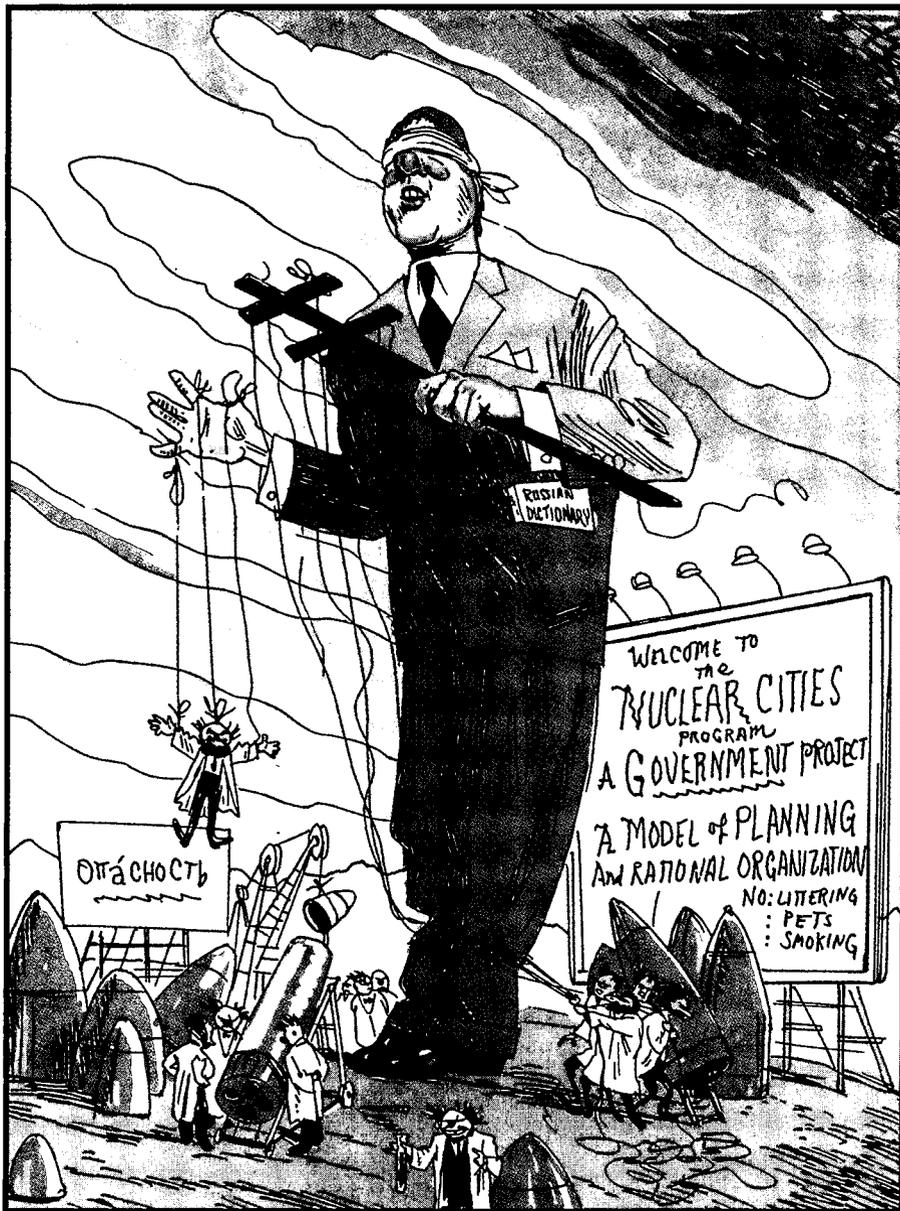


RUSSO-AMERICAN NUCLEAR CITIES

KENNETH R. TIMMERMAN



Since 1994, the Clinton administration has been spending taxpayer dollars to employ Russian nuclear scientists and weapons designers in civilian projects, with the laudable goal of seeking to prevent them from selling their talents to rogue states such as Iran, Iraq, North Korea, and Libya.

