

# News Digest

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THURSDAY, DECEMBER 4, 1997

## New mad cow warnings prompt UK bans

LONDON (AP) — Just in time for the holiday season, Britain announced a ban Wednesday on rib roasts, T-bone steaks and all other beef on the bone after new warnings about mad cow disease.

Restaurants now must rethink their menus, and butchers will have to disappoint customers who like a nice rib roast for holiday dinner parties. There will be no beef bones for soup stocks, and man's best friend will wag his tail in vain.

"Christmas is coming and we usually sell a lot of ribs of beef," said butcher Joseph Steele, whose shop in a quaint byway of Hampstead, north London, caters to a well-heeled clientele.

"I would say 40 percent like rib of beef, sirloin on the bone, T-bone," Steele said. "It will be a big disappointment to them."

The government opted for the ban after its scientific advisers reported a risk that material contaminated with bovine spongiform encephalopathy — mad cow disease — could reach the human food chain through bone marrow.

In announcing the ban to the House of Commons, Agriculture Minister Jack Cunningham called the danger of infection

"very, very small" and said 95 percent of beef is eaten off the bone.

He said the ban would take effect in a week.

Like many British butchers, Steele weathered the original mad cow scare in March 1996, when the government announced a suspected link between mad cow disease and a new strain of Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease, a brain-wasting disease that has killed at least 20 people in Britain.

The European Union barred British exports after that, and Britain has been working with the EU to try to get a gradual resumption of exports.

"The first scare really hit us hard," Steele said, adding that he's less worried about Wednesday's ban.

"They've got over the initial shock. We have quite a sensible clientele," he said.

But farmers fear public confidence in beef will be further eroded. The National Farmers' Union called the news "another body blow" for those who have lost their entire export market and seen a drop in domestic sales brought on by customers' fears.

"The announcement is bound to spread uncertainty in the mind of the housewife, who is

already confused as to whether to buy beef," said David Hill, who has 400 cattle on his farm in Devon county, southwest England.

"We are not making any money now. How are we going to cope?" said Richard Barter, another Devon cattleman.

British beef prices have fallen markedly since the initial ban and, more recently, the strong British pound has forced prices lower.

Concern about infected meat had centered earlier on the spinal cords and brains of cattle, and Britain's previous conservative government tightened slaughterhouse procedures.

Cunningham told the House of Commons Wednesday's move was an essential "precautionary measure," but said the risk was small, with only six cattle among the 2.2 million slaughtered this year thought likely to pose any hazard at all.

Cutting meat away from the bone reduces contact with nerve tissue near the spinal cord, which could be infected.

So rib roast lovers will have to give up their passion for now. And even those who thought they'd play it safe this Christmas by concentrating on dessert could be out of luck, if the

Vegetarian Society has its way.

The group wants the ban extended to gelatin, which is made from bone marrow and used to make sweets, yogurts and puddings.

A ban that does not include gelatin, the group said, was "farical and illogical."



MATT HANEY/DN

## German gold looted during World War II

LONDON (AP) — Less than 20 percent of the looted Nazi gold received by four officially neutral countries during World War II has since been returned, according to a U.S. report released Wednesday.

The report accuses Portugal, Spain, Sweden and Turkey of hanging onto all but a fraction of their Nazi gold — and said Argentina was also suspected of acquiring looted gold that it kept.

For the last 18 months, Switzerland has been under attack for hiding its role as the key neutral country in Nazi gold dealings, but has recently won praise from Washington for its investigations into its past.

On Monday the Swiss reported that Germany stole \$475 million worth of gold from central banks during the war, \$132.8 million from occupied Austria and Czechoslovakia, and \$146 million from Jews and other individuals.

The U.S. report, presented to a 41-nation conference on Nazi gold, gave figures for the first time on the "recalcitrance" of several other neutral countries, including Turkey, which has never repaid a penny of the millions of dollars in looted gold it bought from Germany.

In a separate revelation about the origin of looted Nazi gold, a newly dis-

covered document showed the Western allies had determined that between 50 and 60 tons of gold had been stolen from individual victims of the Holocaust.

Of the 337 tons of plundered gold Allies recovered, all but 5.5 tons was returned to government central banks. Yet none went to the people who lost it.

According to the document, the Allied commission that assessed claims for looted gold determined that gold belonging to "private persons" was claimed by several nations: 35.5 tons by the Dutch; 13 tons by Austria; 6.4 tons by Belgium; and smaller amounts by other occupied countries.

The document did not state that the 50 to 60 tons of stolen gold were actually recovered by the Allies' Tripartite Gold Commission.

But the World Jewish Congress, which discovered the gold commission document about two months ago in the U.S. National Archives, said it showed the commission was aware that a significant portion of gold in banks was "non-monetary," or from individuals.

