

Congressional Closeup by William Jones

Bill would let cartels control food for Russia

Legislation introduced by House Agriculture Committee chairman Rep. Kika de la Garza (D-Tex.) on Oct. 15 would give unlimited funds for the Food for Progress program, which "provides food aid to countries that agree to promote free enterprise in their agricultural sector."

FFP would be expanded to allow the President to enter into agreements with private entities as well as private voluntary organizations, non-profit agricultural organizations, and cooperatives, to carry out the program. It also allows the secretary of agriculture to waive the "creditworthiness" restrictions in the current law to make credit guarantees available to the Soviets.

The United States Department of Agriculture would be directed to oversee private sector assessments of the needs and investment opportunities in developing a "modern food and rural business system" in the Soviet Union. The legislation also calls for the President to designate "suitable multinational organizations" to monitor the transport and distribution of food aid to the former Soviet republics.

Bentsen proposes tax cut to 'jump-start' economy

As all economic indicators point to an ever-deepening depression, Sen. Lloyd Bentsen (D-Tex.), chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, proposed a tax cut for middle-income Americans to "jump-start" the economy, on the CBS News program "Face the Nation" on Oct. 20.

The economy is "dead in the water," Bentsen complained, and the administration is only trying to "talk its way out of it."

Noting that the income for the average American family during the decade of the 1980s had gone down \$1,600 in real dollar terms, Bentsen proposed a \$300 tax credit for each child up to 18 years of age, and to allow everyone to be eligible to deduct investments of up to \$2,000 per year in Individual Retirement Accounts.

The Bentsen reforms would be financed by a 5% cut in defense spending over the next five years, a cut which Bentsen claimed is justifiable in the light of the "collapse of communism."

With mid-October figures released by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce indicating a growing lack of business confidence in the economy, President Bush, under pressure from his own party, has begun meeting regularly with Republican congressional leaders to work out a "growth package," largely based on a re-hash of his proposed cut in the capital gains tax.

The support given the Bentsen proposal by Sen. Phil Gramm (R-Tex.) indicates a growing realization in Congress that the economy is key in this year's elections. Gramm told reporters, however, that the Bentsen package must be coupled to a reduction in the capital gains tax.

Bentley gives pretext for Serbian aggression

Rep. Helen Bentley (R-Md.), an unofficial spokesman for the Serbian lobby in the U.S. Congress, railed against the alleged growing influence of the Croatian Party of Rights and its leader Dobroslov Paraga, in remarks on the House floor on Oct. 16. She tried to create the impression that Croatian fascism, rather than Serbian aggression, is the biggest threat in the war-torn former

Yugoslav Federation.

Citing a *Washington Post* article as her authority, Bentley charged that the Party of Rights "is a reincarnation of the Nazi-backed Croatian Ustashi of the Second World War." The party only represents about 2% of the Croatian population and has been a thorn in the side of the Croatian government, accusing Croatian President Franjo Tudjman of being corrupt and incompetent and even branding him a traitor—as Bentley herself admitted.

Gates nomination to head CIA gets committee okay

The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence on Oct. 18 voted 11-4 to approve the Bush nomination of Robert Gates as the next director of the Central Intelligence Agency.

The Gates nomination, controversial because of his role in the Iran-Contra affair as deputy to then-CIA head William Casey, received less attention than expected because of the fear of Democrats to probe deeper into the Iran-Contra affair.

The support given to the nominee by Intelligence Committee chairman David Boren (D-Okla.), a "Bush Democrat" and a member, together with Bush, of the Yale Skull and Bones secret society, played a decisive role in influencing the committee vote. Boren justified his support for Gates by claiming that if the necessary changes in the CIA were to be made—reorienting its work from Soviet-watching to gathering economic intelligence on U.S. competitors—"we need someone from the inside . . . prepared to hit the ground running."

