

Congressional Closeup by William Jones

Vote on homosexuals in the military set

The House scheduling of a vote on lifting the ban on homosexuals in the military before the end of June may accelerate work on a compromise. Defense Secretary Les Aspin hopes to sell his policy to the Joint Chiefs of Staff and its chairman, Gen. Colin Powell. The Aspin policy would set strict guidelines for when commanders could investigate personnel for homosexuality, and would change current Pentagon policy that says homosexuality is incompatible with military service.

Several Republican congressmen, however, released on June 17 what they described as a comprehensive voting survey of House and Senate members. According to the group, which calls itself "the National Campaign to Keep the Ban on Homosexuals in the Military," as many as 300 members would vote to keep the ban if it came to an up-or-down vote on the House floor.

Wolf forces aid cutoff to Sudan

Rep. Frank Wolf (R-Va.), in floor debate on June 16 on the Foreign Operations Appropriations Bill, succeeded in adding Sudan to the list of countries which would not receive U.S. aid. Among the nations included in that category are Iraq, Serbia, and Libya.

There was no objection to Wolf's move. On the contrary, Rep. David Obey (D-Wisc.), chairman of the Appropriations Committee's Foreign Operations subcommittee, agreed to the motion, as did the ranking Republican on the subcommittee. The only "exemption" to the "aid cutoff" would be "humanitarian aid" going to the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the south of Sudan. It is the NGOs

and their "humanitarian mission" which are chiefly serving as a "fifth column" undermining any attempt to maintain a stable nation-state.

The "cutoff" of aid was more symbolic than real, however, since next to no U.S. aid has gone to Sudan since the Bush administration launched a campaign against that country for alleged "human rights" violations. The U.S. State Department has been helping to bankroll the revolt of rebel leader John Garang in the south in order to keep the country in a continual state of civil war.

The push by Wolf and others on Capitol Hill is part of an escalating international campaign to declare Sudan an "outlaw nation" on the pretext of the "displaced persons" resulting from the State Department-fomented civil war. Sudan has been the target of destabilization operations ever since the country broke some years ago with the International Monetary Fund.

Senate okays campaign finance reform

The Senate gave final approval by a vote of 60-38 to a campaign finance reform bill on June 16 after all public financing was removed from the bill. This compromise succeeded in breaking away a few GOPers from the Republican filibuster which was holding up passage of the bill.

The legislation would ban contributions by political action committees (PACs), bar lobbyists from contributing to those they lobby or lobbying those to whom they contribute, and halt the practice by which special interest groups "bundle" donations to enhance their influence.

In the House, where members are more dependent on PAC contributions, sponsors of campaign finance legislation there warned that the Sen-

ate bill would be "dead on arrival." The House bill, sponsored by Reps. Mike Synar (D-Okla.) and Bob Livingston (R-La.), would cut PAC distributions from \$5,000 to \$1,000 and would cut individual contributions in half to \$500. In addition, the House proposal would provide "equal and adjacent" air-time at network expense to respond to independent expenditures; "close the soft-money loophole," and prohibit bundling. It would not take effect until after the 1994 elections.

Bingaman links aid to population control

Legislation introduced in the Senate by Sens. Jeff Bingaman (D-N.M.) and Alan Simpson (R-Wy.) would appropriate \$1.4 billion by the year 2000 to encourage population control worldwide, and especially in Third World countries. These funds would be made available to governments, multilateral organizations like the U.N. and the U.N. Population Fund, and to non-governmental organizations (NGOs), with the lion's share of such aid being routed through the NGOs.

The legislation, entitled the "International Population Stabilization and Reproductive Health Act," also aims at financing "research on new, improved, and lower-cost fertility regulation options and related disease control for women and men." The bill would also require that an annual report be submitted to Congress on "world progress toward population stabilization and universal reproductive choice."