But a recent review by the General Accounting Office (GAO) found that some of the money has helped the Russians develop better nuclear weapons, missiles, and biological weapons—and that many civilian projects financed with U.S. taxpayer money have direct military applications. Even worse: Some of the U.S.-funded scientists and institutes are developing weapons for Iran and Libya.

Despite these warnings, the Clinton administration now proposes to spend an additional \$600 million to launch a massive public works project in ten Russian “nuclear cities.” Although these sites are ostensibly closed to outsiders, Iranian visitors have in the last five years been spotted at some of Russia’s most sensitive weapons labs, including Vector and Obolensk, where scientists have genetically engineered human and animal viruses to produce the most deadly biological weapons known to mankind.

The GAO concluded in February that the Nuclear Cities Initiative is “likely to be a subsidy program for Russia for many years rather than a stimulus for economic development,” and recommended that it be scaled back. It also said the Department of Energy (DOE), which will oversee the program, should more vigilantly check the backgrounds of Russian scientists slated to benefit from U.S. taxpayer largesse, in order to ensure that weapons designers do not enter classified U.S. facilities and do not use U.S. funds to subsidize new weapons development.

Heading the Nuclear Cities program at DOE is Assistant Secretary of Energy Rose Gottemoeller, the same official who fired the department’s head of security programs because she suspected him of leaking information to Congress on the disastrous state of security at DOE nuclear storage plants and at the national labs (“Nuclear Security Meltdown,” *TAS*, June 1999). In her academic writings, Ms. Gottemoeller has urged the U.S. to abandon its long-standing policy of strategic ambiguity by declaring publicly that the U.S. will not be the first to use nuclear weapons. But Rose Gottemoeller is not just any

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anti-nuclear academic: In 1993 she became National Security Council director for Russia and the other Soviet successor states. Since then, she has presided over policies that advanced the career of former KGB Director Yevgeni Primakov, turned a blind eye to Russia’s nuclear and missile transfers to Iran, and supported President Boris Yeltsin at the expense of democratic reformers, plying him with political favors and cash that went directly into offshore bank accounts. Although she has no hands-on managerial experience, Gottemoeller inherits a program crippled by poor management and lack of oversight, which seems destined to have precisely the opposite effect of its stated intention of helping wean Russia away from nuclear weapons.

FIRST-STRIKE ZONE

Despite the collapse of the Russian economy, the Russian government continues to develop new nuclear submarines and new missiles. Russia’s latest missile, the Topol-M (SS-27), went into service last December. According to Yuri Solomonov, general constructor at the Moscow Institute of Heat Technology, which designed it, the SS-27 was conceived to “effectively penetrate” the antimissile systems “of any state,” and could be converted to a multiple warhead missile if Russia discards START II. It is the only strategic missile in the world—including the U.S.—that has a maneuverable nuclear re-entry vehicle to allow it to defeat anti-ballistic interceptors.

The SS-27 is not the only troubling nuclear weapons project that appears to have taken priority over the Russian economy. Since 1991, the Russians have pumped more than \$6 billion into building a gigantic underground military complex, designed to withstand a direct nuclear blast, at Yamantau Mountain in the Urals. “The Russians have refused to provide any credible explanation for the purpose of this site,” says Rep. Curt Weldon (R-Penn.), who claims to

have raised Yamantau at every meeting he has had with the Russian government over the past four years. The underground complex is so big the Russians had to build two entire, 60,000-person cities, known as Beloretsk 15&16, just to support the workers building it down below. Work at Yamantau continues day and night, even now. “This is a project that is so secret that only the upper levels of the Russian government know about it,” Weldon said. “It is extremely destabilizing. It means that they are thinking about having a successful first strike capability.” Theories abound as to what the site might house—a secret nuclear weapons production plant, an ABM site, a giant ground-based

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laser, or another directed-energy weapon. Even the CIA doesn't know for sure. The reinforced underground bunkers take up 400 square miles, "an area as large as Washington, D.C. inside the Beltway," Weldon said.