Sen. Alan Cranston (D-Calif.), who had been eager to probe the Iran-Contra affair during the hearings of

Bush nominee Donald Gregg to become U.S. ambassador to South Korea, also voted for Gates. It was announced the same week that ethics charges pending against Cranston in the Lincoln Savings and Loan scandal would not be dropped after all. Ethics Committee member Sen. Trent Lott (R-Miss.) claimed that his thinking on the Cranston matter had changed in the wake of criticism of the Senate over its handling of the Clarence Thomas nomination, and that a full investigation was called for.

The Gates nomination will now go to the full Senate where the debate may become more heated. Sen. Sam Nunn (D-Ga.), who backed Gates in committee, said that his vote on the floor was not assured unless he received further information from the CIA on questions raised at the hearings.

Gore seeks restrictions on national sovereignty

One-World advocate Sen. Al Gore (D-Tenn.) launched into a tirade Oct. 17 against countries which exported high technology to developing sector countries like Iraq. He demanded severe restrictions on their sovereignty, if necessary, to curtail such exports. Gore had recently attacked Switzerland for having participated in the "proliferation of weapons technologies to Iraq."

Gore demanded "supranational control" over even the slightest attempt by industrialized nations to promote economic development in the Third World. Gore called for "intrusive inspections" by U.N. investigative teams to examine whether Third World countries are conducting "weapons development," and for more "intrusive" measures on indus-

trialized countries willing to supply high-tech products to the developing world. Gore complained that "multilateral agreements" restricting certain types of exports are only "consensual" in nature, rather than "enforceable."

Gore demanded that governments make such transactions "high crimes," that they "devote the resources necessary to find those who have violated those laws or who are conspiring to violate them, and to punish the violators so heavily as to guarantee the personal ruin of those who are responsible, and to easily threaten the destruction of any enterprise so engaged."

"We and other advanced industrial governments should be utterly deaf to the outrageous demands of various so-called developing countries who regard these constraints as infringements upon their sovereignty. We do not have to recognize the sovereign right of all governments to acquire weapons of mass destruction if they happen to have the talent and money to waste on that process," Gore said.

Gore added that the "dual-use" nature of most technologies merely aggravated the situation, requiring even "peaceful" uses of technology to "be monitored and verified, by highly intrusive means to the degree necessary." Gore said that this should also apply to potential suppliers of weapons technology among the former Soviet republics.

Omnibus crime bill moves forward

The Omnibus Crime Bill moved further toward becoming law, as the House voted 247-177 to reject bans on the sale and ownership of some types of semi-automatic weapons.

The legislation had been attacked by the National Rifle Association and others as a breach of the constitutional right to bear arms. Although the ban was defeated, the Senate version requires a five-day waiting period on the sale of handguns. The House already passed a separate piece of legislation, the Brady Bill, which calls for a seven-day waiting period for the sale of handguns.

The House narrowly defeated, in a 218-208 vote on the same day, an amendment which would have placed severe restrictions on the *habeas corpus* appeal procedures for death row convicts. The House Judiciary Committee had placed restrictions on *habeas corpus*, but not as stringent as those demanded by the administration.

Rep. Henry Hyde (R-Ill.) tried to restore the original provision for a six-month statute of limitations on submitting a *habeas corpus* petition, rather than the year provided by the Judiciary Committee. The committee version also begins the count from the time that the convicted is represented by competent counsel. The Hyde amendment would have allowed the convicted only one opportunity to initiate *habeas corpus* proceedings, whereas the committee would allow him to submit a second petition on condition that state authorities had prevented him or her from raising the claim in the first petition, or, if facts had since come to light supporting his claim which could not have been discovered at the time of the first petition.

New rules introduced by federal courts would not apply retroactively to a person convicted before the new rules were instituted. Rep. Michael Kopetski (D-Oreg.) noted that if the Hyde amendment had been enacted, defendants would "be executed despite the fact that they were convicted or sentenced unconstitutionally."