

Congressional Closeup by William Jones

Senate passes **China sanctions**

The Senate on Nov. 17 passed and sent to the President a bill imposing economic sanctions on Communist China for its June military crackdown against the pro-democracy movement. The sanctions, included as a part of the State Department authorization bill, include suspension of risk insurance for companies doing business in China, suspension of trade assistance, a freeze on exports of U.S. satellites, a halt to sales of controlled munitions, and an end to the sale of certain nuclear materials.

President Bush has somewhat reluctantly agreed to the sanctions, but is being encouraged to veto the bill because of a provision which would bar the President from using U.S. aid money to entice foreign governments to carry out policies contrary to American law. The provision, arising out of the Iran-Contra affair, would "chill . . . a wide range of routine and unobjectionable diplomatic activity," according to top administration officials.

Ethics Committee to probe **Lincoln Savings affair**

The Senate Ethics Committee met on Nov. 17 to consider retaining an outside counsel to investigate whether five senators violated Senate rules when they intervened with federal regulators on behalf of Lincoln Savings and Loan of Irvine, California. If the committee decides to retain an outside counsel, it would be the first step toward a full-scale investigation of the senators—one Republican and four Democrats. Edwin Gray, the chief federal thrift regulator at the time of the alleged violations, said in testimony before a congressional

committee the senators had intervened improperly in an ongoing investigation.

In the byzantine world of contemporary Washington politics, it is generally understood, however, that the "ethics" probe, directed primarily against leading Democratic senators, could very well be a vendetta by sections of the administration or by the Department of Justice against what it considers political opponents. One of the accused, Sen. Dennis DeConcini (D-Ariz.), has been a key opponent of the Racketeering Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) statutes. Another, Sen. Alan Cranston (D-Calif.), had been the most vociferous opponent of the nomination of Donald Gregg as ambassador to South Korea, because of Gregg's role in the Iran-Contra operation and coverup. The other senators are John McCain (R-Ariz.), John Glenn (D-Ohio), and Don Riegle (D-Mich.)

House throws Population **Fund issue to Bush**

The House voted 219-203 on Nov. 14 to allow President Bush to decide whether population control funds will go to a U.N. agency that finances programs in Communist China. The vote eliminated Senate language in the bill which would have provided \$15 million in aid money to the U.N. Population Fund.

Foes of the measure pointed out that the U.N. agency has participated in Chinese programs that use forced abortions and involuntary sterilization. President Bush indicated that he would veto the bill, if the measure were included.

The amendment, submitted by Rep. Christopher Smith (R-N.J.) and accepted by the House, would with-

hold the funds unless the President certifies that the practices have stopped. The White House had indicated to Smith that acceptance of his amendment by the House would remove the threat on that issue.

Controls continued on **Medicaid-financed abortions**

The Congress agreed on Nov. 17 to President Bush's demand for retaining strict controls on Medicaid-financed abortions, as the Senate joined with the House in shelving provisions to permit use of federal funds for abortions in cases of rape or incest. The decision continues current law permitting Medicaid funding of abortions only in order to save a woman's life. The action delays a showdown over liberalizing abortion laws.

Congress criticizes **World Bank lending**

The House foreign aid bill, now pending in the U.S. House of Representatives, would withhold \$2.241 billion of U.S. underwriting for World Bank loans at least until next spring. Rep. David Obey (D-Wis.), chairman of the foreign operations subcommittee, has used the issue to highlight his concern over the bank's "structural adjustment lending" to debt-ridden nations such as Mexico.

In a Sense of the Senate amendment raised on Nov. 13 by Sen. William Roth (R-Del.), it was also proposed that the United States not commit itself at this time to another quota increase for the International Monetary Fund. One of the reasons given by Roth was the dramatic changes taking place today in Eastern Europe. "I do

not believe that this is the time to make commitments of our limited resources that may restrict possible future U.S. involvement in assisting these revolutionary economic and political developments," he said.

Dole attacks Mitchell for 'carping' at Bush

White House concern about Democratic sniping at the Bush administration was transferred to the Senate floor, as Senate Minority leader Robert Dole (R-Kan.) defended the President in a sharp rebuke to Majority Leader George Mitchell (D-Me.), who had called on Bush to visit West Berlin and to "give voice to the exhilaration felt by all Americans" at the effective collapse of the Berlin Wall.

Dole's response came after a series of speeches by the Democratic leader reprimanding the President for his excessive caution and timidity in responding to change in the Soviet bloc. Republicans have been growing restive under Mitchell's assaults, and some have expressed concern that Bush is suffering from an inadequate defense against what they see as a mounting Democratic campaign to portray him as an ineffectual leader. Mitchell accused Bush of not going far enough in normalizing trade relations with the Soviets as they move toward reform of their economy under Gorbachov's leadership.

Nunn forewarns Bush of Soviet proposal

Sen. Sam Nunn (D-Ga.), chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, warned in an address to the Democratic Leadership Council on Nov. 13,

that President Bush must expect and be prepared to counter a possible Soviet proposal to withdraw all U.S. and Soviet armed forces from Europe when he meets with Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachov next month. "How would the United States and our allies respond if Gorbachov offers to remove all foreign troops from all European countries within a period of a few years? We had better start thinking about it," said the Georgia senator.

Nunn said later in an interview that he believes strongly that Gorbachov, spurred by the political upheavals in Eastern Europe, will use the sea-going summit to frame a new peace initiative that will catch Washington off-guard. Nunn said he would urge the administration to deal very carefully with any Soviet proposal for massive withdrawals, making sure that Gorbachov defines "how far out of Europe" Soviet troops would be withdrawn.

Nunn also indicated that current East-West negotiations to reduce NATO and Warsaw Pact conventional forces in Europe might soon come under intense pressure to expand their horizons.

Senate demands free East German elections

In a resolution passed on Nov. 13, the Senate, commending the people of East Berlin for their heroic struggle in obtaining the opening of the Berlin Wall, called upon Soviet and East German authorities to "remove and destroy the Berlin Wall," and urged the government of East Germany to "make permanent the freedom to travel, to permit the formation of political parties, and to hold free elections." The resolution was approved unanimously.

Congress concerned over Bush shift on Iran

The administration is faced with substantial congressional opposition to its about-face on the issue of Iran. A deal struck this month between U.S. and Iranian lawyers which would permit the return of \$567 million in frozen Iranian assets caused a bit of a stir among legislators. President Bush described the shift as a "beyond containment" policy. Both Republicans and Democrats attacked what they called a "totally misguided policy," questioning the wisdom of improving relations with a nation still involved in state-sponsored terrorism, and which is supporting groups still holding American hostages in Lebanon.

At a press conference on Nov. 7, Bush said that he wanted "this underbrush," as he called the seven-year-old U.S.-Iranian claims dispute, "cleared out now." In testimony before the House Foreign Affairs subcommittee on the Middle East, State Department legal adviser Abraham Sofaer told the panel that he thought it "would obviously be desirable" for the United States and Iran to begin direct negotiations to speed up the resolution of government-to-government claims, including Iran's for undelivered U.S. arms and services.

Assistant Secretary of State John Kelly tried to assuage the panel by saying that he detected "no significant change" in Iran's support for international terrorism or its support for Shi'ite extremist factions in Lebanon holding the hostages. While it was "retrenching" in its arms purchases because of a foreign exchange shortage, it was still providing finances and support for the Shi'ite extremist Hezbollah in Lebanon. Kelly added, however, that the administration remains ready to "work to find whenever possible areas in which we can reach understandings" with Iran.