

## Congressional Closeup by Barbara Dreyfuss and Susan Kokinda

### Legislation to raise rates for federal water

Congressman George Miller introduced legislation March 18 that would require the Interior Department to drastically increase the rates it charges thousands of farmers in the West for federally run irrigation programs. Under the formula Miller is proposing to determine water rates, South Dakota farmers now getting water from the Pollack-Herreid project at \$3.10 per acre-foot would have to pay instead \$35.34. Other projects would charge even higher rates for their water.

Miller cites a General Accounting Office study released March 13 as confirmation that his bill is necessary. The report on federal irrigation programs says that the projects sell water to farmers at what amounts to a major government subsidy and at these rates the farmers will never pay back the cost of the projects. The GAO reviewed 6 projects of the Interior Department's Water and Power Resources Service in South Dakota, Washington, Nebraska, Colorado, and California.

"The new GAO report finally blows the cover," declared Representative Miller. "For years Interior has been trying to say that farmers will pay back the project costs. GAO says they will never come close to paying them back." But Miller is much more concerned about declaring water a scarce resource and controlling its use through high prices. His aides confirm that he is familiar with the Global 2000 report declaring resources scarce and population too large. "It's very clear with more and more people realizing that

water is a valuable commodity, we cannot encourage its misuse," Miller said. "Just as the oil companies say higher prices are the only way to conserve their products, price is the only way to regulate water use."

### Senate vote halts Tenn-Tom

In a surprise move, the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee voted March 13 to recommend that the Senate Budget Committee end funding for the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway. The 9 to 4 vote was engineered by Sen. Alan Simpson (R-Wyo.), who declared the vote "signals a new antagonism in the Senate toward pork barrel water projects," while environmentalists from the Friends of the Earth stood by applauding.

Only Sen. John Stennis (D-Miss.), who is not even a member of the committee, spoke out against the vote. Stennis complained that the decision to take a vote was made so unexpectedly only 15 minutes notice was given.

Not even Sen. James Abdnor (R-S.D.), chairman of the Water Resources subcommittee, was present when the vote was taken.

Stennis was seconded in his call to demand completion of the sorely needed Tenn-Tom, which would connect the Tennessee River to the Gulf of Mexico, by Rep. Tom Bevill (D-Ala.). Bevill predicted that the House would vote to fund Tenn-Tom. "It's 55 percent complete and 88 percent of the contracts have been let," he declared, "and it would be foolish to stop

this project." Rep. Jamie Whitten (D-Miss.), chairman of the very important House Appropriations Committee, is a staunch backer of the project and reportedly won a commitment from President Reagan that he would not cut the Tenn-Tom in his budget proposals.

### Liberal Dems decry nuclear energy exports

In a speech on the floor of the Senate March 17, Sen. Alan Cranston (D-Calif.) accused Iraq of "blackmailing" Western Europe into giving it nuclear energy technology under threat of cutting back Iraqi oil sales. Cranston, who has been a leading member of the World Federalists, an organization promoting one-world government, urged the Reagan administration to press France and Italy to stop their nuclear energy-related exports to Iraq. If they do not, Cranston suggested, halting U.S. shipments of nuclear fuel to them and any other nation that provides not only Iraq, but Pakistan, with what he called "highly sensitive nuclear assistance."

Cranston also called for the congressional investigation of the spread of nuclear technologies to India and Libya as well. Cranston is the ranking minority member of the subcommittee on Arms Control, Oceans, International Operations, and Environment.

Cranston said that his statement had been prompted by information gotten from the "executive branch." Capitol Hill sources indicated that this included the State Department. There is speculation

that Cranston is working with James Buckley, undersecretary for Security Assistance, Science and Technology, who is known to oppose American nuclear energy exports.

Cranston has also been working closely with Rep. Jonathan Bingham (D-N.Y.), chairman of the subcommittee on International Economic Policy and Trade. Bingham sent a letter to Secretary of State Alexander Haig March 3 urging the administration to pressure our European allies against selling nuclear energy technology to Iraq and Pakistan on the basis that it presented a danger to U.S. national security interests in the Persian Gulf and South Asia. Bingham intends to raise this issue when hearings are held on an expected request from the administration for conventional security assistance aid to the government of Pakistan.

## **R**esearch Revitalization Act introduced

Representative James Shannon has introduced H.R. 1864, the Research Revitalization Act of 1981, in an effort to "promote research and development." The bill is one of a number of amendments to the Internal Revenue Code of 1954, and hearings on these amendments begin in the House Ways and Means Committee March 23 to go through June.

The bill is designed to increase the amount of money available for university research by permitting business firms to establish tax-exempt reserve accounts to receive,

accumulate and distribute funds for research for up to four years without penalty. It would provide a 25 percent tax credit plus a tax deduction for this category of expenditures.

A recent survey of the members of the Scientific Apparatus Makers Association has indicated that three-quarters of the respondents to the survey would increase their outlays for university research by about 65 percent should this bill become law.

In a statement on the floor of the House March 11, Representative Shannon indicated the importance of research and development for the nation's economy. "Research and development has played a vital role in this nation's economic success for many years. It has led to the unparalleled success of this nation's high-technology industries since 1945. The position of the United States as the world's leader in innovation and technology has begun to slip. It can be seen in our large trade deficits; in declining productivity; in an increase in the number of U.S. patents issued to citizens of foreign countries; in the decrease in the number of new products being introduced into commerce; and in a shift in emphasis to short-range research by U.S. companies. A declining national commitment to R&D is one of the major underlying causes of the problem."

## **C**ongressman warns of Haig power grab

Representative Henry Gonzalez (D-Texas) warned in a statement

on the House floor March 12 that Secretary of State Alexander Haig may well try to grab power away from President Reagan just as he did with President Richard Nixon during the manipulated Watergate crisis.

Noting that the 25th Amendment to the Constitution allows a President's staff to declare him incapacitated, Gonzalez warned, "What few people remember is that before President Nixon resigned, it was his chief of staff, together with the Secretary of State, who contemplated using the 25th Amendment to force him out of office if he did not quit. Even though the 25th Amendment was not invoked, the President's powers were effectively shorn because those same two individuals issued orders that they had to approve anything ordered by the President. . . . This is as close to a palace coup as this country has ever been. They were operating outside the law and outside the Constitution by isolating him and not invoking the judgment of anyone else. It was perhaps a well-meant conspiracy, but a conspiracy nevertheless. Now we see Alexander Haig, who was that chief of staff, as Secretary of State—the keeper of the Seal. We know that Mr. Haig did not then and will not today hesitate to use his considerable powers to get his way—and the way could be inviting.

"Whereas Mr. Nixon was criminally guilty and under broad attack," said Gonzalez, "Mr. Reagan is of an age where his powers might suddenly wane. Mr. Haig did not hesitate to become de facto President in 1974 and he would not hesitate to do so again."