Where do the Russians get all the money for such mega-projects? One source is clear: the U.S. taxpayer. Since 1993, the Clinton administration's misguided nonproliferation programs have pumped more than \$2.5 billion into Russia's military-industrial sector. Now, lots more is on the way.

ENTER BILL RICHARDSON

When he unveiled the \$600 million Nuclear Cities Initiative last September in Vienna at a joint press conference with Russian Minister of Atomic Energy Yevgeni Adamov, Energy Secretary Bill Richardson praised the Russians for their willingness to open ten previously closed nuclear cities.

"This is a Russian-led effort to 'rightsize' their nuclear complex and use the valuable skills of their scientists and engineers to promote economic development and new enterprises—to turn the scientific and technological expertise that resides in their premier weapons facilities toward peaceful uses," Richardson said. "I can not emphasize enough how important it is to us all that economic hardship not drive Russian nuclear weapons scientists into employment in places like Iran and North Korea."

But that was not what the Russians promised at all, according to a GAO audit. The GAO's own investigators were denied entry to Sarov (formerly known as Azarman-16, one of Russia's two nuclear weapons design institutes) earlier this year. In a meeting with the auditors outside the closed city, Sarov officials acknowledged that "it will be difficult to attract commercial partners to a city located behind a fence." Meanwhile, the collapse of the Russian banking system has ruled out any support from Russian private companies to defense conversion, the original goal of the U.S. programs. U.S. officials in Moscow warned the auditors that "care should be taken in transferring funds to any project in Russia lest the money be swallowed up in a bankrupt financial institution."

As part of the Nuclear Cities Initiative, U.S. nuclear scientists are being asked to train their Russian counterparts in Western business techniques and management skills—clearly, not their strong suit. The program will also provide "support systems for depression, women's rights, language training, and job retraining," according to the GAO. The DOE's stated aim is to help the Russians to develop viable commercial projects that will attract Russian and foreign investment capital. "The notion that the national labs can

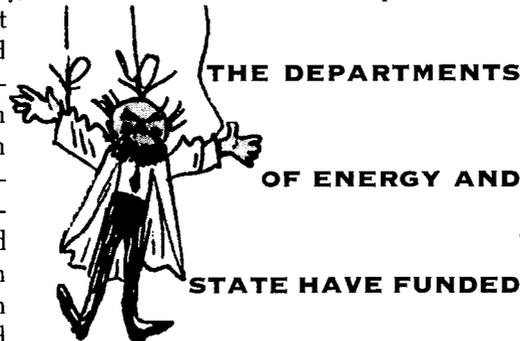
help the Russians to commercialize their nuclear weapons technology is absurd," says former Pentagon official Henry Sokolski. "The labs have no notions of commerce. The problem is that with enough utopianism, you can commit the very crime you're trying to prevent."

A DOE official who worked extensively with the Russians on efforts to convert their nuclear weapons and missile industries to civilian ends deems the programs a resounding failure. "The majority of U.S. taxpayer investments in Russia since 1992 have been misdirected, because they did nothing to convert military production to viable civilian projects," he says. "There has been inadequate oversight, a lack of direct involvement by U.S. industry, and no effort to create an environment where the Russians have an economic interest in the outcome." For offering such criticisms, the official was removed from dealing with Russia and placed into administrative limbo by his superiors.

Russian lab directors complained to the GAO auditors that it was "unrealistic to expect that nuclear scientists trained under the Soviet system can easily make the transition to a market-based economy," while their U.S. counterparts acknowledged that U.S. nuclear labs are "not the place to raise venture capital and develop markets for products because a laboratory does not have that kind of expertise." Despite this, GAO reported that DOE officials were calling the program a success "because it has at least temporarily employed thousands of weapons scientists at about 170 institutes and organizations throughout Russia and other Newly Independent States."

