

By The Associated Press Edited by Michelle Garner

# NEWS DIGEST

Monday, March 25, 1996

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## McDonald's bans burgers in Britain

LONDON — Worried Britons sitting down to their Sunday roasts were likely to be eating pork, lamb or even ostrich instead of their traditional beef.

Fears of the deadly mad cow disease have driven beef off many menus in Britain and badly damaged the export market. At least 20 countries have banned British beef, including the two biggest markets — France and Italy.

McDonald's fast-food chain, which spends \$37.5 million a year on British beef, dealt the industry a severe blow on Sunday with its decision to switch to foreign beef.

The chain, worried about customer confidence, stopped serving hamburgers in its 660 British restaurants and said it wouldn't sell them again until Thursday, when new supplies of beef could be imported.

McDonald's main rival in the UK, Burger King, said it would continue offering hamburgers made from British beef.

The government announced Wednesday that scientists believed the cattle disease, formally known as bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), is the "most likely" source of a new strain of a similar brain disease that has struck 10 young Britons. At least eight have died.

A scientist who has researched BSE

said Sunday that the British government was probably correct in linking the cow disease to the illness in humans.

Stanley Prusiner, who is based at the University of California in San Francisco, said it would take five to 10 years and millions of dollars to find a treatment for the illness. For now, the only way to avoid it is to not eat the meat of stricken cows, he stressed.

A poll conducted for the British Broadcasting Corp. said 46 percent of respondents were "less inclined" to eat beef. Just under 40 percent said they would continue to eat it. The poll, based on interviews with 502 adults Saturday, had a margin of error of 4.5 percent.

A panel of 13 scientists who will advise the government on its policy toward BSE resumed talks on Sunday to draw up guidelines on the risk to children.

The scientists are also discussing whether further information should be given to the public and whether more can be done to eradicate BSE, which has infected British herds over the past decade.

The committee is to report to the government's chief medical officer, who will inform ministers.

An announcement was expected

*"I think it's a sensible move. Until we know the truth it's better to be cautious."*

**JUDITH BROWN**  
Belfast resident

Monday, and the government has made clear it will follow the experts' proposals, even if they call for the mass slaughter of cattle.

Sir Richard Southwood, an expert on animal infection who headed the first government inquiry into BSE, was quoted in The Mail on Sunday as saying a million cattle should be slaughtered.

"Serious consideration ought to be given to destroying all cattle born before 1990 when a lot of infected material was getting into cattle feed," he was quoted as saying. "They could still be incubating the disease."

Southwood's 1989 inquiry concluded there was a slight risk of BSE being transmitted to humans. At that time, Britain banned the practice of enriching cattle feed with sheep

byproducts, because of the sheep disease scrapie, similar to BSE.

On Saturday, shoppers throughout the country turned their backs on beef and bought pork, lamb or poultry for Sunday's big meal.

Butchers who sell organic meats and novelty meats such as ostrich and alligator — at a much higher price than standard supermarket beef — were predicting an increase in sales. All Britain's major supermarket chains reported a slump in beef sales.

McDonald's said its nine Northern Ireland restaurants and 25 in the Irish Republic would continue to sell Irish beef products, in which BSE has never been detected.

At the McDonald's in central London's Victoria Rail Station, appetites appeared undented and customers were sympathetic to the chain's ban on British beef.

"I think it's a sensible move. Until we know the truth it's better to be cautious," said Judith Brown, 18, from Belfast, Northern Ireland.

But at a McDonald's in Nottingham, central England, Andy Campbell, 33, was less concerned.

"I've been eating beef all my life and I feel fine," Campbell said. "If it was going to do me any harm I would have noticed by now."

## Budget war negotiations to test Dole

WASHINGTON — As President Clinton and Congress square off this week in perhaps the finale of their 1996 budget war, there will be an interesting subplot involving firebrand House Republicans and Bob Dole's White House aspirations.

Facing a Friday deadline, administration officials and GOP leaders will try to broker a deal on a \$160 billion bill financing dozens of agencies for the rest of fiscal 1996 and avoiding another federal shutdown. As they do, the measure will be a test case of whether Dole — the party's leader in November's election — can persuade confrontational House Republicans to compromise with Clinton on some of their most heartfelt principles.

The odds are Dole will succeed because it would be too costly for him and congressional Republicans to fail. A new shutdown would tarnish his reputation as an achiever, encourage support for a third-party candidate like Ross Perot, and wound efforts by GOP lawmakers to appear reasonable, not extremist.

But getting there won't be easy. There remains a deep-seated reluctance among many conservative House Republicans to compromise with Clinton on central GOP issues like spending cuts and government regulation — even though Dole, House Speaker Newt Gingrich, R-Ga., and other House leaders want them to.

"He's got to run a presidential campaign, but he doesn't have to win my congressional seat," said Rep. Mark Souder, R-Ind., one of the most conservative of the 74 House GOP freshmen. Souder says that while he and other Republicans want to avoid another shutdown, striking a deal "is like business as usual again" — anathema to first-term Republicans who pledged to change Washington's ways.

