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PROGRESSIVE NEWS UPDATE – March 30th, 2001

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LABOR

8. Bush Pushes New Free Trade Deal With South America
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10. Monsanto Once Again Comes Down On the Little Guy

QUOTE OF THE DAY

“We've been pretty successful early on. We've gotten the ergonomics issue passed, we've done a bankruptcy bill, we've moved through on the first two pieces of the tax cut and passed a budget. Those are pretty good things to have done.”

House Speaker Dennis Hastert (R-IL) on the first 100 days of Congress

SUMMARIES

1. BUSH: MORE OIL AT ANY ENVIRONMENTAL COST (news)

“Faced with strong opposition in Congress to his plans for oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, President Bush said today that he was prepared to exploit oil and gas resources elsewhere in the nation on land that was not federally protected. And Mr. Bush said that if he could not wring enough fuel out of the United States, he would look to Canada and Mexico to address current domestic shortages.”

New York Times, Seelye, 3/30

<http://www.nytimes.com/2001/03/30/politics/30BUSH.html>

2. RELIGIOUS LEADERS CRITICIZE BUSH ENVIRO ACTIONS (news)

“A broad coalition of U.S. religious groups alarmed by President Bush's decision to abandon a treaty to combat global warming urged Bush yesterday to reconsider his approach or risk alienating a growing faith-based movement committed to protecting the environment.”

Washington Post, Pianin, 3/30

<http://washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A14005-2001Mar29.html>

3. EPA ADMINISTRATOR LEFT WITH LITTLE TO SAY AT INTERNATIONAL MEETING (news)

“Three weeks ago, Christie Whitman, the administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, returned from a meeting in Italy to report that she had had “varied success in buying us time to fully engage” in international negotiations on global warming. Today, at another international gathering, Mrs. Whitman seemed to have had less success still. With the White House having abandoned any pretense of support for the most far-reaching international treaty intended to tackle the problem, she heard mostly dismay and disappointment from counterparts who called the stand an enormous setback on an issue that should allow little room for patience.”

New York Times, Jehl, 3/30

<http://www.nytimes.com/2001/03/30/national/30WARM.html>

4. BUSH ARSENIC POLICY CREATES CONCERN AMONG EVERYONE WHO DRINKS WATER (editorial)

“President Bush's administration unfortunately continues its attacks on environmental and public-health directives imposed by outgoing President Clinton. Consider Bush's reversal of Clinton's imposition of stricter limits on the levels of cancer-causing arsenic in drinking water. Arsenic is found naturally. It also gets into water supplies through mining activities. Bush's action pleases Western mining interests that had protested the higher costs of removing arsenic from water. And the change is probably welcomed by water suppliers in rural communities who were faced with having to install expensive equipment. But everyone who drinks water has cause for concern about the Bush move.”

Kansas City Star, Editorial Board, 3/30

<http://www.kcstar.com/item/pages/opinion.pat.opinion/37753d19.329..html>

5. GOP REJECTS REBATE PLAN FOR EVERYBODY IN FAVOR OF TAX CUT FOR THE FEW (news)

“Forging ahead despite uncertain prospects in the Senate, the House of Representatives today approved two more elements of President Bush's tax-cut plan and took the first tentative step toward eventual repeal of the estate tax.

Before passing the bill with tax breaks for couples and families with children, the House rejected a Democratic measure to give taxpayers a \$50 billion rebate this year.”

New York Times, Rosenbaum, 3/30

<http://www.nytimes.com/2001/03/30/politics/30TAX.html>

6. GOP LEADER: TAX CUTS WILL EXCEED ORIGINAL COST PROJECTIONS (news)

“House Ways and Means Chairman Thomas suggested Thursday that Congress could take up tax relief this year beyond the \$1.62 trillion President Bush has recommended. Thomas' comments came after a markup session at which Ways and Means Democrats attacked a GOP estate tax repeal measure before the committee as a backloaded measure costing far more than the Republicans say it will.”

CongressDailyAM, Norton, 3/30

<http://nationaljournal.com/pubs/congressdaily/>

7. BUSH BUDGET LEAVES ‘NO MONEY’ TO PLUG HOLES IN SOCIAL SECURITY (editorial)

“When trustees of the Social Security system issued their annual financial report last week, President Bush chose to accentuate the negative. This was not surprising; Bush campaigned last year on the need to reform the government's huge retirement system. Nor was it misleading; Social Security has genuine long-term problems. But it was curious: The tax and budget plan that Bush has proposed to Congress leaves no money to plug the holes in Social Security that need plugging.”

Minneapolis Star Tribune, Editorial Board, 3/30

http://www.startribune.com/viewers/qview/cgi/qview.cgi?template=opinion_a&slug=ED30

8. BUSH PUSHES NEW FREE TRADE DEAL WITH SOUTH AMERICA (news)

“President Bush sought Friday to gloss over his differences with Brazil over trade, saying “absolutely we can work together” on establishing a hemispheric free trade zone. Bush said he and President Fernando Henrique Cardoso decided in their meeting to try “to iron out any differences that may exist” over a 34-nation free-trade zone in the Western Hemisphere.”

Associated Press, 3/30

<http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/national/AP-Bush-Brazil.html>

9. BOSTON CONSTRUCTION PROJECT REJECTS LIMITING WORK TO UNION LABOR (news)

“For the first time in its nine-year history, the Big Dig next week will put out to bid a huge construction contract that is not restricted to companies that employ union workers. The move is sure to irritate labor leaders battling to save a 1989 agreement that guarantees that only union labor will be used on the \$14 billion project. Advertising a contract estimated at \$440 million to both nonunion and unionized companies could save the costly megaproject money in the short run by increasing competition. But it could cost millions more in the long run if it leads to delays and strikes sparked by labor problems.”

Boston Globe, Palmer, 3/30

http://www.boston.com/dailyglobe2/089/nation/Big_Dig_job_opens_to_nonunion_bidders+.shtml

10. MONSANTO ONCE AGAIN COMES DOWN ON THE LITTLE GUY (news)

“A judge yesterday ordered a Canadian farmer to pay the biotechnology giant Monsanto Co. thousands of dollars because the company's genetically engineered canola plants were found growing on his field, apparently after pollen from modified plants had blown onto his property from nearby farms. The closely watched case was a major victory for companies that produce genetically modified crops.”

Washington Post, Kaufman, 3/30

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A12927-2001Mar29.html>