vice president did not make the call. The aide dismissed the notion of any improper connection between the vice president and Umphrey's donations.

Umphrey is one of five trial lawyers at the center of a legal dispute between the Republican Texas attorney general and attorneys who represented the state in litigation to recover money from tobacco companies for health care costs.

The trial lawyers are receiving \$3.3 billion for the tobacco case. Texas Attorney General John Cornyn is challenging them and seeking to question five lawyers, including Umphrey, who negotiated the state's tobacco settlement.

A message left at Umphrey's law firm in Beaumont, Texas, was not returned.

West Nile virus claims eighth victim in Israel

BY JACK KATZENELL
ASSOCIATED PRESS

JERUSALEM — Anxiety in Israel was growing Thursday after the West Nile virus killed an eighth victim this summer, and hospital emergency rooms were crowded with people who feared they had contracted the mosquito-borne disease.

In two dozen towns in Israel's hardest hit coastal plain, residents closed their windows this week as machines belched forth clouds of insecticide mixed with diesel oil to wipe out the mosquitoes.

In southern Israel, 3,300 geese were destroyed at a farm after some of the birds died of the disease. There were minor outbreaks among geese at other farms but no wholesale slaughter.

Most flocks have been vaccinated against the virus, said Dr. Oded Nir, chief veterinarian at the Ministry of Agriculture. "This is not like last year's outbreak of the virus in New York where they had crows falling out of the sky," Nir said.

There was little chance the outbreaks in New York and Israel were connected, officials said. The virus was probably brought to Israel by wild birds migrating from Europe to Africa, said Dr. Alex Leventhal, the Health Ministry's director of public health.

Concerned by the cases in Israel, neighboring Jordan asked hospitals and clinics throughout the kingdom to notify the Health Ministry if any cases were detected.

Eight people in Israel have died this summer, and 120 more have contracted the disease. The latest victim was Nurit Gurwitz, 54, from Rishon LeZion, south of Tel Aviv, who was hospitalized two weeks ago and died Wednesday.

Gurwitz' family was only informed a few hours before her death that she had contracted the illness, said her husband, Shlomo, suggesting that his wife did not receive the proper treatment from the start. The hospital denied the allegations.

In a sign of growing anxiety, hospital emergency rooms were crowded with people with mild influenza who thought

they had the West Nile virus, which can be deadly for patients with a weak immune system.

"We calm them down and send them home, but more keep coming," said Dr. Motte Ravid, director of internal medicine at a hospital in Kfar Sava.

Most cases were diagnosed in Israel's coastal plain, where many migratory birds rest after long flights. None were in Jerusalem, which is in the hills. "The birds don't stop in Jerusalem and there are fewer mosquitoes there," Leventhal said.

He said the number of cases does not in itself constitute an epidemic, but that nobody could tell how many mild or undetected cases there were. "It could be the tip of the iceberg," he said.

The virus has been known in Israel for decades. Outbreaks were recorded among Israeli soldiers in the 1950s and 1980s. Fifteen percent of Israelis have antibodies against the virus, indicating they had it in the past. All the wild birds tested in Israel's national parks carry the antibodies, Leventhal said.

West Nile virus was first identified in the West Nile District of Uganda in 1937 and is present in East Africa, southwest Asia and Europe. In humans, it can cause fatal encephalitis — an inflammation of the spinal cord and brain.

Last year, the first U.S. case of West Nile virus was reported in late August, and a total of seven people in the New York City area died and 62 were infected. There have been no deaths in the United States this year.

The Israeli Health Ministry has urged local authorities to spray stagnant water, drains and sewers with insecticide and asked the public to use insect repellent.

The government has been accused of not reacting quickly enough to the outbreak. The Association of Local Authorities demanded a free hand to use the dusting machines in every city, but the Environment Ministry refused and dusting could only be used in areas where people or animals had contracted the disease.

"We have no objection to its being used in orchards or citrus groves, but it can cause distress to asthma sufferers and irritation to the skin," said Yiftah Kramer, spokesman of the Environment Ministry. "Therefore we have strict criteria for its use in residential areas."

Russia calls for tighter media laws

VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV
ASSOCIATED PRESS

MOSCOW — In language reminiscent of Soviet times, a policy document signed by President Vladimir Putin warns of "information weapons" allegedly used against Russia by foreign powers and calls for tighter controls over media.

The document, called the Information Security Doctrine of the Russian Federation, immediately came under criticism from journalists and media rights advocates.

"Putin is being driven by his KGB instincts," Ruslan Gorevoi, an activist with the Glasnost Defense Foundation,

said in reference to Putin's 16-year career in the Soviet secret police. "Now he wants to apply his KGB colonel's skills to the president's job."

The document, signed by Putin on Monday and posted on the government's Web site, outlines a long list of threats to the government and public in the sphere of media and information. Subversive activity by foreigners ranks high.

It accuses unidentified foreign powers of plotting to "infringe on Russia's interests in the global information space" and even working out concepts of "information wars" with the aim of "hampering the normal operation of the information and telecommunication

systems."

The document claims that foreign media organizations are trying to squeeze Russians out of the news market and suggests that their activities in Russia be checked more carefully.

The document was vaguely worded and doesn't have legal force, but was regarded by press freedom advocates as a disturbing sign of the thinking prevalent in the government and its bureaucracies, whose actions can be more important than legislation.

Gorevoi and others voiced fear that the document may signal the start of a broad attack on media freedom, involving tighter licensing and tax rules for the independent media.

"Putin wants to feed people with good news to make them feel happy — a new edition of the Soviet information cocoon, which isolated the nation from the rest of the world," Gorevoi said.

"As for the non-government media, we may only offer them information and wait for their interpretation," he was quoted as saying.

Two high-profile cases this year have raised concerns about media freedom in Russia. Radio Liberty correspondent Andrei Babitsky was detained in what was widely seen as redistribution for critical reporting on Chechnya, while media magnate Vladimir Gusinsky was jailed for several days on corruption charges.