## Flurry of AIDS drugs brings new hope

WASHINGTON — Fifteen years into the AIDS epidemic, patients finally have the promise of not curing but controlling the deadly virus — thanks to a sudden influx of new drugs unlike that ever marshaled against any other disease.

"It's such an extraordinary time of both discovery and hope," said Gordon Nary, executive director of the International Association of Physicians in AIDS Care.

"For many people today with HIV disease, there is a very good possibility ... it'll be a chronic disease" instead of a quick killer.

These new drugs, called protease inhibitors, don't cure the HIV virus that causes AIDS. But they attack it very differently than all other medicines — and the two newest ones can almost eliminate virus lurking in patients' blood.

The new drugs give patients unprecedented choices in battling HIV.

More importantly, combining them with older medicines deals the virus a one-two punch that doctors hope — although they haven't proved it yet — will suppress HIV enough that patients can live with AIDS for decades, just as they control other chronic diseases.

The headlines started in December when the Food and Drug Administration approved Hoffman LaRoche's saquinavir, the first but weak protease inhibitor, in a record 97 days.

That record quickly fell. On March 1, the FDA approved Abbott Laboratories' more powerful ritonavir in 72 days. Two weeks later, indinavir got the nod just 42 days after manufacturer Merck & Co. filed an FDA application.

Protease inhibitors weren't the only good news. Patients also got a new eye implant to prevent AIDS-related blindness, the FDA passed a better method to screen blood donations for HIV,

and the first oral HIV test is expected in months.

AIDS patients until now had five choices: AZT, ddI, ddC, d4T and 3TC. All worked the same way, targeting an enzyme called reverse transcriptase that is important for HIV to reproduce. But the drugs help only modestly, and HIV quickly mutates to resist them.

So scientists designed drugs to target a second enzyme, protease, which is vital to another key step in HIV's reproduction. When combined with older medicines, the two most powerful protease inhibitors can cause the amount of HIV floating in many patients' blood to plummet by as much as 98 percent.

HIV still lurks elsewhere in the body, so the drugs are not a cure.

Still, the idea is that keeping patients' HIV blood levels low for years would postpone AIDS symptoms. To do that, three-drug cocktails of either

ritonavir or indinavir plus two older medicines became the most recommended AIDS therapy this month.

But that recommendation could change within the year:

● A fourth protease inhibitor, Agouron Inc.'s nelfinavir, is in final testing and expected to be approved by 1997. Roche is creating a stronger saquinavir, also expected soon, and three other protease inhibitors are in earlier testing.

● Abbott and Roche are studying the effects of taking two protease inhibitors together, ritonavir plus saquinavir. Preliminary results are expected in July.

● Doctors are beginning studies of a four-drug mixture.

● And companies have begun testing two drugs, nevirapine and delavirapine, in a third new class of AIDS medicines.

"It is an exciting time," said FDA AIDS expert Dr. David Feigal.

## Negotiators struggle to formulate plan to release final Bosnian war prisoners

SARAJEVO, Bosnia-Herzegovina — Facing the threat of economic sanctions, Bosnian government and Serb officials tried to work out differences Sunday over the release of their final war prisoners.

The government released 109 Serbs just before a midnight Saturday deadline. But the release fell short of freeing all POWs, as required.

World powers meeting in Moscow on Saturday warned that unless the wartime enemies comply, the Serbs and the Muslim-Croat government

would face sanctions instead of the economic aid they so badly need to rebuild Bosnia.

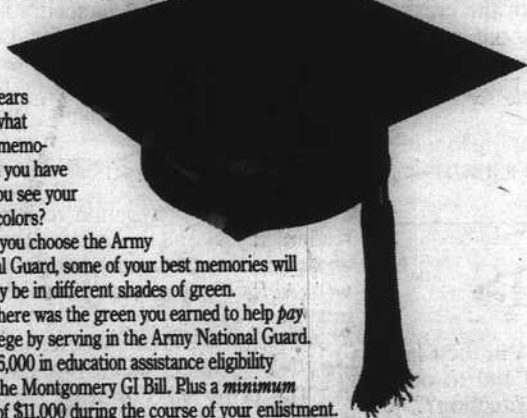
On Sunday, Amor Masovic, the head of the Bosnian government POW commission, and his Bosnian Serb counterpart, Dragan Bulajic, met on a former front line south of Sarajevo and affirmed their commitment to release all prisoners in the next eight days.

"The sanctions they are threatening really will be imposed," Bulajic said. "After this war, after peace came, we all need this economic injection."

But there are differences to be resolved before more prisoners are released, mainly a stalemate over whether to release prisoners suspected of war crimes. There also are conflicting reports over how many POWs are being held.

According to the Red Cross, which is monitoring the prisoner releases, a total 152 Serb, Muslim and Croat prisoners should have been freed Saturday. It says warring parties are holding 62 other prisoners for possible war crimes investigations.

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