

Congressional Closeup by William Jones

SDI funding restored in Senate

In a surprise move, the Senate reversed itself on Sept. 17 and restored some of the funds it had voted to cut from the Strategic Defense Initiative only a month before.

The SDI has been through some rough weather this year. The original administration request for \$5.3 billion was cut down by the House to \$4.3 billion, the amount also recommended by the Senate Armed Services Committee. In the full Senate, it was slashed to \$3.3 billion.

A vote on the Senate bill was then blocked by disappointed backers of the program. When it finally did come, the result was 52-46 to authorize \$3.8 billion.

The vote was held in the wake of a controversial Government Accounting Office report that indicated that many of the SDI tests had not been as successful as previously reported.

Wilkey 'investigation' picks its targets

As most of the House members who had overdrafts at the House Bank have begun to receive letters from specially appointed federal prosecutor Malcolm Wilkey clearing them of any criminal suspicion, the "investigation" has started to narrow considerably.

Wilkey has not yet cleared any of the 17 members cited by the Ethics Committee as "abusers"—those who wrote checks that exceeded their next month's pay in 20% of the months that the panel studied. Most of those with small overdrafts have been cleared, but there are exceptions.

Rep. Nicholas Mavroules (D-Mass.) is one of those not receiving a letter clearing him, and yet he had

only one overdraft. Mavroules, however, is currently under indictment for bribery and alleged financial disclosure violations, accusations which didn't prevent him from winning his primary.

House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Dante Fascell (D-Fla.) had only one overdraft, but is known to have bought a \$100,000 Treasury bill at the bank.

Rep. Mervyn Dymally (D-Calif.), chairman of the Black Caucus, had only one overdraft, but he agreed to put House Sergeant at Arms Jack Russ, who was a chief target of the Wilkey investigation, on his congressional office payroll after Russ was forced out of his position because of the hysteria surrounding the scandal.

According to one source quoted by the Capitol Hill newspaper *Roll Call*, Wilkey is attempting to match House Bank records with the information that members report to the Clerk of the House on financial disclosure forms. The Wilkey investigation is generally seen as a judicial "fishing" operation targeting leading Democrats.

House suspends MFN status for Yugoslavia

The House on Sept. 22 suspended the rules and passed a resolution sponsored by Rep. Frank Wolf (R-Va.) revoking Most Favored Nation (MFN) status for Serbia and Montenegro, the two remaining republics of the Yugoslav federation. The measure passed by more than two-thirds of those present with strong bipartisan support.

Rep. Helen Bentley (R-Md.) and a few others opposed the resolution, claiming that such a vote would ensure that the death and destruction would continue. Bentley is a support-

er of Serbia.

The MFN status could be restored by the President only after certifying that Yugoslavia had begun to comply with the human rights clauses of the Helsinki Final Act, ceased its armed conflict with the other ethnic peoples of the region, and agreed to respect the borders of the six republics of the former Yugoslavia as these were defined under the 1974 Yugoslav Constitution.

Wolf is also calling for tightening the economic embargo of Serbia and Montenegro, including putting pressure on surrounding countries to deter them from violating the sanctions.

Lantos mobilizes against Hungarian nationalist

Rep. Tom Lantos (D-Calif.), a chief Capitol Hill asset of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), launched a broadside on Sept. 23 against Istvan Csurka, vice president of the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF), the major party in Hungary's ruling government coalition.

In a series of special orders, Lantos and his colleagues used time on the House floor to denounce Csurka. Csurka had recently gone out in Hungary attacking the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and comparing it with the former "red" dictatorship. Csurka was reflecting the sentiments of many East European leaders, when they have risked life and limb to liberate themselves from communism only to find themselves under the IMF dictatorship.

