

## Congressional Closeup by William Jones

### Ford slated to win despite legal trouble

Rep. Harold E. Ford (D-Tenn.), Tennessee's only black Congressman, held an early lead over his two Democratic primary opponents in a second attempt for a ninth term.

Ford was indicted by a federal grand jury in 1987 on bank and mail fraud charges stemming from allegations that he had taken payoffs disguised as loans from former bankers Jake Butcher and C.H. Butcher, Jr. Ford spent 11 weeks on trial in Memphis before a mistrial was declared in April when jurors deadlocked. The location of a second trial was then transferred to another district.

Ford is one of numerous black elected officials being targeted for legal persecution aimed at eliminating them from office. Ford is, however, favored to win back his seat in the November elections.

### Senate approves public financing of campaigns

The Senate took a major step toward implementing Project Democracy's one-party police state, when it voted July 30 for public financing of congressional campaigns.

Ostensibly crafted as a means of curbing soaring costs of campaigns and curtailing special interest influence, the bill calls for a variety of measures to encourage candidates to comply with voluntary spending limits. For candidates who agree to spending ceilings, the bill would provide government paid "vouchers" for radio and TV advertising worth 20% of a candidate's permissible level of campaign spending.

The bill would give additional financial assistance to candidates who

face attacks from independent groups and Political Action Committees which are supporting an opposing candidate, and offer direct funding for candidates who comply with spending limits while facing opponents who do not.

The legislation would ban PACs from making any contributions in federal elections.

The legislation is the first step toward the kind of police-state regulation of political campaigns called for by Lloyd Cutler's Committee on the Constitutional System, and related groups. This is the first congressional campaign financing bill that has been voted up by either house.

Although playing up to public concern over the general economic situation and what is interpreted as flagrant government "waste" in campaign spending, the legislation would in effect eliminate the influence of constituency groups, who would no longer be able to contribute to the campaigns of their candidates without jeopardizing their election.

The legislation is opposed by most Republican senators and is threatened with a presidential veto.

A similar measure in the House produced a broad rank-and-file revolt. The major complaint was that the bill's spending limits would affect incumbents who face vigorous challenges in primary and general elections. The House measure would place a 50% limit on contributions from PACs and would restrict use of independent expenditures.

### Social Security removed from budget calculations

The House agreed on July 30 to remove the Social Security Trust Fund from the Gramm-Rudman deficit cal-

culations beginning in October 1992.

The bill, proposed by Rep. Byron Dorgan (D-N.D.), and accepted in a 413-15 vote, would also tie any decreases in the payroll tax to cuts in benefit levels unless benefit levels are specifically exempted from such cuts by a two-thirds vote of Congress.

The Trust Fund was previously calculated on the plus-side of the budget, and the measure would, therefore, push the deficit much further from the Gramm-Rudman targets.

In the Senate, Sen. Patrick Moynihan (D-N.Y.) is reintroducing his plan to cut the Social Security payroll tax 1% from 7.65 to 6.65%. The Moynihan measure also calls for placing the Social Security Trust Fund off-budget.

### Armed Services slashes defense, SDI

The House Armed Services Committee voted on July 31 to kill the B-2 bomber, block plans for mobile missiles, and slash funding for the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI). The B-2 was reinstated from the floor after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.

Committee Chairman Rep. Les Aspin (D-Wisc.) said the vote to cut research and development funds for the MX and Midgetman mobile missile systems was done in order to put Bush on notice that "the two-missile ICBM modernization program has failed to achieve the political consensus necessary for deployment of both systems."

The committee also stripped \$2 billion from the \$4.7 billion White House request for the SDI. House liberals were overjoyed over the move by the committee. "I was out running at six this morning just because I was

exhilarated," said Rep. Ron Dellums (D-Calif.).

Another Senate bill now in committee would seriously curtail spending on bases in Europe and Korea, endangering the transfer of the 401st Tactical Fighter Wing, formerly based in Spain, to a planned new NATO base in Crotona, Italy.

## **Burton seeks more measures against AIDS**

Responding to the somewhat doctored, but nevertheless shocking, figures recently published by the World Health Organization which upped their 1989 estimates of the number of people infected with the HIV virus by 2 million, Rep. Dan Burton (R-Ind.) again called for tougher public health measures to meet the AIDS epidemic.

Burton lambasted House members on July 30 for having just passed legislation which allowed those infected to work in hospitals and in food-processing industries. Ridiculing the optimistic propaganda "safe sex" advocates, Burton pointed to the Florida statistics which gave rise to the suspicion that mosquitoes might have transmitted AIDS around the Miami area. "The problem is," said Burton, "that there is concern because they do not know all the ways that the AIDS virus is being transmitted."

Burton pointed out the cases in the Soviet Union where AIDS may have been transmitted through breast feeding as well as to the recent case in Florida where a woman may have contracted the virus from her dentist in spite of the fact that he wore gloves and a mask. "We are finding," Burton continued, "that AIDS is being transmitted in several ways that cannot be

explained, that the Centers for Disease Control and the [Department of] Health and Human Services continue to say it cannot be spread that way."

Burton called for a program of routine testing, education, and contact tracing. He warned his colleagues that "it is extremely important that we get our head out of the sack in this body, and in the other body, and at the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta and Health and Human Services and come up with a comprehensive program to deal with this terrible pandemic that faces every one of us in the United States of America and the world."

## **Gonzalez attacks police measures in S&L bill**

Although most congressmen have been jumping on the bandwagon to tighten the police measures against the targeted S&L executives, the measures were harshly criticized by the man chairing the hearings on the S&Ls, House Banking Committee Chairman Rep. Henry B. Gonzalez (D-Tex.).

The legislation, which strengthens criminal penalties for certain banking offenses, boosts funding for federal criminal investigations, and creates a financial fraud unit in the Department of Justice, useful for DOJ fishing expeditions against possible political opponents, was passed 424-4, over the objections of Gonzalez. Gonzalez was apparently not informed prior to the bill that it would be brought up on suspension.

Gonzalez called the legislation "a bastard bill with all the defects from such a birth." Gonzalez pointed out that the bill permits wire-tapping for bank-related offenses, increases criminal penalties for bank crimes, and

creates new bank-related criminal offenses. In his remarks in the debate on the bill, Gonzalez noted that most of those measures would have no bearing on the S&L offenders, since any crimes involved in the S&L debacle were committed years ago.

Gonzalez also opposed giving the new commission subpoena authority, calling such a move "unprecedented." "I think it is a mistake," he said, "to give a commission of this nature, with no responsibility to the electorate, the power to go on a witchhunt for publicity for any other purposes."

## **Budget talks collapse, recriminations fly**

Both sides are maneuvering to make the most out of the collapse of the "budget summit." The summit itself, established in order to work out bipartisan support for a fascist austerity plan, was characterized from the beginning by attempts on both sides to lay the blame for the ensuing suffering on the opposite party.

Democrats felt that time was on their side and that as the cost of the savings and loan cleanup swelled and with the threat of across-the-board cuts approaching, they would be the political beneficiaries. The refusal of House Republicans to accept new taxes also meant that Bush did not have his troops under control to follow any tax hikes that might come out of the summit. Democratic National Committee Chairman Ron Brown characterized the collapse of the summit as the "unraveling" of the Bush presidency.

The White House is said to be planning to go out on the offensive to pin the blame for the collapse on the "foot-dragging Democrats."