

## **Congressional Closeup** by William Jones

### **Senate Dems demand Bush attend 'Earth Summit'**

Democrats are putting increasing pressure on President Bush to attend the "Earth Summit" in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in June. A resolution to that effect had been sponsored by Sen. Albert Gore (D-Tenn.), and it has received strong support from Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell (D-Me.).

Some Republicans also want Bush to highlight his environmentalist agenda. Sen. Larry Pressler (R-S.D.) introduced an amendment on Feb. 20 that stops just short of demanding that Bush attend the Earth Summit. In it, he calls on the Congress to declare June 5 "World Environment Day" and urges the President to issue a proclamation calling on the people of the United States to observe the day "with appropriate ceremonies and activities." The Pressler joint resolution also calls on President Bush to "take a strong leadership role" in the upcoming Rio summit.

### **Committee hears proposal of former Soviet scientist**

In testimony before the Veterans Affairs, Housing, and Independent Agencies subcommittee of the Senate Appropriations Committee on Feb. 21, former Soviet space administrator Dr. Roald Sagdeev called for cooperation in space programs. The hearings were called by subcommittee chairman Barbara Mikulski (D-Md.) to explore the U.S. purchase of space assets from the Community of Independent States (CIS), and other means of cooperation with institutions in the former Soviet space program.

Sagdeev warned that "timidity and wasting time could lead to irreversible loss of Soviet space assets, disintegration of enterprises in space technology, [and a] 'brain drain' of world-class space engineers, scientists, and

technicians to different areas of industry and business, mostly within the former Soviet Union."

Congress has been encouraging NASA to speed up the purchase of Soviet space equipment to try to "save" money. Sagdeev, however, discouraged attempts to utilize the relatively cheaper Soviet technology.

Sagdeev supported developing joint U.S.-CIS space projects to keep the former Soviet program alive, but said that the backwardness of Soviet electronics makes their satellites "incapable to compete on international markets." Promising areas of cooperation, Sagdeev said, were to combine Soviet rocket mass-production techniques with superior U.S. electronics and other component designs for a superior and cheaper product.

### **New energy bill: compromise and hodgepodge**

The Senate passed the National Energy Security Act by a vote of 94-4 on Feb. 19 after intense lobbying by environmentalist groups helped kill an earlier version of the bill that would have opened part of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska to oil drilling.

The bill is a hodgepodge of compromises between the powerful environmentalist lobby and pro-industry groups which have been hard hit by the depression and the demands of the Clean Air Act.

The bill facilitates the procedure for obtaining a federal license to build a nuclear power plant, and expedites federal approval of natural gas pipelines.

But in other respects, the bill favored environmentalist interests. It would require millions of cars and trucks in commercial and public fleets to run on fuels other than gasoline beginning in 1995, and contains numer-

ous amendments which call for more "energy efficiency" and the use of "renewable resources," with solar-power cells being added to the list of "alternative fuels" permitted in vehicle fleets.

The bill also sets tighter efficiency standards for commercial heating and air-conditioning equipment. Sen. Timothy Wirth (D-Colo.) said the bill "represents a sweeping commitment to energy efficiency"—and will impose further punitive costs on production.

### **Greenspan tries to 'talk up' economy**

Federal Reserve chairman Alan Greenspan said that he was "more optimistic" about the economy than he had been only a few weeks ago, claiming that he was "beginning to see stirrings" in the bleak economic picture, in testimony on Feb. 19 before the House Subcommittee on Domestic Monetary Policy. His statements, however, seemed more designed as an attempt to re-elect George Bush.

Greenspan alleged that there has been a "modest improvement" in new orders for manufactured goods, faster expansion of the money supply, and better retail sales. Greenspan also pointed to the fact that "core inflation rates are falling," much of which has been due to the collapse of the economy—and of prices—rather than to the Fed's lowering of interest rates.

### **Adams tries to revive population control funding**

Sen. Brock Adams (D-Wash.), the co-sponsor with Sen. Barbara Mikulski (D-Md.) of a stalled amendment to force the United States to fund international population assistance pro-

grams, is making a renewed attempt to breathe life into the legislation.