Characteristically, Lantos attacked Csurka as an "anti-Semite," making no direct reference to the actual nature of the Csurka remarks. Comparing Csurka with IMF supporter Slobodan Milosevic, who has led Ser-

bia's butchery against its neighbors, Lantos raved that the liberation of eastern Europe has "unleashed evil, dangerous, profoundly negative forces: racial hatred, ethnic hatred, religious hatred, neo-Nazism, and neo-fascism" (see p. 40).

Lantos warned that if the Hungarian leadership didn't distance itself from Csurka's attacks, they would be subject to the same reprisals and sanctions as Serbia. "Just yesterday in this hall," said Lantos, "we deprived Yugoslavia of Most Favored Nation treatment because of its policies of brutality and ethnic cleansing. . . . Well, today it is the turn of the new Hungarian fascists to be explored in this body." C-Span coverage of the Lantos ravings was broadcast in Hungary.

New trade sanctions slammed on Cuba

With strong bipartisan support, the House approved on Sept. 24 the Cuban Democracy Act of 1992. The legislation toughens the 30-year trade embargo against Cuba, while at the same time holding out aid and assistance to "democratic forces" in that nation.

The legislation imposes a ban, which had been relaxed in 1975 during a period of rapprochement, on U.S. companies trading with the island through their foreign subsidiaries. It also calls on the President to pressure other countries to collaborate in the ban, by making it clear "that, in determining its relations with them, the United States will take into account their willingness to cooperate in such a policy."

The bill is supported by both Bush and Clinton, who are fishing for votes from Cuban-Americans. Rep. Charles

Rangel (D-N.Y.) lambasted the bill, saying that it was less concerned with determining the future of Cuba than it was in appealing "to Cuban-Americans in Dade County," Florida. Other opponents of the legislation expressed concern that the ban on third countries would harm U.S. trade competitiveness.

Bush trades test ban for Supercollider

President Bush overrode objections from his national security advisers and agreed to a limited nuclear test ban in exchange for congressional approval of funding for the Texas-based Superconducting Supercollider.

The test ban proposal has been raised again in the Congress chiefly for electioneering purposes against Bush. The White House had initially threatened to veto the legislation, but James Baker III, the head of the Bush reelection campaign, sought a compromise which would guarantee the \$8 billion project, which will create 7,000 jobs in Texas.

The Supercollider had been voted down earlier by the House but was restored in conference committee. Baker felt, according to a *New York Times* report, that if President Bush vetoed the bill he would either lose the Supercollider or face a veto override. The original test ban measure was therefore modified to give the President the possibility of resuming underground testing in the future.

The original measure had called for a nine-month moratorium on testing, after which the President could resume testing only if Russia resumed such testing. The compromise also allows the President to resume testing if China conducts underground nucle-

ar tests. The White House and the Pentagon feel that the Chinese will ignore the test ban entirely, thus allowing the President to resume testing after nine months. The measure has been attached to the legislation authorizing \$550 million for the Supercollider in the next fiscal year.

Vetos on family leave, China trade upheld

President Bush vetoed on Sept. 28 legislation which would restrict China's trade with the United States unless there were a significant improvement on China's part in the area of free trade, arms proliferation, and human rights, including accounting for and releasing protesters rounded up during the massacre at Tiananmen Square in 1989. The legislation would have effectively ended the Most Favored Nation status now given for exports of goods made by China's state-owned industries unless China met the stipulated reforms in these areas.

Democrats had worked overtime to get the bill through Congress in order to force a presidential veto. Much of the legislation being considered in the tail-end of the current session is being used by the Democrats for election propaganda.

Similarly, Bush vetoed the family leave bill. The Senate was able to mobilize the two-thirds necessary to override the veto on Sept. 24, in a 68-31 vote. Vice presidential candidate Sen. Albert Gore (D-Tenn.) broke off his campaigning in order to cast his vote. The House was unable to mobilize the 17 additional votes needed to override. The family leave bill would require many large employers to give their workers up to 12 weeks unpaid leave each year to tend newborn babies or ill relatives.