

## **Congressional Closeup** by William Jones

### **U**nemployment bill hits Bush economic policy

A proposal by Democrats to extend unemployment benefits for 20 additional weeks has become the spearhead of an attack on Bush economic policy.

The proposal, passed by the House Sept. 17 by a vote of 283-125, would mandate that the President declare a budget emergency, which would allow funds to be allocated despite the budget guidelines worked out between Congress and the White House last year.

An almost identical bill was passed by the Congress in August, was signed into law, but was killed by Bush's refusal to declare a budget emergency—which would have been an indirect admission by the administration that the economy was in a serious crisis.

A similar bill is being debated in the Senate. Sen. Donald Riegle (D-Mich.), one of the chief opponents of the "fast track" trade negotiations with Mexico, attacked the administration's coverup of the real state of the economy. He called the Gramm-Rudman budget restrictions as "phony as a \$3 bill."

In floor statements on Sept. 19, Riegle said that the deficits were "out of control" because "we do not have any significant productivity improvement and we do not have enough jobs for our people." He blamed the rising deficits on Reagan-Bush supply-side economics, attacking the "fast track" agreement for Mexico as exporting jobs abroad. "We need to have more capital investment in this country," said Riegle. "We need to drive the business sector at a faster rate. . . . We need to invest more in technology and to get that technology applied in new products in this country and not let the technologies shift overseas."

Riegle also attacked the policy of "raiding all the trust funds and using the money for things for which they were not intended to be used." He ridiculed attempts by the administration to "reform" Gramm-Rudman, calling it "the only fig leaf in town" behind which everybody was trying to hide.

In the House debate, Rep. Charles Hayes (D-Ill.) said on Sept. 17: "Common sense would tell us that the best way to decrease the deficit is to put people back to work to, in fact, increase our revenue by increasing the pool of taxpayers."

In order to preempt a heated debate on economic policy, Sen. Robert Dole (R-Kan.) presented a Republican alternative which would extend unemployment benefits by six weeks rather than the 20 weeks proposed in the Democratic package. The Dole bill would finance the benefits with money raised by auctioning federal broadcasting frequency rights.

### **N**ervousness grows over Yugoslav slaughter

The escalation of the Serbian aggression against Croatia, and the lack of response by the Bush administration, have become a concern of some congressmen. Rep. Frank Wolf (R-Va.), in floor comments on Sept. 19, called on President Bush to immediately demand a cease-fire and to warn anyone who violates the cease-fire that he would impose political and economic sanctions against them.

Wolf, along with Rep. Chris Smith (R-N.J.), visited Yugoslavia during the first week of September as part of a congressional human rights group. A strong backer of Bush, Wolf said that he was "disappointed in the

Bush administration and those who are advising the President on this very, very difficult issue." Wolf tried to divert criticism from the White House by blaming the State Department which, he said, "does not like to take advice from anybody." Wolf compared the State Department's "wait and see" attitude to the attitude they took toward the Ceausescu regime in Romania. The United States awarded Ceausescu Most Favored Nation status, and Congress only succeeded in revoking it against a lobbying effort by the State Department.

On Sept. 19, Sen. Albert Gore (D-Tenn.) called on the administration to take measures to stop the fighting, including: severing diplomatic relations with Belgrade; recognizing Slovenian and Croatian independence; freezing Yugoslav assets abroad; ending shipments of all supplies of jet fuel, military equipment, and spare parts to Yugoslavia; and making substantial levels of anti-air and anti-armor equipment available to Slovenia and Croatia. Gore also called for the demobilization of the Yugoslav Army.

Sen. Dennis DeConcini (D-Ariz.) encouraged the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) to introduce peacekeeping forces into Yugoslavia.

### **P**anel opposes High Court on coerced confessions

The House Judiciary Committee on Sept. 22 inserted a provision into this year's crime bill which would reverse a U.S. Supreme Court ruling in March that allowed convictions to stand even though they had been obtained through a coerced confession. The action is the first sign of congressional resistance to

the Rehnquist Court's drive for police-state measures in the United States.

