

## Congressional Closeup by Carl Osgood

### Hall urges more aid for Cambodia

Rep. Tony Hall (D-Ohio) said on April 13 that there's another story in Cambodia that has been ignored amid all the debate on what kind of tribunal should try the leaders of the Khmer Rouge. That story, he said, is poverty and underdevelopment. Hall had just returned from a four-day visit to Cambodia.

"Cambodia has been set back 35 to 40 years," he said. In the rural areas that he visited, there's no infrastructure, most children under five are stunted, there's malnutrition that keeps people small, there's no clean water, and four out of five children have no access to education, he said. Even teaching basic health-care practices to people is difficult in the rural areas. "I couldn't escape the feeling," Hall said, "that Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge have won, because they took the people back 40 years in time and left them there."

Hall criticized U.S. aid policy to Cambodia, which has dropped from \$38 million three years ago to \$12 million this year. "That's too little," he said. The problem with U.S. policy is, "we're linking the tribunals to any type of aid program," and humanitarian aid shouldn't be linked to anything. "You shouldn't deny child survival activities. . . . Our administration and Congress seem to be together on this, and I don't think it's a good policy." He said that \$20-25 million per year would be a more appropriate level of assistance.

Hall reported his meeting with Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen as a hopeful sign. He said that Hun Sen talked about the problems of poverty, education, malnutrition, and the demobilization of the military. He commented that this was the first time he had met with a leader of a poor country

who not only was concerned about his people, but also had a plan for dealing with these problems. "I told him," Hall said, "that if he accomplishes even half his plan, he'll be a very successful Prime Minister."

### Sharp partisanship dominates census debate

The debate over how the Commerce Department should conduct the year 2000 census took on sharply partisan overtones on April 14, when the House took up a bill that would require the Census Bureau to make available the data gathered on Census Day, April 1, 2000, to local communities for review. Dan Miller (R-Fla.), who managed the floor debate for the GOP, said that the local review program "allows local governments to check for mistakes by the Census Bureau that may have left households in their communities uncounted." The bill is modelled on a similar program that in 1990, Miller said, corrected almost 400,000 errors.

Democrats countered that the 1990 Census was seriously flawed and its mistakes ought not to be repeated. Carolyn Maloney (D-N.Y.) said that the 1990 census missed 8.4 million people, mostly minorities, and that the bill "may create so much disruption that the Census Bureau will miss the statutory deadlines for delivering apportionment counts to the President." She said that the Republicans "believe that the errors in the census are to their political advantage."

Majority Leader Dick Armey (R-Tex.) responded that Maloney's charges were "as malicious a diatribe regarding the motives of the majority in this matter as I have heard on the floor of this House." He said, "It is commonplace among the Democrats for them to accuse us of what they

themselves are doing." He insisted that the GOP's only motive is to make sure "every American gets counted."

The House passed the GOP bill by a vote of 223-206, and rejected a substitute amendment to provide for local jurisdictional review before Census Day, sponsored by Maloney, by a vote of 226-202. Commerce Secretary William Daley has recommended that President Clinton veto the bill.

### Balkans war funding request comes to Hill

On April 19, the Clinton administration sent up a supplemental spending request of some \$6 billion to cover costs of military operations against Yugoslavia. The request covers expenses incurred since NATO's bombing campaign against Serbia began on March 24, and anticipated costs of military and humanitarian operations through the end of fiscal year 1999 on Sept. 30.

The package that Office of Management and Budget Director Jacob Lew presented to reporters includes \$5.123 billion for military operations and munitions, \$335 million for Department of Defense humanitarian operations, and \$591 million for the State Department, of which \$150 million goes to "securing front-line states." Lew said that the costs of operations and munitions to date has been roughly \$1 billion.

While the administration is calling on Congress to act quickly on the supplemental, the request is threatening to become entangled in the GOP's national security agenda. House Speaker Dennis Hastert (R-Ill.) said, "This emergency funding measure cannot . . . simply replace bullets for bullets and bombs spent on Kosovo. We must provide our troops with the necessary

tools and training to defend America's interests now and into the future."