The original amendment was tagged on to last year's foreign aid bill, which has become bogged down in committee. Adams called on Feb. 20 for bipartisan support to review the proposal as a separate piece of legislation.

## 'Time running out' on Israeli loan guarantees

The Bush administration failed to achieve an agreement with Israel over its policy of establishing settlements in the Occupied Territories, the major impediment to U.S. attempts to broker peace talks in the region. At a meeting between Secretary of State James Baker III and Israeli Amb. Zalman Shoval on Feb. 21, both sides agreed to disagree.

Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.), head of the Appropriations subcommittee responsible for foreign aid, warned Baker that "time is running out" for Congress to act on the Israeli request for loan guarantees needed to settle the Soviet Jews immigrating to Israel. Baker was willing to allow Israel to finish the 6,000 housing units under construction in the territories, but called for a freeze on new construction. The Israelis countered by saying that they would not use the loan guarantees for settlements in the Occupied Territories, but would reserve the right to continue building settlements there.

Leahy told Baker on Feb. 21 that he would wait only a few days before acting on his own to introduce "a very tough, dollar-for-dollar accounting and deduction" for any Israeli construction activity in the territories since Jan. 1. The Leahy formula would forbid using U.S. funds "directly or indirectly" for settlements, and make all U.S. loan guarantees

subject to cancellation if Israel starts any new construction.

If he can't get majority backing on the subcommittee, Leahy said he would "forget the whole thing" and not propose a bill. This would leave foreign aid expenditures to be funded through a continuing resolution, which would effectively place the loan guarantees in a state of limbo for the coming year.

## Aspin seeks to 'preempt' nuclear proliferation

In his fervor to whittle down U.S. military capabilities, House Armed Services Committee Chairman Les Aspin (D-Wisc.) is simultaneously gearing up to prepare U.S. military forces for future forays into Third World countries under the umbrella of preventing "nuclear proliferation." In a policy paper entitled "From Deterrence to Denuking" issued Feb. 18, Aspin pinpoints the proliferation of nuclear weapons to Third World countries as the number-one strategic danger to the United States.

Concurring with the Bush administration policy of technological apartheid toward Third World countries, Aspin targets four countries which he believes to have nuclear weapons or the ability to assemble them on short notice: India, Israel, Pakistan, and South Africa. He also refers to a number of other countries which, he claims, are either pursuing nuclear capabilities or have done so in the past: Iraq, North Korea, Libya, Iran, Argentina, Brazil, and possibly Algeria.

In the case that a country is not prepared to meet U.S. demands to eliminate a particular nuclear program, Aspin recommends the use of force to "preempt" them from becoming a nuclear power. "We must confront and work through together the

prospect that force may be the only way in some instances to stop proliferation of nuclear weapons," said Aspin. "If future leaders like Saddam Hussein are intent on developing nuclear weapons, and have a relatively advanced economy to support that effort, the choice that is presented to us may be stark: use force to put a halt to the nuclear program, or welcome a new member to the nuclear club."

It is clear that Aspin prefers the second alternative. "The United States will have sufficient non-nuclear military forces in the future to employ force unilaterally against Third World proliferators," he said.

## Annunzio objects to Bush policy on Azerbaidzhan

Rep. Frank Annunzio (D-Ill.) warned on Feb. 20 that the Bush administration, despite clear statements from the administration regarding Azerbaidzhan's flagrant violation of human rights in its attempts to annex the Armenian enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh, was preparing to move for "unprincipled recognition" of the republic.

"Instead of requiring that Azerbaidzhan demonstrate a respect for human rights and the willingness to establish democratic institutions, the secretary of state visited Azerbaidzhan last week and indicated that the United States would soon establish full diplomatic relations."

Since then, Annunzio added, the Azerbaidzhanis had launched a major military offensive against Nagorno-Karabakh. "By abandoning any standards or expectations for United States recognition," Annunzio said, "the administration has given the green light to Azerbaidzhan to unleash this most recent, and most destructive, wave of aggression against the population of Karabakh."