

Medicine prices court disaster

By James Clingman
Special to Sentinel-Voice

In case you or someone in your family, especially an elderly person, have not noticed yet, the price of medicine has skyrocketed and continues to climb. Amid the humdrum of whether we should be allowed to purchase our legal drugs from Canada and elsewhere, the Bush administration and Congress have slowly and surely pulled yet another piece of wool over our eyes.

As if "Leave no child behind," 2 million lost jobs, military debacles, homeland security, and the Patriot Act were not enough, now we have prescription drugs so high that only those to whom Bush gave the biggest tax cuts can afford to buy them.

But wait, there's more. Have you noticed the price of gas these days? To all of you who fell for the SUV charade of "the bigger the better," you have my deepest sympathy, especially if you are not in the high end of the Bush tax cut beneficiary group. When the price of gasoline started its rise, the primary reason given was that government purchases of crude oil had caused the demand to go up, thus, consumers would have to pay higher prices at the pump. I don't know about you, but I sure bet Cheney and Condi Rice are doing all right. How are you doin', San Diego? The first week of March 2004, you had the highest priced gas in the country at \$2.19 per gallon for regular unleaded. I wonder what premium users had to pay.

Let's not forget about Halliburton, that company whose subsidiary, Kellogg, Brown, and Root, is now accused of shafting the taxpayers for millions of dollars in overcharges for gasoline in Iraq, the land that holds the second largest oil reserves in the world. Old Dick Cheney, the invisible vice president, is laughing all the way to the bank, saying, "I have no financial ties to Halliburton." Maybe that's why we call him the "vice" president.

Gasoline stations where I live change their prices everyday. To give credit where it's due, some of them hold their prices down and do not succumb to the greed and graft that goes on daily in this industry. However, I often ask why the price of gas, in the ground and already paid for, would change from day to day at local service stations. That is tantamount to other local stores changing the prices on their merchandise everyday, even after they have bought and paid for it. I understand price fluctuations, but the gas people are ridiculous; they are ripping us off big time.

The latest news reports cited the Saudi's inability to produce at the capacity necessary to keep prices from rising. That excuse, along with the other song and dance about changeover from winter to summer fuel grades and satisfying new pollution standards, is tired and, quite frankly, just a plain old lie. By the way, the Bush dynasty, Daddy Bush in particular, has an excellent relationship with the Saudi family, via the Carlyle Group. Do you suppose he would put in a good word for his country to his Saudi buddies?

The prescription drug industry is no better. They should be ashamed of themselves, but that would be too much like right. The drug companies gave millions in campaign contributions to Bush and his crooks (Yes, they gave some to the Dems as well, but you know what I think about that. Two wings on the same bird.) And now they will make billions on their political investment. Most people cannot even afford to stay alive anymore.

The poor and elderly are suffering tremendously under this so-called "compassionate" conservative, not to mention most Black people. The Bush compassion has led us to unbelievable deficits (now the Congressional Budget Office is talking in the trillions of dollars), a war to end all peace in Iraq, shenanigans in the disclosure of what really happened prior to and on September 11, 2001, thievery in the oil industry, kick-backs and sweetheart deals for contractors, and leaving every child behind.

His compassion is so deep that he has assisted the drug industry in its hijacking of billions in revenue, and he has connived with the oil barons to kill us at the pump. What
(See Clingman, Page 12)



Haitian President Boniface Alexandre (L), Prime Minister Gerard Latortue (C) and the new commander of the multinational force in Haiti Brigadier General Ronald Coleman (R) take part in a official ceremony in Port-Au-Prince.

Haiti could spell trouble for Africa

By Hazel Trice Edney
Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON (NNPA) — The Bush administration's complicity in the overthrow of Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide implies that other democratic nations, including those in Africa, might also be vulnerable for coup d'états or pre-emptive strikes, says the president of TransAfrica Forum, a leading research institution in the nation's capital.

"It's particularly nations in the global South, such as Africa, the Caribbean, Latin America and Asia. The U. S. has a history of undermining governments so that what we're seeing from Bush is not new on one level. What's new is how blatant it is," says Bill Fletcher, head of the 27-year-old organization.

"The implications can be seen in what happened in Iraq and what happened in Haiti. That is that the Bush administration is repudiating international law. That's what they're doing. And they're basically saying that there's no law that they're bound to respect because they've got the guns. It could happen anywhere."

Human rights activists and politicians have long protested the U. S. treatment of Haiti.

"I think it's largely racism," says former TransAfrica President Randall Robinson. "I think the Bush administration hates President Aristide largely because he's not a president to be told what to do by Americans."

As protestors escalated demands for Aristide's return, he boldly moved to Jamaica on Monday, hoping to return home soon. He describes himself as the president of Haiti and continues to insist that he was forced to

resign by U. S. officials on Feb. 29 as armed rebel forces closed in on his palace in Port-Au-Prince.

He has urged his followers to peacefully resist the occupation by foreign troops, including 2,000 Americans, and says he is willing to return to power in Haiti.

But the Bush Administration insists that Aristide resigned willingly, has pushed ahead for a transitional government until new elections in 2005.

That move, says Ira Kurzban, Aristide's Miami-based attorney, is only Bush's way of getting even for his father, George Herbert Walker Bush, whose administration first helped to oust Aristide in 1991, only to see him reinstated by President Clinton in 1994.

Fletcher points to the official U. S. security strategy as

documentation that the U. S. government currently sees itself as being among what he describes as "the cowboy wing of the ruling group."

The 20-page document posted on WhiteHouse.gov, titled, "The National Security Strategy of the United States of America," states in its overview that "the United States possesses unprecedented—and unequaled—strength and influence in the world" and promises to "expand the circle of development by opening societies and building the infrastructure of Democracy" and to use America's strength to "promote a balance of power that favors freedom."

Fletcher sees that as an extension of the Monroe Doctrine of 1823 that basically holds that it is the United States' "manifest destiny" to rule the Western Hemisphere.

Fletcher says America is essentially stating, "There will never be a military competitor with the U. S. And if you disagree with the first three points, the U. S. has the right to take you out."

TransAfrica raised its profile as a leading group for Haitian liberation in 1994 when its then president, Randall Robinson, went on a 27-day hunger strike, helping to force Clinton to restore Aristide to power.

"This is a policy of simple meanness. Don't look for rationale in this. You won't find it," Robinson says. "This is a reckless, cruel, stupid American policy that in large part wears the face of the first Black secretary of state in the United States."

Secretary of State Colin Powell was among the first to defend the Bush administration.
(See Haiti, Page 14)

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