

Congressional Closeup by William Jones

Dodd bill would allow Iraq to buy medicine

Sen. Chris Dodd (D-Conn.) introduced a resolution on July 8 which calls for transferring a portion of Iraq's frozen assets in order to meet immediate medical and humanitarian needs. The resolution is a counterpart to the House Resolution 168 introduced by Rep. Timothy Penny (D-Minn.).

The resolution is co-sponsored by Sens. Paul Wellstone (D-Minn.), Paul Simon (D-Ill.), Alan Cranston (D-Calif.), Claiborne Pell (D-R.I.), James Jeffords (R-Vt.), and Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.).

Citing the spread of disease and destruction of infrastructure, the resolution also calls on U.N. donor nations, including the United States, to "fulfill their pledges made to the U.N. in response to its appeal for \$400 million in emergency humanitarian assistance in Iraq."

Senate defies Bush, lifts abortion counseling ban

The Senate on Sept. 12 approved legislation which nullifies an administration ban on abortion counseling and referrals at federally funded family planning clinics. The action may foreshadow a veto fight with the Bush White House over aid to abortion counseling.

Although both the House and the Senate have voted to suspend the ban, which was attached to the human services appropriations bill for fiscal 1992, it is unclear whether either chamber could muster the necessary two-thirds vote required to override a possible veto (the votes were taken without a roll call).

Capitol Hill sources indicate that the administration would lose the vote in the Senate and would not have the

votes to sustain a veto in the House. Bush must now either back away from his commitment to veto the measure, exposing his "pro-life" stance as mere political posturing, or suffer the first veto defeat of his presidency. As a congressman, Bush was the prime proponent of population-control measures.

Aspin would use U.S. military to aid East

House Armed Services Committee Chairman Les Aspin (D-Wisc.) proposed to use U.S. military troops for flying humanitarian aid into the Soviet Union, at a Capitol Hill luncheon on Sept. 12. During upcoming conference committee negotiations on the Defense Appropriations bill, Aspin intends to put forward a proposal for the transfer of \$1 billion from the defense budget to be used at the discretion of the President for humanitarian aid to the Soviet Union.

Aspin argued that because of the budget agreement, this money can effectively only be taken from the defense budget. He implies that by not sending humanitarian aid to the Soviet Union in their "first winter of freedom," there could be serious complications and the danger of more instability in this nuclear power, necessitating even greater defense spending.

Aspin warned in particular of a scenario in which rebel groups in the Soviet Union gain control of a Soviet nuclear weapon, or in which, in the midst of widespread chaos and disorder, "disaffected Soviet troops" illegally sell nuclear weapons to international terrorist groups or to foreign nations.

Aspin insisted that such aid must be delivered by U.S. military troops "to the points of distribution in the So-

viet Union" (a proposal which caused some consternation among the attendees at the luncheon), because of the lack of infrastructure and transportation in the U.S.S.R. Aspin referenced "Operation Comfort," where U.S. troops were used for the distribution of aid to the Kurds.

Aspin insisted on maintaining the ABM treaty, suggesting, however, that negotiations be set up with the Soviets to amend the treaty in order to allow several more ABM sites in order to "get complete coverage of the United States in an ABM system." When one of the guests at the luncheon suggested a renewed effort for a Strategic Defense Initiative in order to provide total defense of the population, Aspin mumbled that the SDI is no defense against someone who wanted to smuggle a nuclear device into the United States. With leading SDI researchers present in the audience, Aspin was, however, careful to add, "But it's back to the drawing board on a lot of issues."

Funds cut for NATO air base in Italy

The Senate Appropriations Committee on Sept. 12 passed an \$8.4 billion Military Construction bill for FY 1992 that prohibits funds for a new NATO air base in Italy, a base that has been deemed critical for European defense.

The chairman of the subcommittee on military construction called the proposed air base at Crotone, Italy "an extravagance," saying that in light of Pentagon decisions to close dozens of bases in the United States, the administration could not justify building a new one in Italy because of the alleged diminished risk of war with the Soviet Union.

The committee proposal will now

go to conference committee with the House. The House Military Construction bill provides \$158 million for the U.S. contribution to the NATO budget, while the administration asked for \$358 million.

Dems propose increased unemployment benefits

The House voted 283-125 on Sept. 17 to provide up to 20 weeks of additional benefits to jobless workers. In the vote, 234 Democrats joined with 48 Republicans to approve the legislation.

Congress passed a similar bill last year. It was signed by President Bush, but the benefits were killed when the President refused to declare a budget emergency, which was required to override budget constraints and fund the extended benefits. The White House insists that there is no recession, and therefore no added benefits are required.

According to Democratic sources, 2 million Americans have exhausted their unemployment benefits so far this year and nearly 300,000 more lost their jobs in the last six weeks. This legislation would make permanent changes in the unemployment compensation system and cost \$6.5 billion over the next five years. It would waive the requirements of last year's budget agreement.

Rep. Brown proposes 'debt for science' swaps

Rep. George Brown (D-Calif.), chairman of the House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, proposed to replace "debt for equity" schemes being imposed on Mexico, with "debt for science," in a commentary in the Sept. 12 *Los Angeles Times*.

Brown proposes the creation of an endowment of up to \$20 million for cooperative research with Mexico—money which the Congress has appropriated but which the administration has refused to spend. The money Mexico would spend on infrastructure and science programs would be "matched" by U.S. funds for reduction of Mexico's debt.

Brown argues that promotion of "economic growth built on research and development" would help to solve the problems which Mexico now has of underemployment, emigration, and a "brain drain." Such a policy, Brown argues, would be beneficial to both the U.S. as well as to Mexico. A "free trade agreement," Brown warns, "will never be fully realized without substantially increased levels of scientific and technological cooperation between Mexico and the United States." Brown will be meeting with government and science representatives during a four-day trip to Mexico starting on Sept. 18,

JEC urged to adopt 'industrial policy'

Adm. Bobby Inman (ret.) urged that the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) be turned into the National Advanced Research Projects Agency, or "NARPA," in testimony to the Joint Economic Committee in mid-September. Inman, according to the Sept. 14 *New York Times*, briefed the committee on the Carnegie Commission on Science, Technology, and Government study, for which he headed the task force on science, technology, and economic performance.

The proposed agency would support higher risk research not only for the military, but that which could benefit other government agencies, with

expected commercial applications. The Bush administration has strenuously opposed a policy in which the government would support R&D for industry. Former DARPA head Craig Fields was fired over this "dual-use" issue last year.

The Carnegie study also recommends that the National Security Council expand its role to include economic as well as traditional "national security" factors. This is based on the view that the economy is a crucial aspect of national security, and that technological advance is crucial for the economy.

At a conference in Washington on global competitiveness, Inman warned the audience not to fool itself into thinking the U.S. economy was healthy, as the jobs created over the past decade in service "industries," for example, pay 50% of the industrial wages people used to earn. Households only survive today, he said, because most women are also working.

Washington to Baltimore maglev funded by Senate

The Senate approved \$500,000 on Sept. 17, to be used toward the development of a magnetically levitated train running from Washington, D.C. to Baltimore, Maryland. The measure is part of the Surface Transportation Act which is now before Congress which authorizes a total of \$750 million for the development of the maglev system in the Northeast corridor. The Baltimore-D.C. route is to be part of a more general network through the Northeast corridor going from Washington to Boston.

A prime proponent of the project is Sen. Barbara Mikulski (D-Md.), who sees this as a necessary link in creating greater industrial activity in the Baltimore-Washington corridor.