Democrats, however, are warning the GOP against using the supplemental as a vehicle for their own agenda. Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle (D-S.D.) said that the Democrats, rather than filibustering a bill loaded with extras, "would probably . . . simply encourage the President to veto a bad bill and bring it back again with another opportunity to pass something a lot more stripped down." He called on the Republican majority to finish work on the supplemental appropriations bill that was sent to conference committee prior to the Easter recess. That bill includes funding for hurricane disaster relief in Central America. "My desired scenario," Daschle said, "would be to merge the two, keep them as focussed as we can on these emergencies and deal with these other issues as they come before us."

## **Alleged Chinese spying gets third hearing**

The Senate Armed Services Committee's April 12 hearing on alleged Chinese espionage at U.S. nuclear weapons laboratories began with both parties seeing red: Republicans seeing Red Chinese spies stealing U.S. nuclear secrets, and Democrats seeing a witch-hunt directed not at the Chinese, but rather at the Clinton administration.

Committee Chairman John Warner (R-Va.) declared that the public has a right to the fullest airing of the facts possible, so that it can judge for itself the credibility of administration and other witnesses. "We must determine," he said, "whether senior members of this administration . . . inten-

tionally prevented full disclosure to the Congress of the extent of the alleged Chinese espionage at Department of Energy facilities as it was alleged at that time." He added that if this was done to protect the engagement policy, "then the administration's motives and its ability to effectively manage its national security missions must be placed before the Congress and the nation's public."

The fireworks began when James Inhofe (R-Okla.) demanded that Warner not allow any witnesses to avoid answering questions in open hearing on the basis that the information was classified. Jeff Bingaman (D-N.M.) pointed out that the density of hearings by different committees is creating the perception of a "piling on" by the Congress, leading many to question the motives of Congress. He warned that "witnesses themselves are being put in an untenable position where they are told to err on the side of not responding to questions if there is a chance that the response would get them into classified areas, and yet we have members of this committee here who are saying that if they do adhere to that advice, they're covering up."

Warner assured Bingaman that all the committees involved would remain within their jurisdictional guidelines, and that if any unclassified information came out in the closed hearing to follow, he would have it publicly released.

## **House, Senate complete budget resolution**

For the first time since Republicans took control of Congress, both Houses completed work on a budget resolution in time to meet the April 15 deadline set by the Congressional Budget Act of 1974. While the GOP leader-

ship congratulated itself for getting the resolution done, its completion signals the beginning of further conflict, because a reconciliation bill and 13 Appropriations bills, all subject to Presidential veto, will be required to implement it.

Debate in both Houses was characterized by the usual partisan bickering, but GOP hostility toward the Federal government was central to supporters of the budget plan. During House debate on April 14, Budget Committee Chairman John Kasich (R-Ohio) made clear that the GOP plan for Social Security and Medicare includes sinking those funds into the private equity markets, because "we will all have greater control as individuals" to generate higher rates of returns for retirement. In addition to setting aside \$1.8 trillion to "save" Social Security, the resolution also includes \$780 billion in tax cuts, although those wouldn't begin until fiscal year 2001.

Democrats were as critical of the resolution as Republicans were in praise of it. John Spratt (D-S.C.) complained that the budget plan reduces the Veterans Administration's budget every year starting in 2001, and cuts funding for biomedical research by \$25 billion over ten years despite the fact that Republicans have been big boosters of the National Institutes of Health. Jim McDermott (D-Wash.) said that the provision on "enhancing" retirement security, allows the budget committee chairmen "to pass any legislation that the budget chairman describes as enhancing retirement security. If that happens, we open up the bottom of the box, all the money comes out and here comes the tax break."

The House approved the budget resolution on a party-line vote of 220-208, and the Senate followed suit on April 15 by a vote of 54-44.