

## Congressional Closeup by Ronald Kokinda and Susan Kokinda

### Congress may deregulate what's left of trucking

The Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Subcommittee on Surface Transportation, chaired by Sen. Robert Packwood (R-Oreg.), has begun hearings on deregulation of what's left of the U.S. trucking industry. The hearings are the result of a major new deregulation push by the Reagan administration and Secretary of Transportation Elizabeth Dole.

While Packwood has not yet drafted a bill, Sen. John Danforth (R-Mo.) has introduced S. 1711, and Rep. Jim Moody (D-Wisc.) has introduced H.R. 3222 in the House, which would completely deregulate the industry.

On Sept. 27, Packwood's subcommittee heard from Secretary Dole, several officials from the Interstate Commerce Commission, the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, representatives of the trucking industry association, and independents.

Packwood heard from Teamsters economist Norman A. Weintraub, who documented the massive collapse of the trucking industry since deregulation was introduced in 1980. Weintraub's testimony confirmed in all essentials the forecast of *EIR's* November 1979 Special Report, *Trucking Deregulation, a Disaster Worse than Vietnam*, which warned Congress that deregulation would put reliable carriers out of business, raise costs, reduce service, and hike insurance rates.

Weintraub said that 21.8% of the total operating revenue of the nation's general freight carriers has been lost since enactment of the Motor Carrier Act of 1980. Sixty major unionized carriers have been forced out of business, representing 77,169 employees, operating revenues of \$3.5 billion, and

20% of the industry's capacity. The financial condition of the rest of the industry has not improved, with many firms in serious financial difficulty and half the 40 largest carriers having operating losses for 1984. Between 1979 and 1985, total tons hauled by the industry fell by 53%, including a 16% drop between the first quarter of 1984 and the first quarter of 1985.

Packwood is expected to carry Dole's proposals forward with a passion. Weintraub characterized Moody's "Democratic alternative" as no alternative at all. Indeed, Moody seems to get his inspiration from another 1988 Democratic presidential hopeful, Sen. Ted Kennedy (D-Mass.), whose Harvard minions began the airline and trucking deregulation efforts.

### House rejects cuts in food price supports

In two floor votes on the farm bill on Sept. 26, the House rejected the demand by "free enterprisers" and environmentalists to accelerate the destruction of the American farmer by turning him over to "free market" bankruptcy. Administration-backed amendments to the farm bill had called for cuts in food price supports, but were defeated by surprisingly large majorities.

But instead, the House bill opts for letting the farm sector down more slowly, and is in fundamental agreement with opponents of farm programs, that the amount of food produced and the land in production—not the debt burden—must be reduced.

Backed by the administration, Reps. James Olin (D-Va.) and House Minority Leader Robert Michel (R-

Ill.) put forward an amendment to reduce the dairy price support level of \$11.60 by 50¢ every Jan. 1, if the dairy "surplus" were projected to be 10 billion pounds or more the first year, and 5 billion pounds each following year. "We would keep on doing that until we get down to the point where it is only marginally profitable to sell milk manufactured products to the government," Olin said. He projected the support price would fall to at least \$10.10 per hundred pounds of milk.

The Olin-Michel amendment was defeated 244 to 166.

Representatives Tom Downey (D-N.Y.) and Willis Gradison Jr., (R-Ohio), also with administration backing, tried to cut the support price for sugar from 18¢ to 15¢ per pound over three years. Downey and Gradison were defeated 263 to 142. Extreme liberal Rep. Barney Frank (D-Mass.), as the pot called the kettle black, called the farm support system "guild socialism."

Representative Edward Madigan (R-Ill.), the ranking Republican on the House Agriculture Committee, warned the administration that the votes, which had been expected to be close, "may demonstrate to them that the problem in the farm community is much more severe than they thought it to be." Agriculture Secretary John Block wasn't taking the hint, however, and denounced the votes as "regrettable." The administration has strongly implied a veto if the farm bill goes too high.

As the House continues to work on the farm bill, Rep. Stan Lundine (D-N.Y.) is expected to try to cut the peanut price support program.