Jewish groups have argued that Jews and other victims of the Nazis were shortchanged when the commission distributed the gold.

## U.S. refuses to sign treaty

■ The Anti-personnel land mine pact has been endorsed by 125 nations.

OTTAWA (AP) — Goaded into action by a global grass-roots alliance, 125 nations began signing a treaty Wednesday to ban anti-personnel land mines — a treaty the United States has refused to endorse.

As mine victims in wheelchairs and jubilant activists looked on, Kofi Annan, the secretary-general of the United Nations, praised the treaty as "a historic victory for the weak and vulnerable of the world."

Also attending the ceremonies were observers from major holdout nations — such as the United States — which now face increased pressure to support the treaty.

When activists began campaigning for such a ban seven years ago, some people felt this achievement was out of reach. Those who didn't were filled with elation Wednesday.

"Here we have 125 governments recognizing that the tide of history has changed," said Jody Williams, who shared this year's Nobel Peace Prize with her anti-landmine coalition. "It's a new definition of superpower. It is not one, it is everybody.

We are the superpower."

Williams shared the podium at the ceremony with Annan and Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien. Canada — which was the first nation to sign Wednesday — played a pivotal role in persuading other nations to form an unprecedented alliance with non-governmental agencies in pushing for a ban.

"It is an alliance that has shamed the world and enlightened it," Annan said. "It has, for once, made the international community a living, thriving reality."

With so many countries lined up to sign, the ceremony was scheduled to continue through Thursday while delegates held round table discussions on the next steps — notably raising funds to aid mine victims and clear away the estimated 100 million mines scattered round the world.

"Let us swear to the hundreds of thousands who have been murdered by land mines that we will not turn back," said Chretien, whose government pledged \$70 million over five years. "This slaughter must end."

The treaty requires signatories to destroy their stockpiles of mines within four years and remove deployed mines within 10 years.

Major holdouts refusing to sign include the United States, Russia,

China, Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Libya, India, Pakistan, Egypt, Israel, North Korea, South Korea and Vietnam. Many of these countries sent observers who participated in discussions about mine clearance and other technical issues.

"We're part of this process," Ambassador Karl Inderfurth, the chief U.S. observer, said in an interview. "The United States is in a very special position, and other countries understand that."

The United States has said it could sign the treaty only if exemptions were made to protect its troops in Korea and allow continued use of its anti-tank munitions. Inderfurth said Clinton has asked U.S. defense officials to address both these problems with a tentative goal of signing the treaty in 10 years.

He estimated the world spends about \$200 million a year on clearing mines, and said they should be spending five times that to get the job done effectively.

U.S. supporters of the ban expressed dismay that their country was not part of Wednesday's celebrations.

"I'm extraordinarily disappointed the United States is not signing," said U.S. Senator Patrick Leahy, a Democrat from Vermont.

## Reno must face her 2nd decision

*Fate of an independent council lies in her hands*

WASHINGTON (AP) — The political fund-raising controversy still holds peril for key players. Attorney General Janet Reno faces a second decision this month on whether to seek an independent counsel to investigate President Clinton while her task forces plan to begin indicting fund raisers.

In addition, Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt awaits a decision from Reno, due by Feb. 11, in an American Indian casino case that senior officials called the most difficult to resolve without requesting appointment of an independent counsel.

In that matter, Babbitt's sworn testimony to the Senate is directly contradicted by a lawyer, who was a close friend.

While Republicans continued to

boil over Reno's rejection of an outside prosecutor for telephone fund raising by Clinton and Vice President Al Gore, the 120 lawyers and FBI agents on the Justice Department task force plowed ahead Wednesday on a broad front.

They were using grand juries here and in Los Angeles, according to people involved in the case. Investigators were examining a host of questionable financial transactions, a coterie of fund raisers, possible foreign payments and Democratic party fund-raising practices. At least two Republicans also were under scrutiny.

Reno warned that the telephone decision exonerated no one from this broader investigation.

Officials anticipate indicting two Democratic fund raisers this month

or next on charges of concealing the identity of the real donors, hoping to pressure them or others into providing evidence against others.

Two Democratic fund-raisers, former Little Rock restaurateur and longtime Clinton friend Yah Lin "Charlie" Trie and immigration consultant Maria Hsia, have been linked in congressional testimony to schemes to launder contributions through straw donors. Lawyers for both denied the allegations.

Others under investigation include: former Commerce Department aide and Democratic party fund raiser John Huang, West Coast entrepreneur Johnny Chung; Thai business consultant Pauline Kanchanalak and Indonesian entrepreneur Ted Sioengt.

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