

Congressional Closeup by William Jones

Burton defends Masters and Johnson

In a speech on the floor of the House in mid-March, Rep. Dan Burton defended the recently published book by Masters and Johnson on the AIDS epidemic, which has been heavily criticized by official medical institutions. Burton (R-Ind.), who has authored legislation calling for mandatory testing of the entire population, stressed the need for quick action if we are to prevent a catastrophe.

"The facts show," said Burton, "that we have got a tiger by the tail. This is not an epidemic, but a pandemic staring us in the face. We have to head it off at the pass, and the only way to do it is to start off with testing." Burton referred to the studies by Dr. Alan Salzborg of Miles City, Montana, saying, "If we do not start by 1990 or 1991, his estimates are that by 1995 to 1998, in that three-year period, we will have somewhere between 3½ and 5 million people actually dead or dying from AIDS."

Referring to a statement by Surgeon General Koop, who played down the danger of catching AIDS in extramarital heterosexual relations, Burton commented, "Our Surgeon General is saying that the dimensions of this disease will not be known for years. What he is saying in effect is that it is going to continue to spread and there is no way of knowing how far it will spread and we are going to have to let it go unabated, except for maybe throwing out some educational materials to each household."

Burton also went on the offensive against those who are consciously down-playing the danger of the AIDS epidemic in order to prevent the spread of panic among the general population. "I believe just the opposite," said Burton. "Abraham Lincoln said, 'Let

the people know the facts, and the country will be saved.' If you want a real panic, those of you at HHS and CDC, just wait until this thing really gets out of control."

Burton continued with an analogy from the period of the Black Plague: "When the bubonic plague was at its height during the 14th and 15th centuries, if somebody was suspected of having the bubonic plague, they boarded up their house and they burned them alive, and if you think that cannot happen in a civilized country like the United States, you are wrong. We need to tell people what they are up against in this country. We need to get on with the testing program so we can minimize the damage."

Major gains predicted for the Democrats

Although Mike Dukakis is seen trailing George Bush in the presidential race in polls recently taken on Capitol Hill, the situation looks much worse for the GOP in congressional races this year.

The latest survey predicts that the Democrats will gain 10 seats in the House in November, increasing their margin to 267-168, and will have even odds or better of winning races for 15 seats now held by Republicans.

The GOP, on the other hand, has fair chances of winning races for only five seats now held by Democrats.

The rate of retirement plays a certain role here, with 12 Republican House members giving up their seats either to retire or to run for the Senate, as compared to only 7 Democrats. The picture becomes even gloomier for the Grand Old Party if one takes into consideration that the next congressional election will also be a referendum on

the "Reagan recovery"—which voters have heard so much about, but seen very little of.

Senate votes to restrict covert action

Despite veto threats from the White House and objections from Director of Central Intelligence William Webster, the Senate approved 71 to 19 a bill which would overhaul existing intelligence oversight legislation in order to close loopholes utilized by President Reagan to keep Congress in the dark for 10 months about the secret sale of arms to Iran and the diversion of profits to Contra forces in Nicaragua.

In place of current requirements for "timely notice" of such covert operations by the President, the bill would require notification in advance under "ordinary circumstances," and notice with delay of no more than 48 hours on "rare occasions when time is of the essence." Notification could be limited to the four top leaders of Congress, in cases where disclosure would put national security at "grave risk."

Attempts to lengthen the notification period were defeated by large margins. A proposal by Sen. John Chafee (R-R.I.) to extend the 48-hour notice limitation to 10 days was defeated 60-32. Another proposal by Sen. James McClure (R-Ida.), which would have allowed the President to withhold notification when lives were at stake or the cooperation of other countries jeopardized, was defeated 65-23.

President Reagan may deem it fit to veto the bill in its present form, although, as it was passed by such a wide margin, it is likely that Congress would override a veto.

Senate approval of the bill came at the same time as the announcement by Independent Counsel Lawrence Walsh that indictments were imminent for the chief participants in the Irangate scandal.

A **Amendment to INF** **seeks data accuracy**

Republican Sens. Steven Symms (R-Ida.), Malcolm Wallop (R-Wyo.), and Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) have submitted an amendment to the INF treaty which specifies that no provision in the treaty will be effective until the President certifies that the Soviet Union has provided accurate data regarding the size and composition of its SS-20 missile force.

As there have been contradictory reports and testimony regarding the actual number of SS-20s the Soviets have, including skepticism expressed by Admiral Crowe, the head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, concerning the accuracy of the Soviet data, the Senate would have to go into closed session in order to hear some of the material, much of which is classified.

The three senators have attempted to initiate a discussion of this amendment before the treaty is actually brought to the floor by the Majority Leader. They wanted to use the occasion of the bill on covert action to bring the amendment onto the floor.

If the floor discussion of the amendment takes place before the Select Committee on Intelligence and the Armed Services Committee report on their hearings to the Foreign Relations Committee, it could affect any recommendations made by the Foreign Relations Committee before submitting the INF treaty to floor debate.

A discussion of this amendment

will probably be scheduled for some time in late March.

A **Anti-nuclear** **bill defeated**

A bill that would seriously penalize contractors involved in work at the nation's nuclear weapons plants was defeated by the Senate 53-41. The bill, promoted by Sen. Howard Metzenbaum (D-Ohio), would have forced many contractors to shy away from involvement in nuclear weapons production by making them liable for future accidents caused by negligent work at the plants.

As Sen. J. Bennett Johnston (D-La.) pointed out, "Rather than attracting the big companies with their reliability and expertise, we'd wind up with fly-by-night operators running these plants." Johnston succeeded in tabling the motion, offering a compromise which would provide for stiff fines, ranging up to \$100,000 per day, for violations of safety rules by Energy Department contractors. Additional fines, and prison sentences ranging up to five years, could be imposed on corporate officials who commit "knowing and willful" safety violations. The compromise amendment was approved 94-0.

R **ep. Biaggi appeals** **his sentence**

Rep. Mario Biaggi (D-N.Y.), sentenced to two-and-a-half years in prison on bribery, racketeering, and tax fraud charges in connection with the Wedtech scandal, has appealed his case. The trial could last up to three months. Biaggi is said to be in a bit of

pecuniary difficulty because of the legal fees.

But, according to Bob Blancato, a spokesman for the congressman, Biaggi was given an "enormous ovation" at a party for New York politicians recently.

H **ouse Republicans hail** **Honduras troop deployment**

House Republicans led by Rep. Robert Dornan (R-Calif.) are beating the drums for the presidential decision to send U.S. troops to Honduras. The good congressman, after chairing an excellent hearing on the problems of Soviet non-compliance with their treaty obligations, stepped into the briar patch of what could become a new Vietnam debacle.

Having shown such political acumen on the question of Mr. Gorbachov's disinformation campaign, which led to the signing of the INF agreements, the congressman and his honorable colleagues are about to knee-jerk their way into the jungles of Central America—to the tremendous delight of that same Mr. Gorbachov. The Russians have set up that particular booby trap precisely for gentlemen with conservative inclinations.

No, gentlemen, the big game is elsewhere than the jungles of Nicaragua. As these gentlemen rant and rave about Communist infiltration in Central America, the Soviets are consolidating their positions on the plains of Central Europe. And that same tough President who is being lauded by his conservative colleagues for his determined stand to stop what he alleges to be an invasion of Honduras, is still shining his shoes and cleaning his tux to make that important date with Gorbachov sometime in May.