

'Guy with the funny name' leads in Maryland contest

THE candidate, Paul Tsongas, doesn't kiss babies; instead he hands them out copies of his 86-page policy booklet: "A call to Economic Arms".

The five children presented to the Democratic front-runner at a Maryland neo-space workshop yesterday morning weren't so much infants as sub-teens from the nearby St Mathias Catholic School with serious, rehearsed, questions on economics and education.

And in his ultra-serious manner, the former Massachusetts senator gave them earnest answers, and a copy of his pro-business programme.

Mr Tsongas selected the OAC (Orbiting Astronomical Corporation) site as a prime example of the independent small enterprises which he champions. It has 1,300 workers and makes a profit. "If

Today's Maryland primary will show whether the earnest but wry Democrat, Mr Paul Tsongas, has broken his dour regional image. **Conor O'Clery reports.**

companies like this don't thrive, there is no American economy," he told the executives. The visit in a hectic day's campaigning to win the state in today's crucial Democratic primary election, also gave the almost unknown Mr Tsongas an opportunity to make himself visible to Maryland voters.

Recognition is a major problem for the senator from Massachusetts — some supporters can't remember his name. One Maryland elector commented: "I like

the guy with the funny name that has a 'G' in it."

Aware of his dour image, the senator cracks wry jokes. Handed the controls of a radio-controlled robot he guided it round and round in circles and said: "Which candidate does that remind you of?" "Bush," someone shouted.

Mr Tsongas is leading in Maryland, where voters in the white-collar Washington and Baltimore suburbs, angry at the effects of the recession, appear more attracted to his 'no hand-outs'

programme. His nearest rival, Governor Bill Clinton, campaigned in Georgia on a programme of tax cuts, but all day his radio ads in Maryland blasted Mr Tsongas for his support for capital gains tax cuts and nuclear power.

Primaries are also taking place today in Colorado and Utah where the other three Democratic candidates, Senators Bob Kerrey and Tom Harkin and the former California governor, Mr Jerry Brown, are concentrating their efforts.

"I have to do well here to show I'm not a regional candidate," said Mr Tsongas, who won the New Hampshire primary as a 'local boy' two weeks ago. Mr Clinton has to win Georgia to prove he can sweep the south in primaries next week. Mr Tsongas won the backing of

the *Baltimore Sun* yesterday. It praised his campaign for providing a "refreshing zest for hard truths and realism".

The Republican primary in Georgia is a showdown between President Bush and his conservative challenger, Mr Pat Buchanan, who observers predict will gain enough voters to seriously embarrass Mr Bush.

Mr Tsongas said yesterday that the US had a role to play in Northern Ireland and that nothing was to be gained by excluding parties like Sinn Fein from talks on the future. Accompanied by Congressman Joseph Kennedy of Massachusetts, Mr Tsongas was asked at a news conference in Greenbelt if he saw the situation in Ireland as a human rights problem. He replied: "Yes, I think there is a human rights issue there."



THE TSONGAS TSPRINT

KAL: Cartoonists and Writers syndicate

"I think you have to be consistent about human rights (criticisms), whether you're talking about your enemies or your friends. For example I was concerned about Afghanistan. If you criticise one kind of regime you should criticise all of them."

Earth Summit plans enter critical stage

EARTH WATCH

Michael Littlejohns, New York
Alison Smith, London

PLANS for this year's Earth Summit entered a critical stage yesterday as representatives of over 160 countries gathered to complete an agenda for the June meeting in Rio de Janeiro.

The meeting, expected to last five weeks, will try to secure world agreement on a global regime to protect the environment without applying too hard a brake to economic growth. This will include a wide array of measures, including an action plan dubbed Agenda 21 (for the new century) and an Earth Charter listing rights and obligations of governments and individuals.

The Rio conference, organised by the UN, has been billed as an Earth Summit because heads of government are invited to lead their delegations.

Emphasising British support, Mr Michael Heseltine, environment secretary, addressed the meeting in New York yesterday. He made it clear that the UK has not ruled out the use of fiscal measures, such as a carbon tax, as part of its strategy to clean up the environment. But he pointed out the need for international agreements to make green measures effective.

The EC has tentatively agreed on a carbon tax which it intended to propose at Rio. But there have recently been indications that it is backing off the idea because of lack of support outside the EC. Mr George Bush, who campaigned in the 1988 election vowing to be "the environmental president", has not said if he will go to Rio.

His administration wants more data before considering environmental measures that could drastically raise costs for industry during a grinding recession.

