

Congressional Closeup by Barbara Dreyfuss and Susan Kokinda

Senate clears away some nuclear plant roadblocks

The April 29 Senate passage of a nuclear waste bill, following an earlier action on the Nuclear Regulatory Commission Authorization, marked the first substantive congressional action in many years toward removing some of the roadblocks which have plagued nuclear energy development. However, House and conference committee hurdles still remain.

The National Nuclear Waste Policy Act of 1982 (S.1662), which passed the Senate by a vote of 69 to 9, establishes a Federal program for the interim storage and permanent disposal of high level nuclear waste from civilian power plants. Floor managers of the bill, principally Senate Energy Committee Chairman James McClure (R-Idaho) and Senator Bennett Johnston (D-La.) were able to defeat a number of potentially crippling amendments. Chief among those were amendments which would have given states a veto over a federal decision to site a nuclear waste facility in their state. The legislation also solved the politically sensitive issue of establishing permanent storage facilities, and hence provoking insurmountable opposition from the region so designated, by instead establishing interim storage facilities and continuing the process of developing ultimately acceptable permanent storage capability. The legislation also establishes "away-from-reactor" storage so that utilities which have nuclear plants do not have to store the wastes on site.

A month earlier, the Senate passed amendments affecting the

Nuclear Regulatory Commission, which clear away some of the regulatory entanglements established by environmentalists over the years to hamper the development of nuclear power.

Hong Kong singled out at drug hearings

Senator S. I. Hayakawa (R-Calif.) forced acting drug enforcement administrator Francis Mullen to concede that the governments of Hong Kong and Great Britain are not giving the United States the cooperation necessary to end Hong Kong's role as the financier of Golden Triangle drug traffic. The exchange took place at hearings of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee's East Asia and Pacific Affairs subcommittee, chaired by Hayakawa, and convened on May 6 to examine the problem of Southeast Asia drug trafficking. Testifying for the administration were Mullen, and Dominick L. DiCarlo, the Assistant Secretary of International Narcotics Affairs of the U.S. State Department.

In his opening statement, Senator Hayakawa outlined his twofold purpose in calling the hearings: "We must re-double our efforts to control or disrupt the flow of illegal narcotics and seek new ways to do so; and we must alert the American people to the increased danger coming from the Golden Triangle."

Both DiCarlo and Mullen put forward the oft-repeated administration line that throwing more money at the international narcotics problem was not necessarily the solution, and that the key to U.S.

strategy was "convincing" drug-producing and transshipping countries to be more aggressive in their own local efforts. Mullen then went on to try to whitewash the continuing active, high-level complicity of Hong Kong in the Golden Triangle traffic, stating "The Hong Kong government has emerged as a substantial force among Southeast Asian governments in the effort to reach traffickers through financial investigations." Mullen repeated the contention first aired by a Senate Permanent Investigations Subcommittee report that Thailand, not Hong Kong, was the real regional problem in breaking the financial support chain.

Hayakawa then responded, "In August, I traveled to Hong Kong and was told that the managerial skill and financial support for drug trafficking emanates on that island. To what degree are we getting the support of the British, Hong Kong, or possible the People's Republic of China governments in this matter?" Mullen at first evaded a direct answer with, "It is true that Hong Kong is the financial center of this traffic and there is a huge financial flow through there. There are laws on the books which allow for seizure of assets, but they are not enforced to the degree we would like. Hong Kong fears that too much emphasis on this would impact private sector finance, but this goes beyond the control of the DEA." Hayakawa interjected, "You are not answering my question," and Mullen responded that we have no cooperation from the People's Republic of China, "and Britain and Hong Kong are cooperating, but

it is not as great as it could be. We do need more cooperation."

Webster admits complicity in loss of control of Abscam

FBI Director William Webster was grilled on the methods and safeguards of the FBI undercover operations known as Abscam before the House Judiciary Civil and Constitutional Rights Subcommittee April 29, and admitted his own personal involvement in approving a bribe to Sen. Larry Pressler (R-S.D.) in what committee members charged was an operation that Webster had lost control of "right from the beginning." Webster said that when he was informed that Joseph Silvestri, the middleman working to set up targets for the FBI, was bringing Pressler before the cameras to be offered a bribe that he had "never heard the Pressler name before and I had an hour and a half to decide whether [Pressler] should be brought to a meeting. . . . I made the decision to go ahead with the bribe offer and I accept responsibility for it."

Subcommittee Chairman Don Edwards (D-Calif.) read from trial testimony of FBI agent Anthony Amoroso who said that he was not trained in entrapment law, had not been given any guidelines for his role in the undercover operations, and had not filed any reports to FBI superiors. "Over 50 percent of the time Weinberg, [another professional conman used by the FBI] was not supervised at all," Edwards charged. Rep. Bill Hughes (D-N.J.), a former prosecutor, told Webster that if anyone working for him had fished a target out on the basis that the FBI

used, "I would have fired him for a basic lack of understanding of our system of constitutional safeguards." Webster claimed that supervising a "free agent," as he described the middlemen, for 50 percent of the time was a "substantial amount of monitoring," and told Hughes that if he fired people on that basis "I guess you would fire a lot of people in the Department of Justice." Hughes told Webster, "Yes, I guess I would."

"What differentiates us from a police state?" Hughes, himself an FBI target of Abscam, asked. "Can you tell me what at any time . . . I did or said to make me a target of reasonable suspicion?" Webster replied that "everyone who looked at Silvestri thought it was appropriate" to bring his targets into meetings, but later he was forced to admit that "it was nothing you [Hughes] did or said to a government agent, but what was said by an individual currently under indictment" that led to the targeting of Hughes.

Both Henry Hyde (R-Ill.) and Pat Schroeder (D-Colo.) expressed grave concern for the careers of innocent citizens and businessmen that the FBI was complicit in destroying.

House struggles with farm sector crisis

Twenty-six Republicans led by Rep. Steve Gunderson (R-Wisc.) and Pat Roberts (R-Kansas) on May 3rd, and twenty-six Democrats led by Rep. Bill Alexander (D-Ark.) on May 4th, took the floor of the House of Representatives to outline the severe crisis conditions in the American agri-

cultural sector and to discuss potential remedies. Numerous legislators said the farm crisis was the "worst since the Great Depression" and described how estimated 1982 farm income "represents the lowest real net income ever recorded for agriculture."

"It is the link of high farm debt and high interest rates which promises to wreck agriculture," charged Alexander, who was joined in his attack on high interest rates by over half of the participants. "The question now is whether the current generation can hang on and survive this crop year," Roberts said.

The debate on the floor came as the House Agriculture Committee this week passed H.R. 5831, this year's farm authorization bill. A significant provision sponsored by Rep. Tom Daschle (D-S.D.) included in the bill is for deferral of repayment on a Farm Home Administration loan if the farmer is unable to pay because of factors beyond his control.

Rep. Jack Hightower (D-Tex.) introduced the "Farm Crisis Act of 1982" on May 5th providing for "a nationwide vote for farmers to make the decision if there should be a reduction in crop-acreage of 15 percent, . . ." which also "underlines the belief of Congress that export credit needs are not being met and it is hurting our national economy and our balance of payments."

Rep. Kike de la Garza (D-Tex.) and William Wampler (R-Va.) stressed in their remarks that the "systems of science and technological investments" that made American agriculture great must be supported.