The Senate Agriculture Committee on Sept. 19, meanwhile, passed the Omnibus Farm Bill, S. 616, which is projected to be \$11 billion over the

three-year congressional budget ceiling of \$34.8 billion. The key amendment by Sen. John Melcher (D-Mont.) to freeze direct subsidy payments to farmers for four years, passed 10 to 7, with Republican Sens. Mitch McConnell (Ky.) and Mark Andrews (N.D.) voting with the Democrats. Agriculture Committee Chairman Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) let the bill move out of committee after the Senate Finance Committee agreed to support the tobacco program in exchange for continuing the 16¢ a pack tax on cigarettes.

## **F**ascell, Aspin attack the SDI

A report critical of the Strategic Defense Initiative, requested by Rep. Les Aspin (D-Wisc.), chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, was released Sept. 25 by the Office of Technology Assessment (OTA). Representative Dante Fascell (D-Fla.), the chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, immediately took to the pages of the *Congressional Record* Sept. 26 to praise the report (see *National News*, pp 70-71).

Fascell announced on Sept. 24 that he intended to bring House Joint Resolution 3 to the floor during the first week in October. The resolution urges the President to seek Senate ratification of the Threshold Test Ban Treaty (TTBT) and the Peaceful Explosions Treaty (PNET), which limit nuclear testing above 150 kilotons. It also urges the President to immediately resume negotiations with the Soviet Union for a comprehensive test ban treaty. Fascell pointed out that the resolution has over 200 House cosponsors.

The OTA report, he said, "rein-

forces many of the points made in the Foreign Affairs Committee's 'Interim Report on the Administration's Space Arms Control and Defense Policy,' released in May 1984," which claims that the SDI "could stimulate an offensive and defensive arms race."

Fascell claimed that the "OTA report further shows that the success of the President's Strategic Defense Initiative depends on Soviet cooperation." He argued that SDI research must be carefully done so as to remain within the ABM Treaty, and to reject the idea in the White House pamphlet, "The President's Strategic Defense Initiative," that a Soviet SDI capability, lacking a U.S. counterpart, would reduce the United States to a choice between "surrender and suicide." Fascell claimed that our "offensive countermeasures would more than likely be adequate for penetrating Soviet defense."

## **D**ole warns of 'zero hour' on federal debt ceiling

Senate Majority Leader Robert Dole (R-Kans.) warned his colleagues on Sept. 26 that the Senate would have to raise the ceiling on the nation's debt before "zero hour," when the federal government will run out of operating funds. Dole informed senators that Secretary of the Treasury James Baker wrote him that zero hour is expected to be Oct. 7.

The House passed its debt-ceiling increase, HR 372, raising the ceiling to \$2.079 trillion, as part of the budget resolution. The Senate Finance Committee has similarly passed the bill which will now go to the Senate floor, where a bruising battle is expected.

A fight is also expected around S.

1702, the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985. Introduced by Sen. Phil Gramm (R-Tex.) on Sept. 25, the bill now has about 35 sponsors. It seeks to balance the federal budget by 1990, and sets maximum allowable deficits for the next five years. Describing it as an "emergency measure," Gramm noted that the President would not be allowed to submit budgets that have deficits greater than the maximum allowable amount. No Senate committee would be allowed to send forth a bill over the deficit limits prescribed for each year. No amendment would be offered in the Senate unless it was a "zero-sum" amendment, offering a cut in some area if that amendment proposed an increase in a program.

## **S**enate hearing examines AIDS funding increase

The Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, chaired by Sen. Lowell Weicker (R-Conn.), held hearings on Sept. 26 to examine whether, and by how much, funding for research on the deadly AIDS virus should be increased. By voice vote earlier in the week, the subcommittee had approved a FY 1986 appropriations bill, which includes a \$130 million increase over FY 1985 for AIDS research.

Dr. James Mason, acting assistant secretary of health, admitted in his testimony to the subcommittee that the virus is transmitted heterosexually, and that poor nourishment is a major "co-factor" in determining whether an exposed person actually comes down with the infection.

(See article, p. 6 for the testimony of Dr. William A. Haseltine.)