Last week, the US pledged \$75,000 million to the international effort to reduce "greenhouse gases" that have resulted in ominous climate change. But the US, by far the greatest source of emissions, had yet to consider broader incentives to curb the gases. The US has been blamed for lack of progress on a convention on climate change supposed to be signed in Rio.

Mr Maurice Strong, a Canadian millionaire businessman and conference secretary-general, believes humankind's survival rests on saving the ecosystem. With the threat of global war no longer plausible, "the primary issues we face today are all environment-related".

A paper for the New York session states that underlying Agenda 21 is the notion that humanity has reached a choice between continuing present policies or changing course to bring about "more productive and better protected ecosystems and a safer, more prosperous future". — (Financial Times Service)



Mr Heseltine: Carbon tax

Petersburg gang takes Irish EC butter

THE FIRST major case of organised theft from the European Community's humanitarian aid programme for Russia has taken place in St Petersburg where a highly organised criminal gang stole 7.5 tonnes of Irish butter with a black market value of over one million roubles from cold storage units in the city.

The theft was confirmed to *The Irish Times* by Mr Peter Shaw, the chief agent in the city for the Community aid.

Mr Shaw said that the raid was obviously the work of a very highly organised gang who knew what they were doing. Despite the theft the EC distributors had managed to keep losses of aid supplies down to 0.5 per cent of the total but he admitted to having been "badly shaken up" by this major, professionally organised criminal act.

Because of previous large-scale thefts, notably in St Petersburg, of aid from Western, and particularly German, charities, the EC set up a special task force to ensure that as little as possible of the food aid went into the hands of what is known as the "Russian mafia".

When the aid programme was originally announced the former Communist Party daily newspaper in a prominent article declared: "Why not give the food directly to the Mafia? They'll get it anyway."

One German charity, Cap Anamur, at the end of last year estimated that almost 70 per cent of its food parcels for the elderly and handicapped in the city had gone missing, and issued a statement saying it believed that criminal elements and gangs of demobilised soldiers were responsible.

The city authorities and the police, in conjunction with the EC agents, are investigating the theft and considering methods to prevent similar occurrences in the future.

The task force, composed mainly of army officers from various EC countries, does not

RUSSIA

Seamus Martin, St Petersburg

have any Irish representative in St Petersburg as it does in Moscow. But Mr Shaw was satisfied that its works have been effective. "It does its job very well but it can't be everywhere all the time," he said.

The butter was worth half a million roubles at EC prices, estimated at twice that value on the St Petersburg black market where butter is in extremely short supply. Long queues form in the very early hours of the morning for daily produce. At present all butter available in this city of five million people comes from Irish intervention stocks.

Mr Shaw said that at present the EC is able to distribute only 100 tonnes of butter per day in the city. Part of this was due to the inefficient local distribution system. Russian refrigerated trucks were of good quality, he said, and could carry 2.5 tonnes of goods per journey, just one journey per day. In addition to this food stores of 300 square metres had 250 employees with the result that if all the workers turned up there would be no room for the customers.

Food aid from the EC is sold in the shops at fixed prices, considerably lower than those in the farmers' markets. A little over 25 per cent of the money paid for the goods by the customers goes to retailers, distributors and government agencies, with the rest going to a social fund to help the poorer section of the community.

Out of this fund the EC, in conjunction with the local authorities, has set up 300 soup kitchens in the city as well as being able to supply pension supplements for the elderly and others who are bearing the brunt of the abolition of price control.

The thieves who got away with the Irish butter, therefore, can be said to have stolen about 375,000 roubles from the city's poorest inhabitants.



A disputed hillside: An Azeri policeman removes the body of a child in Nagorno-Karabakh yesterday. EPA photograph

Corpses scattered over killing fields of Nagorno-Karabakh

STIFFENED by death and cold, the mutilated corpses of Azeris mown down as they fled an Armenian offensive in Nagorno-Karabakh clung to the snow-covered hillside yesterday almost one week after the attack.

Journalists flown in by army helicopter from Agdam just east of the disputed enclave within Azerbaijan counted 31 bodies, many shot through the head at point-blank range, while some had been scalped. Still others among the dead men, women and children had fingers missing.

Volunteers had collected another 20 bodies and were to take them back to Agdam where they are to be displayed today at the local mosque. The journalists saw the corpses

AZERBAIJAN

Stephane Bentura, Agdam

in the hills above the village of Askeran amid charges by Azerbaijani authorities and refugees that more than 1,000 people were killed after Armenian forces attacked the Azeri village of Khodzjali.

