

Congressional Closeup by Carl Osgood

Role of government key, says Mitchell

U.S. Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell (D-Me.) spoke about the positive role that the government should play in social and economic policymaking, in a speech at the National Press Club on Oct. 6. He said that the speech would probably be his last as a U.S. senator (he is not seeking re-election).

Mitchell listed the programs of President Franklin D. Roosevelt and pointed out that most of these were blocked by the Supreme Court until well into the 1930s. "In recent years, as we have turned to even more difficult tasks facing a modern society, it has become fashionable to sneer that government is not the solution, it's the problem," he said. "It's a lot more sensible, I think, and revealing, to ask what would have happened with child labor, workplace conditions, home ownership, illness, and old age without government action?"

He said that "the lesson of the 20th century is that neither a state-controlled economy, nor a totally unregulated market economy will meet the economic and social needs of its people. There is insufficient private benefit to any one corporation or individual to build a highway between two cities, but there's clearly a benefit to all private companies and all private citizens when good highways are built and maintained."

GATT pushed off till lame duck session

The House voted 298-123 on Oct. 6 to delay consideration of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) treaty until Nov. 29, in what media are describing as a political victory for Minority Whip Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.). The delay is part of the

Republicans' tactic of obstructing and opposing anything and everything President Clinton is attempting to get through Congress.

But free trade ideologues are increasingly worried that this is the first time "protectionists" have achieved a victory in Congress. Moreover, there is growing fear on the part of the free traders that Americans are waking up to what free trade is really all about. "The growing public awareness of trade issues built in NAFTA [North American Free Trade Agreement] is moving into GATT. It's made a vote for GATT a politically dangerous vote," Public Citizen activist Lori Wallach told the *Wall Street Journal*.

Hollings slams GATT, British example

On Sept. 30, Ernest Hollings (D-S.C.) condemned the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and free trade policy in general, on the Senate floor. Hollings reported that he had told President Clinton that he'd better round up all the Republican votes he could get, "because I am absolutely opposed to this so-called free trade nonsense."

Hollings said that Article I, Section 8 of the Constitution gives Congress the right to regulate foreign commerce but that Congress has substantially yielded its powers by approving the fast track procedure.

Hollings said that there are two fundamentally different trade systems and economies. "We follow," he said, "Adam Smith, David Ricardo, the doctrine of comparative advantage, free markets, and free trade. They—the Germans, the Japanese—follow Friedrich List, of the wealth of the nation being measured not by what you can buy but by what you can produce." Instead of continuing "Cold

War trade policies," Hollings said, "what we need to do is refurbish our manufacturing sector and strengthen the economy of the United States."

Hollings reported that since the conclusion of the Tokyo Round of GATT in 1979, "we have had an outflow due to our trade deficit of \$1.4 trillion. We have had 3.2 million jobs lost. We have had an inflow of manufactured goods, so now our manufacturing sector has dropped from 26% of our workforce to 16% of our workforce. And those Americans with regular jobs are taking home less pay in real terms than what they were taking home 20 years ago, and less than even a few years ago."

Hollings said that those who are pushing GATT "are off on the example of the British," and now, "England is a museum to visit. There are two levels of society, the impoverished and the very wealthy with these large estates. We are going the way of England, 'to hell in a handbasket,' economically."

Senate, House pass resolutions on Haiti

The House and Senate on Oct. 6 passed resolutions granting limited approval for the U.S. military intervention in Haiti. The two resolutions are substantially the same, with neither setting a date for final withdrawal of U.S. troops and both stating that the withdrawal should take place "as soon as possible."

Sen. Hank Brown (R-Colo.) attacked the Clinton administration on the sovereignty issue. He quoted Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott from a 1992 article in *Time* magazine, that "once a country utterly loses its ability to govern itself, it also loses its claim to sovereignty and should become a ward of the United Nations."

Unfortunately, Brown based his attack on the costs to the U.S. taxpayer of making countries such as Haiti, Somalia, and other collapsed nations, wards of the United Nations, rather than on a defense of the principle of national sovereignty.

Mining reform bill fails in conference

J. Bennett Johnston (D-La.), the chairman of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, announced on Oct. 5 that a conference committee that had been working since May could not come to an agreement on reform of the 1872 mining law. "My goal," Johnston said, "was to provide for a fair return to the public for federally owned minerals and to increase environmental protection, but in a manner that would not shut down mines and cause job losses." He blamed the mining industry for the failure of the conference because they "could not accept the latest proposal."

The Senate-passed version of the bill, the Hard Rock Mining Reform Act of 1993, differed substantially from the House-passed Mineral Exploration and Development Act, particularly in environmental provisions. The Senate bill's only environmental provision was an abandoned mine reclamation program, whereas the House bill included stiff requirements for exploration and operations permits for mining on public lands.

Dennis DeConcini (D-Ariz.) told the Senate on Oct. 5 that the conference committee has agreed to a compromise that "would allow the [mining] companies to remain in business while protecting the fragile western environment," but that the Interior Department was "unwilling to seek a middle ground. The West cannot be won by destroying the mining indus-

try and that is what was about to happen."

Dole backs Clinton's Persian Gulf deployment

Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole (R-Kan.) took to the Senate floor on Oct. 8 to praise President Clinton's deployment of troops to the Persian Gulf. "After the punishing lesson of Desert Shield and Desert Storm, Iraq should not doubt our resolve in 1994. Intimidation and aggression will not succeed," Dole said.

No mention was made of the British-manipulated nature of the crisis.

Dole said that "there should be no easing or lifting of sanctions until all conditions of U.N. resolutions are met, including complete compliance on weapons inspections, full recognition of Kuwait, ceasing support for international terrorism, return of all Kuwaiti detainees, an end to Iraqi repression, and compensation for the victims of Iraqi aggression."

Riegle accuses Iraq of chemical warfare

Sen. Don Riegle (D-Mich.) on Oct. 8 reiterated his assertion that Iraqi chemical weapons present in the theater of operations during the 1991 Persian Gulf war are to blame for the so-called Persian Gulf syndrome among U.S. GIs. The syndrome, which has varying and sometimes debilitating symptoms, is reported to afflict anywhere from 5,400 to 29,000 veterans of the war.

Riegle accused the Pentagon of a coverup of the presence of such weapons on the battlefield. After detailing British and U.S. Army reports documenting the presence of Iraqi chemical agents in the battle zone, Riegle

said, "we cannot allow the U.S. military establishment or our government to turn its back on hundreds of thousands of Americans and their families . . . who were almost certainly exposed to chemical or biological weapons agents during the Gulf war."

Riegle also said that the agents were identified in laboratory tests of gas mask components brought back from the Gulf, carried out at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory. The specific agent identified, he said, was licensed for export from the United States to the Iraqi Atomic Energy Commission, "an Iraqi governmental agency that conducted biological warfare-related research."

Democrats' reform bills die as Congress adjourns

Five major Democrat-sponsored reform bills died on Oct. 8, when Congress went out of session without taking action on them. Most were filibustered in the Senate by Republicans. The bills included lobbying reform (which had passed the House), campaign finance reform, and a bill to apply workplace standards laws to Congress.

Democrats blamed Republicans. Rep. Pat Schroeder (D-Colo.) complained on Oct. 7 about "individuals in the other body who have been able to stop everything that has transpired over here. That is really more power than a President has."

Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell (D-Me.), asked at the National Press Club on Oct. 6 if the failure of the reform agenda was because of recalcitrant Republicans or reluctant Democrats, replied, "When 92% of Democrats vote for reform and 95% of Republicans vote against it, it's pretty easy to answer the question: recalcitrant Republicans."