Temporary employment does little to reach the goal of the nonproliferation programs mandated by Congress, which is to help the Russians make the shift from designing and building

new weapons to designing and building commercially viable products. Of the 400 Russian projects managed by the Department of Energy since 1994, none "can be classified as long-term commercial successes, and only a few have met with limited success," the GAO auditors found. Instead of pumping in money to keep Russian nuclear labs and other weapons design institutes open, the former DOE official argues that the U.S. should foster "patient capital" (as opposed to venture capital) for long-term investments in new, state-of-the-art civilian factories in Russia, designed from the ground up to produce marketable goods. "You need direct project management by U.S. industry, and you need an overall strategy, as during the Marshall Plan. As it is, we're taking tank factories and trying to get them to make tennis shoes. Missile plants are making lawn chairs. None of this is commercially viable." Once the U.S. government funds for



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such projects dry up, the tank factories and missile plants will go back to making tanks and missiles.

Even Russian lab directors are complaining that in its naive approach to proliferation, the Clinton administration is making dangerous mistakes. TAS has learned that one Russian lab director warned the director of DOE's Initiatives for Proliferation Prevention (IPP) project in Moscow in November 1996 that U.S. taxpayer money was being funneled into Russia's most dreaded biological weapons facilities, and that, given the way the U.S. had structured the programs, there was nothing he could do to stop it.

GERMS, MISSILES, AND IRAN

The State Research Center of Virology and Biotechnology, known as Vector, was founded in the 1970's to carry out top-secret research into deadly viral weapons. Given all new labs and a new charter by Mikhail Gorbachev in 1987, Vector "weaponized" new strains of smallpox at a time when the World Health Organization declared the disease eradicated worldwide. On May 24 of this year, the World Health Organization voted not to destroy the remaining world stockpiles of smallpox, which in theory are held only at Vector and in Atlanta, Georgia, for fear the Russians may have transferred them to rogue states for use as weapons. Worldwide smallpox vaccination was halted nearly twenty years ago, leaving most of the world's population with no immunity—and thus, easy victims of a Third World biological attack. According to Ken Alibek, a Russian defector who was deputy director of Vector's parent organization, Biopreparat, the U.S. has only 7 million doses of smallpox vaccine, putting major U.S. cities at the mercy of any large-scale terrorist attack. Smallpox has killed 500 million people this century alone, making it the deadliest disease known to man.

Before Alibek defected from Russia in 1992, Vector also developed a new form of the Ebola virus known as Marburg-U, a disease which liquefies the victim's internal organs and causes the pores of the skin to ooze blood from internal bleeding. Vector's state-of-the-art production facility near the Siberian town of Koltsovo continues to receive funds from IPP and the U.S. Department of State, under a parallel program known as the International Science and Technology Centers (ISTC). Vector's programs are still "too sensitive to discuss," say former officials, who voice concern that the State Department has provided general support funds which Vector can use for whatever purpose it chooses. These funds were awarded Vector despite U.S. government awareness that the institute is currently developing new biological weapons for the Russian military, including a new strain of German measles that creates AIDS-like symptoms in a matter of days. A Vector researcher went to Iran on a contract approved by the Russian government, the GAO discovered, at the same time that Vector was receiving U.S. taxpayer grants, ostensibly to develop new vaccines. And according to Alibek, who published a chilling insider's account of Russia's secret biological weapons programs earlier this year (*Biohazard: The Chilling True Story of the Largest Covert Biological Weapons Program in the World*, Random House, \$24.95), Vector scientists have recently succeeded in introducing a gene from Ebola into the smallpox virus to create "a smallpox-Ebola weapon."

Obolensk, a sister organization, to Vector, located in the Moscow suburbs, is also receiving ISTC grants and is developing a genetically enhanced variant of Anthrax resistant to all known vaccinations—the ultimate in biological warfare. "These institutes are definitely beyond the pale," said Zachary Davis, a nuclear analyst for the Congressional Research Service.

They are not the only Russian grant recipients working on questionable projects. Of the seven Russian institutes hit with White House sanctions in January for selling missile-related equipment and technology to Iran, most were recipients of ISTC grants, a State Department official supervising the program acknowledges. "Since the sanctions, we have suspended any new contracts with these entities," the official says.

