

## **Congressional Calendar** by Barbara Dreyfuss and Susan Kokinda

### **M**embers vie to balance budget

Led by House Budget Committee chairman Robert Giaimo (D.-R.I.) and having the apparent support of House Majority Leader Jim Wright (D.-Tex.), Democrats on the House Budget Committee presented a plan on March 19 which would cut the federal budget by \$16 billion rather than the \$12 to \$14 billion which President Carter has proposed. In addition, Giaimo is considering several proposals which would increase revenue by \$3.5 billion, thus leaving the 1981 budget with a small surplus. One possibility is a 5 percent surcharge on upper-income taxpayers, possibly on those earning more than \$50,000 per year.

The cuts proposed by the House Budget Committee's Democrats were similar to those worked out during meetings of the congressional leadership and the administration prior to the President's March 14 message. They include cutting \$1.7 billion in federal revenue sharing for states, major reductions in federal jobs, cuts in anti-recession aid to cities, reduction in the strategic petroleum reserve, delays in welfare reform programs and large reductions in federal highway programs. In addition, Giaimo is proposing cuts in defense spending in areas that do not affect preparedness.

Meanwhile, on the Senate side, Senate Banking Committee chairman William Proxmire (D.-Wisc.) welcomed Federal Reserve Board chairman Paul Volcker's invitation to slash the budget even further in

hearings before the Banking Committee on March 18. Senate Republicans issued a "Statement of economic principles" on the same day which pledges full Republican support for a balanced budget in 1981 and thereafter.

### **S**enate committee kills balanced budget amendment

By a vote of 9 to 8, the Senate Judiciary Committee voted to kill a proposed constitutional amendment to balance the budget. The amendment, sponsored by Arizona Democrat Dennis DeConcini would have required the federal government to live within its income except during a state of declared war or when three-fifths of the members of both House and Senate approved deficit spending. Maryland Republican Senator Charles Mathias and eight Democrats comprised the vote against the amendment. They argued that amending the Constitution is a serious and relatively permanent matter which is now unnecessary since Congress and the President are exercising fiscal restraint.

Mathias is, in addition, the sponsor of legislation which would statutorily mandate Congress to balance the budget—that is by simply passing a bill rather than a constitutional amendment, thereby making modification of the procedure possible in the future. Other senators and members of the House have adopted a similar approach of either mandating a balanced bud-

get or limiting federal spending to a certain percentage of the gross national product. While the constitutional amendment approach is dead, Congress is not yet finished with the idea of a self-imposed straitjacket on the federal budget.

### **A**nother intelligence reform bill introduced

Rep. Les Aspin (D.-Wisc.) introduced the "Intelligence Activities Act of 1980" on March 18, and staked out the extreme liberal position in the battle ongoing over the issue of congressional oversight and control over the intelligence agencies. While the administration wants a "blank check" in regard to congressional oversight over covert activities, Aspin's bill would mandate prior notification of the relevant committees by the CIA prior to the carrying out of covert activities. The Omnibus Intelligence Reform Legislation introduced by Sen. Walter Huddleston (D.-Ky.) of the Senate Intelligence Committee has already run into trouble with the administration of this issue, but Aspin does not think even the Huddleston bill is tough enough. In describing his position, Aspin said, "With regard to the timing of notification, Huddleston is ambiguous; Moynihan (referring to a bill introduced by N.Y. Sen. Daniel Moynihan) requires notice 'as soon as possible,' while my bill requires advance notification."

Motivating his approach, Aspin said, "A number of covert actions blew up in our faces in the past

because they were terrible ideas to begin with. They were put together by a handful of true believers who prevented anyone who might question their judgment from having a say. The Nixon administration, for example, set up the 40 Committee to oversee intelligence operations. But when the White House had an inspiration it thought some members of the Committee might find less than inspiring, it simply bypassed the Committee. That's how we got Track II in Chile, and how we first helped and then cynically shut off help to the Kurds."

With the administration and Congress apparently deadlocked over this crucial issue, it appears unlikely that, should legislation actually make its way through Congress this session, the President would ever accept it.

## **A**ttacks on Western Europe building in Congress

In testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on March 18, former Secretary of Defense Clark Clifford attacked Western Europe's "reticence" in supporting the sanctions taken by the United States against the Soviet Union, in the wake of the Soviet incursion into Afghanistan. He attacked our allies for conducting "business as usual" and warned that Moscow "was deriving substantial comfort from this division within the alliance." Clifford's remarks were echoed by members of the Foreign Relations Committee.

This was the first public out-

burst of a developing thrust on Capitol Hill, which is emanating especially from Ronald Reagan's conservative supporters—a thrust whose end result will be the undermining of the governments of West Germany's Helmut Schmidt and France's Giscard d'Estaing. This began to surface immediately following the visit of Schmidt's electoral opponent, Franz-Josef Strauss, the leader of the Christian Socialist Union, to the United States during the week of March 10. In a background meeting with top Capitol Hill staffers, especially those affiliated with Georgetown's Center for Strategic and International Studies, on March 13 Strauss played up the line that Germany and France are tilting away from NATO and toward the Soviet Union. Along with overt attacks on Western Europe, conservative Republicans are foolishly playing into the undermining of Schmidt by curbing their natural animosity toward Germany's "Green Party," a group of environmentalist terrorists who are being used to try to bring down the Schmidt government and pave the way for Strauss.

## **W**indfall profits conference report passes House

President Carter's proposal to impose a \$227 billion windfall profits tax on domestic oil production passed the House of Representatives on March 13, by a vote of 302 to 107 after beating back a Republican attempt to return the bill to

Conference Committee and change the bill so as to lessen the tax burden on independent oil companies. The Republican attempt was rejected by a vote of 227 to 185.

After ten months of stop and go activity, the bill's final hurdle is the Senate floor, where Oklahoma Republican Henry Bellmon is now threatening filibuster if the tax on independents is not eased. As of March 19, the bill was being debated on the Senate floor without a time limit, with a filibuster still pending. Independent oil men have been lobbying Capitol Hill for several weeks with the slogan, "If you like OPEC, you'll love the windfall profits tax." They are arguing that the tax will curtail domestic production while letting the major multinational oil companies continue to manipulate both the price and the supply of most of America's oil.

## **B**ill to break up the networks being considered

Sen. Robert Dole (R-Ka.) is considering introducing legislation which would break up the major networks under existing antitrust precedents, according to Capitol Hill sources. Apparently disgusted by the way the three major networks are manipulating the current presidential race, which Dole just dropped out of, and frightened by the implications of such control over the U.S. political process, Dole's staff is researching the feasibility of a legislative thrust to break such control.