

Congressional Closeup by Ronald Kokinda

Congress prepares bill for trade war

Armed with the new buzz word "competitiveness," Congress is gearing itself up to pass a trade bill this year. While some rhetoric has included talk of "expanding international trade," and "expanding markets," proposed actions so far amount to jawboning and attacks on American allies, and preparations for trade war.

Shortly after emerging from a White House meeting chortling that he had a deal with the Reagan administration, the new chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, Sen. Lloyd Bentsen (D-Tex.), began hearings Jan. 13 with a carefully selected group of witnesses such as Robert Strauss and Robert Hormats, trade officials from the Carter era. Bentsen hopes to have a specific bill prepared by mid-February which focuses on pressuring the administration to use the multilateral trade negotiations to expand market access for U.S. goods.

Bentsen began his hearings demanding that Europe and Japan absorb more exports from developing-sector nations to a per capita level equivalent to what the United States imports from those nations. This, he said, would result in a \$250 billion trade expansion overall. When asked why the fundamental issue of debt strangulation of U.S. exports was not addressed, since this was the only way to expand production and trade overall, a committee spokesman could only point to the Banking Committee and Treasury Secretary Baker for the lead in these areas.

Democrats and Republicans, liberals and conservatives alike, joined in the attack on our allies. Strauss called the European Community's agricultural policy the "worst protec-

tionist folly in the world," and blamed it for the condition of farmers in the Midwest. Sen. Malcolm Wallop (R-Wyo.) called Europe "the most protected marketplace anywhere." Sen. Don Riegle (D-Mich.) labeled Japan "the greatest predatory nation in the world today." Sen. John Chaffee (R-R.I.) demanded "greater market access" for U.S. goods abroad.

Sen. Max Baucus (D-Mont.), who had hoped to chair a trade subcommittee before Bentsen gave trade the status of a full committee issue, backed the actions of Special Trade Representative Clayton Yeutter, who is currently organizing trade war with Europe.

Some congressional offices are surprised by the new players who have entered the trade debate, such as the House Democratic leadership who, under the aegis of the House Economic Leadership Institute and Speaker Jim Wright, plan a symposium on trade for Jan. 21. This group has invited former CIA deputy director Bobby Inman, industrialist H. Ross Perot, and others who are seeking genuine economic revival, to participate, as well as Republican leaders. The Republicans have informed Wright that they will not participate, however.

Dannemeyer introduces legislation to fight AIDS

Rep. William Dannemeyer (R-Calif.) strongly condemned the U.S. Public Health Service and state medical authorities for their "failure to act" to stop the spread of the deadly AIDS virus, and introduced an omnibus package of legislation Jan. 7 in order to fill "a dangerous void in public-

health policies and protections."

Dannemeyer said that the "linchpin" of his legislation was criminal penalties for those who carry the virus and "purposefully engage in activities considered high-risk, for purposes of transmission." Those federal employees and members of the armed forces who were convicted would be put into enforced isolation for five years, or until a cure is found. The package would also make it a crime for a carrier to knowingly donate blood, semen, or organs.

Dannemeyer said he felt that prosecution for transmission of the AIDS virus "could be accomplished in most jurisdictions under theories of homicide or attempted murder," but that it was important for the federal government to "spell out a policy of deterrence." "No civil rights cry can overcome the realities of actions which condemn another to die. . . . Such conduct is murder and must be sanctioned as such," he said.

The legislation also requires mandatory testing of federal prison inmates, individuals arrested for prostitution or drug abuse, and those seeking to immigrate to this country, to identify carriers of the virus. It also mandates testing for those seeking a marriage license or work in the medical profession.

Dannemeyer recommended counseling for those who test positive. "Ultimately," he said, "it would be appropriate for public health authorities to consider court sanctioned isolation" for prostitutes and intravenous drug abusers. States receiving federal funds would be required to trace, test, and counsel all partners of AIDS victims, a procedure already followed for venereal diseases.

Dannemeyer pointed out that the conduct of the Public Health Service

has been a "product of compromise." "The most regrettable part of this reality is that the contamination of our Nation's blood supply could largely have been avoided if the Public Health Service had restricted all high-risk groups from donating blood," he said. Nine thousand hemophiliacs and 20,000 transfusion recipients have been infected by this route alone, he pointed out.

Simon to introduce depression-era jobs bill

Sen. Paul Simon (D-Ill.) announced on Jan. 13 that he intends to introduce jobs legislation, probably in early February. The legislation amounts to a revival of the depression-era Works Progress Administration, the make-work approach which characterized the first Franklin Roosevelt administration.

Under the the "Guaranteed Job Opportunities" bill, people who are looking for work would be able to get a temporary job for a four-day, 32-hour work week, with one day left for continued job hunting. They would be paid the minimum wage or 10% over what they were receiving through welfare or other benefit payments.

The work available would be such things as "repairing roads or sidewalks, planting trees, or tutoring," according to Simon's office. Local boards, including at least one representative with veto power over projects from labor and one from the business community, would decide what needed to be done locally.

Based on his book *Let's Put America Back to Work*, this dead-end depression-style work will cost roughly \$8 billion and put 3 million people to work, saving billions more on fed-

eral benefit program payments, Simon argues.

Simon will chair the Senate Labor Employment and Productivity subcommittee, which will have jurisdiction over the legislation.

Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.), chairman of the full committee, praised Simon's approach. Kennedy, according to some observers, has become one of the most powerful Democrats in the Senate; 9 out of 11 freshman senators are obligated for his help in winning their seats.

New unconstitutional amendments proposed

As the Trilateral Commission gears up a national effort to scrap the U.S. Constitution and institute a parliamentary system, several congressmen have introduced legislation for amendments that would require a balanced budget, change the terms of senators and congressmen, and, most dangerous, give the President a "line-item veto."

Reps. Richard Durbin (D-Ill.) and Richard Schulz (R-Pa.) each have a bill, and Sen. Alan Dixon (D-Ill.) introduced Senate Joint Resolution 6 on Jan. 6, a proposed constitutional amendment giving the President expanded authority to selectively veto congressional appropriations. Offered in the name of ending the government "paralysis" which has left the budget deficit untouched, Dixon says, "Congress must surrender some of the prerogatives it has accumulated over the years, and allow at least a partial restoration of the President's veto power." Dixon argues that the President does not have the means to axe smaller appropriations, because they are lumped into omnibus spending bills.

The Congress, under Dixon's proposal, could override the President on a simple majority vote.

But as one source close to the House leadership characterized the line-item veto, it could give the power "to this President or any other to become close to being a dictator." He predicted that few of the proposed amendments would get a wide platform in Congress.

Gephardt to lead disarmament effort

Presidential aspirant and chairman of the House Democratic Caucus, Rep. Richard Gephardt (D-Mo.), is taking the point for the liberals in their disarmament campaigns.

Gephardt has already introduced a bill that would force the United States to keep its nuclear tests below the one-kiloton level, which would make it difficult to maintain a testing program that would ensure the safety and reliability of the nuclear deterrent arsenal.

Gephardt intends to introduce another bill shortly which would mandate that the United States continue to comply with the unratified SALT II treaty, by eliminating funds for any weapons which breach the treaty's limits.

He will also introduce a bill to force the administration to comply with the restrictive interpretation of the Anti-Ballistic Missile treaty, which would prevent the development of critical components of the Strategic Defense Initiative. Here again, funds for the SDI would be eliminated. An aide to Gephardt said that the congressman plans a "major strategic policy speech" on these topics in the near future.