One of the entities was TSAGI, also known as the Aerohydrodynamic Institute. TSAGI contracted in early 1997 to build a wind tunnel, at the Shahid Hemat missile plant outside of Tehran, which is being used by Iranian and Russian missile designers to refine the Shahab-3 missile. Successfully test-fired in July 1998, the Shahab-3 gives Iran the capability for the first time of reaching Israel with a nuclear weapon. A follow-on missile, the Shahab-4, is also being developed with Russian assistance, and will be able to target U.S. NATO bases in Europe. The ISTC was planning to fund a TSAGI project involving new aircraft designs aimed at improving wake vortex disturbance, a phenomenon which can cause small planes to crash when they cross the wake of a larger aircraft.

Other institutes whose ISTC-funded projects have been put on hold include NPO Trud, which sold liquid fuel booster technology to Iran, the Moscow Aviation Institute, and the Baltic State Technical University, where Iranian missile designers were being trained. The Scientific Research and Design Institute of Power Technology (NKIET) was also receiving ISTC funds. Deputy Atomic Energy Minister Bulat Nigmatulin acknowledged that NKIET had held talks with Iran, aimed at building heavy-water and light-water reactors. However, he said, "these talks did not lead to anything and were halted when talks reached more concrete matters." Nigmatulin then used a Clintonian defense to explain why NKIET should not be punished: "If a wife dances with another man the whole night and nothing happens in the end, I don't understand why the husband would be upset and jealous," he said. "And they didn't even dance all night." Two weeks later, on February 1, the Ministry of Atomic Energy announced that a group of 40 Iranians was arriving in Russia that month for a 13-month training program in nuclear reactor operations. So much for dancing.

Nor were NKIET's Iranian contracts its only dubious foreign dalliance. The GAO found that NKIET had provided training to Libya on light-water reactors, prior to the IPP contract award in 1996. Yet White House officials desperately sought to spare the firm from sanctions. "Rose Gottemoeller argued that NKIET was the only game in town," a source privy to the administration's arguments tells TAS. "She claimed they were the only Russian enterprise that had mastered the technology needed to maintain the containment of the Chernobyl reactors, and had to be protected, whatever the cost."

FUNDING PROLIFERATION
TO ENHANCE CAREERS

Critics of the State Department's ISTC program include Oles Lomacky, an American who served as Executive Director of ISTC in Moscow from 1995 to 1997 "The purpose of these programs is very noble, but the difference between our intent and our actions is night and day." Lomacky and others involved in the programs who asked not to be named cited poor management and careerism as impediments to meeting the administration's non-proliferation goals. "The grand scheme is, if you give Russian scientists enough money, they will stop doing what they were doing before, which was designing weapons. That is just a fantasy," says Lomacky. "Our objective ought not to be maintaining the nuclear cities, but creating opportunities for these people to do other things somewhere else. As it is, the same people who were designing bombs in the Soviet era are still there."

Lomacky and others are highly critical of the State Department director of the ISTC program, career bureaucrat Anne Harrington. "She has no technical background, and she is not a manager. And yet, she is micromanaging the entire program," Lomacky says. "She sees this as her power base." Others accuse Harrington of seeking to become the "vicar" of U.S. foreign aid programs to Russia, counting her success by the amount of U.S. taxpayer aid she can personally distribute.

"At least with the IPP programs, which are managed by the labs, you have one U.S. nuclear scientist managing one Russian project," a former U.S. intelligence officer who has tracked both programs tells *TAS*. "That is expensive, but it provides some element of transparency. With ISTC, each U.S. manager is responsible for as many as 60 Russian projects. For God's sake, if you're going to give them money, you need to make sure you know what they're doing. Most of the time, the ISTC doesn't have a clue. They are actually providing U.S. taxpayer dollars to fund proliferation. We need to get our scientists into those Russian labs, not write the Russians a blank check so they can do whatever they want."

A senior State Department official involved in managing ISTC defends Harrington and her management of the projects, and insists that U.S. monitoring teams have stayed on-site at troublesome institutes—including Vector—for as long as four months at a time. "If our job were science, we'd be working with the Russian Academy of Science," the official says. "But our job is nonproliferation. So we engage the institutes that are the most likely targets of countries seeking to acquire missile, biological, and nuclear weapons technology. This requires us to devise a careful oversight and monitoring program."

