

## **Congressional Calendar** by Barbara Dreyfuss and Susan Kokinda

### **A**laska lands bill hotly contested

Senate debate on the controversial Alaska lands bill, which sets controls over the development of the natural resources of Alaska, was suspended last week after it became bogged down in extended disagreement over amendments.

Negotiations on a compromise bill began among Senator Tsongas (D-Mass.), the main proponent of environmentalist-backed legislation, and Senators Jackson (D-Wash.), Hatfield (R-Ore.) and Stevens (R-Alaska).

A compromise is reported to have been reached whose provisions include a halt to resources development on Admiralty Island, except for the Green Creek Mines, but a go-ahead on seismic exploration for oil in the Arctic National Wildlife Range, and on some mining in the White Mountains. The bill restricts resource development and is vigorously opposed by Alaska Governor Jay Hammond.

Hammond told reporters July 29 that the compromise was not satisfactory and called on Alaska's two Senators to oppose it "by any means." He charged that the compromise would close Alaska to timbering, mining, and oil exploration.

### **R**ailroad dereg bill removed from House floor

In an effort to forestall passage of a radically altered railroad deregulation bill by the House July 23, sponsors of the legislation, including Congressman James Florio (D-N.J.), Harley Staggers (D-W. Va.), James Broyhill (D-N.C.) and Ed-

ward Madigan (R-Ill.) took the bill off the House floor after the House voted 204 to 197 for an amendment that maintained significant regulation on the railroad industry.

The amendment was sponsored by Rep. Bob Eckhardt (D-Tex.) in an attempt to stop total deregulation of the railroads.

First, it changed the procedure by which the Interstate Commerce Commission could enter the rate-making process. The original form of the bill only allowed the ICC to enter the picture when railroad rates reached 200 percent of variable costs. The Eckhardt amendment lowered this to 160 percent.

Second, the bill now allows the ICC to stay in the picture if it is determined that there is no alternative transportation source for a shipper, but defines "alternative transportation sources" so as to ensure that the ICC will not be involved in most shipping cases. The Eckhardt bill redefines this to allow for more ICC activity.

The Florio bill stated that every shipper within a fifty-mile radius of a transport line should get the same rate deal, but defined a shipper as those shipping over 20,000 tons. Rep. Eckhardt reduced the tonnage defining a shipper to 5,000 tons.

The original deregulation legislation deprived state regulatory agencies of jurisdiction over intrastate shipping. The amended bill provides for state jurisdiction and has the ICC take charge if interstate shipping is involved.

After the House returns Aug. 18 from its recess, another aspect of the bill will be reviewed. Currently, the deregulation legislation allows a carrier to unilaterally impose surcharges that would hurt small car-

riers more than larger ones. Rep. Eckhardt has proposed removing the language about surcharges and calling instead on the ICC to enforce a revision of railroad rates by next year.

The passage of the Eckhardt amendment took the chief sponsors of the legislation by surprise, since an effort to amend the bill prior to the July 4 recess was voted down 240 to 130. Caught off guard, the bill's sponsors pulled it off the House floor, to give them time to win support for the original version of the legislation. Staff assistants to Rep. Eckhardt believe that Rep. Florio may finally be willing to discuss a compromise on the bill.

### **S**enate Budget Committee. back at work

The Senate Budget Committee held a series of hearings during the week of July 21 on U.S. economic prospects designed to help the committee in its efforts to draft a second budget resolution. Originally the committee had until Aug. 18 to draft the resolution, but has moved the timetable up to Aug. 28, ostensibly to give them more time to gather economic data. Staff members refused to comment on whether the decision to move up the deadline for the resolution was connected to the fact that the Democratic Party convention will not end until August 17, so that Senators might want to have time to weigh the results of the convention debates before they draft the resolution.

The committee held three days of hearings. On July 22, speakers were former Council of Economic Advisers head Walter Heller former

Council head Alan Greenspan. The following day OMB Director James McIntyre testified, along with White House economic adviser Charles Schultz.

On July 24 Federal Reserve Chairman Paul Volcker testified, declaring that "conditions have not been put in place for a major tax reduction in 1981."

"The Federal Reserve has been, and will continue to be, guided by the need to maintain discipline" in monetary policy, Volcker stated, and urged Congress to pursue a similar policy of fiscal austerity.

## **Tenn-Tom waterway comes under attack**

Hearings began on July 25 in the Water Resources Subcommittee of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, on the need to continue funding the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway Project. Known as Tenn-Tom, it has been the center of a battle between the administration and conservative Democrats on Capitol Hill for the past three years.

Tenn-Tom is a proposed 100-mile long canal to connect the Tennessee and Tombigbee Waterways and thereby link the coalfields of western Virginia, Tennessee and Kentucky to the newly expanded port of Mobile, Alabama.

An effort has been waged by environmentalists, liberals, the administration and major railroads to kill Tenn-Tom in the course of the fiscal 1981 appropriations process. The Water Resources subcommittee hearings, convened by Senator Daniel Moynihan (D-N.Y.), the

subcommittee chairman, are part of that campaign.

Moynihan has charged that "Tenn-Tom would just be a clone of the Mississippi River" and is therefore unnecessary. Ironically, all the Louisiana Democrats, including the Congresswoman representing the port of New Orleans, which, according to Moynihan, would be in competition with Mobile, vigorously support the Tenn-Tom project.

Moynihan's subcommittee gave a forum to the Association of American Railroads (AAR), joined in alliance with the environmentalist movement. The AAR's arguments against Tenn-Tom are pure "free enterprise" arguments. They claim that it is government subsidization of waterways which has undercut the nation's railroads.

Proponents of the bill argue that in order to make U.S. coal exports competitive on the world market, internal transportation costs must be cheapened. Railroads currently hold a near monopoly in some areas of both production and transportation of coal.

## **Senate votes up nuclear waste program**

The Senate voted 88 to 7 on July 30 to establish a government-run nuclear waste program, directing the Department of Energy to build several temporary storage facilities around the country, while a permanent disposal plan is developed. The bill allocates a \$300 million fund for the Energy Department's development of storage sites at away-from-reactor facilities.

Nuclear energy spokesmen

hope the bill will spur the house to similar action. "It provided what we think is a good format for getting on with the waste disposal program," declared George Gleason of the American Nuclear Energy Council.

Environmentalists were bitter. "It's a bailout for the industry," charged Harvey Rosenfeld of Ralph Nader's Critical Mass Energy Project.

Senator Bennett Johnston (D-La.), who managed the bill through the Senate, called it a "monumental" action by the Senate. He cited 21 commercial nuclear power plants the Department of Energy has said will be in trouble between now and 1984 because of waste disposal problems. Failure to build the interim storage sites, he said, could "stop the industry in its tracks" and lead to plant shutdowns.

## **Congress approves standby rationing plan**

Congress gave its final approval July 30 to President Carter's standby gasoline rationing plan, which would go into effect if there was a catastrophic 20 percent gasoline shortage. The Senate voted 60 to 31 and the House followed with a vote of 209 to 205 to keep the plan in committee. Under the law, the plan takes effect unless it is disapproved by both the House and Senate.

The plan has been attacked for saving relatively little oil while inflicting maximum damage.

It provides for issuing ration coupons for each registered auto, up to three per family. The average amount of gasoline allocated would be about 45 gallons a month.