

Congressional Closeup by William Jones and Carl Osgood

Confederate insignia denied design patent

Following a dramatic intervention by Carol Moseley-Braun (D-Ill.), the only black U.S. senator now in office, the Senate abruptly reversed itself and denied a design patent for the insignia of the United Daughters of the Confederacy. The design featured the original flag of the Confederacy encased in a wreath.

"The issue is whether or not Americans such as myself who believe in the promise of this country will have to suffer the indignity of being reminded time and time again that at one point in this country's history we were human chattel," said Braun.

Moments before, the Senate had voted 52-48 to renew the patent on the insignia, then voted 75-25 to table the measure. Sen. Howell Heflin (D-Ala.), whose grandfather had signed the Declaration of the Confederacy and who had voted for renewing the patent, changed his vote, and others followed.

Congress pressured to restore NED funding

Considerable pressure is being exerted to restore funding for the National Endowment for Democracy, which was removed by the House. In floor comments on July 20, Rep. Paul Kanjorski (D-Pa.), the chief sponsor of the bill to cut NED funding, warned that "the patriarchs of the Republican Party, the patriarchs of the Democratic Party, the leaders of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and the AFL-CIO" have joined together to make sure that the funding is restored by the Senate. The funding goes primarily to projects abroad run by these organizations.

The NED is the official arm of "Project Democracy," which runs dirty tricks and covert intelligence operations, as exemplified by Oliver

North's "Enterprise."

Much of the support for eliminating the funding was from a desire to cut expenditures, especially those related to foreign aid. "I must answer my constituents," said Kanjorski, "when they ask how can America today, with \$300 billion in deficits, continue to finance the economic, social, and political benefits of all the people of the world and provide for economic, social, and political benefits of the American people here at home?"

Rep. Christopher Shays (R-Conn.) said that the NED was "an inherently corrupt system." He referred to Government Accounting Office reports which indicate that NED funds have not always gone where they were supposed to. Others indicated that they did not object to the nature of the NED programs, but the fact that they are run independently of government agencies.

Rostenkowski affirms innocence amid scandal

House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Dan Rostenkowski (D-Ill.) on July 24 denied the "unfair, false, and baseless allegations" in the press concerning his involvement in a scandal involving the House Post Office. Rostenkowski has been mooted as a target of an on-again, off-again federal grand jury investigation of the House bank.

Rostenkowski has been heavily involved in steering the Clinton administration budget package through the House-Senate conference, and stands to play a major role in key administration issues such as health care, welfare, and trade.

A guilty plea to misdemeanor charges by House Postmaster Robert V. Rota revived interest in the case. House Republicans are demanding that documents relating to the Post Of-

fice be released to the public, despite a warning by U.S. Attorney Ramsey Johnson that the release could have "significant adverse effect" on the investigation. Following partisan floor debate on July 21, the House voted 244-183 to withhold the documents.

Senators stung by criticism of Somalia operation

On July 16, Sens. Paul Simon (D-Ill.) and Carl Levin (D-Mich.) responded to Sen. Robert Byrd's (D-W.V.) call for U.S. withdrawal from Somalia. Simon called for the creation of a U.N. rapid deployment force to be available for deployment on 24 hours notice. He criticized the November 1992 U.N. plan to send troops to Somalia only because these were sent by ship, requiring more time for them to get there. Simon also said that he had received a fax from U.N. Ambassador Madeleine Albright reporting that a group of tribal leaders in various communities in Somalia were thanking the U.N. for "being there and doing the job that we're doing."

Levin claimed that "in most parts of Somalia, the U.N. mission is achieving its goals." He claimed that General "Aideed is basically trying to run the United Nations out of Somalia. If the United Nations knuckles under to him, then the world basically gives up the humanitarian mission in Mogadishu, and we send a signal that one factional warlord can win against the entire world."

Criticism of the Somalia operation is rapidly spreading. Even U.N. Undersecretary General Jan Eliasson expressed concern that the mission was losing its nature of humanitarian relief and taking on the nature of a military operation directed against Aideed. As Byrd had pointed out, this was creating violent anti-American sentiment in the country. The criticism has

forced the administration to send a special observer group to Somalia, led by Ambassador David Shinn, to "evaluate" the results of the operation.