In a statement on June 16, Bingaman said, "The U.S. effort to develop economies and promote democracy in nations around the world is futile unless this staggering [population] growth rate is addressed." The bill, he

claimed, "has received broad, bipartisan support."

Identical legislation has been introduced in the House by Reps. Anthony Beilenson (D-Calif.) and Connie Morella (R-Md.). In introducing their bill, Beilenson tried to sell the bill as a "woman's health" measure. "In much of the developing world, high birth rates, caused in part by the lack of access of women to basic reproductive health services and information, are contributing to intractable poverty, malnutrition, widespread unemployment, urban overcrowding, and the rapid spread of disease."

Echoing the ravings of Parson Thomas Malthus in the 19th century, Beilenson continued: "Population growth is outstripping the capacity of many nations to make even modest gains in economic development, leading to political instability and negating other U.S. development efforts. . . . All our efforts to promote peace, security, and the well-being of people around the world will be ineffective unless we successfully address this problem."

Brown welcomes Clinton backing for Space Station

Rep. George Brown (D-Calif.), the chairman of the House Science, Space and Technology Committee, and the prime mover of any NASA legislation in the House, welcomed the President's decision on June 17 to support a "cheaper, simpler version" of Space Station Freedom. Brown, who had previously announced that he would not support a bill which did not provide the funding he deemed necessary for building the Space Station, gave his support despite some "technical" reservations about the President's design choice.

At a background briefing, senior

White House officials explained that President Clinton had chosen "Option A" of the three options developed by a redesign team. "Option A" would cost \$10.5 billion over the next five years—\$1.5 billion more than the target set by the White House, but at least \$4 billion less than the current design. Savings over the possible two-decade life of the program supposedly could amount to about \$18 billion.

Though the technical specifications for the new design were not spelled out at the White House briefing nor by White House Science Adviser John Gibbons, who testified on the same day before the House Appropriations Committee on the NASA budget, it is clear that the basic Space Station Freedom hardware will be preserved. The administration will request \$2.1 billion in fiscal year 1994 (which starts in October) for the Space Station and related programs, and \$10.5 billion in the fiscal year budgets for 1994-98.

The White House stressed that \$4 billion will be "saved" over the next five years, compared to the cost of completing the current Space Station design, and that management changes at NASA will be required to so "streamline" the program.

Lugar calls for an expansion of NATO

In a press conference held at the Foreign Press Center on June 21, Sen. Richard Lugar (R-Ind.), the ranking Republican on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, announced that he would begin working for an expansion of NATO which would, initially, bring countries like Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic in as new NATO members.

Ultimately, Lugar said, he

thought that NATO could also include countries like Ukraine, and even Russia, but that the basic criterion for membership would be that member countries shared the fundamental values of the present NATO countries. "If other countries are involved in NATO," Lugar said, "there would be a better possibility to deal with crises."

One of the reasons he was taking the initiative, he indicated, was the failure of the West to respond effectively to the crisis in Bosnia—the demonstrated inability of organizations like the U.N. to deal with "peacemaking" as opposed to simple "peacekeeping" functions. Such peacemaking "requires a degree of coordination which the United Nations doesn't have," said Lugar.

He also bemoaned the failure of U.S. policymakers to understand the importance of Bosnia, and, indeed, even the importance of Europe as a whole in today's world. "Today in the United States," Lugar warned, "people are even calling into question the significance of Europe. . . . NATO must not become impotent."

When asked if he had a similar policy regarding the Pacific Rim countries, Lugar said that he had "seized upon Europe because of the serious deterioration in Bosnia." He also expressed great distress over the fact that "there could be a feeling of concern among Muslim nations" over the failure of the West to act in Bosnia. "President Clinton is sensitive to the opinion of Muslim nations," said Lugar, "and that is why he acted as he did on Bosnia." When asked if he felt that this wouldn't perhaps require that Indiana boys answer the call to battle if one of these nations is attacked, Lugar responded that if the East European countries become members of NATO, then "an attack on one would be an attack on all."