As the last former Soviet soldiers began withdrawing from the enclave, Armenia reiterated denials that its militants had massacred men, women and children fleeing the carnage across snow-covered mountain passes. But dozens of corpses scattered over the killing fields of

Nagorno-Karabakh lent credence to Azeri reports of a massacre. The attack came as the refugees fled an onslaught on the airport of Nagorno-Karabakh's main town Stepanakert, located at Khodzjali, a village of some 3,000 people.

The corpse of a woman — her eyes half-open — clutched her baby in death, drawing tears from the Azerbaijani militiamen accompanying the journalists, who spent 15 minutes in the area.

The refugees scarcely had time to dress before fleeing from Khodzjali into the night. Many of those killed had their arms spread wide as if they had tried to surrender.

According to an Azeri pilot, several dozen corpses were still in the nearby woods, but too close

to Armenian positions on the "front line" in Nagorno-Karabakh to be viewed. The 20 bodies recovered by the volunteers were stacked in piles. They had been gathered during a fragile truce agreed with Armenian fighters a few hundred yards away.

Mr Zakhid Dzhabarov (32) said he lost his wife and son in the "massacre" by the Armenians. He said about 60 bodies were collected yesterday, while 50 residents and fighters from Khodzjali had already been buried.

According to Mr Dzhabarov, after hours of desperate flight across the mountains, several hundred Khodzjali refugees reached the hills between Askeran and Nakhichevanik at dawn last

Wednesday. Then, he said, "two armoured vehicles opened fire without warning. Everyone began to run and tried to return to the forest. Armenian infantrymen came up from Askeran and opened fire on everything that moved."

He said he saved himself by diving into a snow-filled ditch with three friends.

According to Mr Dzhabarov, the Armenians captured 300 people after surrounding them in the woods. "The 200 others were killed, or wounded and finished off at point-blank range."

Mr Dzhabarov claimed that "youths, old men and women then came from Askeran and looted the corpses." — (AFP, Reuter)

AIDS virus co-discoverer suspected of patent fraud

DR ROBERT Gallo, US co-discoverer of the AIDS virus, faces new investigations for alleged patent fraud and perjury on top of a long-running inquiry into alleged scientific misconduct at his laboratory in the National Institute of Health (NIH).

The latest federal investigations are expected to focus on patent documents and sworn statements which Dr Gallo made in connection with a 1987 agreement between the US and France.

That agreement is supposed to settle the vexed issue of who discovered the virus (now known as the Human Immunodeficiency Virus or HIV). Dr Gallo and Professor Luc Montagnier of the Pasteur Institute in Paris would share scientific credit for the discovery, and \$5 million a year in royalties from HIV tests would be divided equally between the two countries.

However, it has emerged since that the virus originally isolated in Dr Gallo's laboratory in 1983/84 was derived from a sample sent by

Professor Montagnier in France. Although Dr Gallo's cell culture may have been contaminated accidentally by the French virus, his critics allege that his sworn statements deliberately concealed the similarity between his virus and Professor Montagnier's.

Dr Gallo has always insisted that his discovery owed little to the French work. He now maintains that he believed in 1983/84 that the two viruses were quite different.

The initiative to pursue the allegations of patent fraud and perjury comes mainly from the House of Representatives subcommittee on oversight and investigations.

Mr Dingell has brought the congressional watchdog, the General Accounting Office, into the inquiry. It is understood that the federal Department of Health and Human Services, which is responsible for NIH, is also investigating. — (Financial Times Service)

Despite reforms, king will retain authority

SUNDAY'S announcement establishing a formal Consultative Council for the first time in Saudi Arabia's history was, in many ways, typical of how things are done in the kingdom.

At a stroke, King Fahd earned plaudits abroad for welcoming broader participation in the country's governance, but diplomats and observers noted that this "opening" was presented in terms calculated to please religious conservatives and that, in the short term, it will have little effect on the way things are run in this most opaque of societies.

Gordon Robison, just returned from Saudi Arabia, explains why King Fahd's decree will have little effect

When it convenes, probably around the end of the year, the council will provide Saudis outside the royal family and the cabinet with a formal voice in the running of the country. But the council is to have no power *per se*. It can advise the king, but the monarch retains ultimate authority. Further, its members are to

be appointed by royal decree, and several western diplomats said yesterday that they expect figures from the country's religious establishment to receive a disproportionate number of seats in the council.

But if this appears slight by western standards, it also represents a combination of bold innovation and deep-rooted conservatism peculiar to Saudi Arabia.

The council and the other two principal elements of the king's announcement — an "electoral college" of princes to oversee the succession and a Basic Law codifying the rights of Saudi citizens — do not represent any dramatic break with established practice in the kingdom. It is, as one diplomat, a long-time Saudi-watcher based in Cairo, put it, "a formalising of something that always took place anyway".