Even this official acknowledges that most ISTC monitoring is conducted by Russian employees working out of ISTC's Moscow headquarters, giving rise to accusations of collusion.

As chairman of the ISTC board, former Bush administration arms control expert Ron Lehman, acknowledges that the administration's nonproliferation efforts in Russia walk a fine line between aiding Russian weapons programs and shutting them down. "There is no way I can guarantee that just by paying money to a Russian scientist he is not going to help Iran or Iraq," Lehman tells *TAS*. "It's not going to be 100 percent successful. But we are far better off having the contact than not. It's important to encourage the Russians to work together with outside scientists on civilian projects." Lehman insists that the programs are taking a "hard-nosed view" toward U.S. nonproliferation goals, and feels the gains of working with the Russians far outweigh the risks of providing limited subsidies to Russian weapons research.

The DOE has accepted the GAO's criticism and has pledged to correct the deficiencies the government auditors found in the IPP program. But while individual programs can be corrected, the administration's approach toward the collapse of Russia remains fragmented, fraught with bureaucratic infighting, and lacking any strategic vision.

In a separate review of the Russian programs, released this May, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) pointed out that U.S. taxpayers currently spend \$700 million per year on programs aimed at enhancing nuclear security in Russia that have simply failed to solve the problem. "Sizable quantities of fissile materials in Russia remain unprotected; no effective export control system or enforcement mechanism exists to ensure that stolen materials or warheads are not smuggled out of the country; and thousands of weapons scientists and nuclear workers are facing economic hardship because of budget cuts and recession," says the CBO.

For all that, administration critics such as Rep. Weldon believe we should continue to engage the Russians, and that the "gross mishandling" of the nonproliferation programs can be corrected. "There should be a joint oversight committee, with Russian and American scientists, to select the programs that do the most good," says Weldon. "We are not doing the real work of stabilizing those weapons of mass destruction Russia still has. Instead, we're just making contractors rich."

We have been lucky so far, but the Clinton administration's piecemeal response to the momentous challenge created by the end of the Cold War will face far greater scrutiny after the first nuclear terrorist bomb goes off on Main Street, and Americans realize that it could have been prevented. ❁

**AUDITORS FOUND THAT A
RUSSIAN INSTITUTE HAD
TRAINED THE LIBYANS TO
MAKE LIGHT-WATER REAC-
TORS. THE WHITE HOUSE**



ARGUED

AGAINST

SANCTIONS.

FORGET CONGRESS!

**Where Were Republicans When Chinese Agents
Were Bribing the Clinton-Gore Administration
And Stealing National Security Secrets?**



JUDICIAL WATCH SEEKS TRUTH AND JUSTICE WITHOUT REGARD TO POLITICS

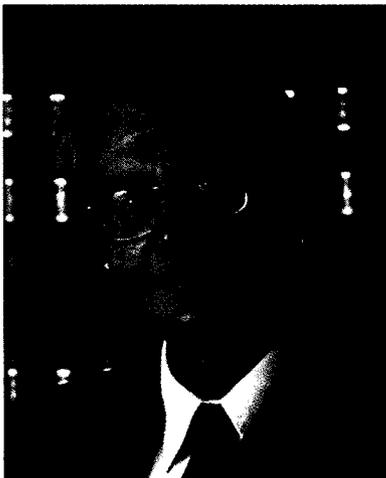
The future of our children rests mainly with the courts and the judges who oversee Judicial Watch's 6 Chinagate lawsuits. For years, Republicans in Congress have abdicated their oversight duties to uncover the wholesale breaches of national security resulting from the sell-out of American interests to the Communist Chinese in exchange for campaign contributions to the Clinton-Gore Administration and Democrat Party.