Budget dispute delays aid to flooded Midwest

A \$3 billion emergency aid package for Midwestern flood victims was delayed on July 22 over disputes on how to pay for the aid. The White House had proposed that the emergency relief be kept outside of the budget caps, urging Congress to get the money into motion without delay. But the proposal led to an immediate reaction from a number of legislators who wanted to add amendments calling for spending cuts elsewhere to pay for the aid, thus delaying passage.

Most House Republicans and 45 conservative Democrats joined forces to block the aid measure, expecting that the House leadership would agree to a measure which would indicate how the relief was to be funded. Instead, the leadership adjourned on July 23, leaving opponents from flood-ravaged states the weekend to explain the delay to outraged constituents.

On July 27, the House passed the relief aid 400-27.

Dems warn Clinton: NAFTA is in trouble

One hundred House Democrats sent a letter to President Clinton, which they released on July 27, warning that he will jeopardize his chances of passing health care reform if he goes ahead with his plan to seek ratification of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) this fall. The letter was drafted by House Whip David Bonior (D-Mich.), a strong critic of NAFTA.

The letter urges Clinton to withhold

NAFTA until the health care reform has been passed. "The debate over NAFTA will be difficult and divisive," the letter reads. "It will detract from our efforts to build a broad coalition of support for health care reform."

House Majority Leader Richard Gephardt (D-Mo.), a NAFTA supporter, said that Bonior was acting "on his own" because of his strong feelings about the treaty. But even he urged caution on the treaty. "It appears that the administration has set its sights on completing NAFTA negotiations before the August congressional recess," he said. "I'm not convinced this is a good idea."

Action demanded to save Sarajevo

Over 78 congressmen signed a letter authored by Rep. Frank McCloskey (D-Ind.) and Sen. Dennis DeConcini (D-Ariz.) calling on the Clinton administration to immediately halt the Serbian onslaught against the Bosnian capital of Sarajevo. The letter condemned the fact that the Helsinki principles which were created to guide European affairs was "being blatantly violated" by the Serb actions. It called the international toleration of these actions "completely untenable."

The letter warned that if the Serbian aggression were not stopped in Sarajevo, a city which had exemplified "the ability of Europeans of various cultures and religions to live together peacefully," then it would quickly spread.

The letter has bipartisan support and the list of endorsers is growing every day, according to sources at the Congressional Helsinki committee. It urges the President to use his influence to push for the following actions: 1) suspend the Owen-Stoltenberg negotiations until the siege of Sarajevo has ended; 2) issue a 72-hour deadline, be-

ginning immediately, for the belligerents to cease fire and withdraw from their positions in the hills surrounding Sarajevo; 3) enhance Unprofor capabilities to include the aerial bombardment by NATO of Serb hill positions and the elimination of Serb blockades; 4) place Sarajevo's utilities under U.N. control; 5) expel the Serbs' liaison from the Sarajevo airport; 6) replenish supplies of humanitarian relief; and 7) warn the Croatian government and the Bosnian Serbs that they must cooperate with relief efforts or "face consequences commensurate with the problems they cause."

"The United States has generally taken the right positions in supporting the lifting of the arms embargo on the Bosnians and supporting multilateral air strikes on militant Serb positions," the letter reads, "but we cannot afford to relinquish our leadership role in getting the wider support these positions need to make a difference." The letter criticized statements by Secretary of State Warren Christopher that nothing more could be done to deal with the Serbian aggression.

House panel guts Clinton's SDI budget

President Clinton's proposal for the renamed Ballistic Missile Defense program of \$3.8 billion was cut by a House Armed Services subcommittee chaired by Patricia Schroeder (D-Colo.) on July 26. The subcommittee approved the spending for battlefield anti-missile missiles like the Patriot, which the administration had recommended, but cut research on space weapons.

The program has been transformed from its original goal of creating a defense "shield" against nuclear attack. It was renamed the Ballistic Missile Defense program by Clinton in a move to further downgrade it.