

Congressional Closeup by William Jones

Allocate \$2.6 billion for the war on drugs

The budget agreements worked out so meticulously by the administration and the Congress have proven themselves insufficient, in the recent Senate authorization of \$2.6 billion to enforce anti-drug laws. The bill was supported unanimously in the Senate, although there was a myriad of motives behind the authorization which had little to do with simple fervor to eliminate drugs.

Sen. Alfonse D'Amato (R-N.Y.) and Sen. Dennis DeConcini (D-N.M.), the cosponsors of the bill, have used the occasion to snub the White House, both by breaking the budget agreements on a measure that the White House would have a difficult time opposing, and also pointing out how the President's much-touted War on Drugs has, in fact, been a miserable failure.

D'Amato has, together with Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.), been in the forefront of the campaign against Panama—also in the name of the War on Drugs. Some Democratic senators, long indifferent to the drug issue in their own states, have smelled that the drug issue is going to be a hot election issue. Therefore, many of those who have been cavorting with the worst launderers of drug money for years have now taken up the sacred crusade against drugs—although whether they are prepared to clean up their own stables is still a very open question.

White House spokesman Marlin Fitzwater responded by saying that there is a "lot of political posturing on the drug issue." True enough—although the political posturing has also been evident in much of the administration's War on Drugs, where the real question, of going after the drug-money launderers, was dropped at a very early stage of the game.

The funds authorized for anti-drug

operations involve an increase of \$800 million, of which \$231 million will go to the Coast Guard, \$112 million to the Drug Enforcement Administration, \$125 million to the Customs Service, \$100 million to the Defense Department, and \$59 million has been added to the Immigration and Naturalization Service's border patrol.

A further \$485 million would be allocated for drug treatment programs, with another \$200 million for new prison construction, and \$50 million for drug education programs. Federal aid to state and local drug enforcement agencies would be raised by \$250 million, \$39 million would be added for drug interdiction, and \$10 million for a Latin American anti-drug strike force.

Controversial trade bill going to no-man's land

Although congressional conferees finished their work on the giant trade bill after dropping a disputed provision which required foreigners to disclose their U.S. investments, the President has renewed his threat to veto the legislation if other items which he finds objectionable are kept in the bill, the most objectionable for him being the provision requiring employers to give advance notice of plant closings and layoffs. Other points of controversy for the White House were the provisions calling for special assistance to workers displaced by imports, sanctions against Japan's Toshiba Corp. for selling sensitive technology to the Soviets, and certain provisions mandating retaliation against foreign countries.

The Republicans believe that they can mobilize enough votes to sustain a veto, although they would be willing

to go into filibuster, if necessary. The goal of a filibuster, says Sen. Dan Quayle (R-Ind.), would be to force the conferees "to come back with a different bill."

If the bill is vetoed, it could damage the free trade agreement recently negotiated between the United States and Canada. Some congressional sources say that if this bill doesn't go through, it would be difficult for the Congress to negotiate a new one. The deadlock on the issue of trade legislation would thus be total.

South Africa sanctions bill passes subcommittees

A bill that would impose major economic sanctions against South Africa has passed its first hurdle in spite of tough Republican opposition. The bill, which has been approved by two House Foreign Affairs subcommittees, would require an end to all U.S. business investment in South Africa and impose a virtual two-way trade ban.

The sanctions, ostensibly aimed at forcing the government to abandon the policy of apartheid, would, in fact, serve to worsen already horrendous conditions for the blacks in South Africa, and help to break very tenuous ties with South Africa at a time when the Soviet Union has been making diplomatic gestures toward the South African government.

The bill would bar U.S. companies and foreign affiliates from making or holding any investments in South Africa, giving firms a year to terminate their investment, and calling for terms of divestment to be negotiated with trade unions or other worker organizations. The bill also bans imports of South African goods into the United States except for strategic minerals needed for the U.S.

economy or defense that are not obtainable elsewhere—although there seems to be no reason why the South Africans wouldn't retaliate by banning export of these strategic minerals to the United States.

Any way it's looked at, the bill is so irrational that it has to have been authored in Moscow.

The bill also bans U.S. exports to South Africa except assistance for disadvantaged South Africans. The Democratic majority in the subcommittee defeated a number of Republican amendments which would have effectively gutted the bill.

INF ratification by summit looks unlikely

The INF treaty seems to be in for very rough weather. On the one hand, there is clear indication that even the most energetic arms-controllers are getting a bit nervous that President Reagan, with the INF in his pocket as he lands in Moscow, just might negotiate away the kitchen sink in a START treaty, which even many pragmatists on Capitol Hill seem less enthusiastic about. If the INF treaty is not ratified when President Reagan goes to Moscow, the possibility for him taking the next step into a START treaty are equal to null.

Second, there are aspects of a strictly political nature coming to the fore at this time. Senate Democrats like Armed Services Committee chairman Sam Nunn and Majority Leader Robert Byrd are not extremely interested in seeing President Reagan (and, by association, Vice President George Bush) getting full credit for an arms control treaty—an issue which they believe will have a great deal of significance during the election campaign this year.

So, for political reasons, the rush

to judgment which characterized the initial phases of the treaty process has diminished to a steady trot and is threatening to become a slow crawl. The White House is going to do a lot of hustling in order to try to get the treaty ratified in time for the summit—and even then they might not get their way.

As it looks now, the treaty will not come to the floor until May 9. That leaves less than three weeks until the summit, and some senators have a lot of talking to do before they intend to give their okay to the treaty—and, even then, it just might be loaded with enough conditions to require renegotiation.

The issue of how the treaty will deal with futuristic weapons has been one demanding clarification. Does the INF treaty, for instance, forbid missiles armed with lasers, masers, or other types of weapons? The White House says that it does. Soviet Foreign Minister Shevardnadze has also written a letter saying that the Soviets agree that futuristic weapons are banned, although the wording of the Shevardnadze letter is open to interpretation. It seems to infer that even missiles without destructive devices, such as those used for surveillance, would also be banned by the treaty, although this is not stipulated in the treaty. This issue might demand an amendment which defines exactly which type of "futuristic weapons" are included in the treaty.

The INF ratification debate could become a real tarbaby, when one looks at the myriad of issues which are going to be brought up in the course of the debate. And at the moment, it doesn't seem that the White House is going to have too many allies in the Senate to railroad this thing through in time for the big Moscow bash on May 27. The President may just be going to Moscow empty-handed. And, if that is the

case, the big question remains: Will he go at all?

Emergency hunger relief act introduced

With more than 40 cosponsors from both parties, Rep. Leon Panetta (D-Calif.) introduced a bill that would make major changes in federal food aid programs. Sen. Edward Kennedy is calling the legislation "a new declaration of war on hunger." Liberal Democrats are now going to focus on the Reagan administration's real Achilles heel—its disastrous economic policies. One can bemoan the fact that liberal demagogues like Kennedy can now utilize hunger for their own propagandistic motives, but it is hard to deny the fact that the problem does exist in these United States—and that it has become more acute under administration policy.

A recent U.S. Conference of Mayors survey reported that in 1987 the demand for emergency food assistance increased an average of 18% in 23 of 25 major cities, and that two-thirds of the 1987 aid requests were from families with children. Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) is probably understating the case when he says that "13 million children in the richest, most powerful nation in the world live in poverty."

If the concerned congressmen had expended a little more effort trying to resolve the underlying problems causing that hunger, by trying to prevent the destruction of U.S. agriculture and reforming the bankrupt U.S. financial system, instead of simply trying to alleviate the symptoms by increasing Breakfast for Children programs, their efforts might be deemed as more than simply fishing for votes in this election year.