Why have the Cox and every other Republican Congressional "Committee" refused to investigate the linkage between campaign cash and the sell-out of the United States to the Communist Chinese? The answer is simple; John Huang and others have illegally laundered campaign cash to the Republicans as well. And many of the companies who bought seats on Clinton's taxpayer-financed trade missions and received export licenses from his Commerce Department to sell high technology to Communist China donate even more heavily to Republicans.

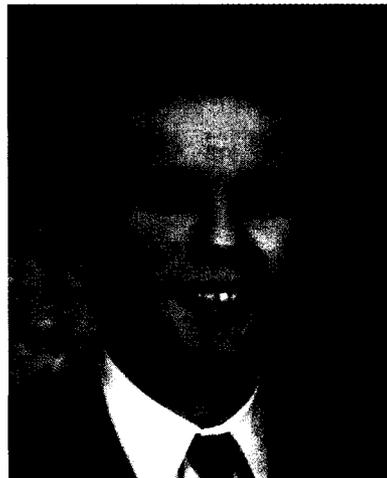
Judicial Watch is disgusted and outraged by what has been a bi-partisan cover-up in Congress. It's time for you, the American people, to take matters into your own hands. Support Judicial Watch's efforts to use the courts – the last hope of the American people – to uncover and bring to justice the sellout of our country to the Communist Chinese. Through our 6 lawsuits, and our new Chinagate Task Force, we intend to bring about justice regardless of where the chips may fall!

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MISTER CONNERLY

Ward Connerly wants to end racial preferences in a key state.

Fearing a backlash, Jeb Bush and other Republicans think he

should stay in California. Are they right? • BILL DURYEA •

The reception Ward Connerly got in Florida earlier this year could not have been much chillier. From the perspective of the state's political establishment, the California businessman and conservative crusader could have smuggled in a load of citrus-devouring fruit flies and he would not have been treated with the same disdain.

What Connerly was threatening to import was potentially far more dangerous. Connerly, the leader of two highly divisive and hugely successful anti-affirmative action initiatives in California and Washington state, had come to Tallahassee in January to announce that Florida would be perfect territory for a similar ballot initiative.

The political opposition massed quickly. The rhetoric smacked of century-old prejudices against carpetbaggers. More than a whiff of fear was detectable amid the loathing.

"He needs to take his little butt back to California where he came from and leave us the hell alone," said one state senator.

Another Tallahassee powerbroker opined: "Mr. Connerly and his special interest groups are combining efforts to eliminate job and contract opportunities for women and minorities."

At first blush it might seem both statements came from roughly the same end of the political spectrum. In fact, the first comment came from Betty Holzendorf, a black Democrat from Jacksonville; and the second was from Al Cardenas, chairman of the Republican Party of Florida.

Such agreement between two parties undergoing a momentous and bitter power shift made it clear that Connerly represented a formidable foe: a black conservative with a deft fundraising touch and a silver-tongued debating style. The Tallahassee political elite, of both parties, knew that every time Connerly had made a direct appeal to the voters he had won—by large margins.

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BILL DURYEA is a staff writer for the St. Petersburg Times.

Connerly, whose ideals and ego are evenly matched, was undaunted. Armed with poll figures that suggest overwhelming grassroots support for ending racial and ethnic preferences in state hiring, contracting, and higher education admission, Connerly said he was ready to put a voter initiative on the ballot in November 2000.

Since then the opposition has not diminished and Connerly's resolve has strengthened.

By early July, Connerly expects to have gathered roughly 43,600 signatures on his petitions, enough to trigger a mandatory review of the proposed ballot language by the Florida Supreme Court. If he clears that hurdle, which has already forced him to radically alter his previously unbeaten ballot language, the stage will be set for a nasty showdown that would most certainly divide the state as no other issue has in recent years.

Already the Florida Civil Rights Initiative is highlighting a number of political ironies that will likely play out for a national audience during the coming presidential election:

- The Republican Party in Florida, following the lead of the national party, refuses to embrace an issue that a majority of Republican voters support.

- Florida's new Republican governor has said he is opposed to racial preferences, but won't back Connerly for fear of alienating black Democrats.

- Connerly, a long-time Republican loyalist, has said he wants to support Texas Governor George W. Bush for presi-