Saudi kings have long wielded their theoretically absolute power in consultation with other members of the royal family, religious

leaders and, to a lesser extent, the business community. The system is an extension of traditional, tribal-based, systems of government and emphasises consensus.

In the final analysis, however, little is likely to change. Similar advisory councils exist in most of the other Gulf states, and in no case do they represent a serious challenge to the primacy of the local ruling family.

Moves towards the Saudi council began with complaints about the way in which the king invited American troops into the country in the days following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. That decision was taken in consultation only with the handful of princes who represented the real power in the country.

Professor Geoffrey Blainey, historian at Melbourne University, who is well known for his conservative views, said Mr Keating had got his facts wrong in history as he had in economics. Professor Blainey argued that Britain did not abandon Malaya and Singapore, but had been too stretched in Europe to defend them properly. It was true that Churchill in 1942 opposed Australia's request for its divisions to be sent back from North Africa to defend Australia against the Japanese, he said, but the Australian government had overruled him and brought the troops back anyway.



Mr Paul Keating: Budget fell flat.

Tabloids give Keating a perfect smokescreen

From Brian Donaghy, in Adelaide

"THE British tabloid newspapers," the Australian Prime Minister, Mr Paul Keating, declared last Friday, "are the pits."

But secretly, he is delighted. The reporting in the British tabloids of the Queen's visit to Australia was predictably dreadful. But it may well have saved Mr Keating's political career and given his Labour Government almost half a chance of being re-elected next year.

It seems that nothing unites people behind a leader quite so much as having him insulted by overseas newspapers, and Mr Keating — the "Lizard of Oz" to readers of the *British Sun* — is riding high.

Paul Keating is secretly delighted, Brian Donaghy writes.

And if vox pops and radio phone-in programmes are any guide, the British press have given the Australian republican movement the greatest boost since the Governor-General, Sir John Kerr, sacked the Australian Government of Mr Gough Whitlam in 1975.

On Wednesday last, Mr Keating unveiled his much-vaunted economic statement, designed to reverse the recession, demolish the conservative Opposition's promises of major tax

cuts, and give his demoralised party some hope of winning the next election.

It fell flat. Mr Keating failed either to match or discredit the Opposition's proposals. Overall, he has promised additional spending on a range of measures totalling \$2.4 billion over four years (\$1.13 billion) to create 800,000 new jobs. But less than half will be spent before the next election which must be held by March next.

Within 24 hours, the Opposition had run the Keating package through a computer simulation of the economy used by the Treasury itself and claimed it would boost inflation and the national debt, but not jobs, thereby causing a further cloud over Labour's political fortunes.

Then the *Sun* and the *Star* came out. The Ozzie-bashing headlines sparked by jingoistic and apparently heavily distorted reporting of the Queen's visit in the British tabloids gave Mr Keating a chance to establish himself as patriotic, passionate and progressive, and to deride the pro-monarchy Opposition (and by implication their electorally-attractive economic package) as hopelessly out of date.

In remarks already famous at both ends of the globe, Mr Keating said that when at school he (unlike the Opposition Coalition leader, Dr John Hewson) had learned "about self-respect and self-regard for Australia, and not some cultural cringe to a country which decided not to defend the Malaysian peninsula, not to worry about Singapore, and not to give us our troops back to keep us free from Japanese domination."

Asked on Sydney radio on Friday if he regretted the remarks, Mr Keating replied "Oh, God no. Those British tabloids are the pits. But the fact is that we have every entitlement for Australia to be aggressive about its own future. . . . not to be seen as some sort of cultural derivative

of Britain. That's finished, that's over." The Coalition leaders, he said, were "hankering after the 50s and 60s."

Other senior ministers kept up the campaign. On ABC radio, the Minister for Employment, Education and Training, Mr Kim Beazley, said Mr Keating "did no more than put on the record what are the facts of World War II, facts that Australian people need to know if they are to learn from their own history."

Dr Neal Blewett, Minister for Social Security, said it was true that Sir Robert Menzies (the intensely pro-British Liberal Prime Minister from 1949 to 1966) "had put Australia in the cooler for 20 years." He said "I have always been a supporter of Aus-

tralia as an independent country that has its own way to make in the world."

Professor Geoffrey Blainey, historian at Melbourne University, who is well known for his conservative views, said Mr Keating had got his facts wrong in history as he had in economics. Professor Blainey argued that Britain did not abandon Malaya and Singapore, but had been too stretched in Europe to defend them properly. It was true that Churchill in 1942 opposed Australia's request for its divisions to be sent back from North Africa to defend Australia against the Japanese, he said, but the Australian government had overruled him and brought the troops back anyway.