The March decision by the Supreme Court in *Arizona v. Fulminante* reversed a century of precedent in which cases based upon a coerced confession were thrown out of court.

Committee chairman Rep. Jack Brooks (D-Tex.) said that the Supreme Court's decision "defies our common understanding of fairness" and would create a "what-have-we-got-to-lose attitude" among law enforcement officials. The provision mandates that no coerced confession could be considered a "harmless error"—the term the Supreme Court had used.

Other provisions of the bill, however, include severe time restrictions on *habeas corpus* appeals from prisoners facing capital punishment.

## Michel tries to halt 'October Surprise' probe

House Minority Leader Robert Michel (R-Ill.) warned Democrats that Republicans would retaliate with a probe of alleged Democrat-Sandinista collaboration if the "October Surprise" investigation were continued. The threat, made at a meeting with editors and reporters of the *Washington Times* on Sept. 23, is an attempt to stave off a Democrat-initiated investigation of the October Surprise, in which members of the Reagan-Bush campaign allegedly sought to delay the release of American hostages held by Iran, thus ensuring a Republican victory in the 1980 elections.

"If there is enough smoke for the investigation of an October Surprise," said Michel, "it can very well be countered by justifying an investigation of a Managua Surprise."

Michel indicated that he was prepared to sacrifice the "collegiality" which he has prided himself on maintaining with his Democratic counterparts in order to assure Bush's reelection. Michel also said that he would not want to make the "Managua Surprise" a "party-defining" issue against the Democrats unless they insisted on probing GOP involvement in the October Surprise.

Michel's threatened probe followed testimony by a CIA official in September to a congressional committee in which he said that there existed electronic interceptions of discussions between members of Congress, their aides, and the Sandinistas. The discussions allegedly involve House Majority Whip David Bonior (D-Mich.).

Although House Democrats have been threatening to expose the Reagan-Bush hostage deals with the Iranians, little has been done to initiate such a probe. The Senate confirmation of Bush-appointed CIA Director Robert Gates is now generally considered a "done deal," despite Democratic threats to use the Gates hearing to revive the Iran-Contra scandal, and seems to indicate that Democratic leaders are not yet prepared to make Iran-Contra an issue in the election.

## Gore calls for sending Iraq to the Stone Age

Although, with the threats by George Bush of new military incursions into Iraq, liberal Democrats are jumping on board the "Get Saddam" bandwagon, none has exposed more clearly the real nature of this "new world order" than Sen. Albert Gore (D-Tenn.).

In floor statements on Sept. 19,

the environmentalist senator said that it is necessary to block Saddam's "access to knowledge and technology," effectively sending the formerly relatively highly developed Iraq back into the Stone Age. "In general," said Gore, "the world does not need the contributions of Iraqi space science or of Iraqi work in nuclear physics—practical or applied. The United States should work to completely block future Iraqi activity of any kind in these areas, to the extent they are dependent upon equipment, services, or training—including university training—available from any country with advanced capabilities."

Gore claimed that "there is no way to think about certain branches of science and engineering in Iraq except as tap roots for programs aimed at programs of mass destruction." He also called for sanctions against any country which would dare give Saddam access to "technology and knowledge. . . . We have to get much tougher about exposing the network of foreign suppliers used by Saddam Hussein. If this means deeply embarrassing certain friendly governments, so be it."

Gore, who claimed to have undergone a "moral crisis" when he shifted his vote in January to support the U.S. military aggression against Iraq, accused Bush of half-measures by not having the troops go into Baghdad, as recommended by Gen. Norman Schwarzkopf, and eliminating Saddam. He also called for the creation of a war crimes tribunal against the Iraqi leader.

Senator "Blood and" Gore also called for blocking Saddam Hussein's access to international support, building the stock and resources of his opponents, and cutting off his access to any resources he needs to rebuild his military machine.