

## Congressional Closeup by William Jones

### Simon introduces a balanced budget amendment

Sen. Paul Simon (D-Ill.) introduced a balanced budget amendment on Feb. 4 which requires the President each year to present a proposed budget for that fiscal year "in which total outlays do not exceed total receipts." "Total receipts" is defined as "all receipts . . . except those derived from borrowing."

The Simon amendment stipulates that the limit on the public debt shall not be increased except by a vote of three-fifths of each House.

On the other side of the aisle, Sen. Phil Gramm (R-Tex.) has said he would try to attach a balanced budget amendment to legislation that will be needed in late March or early April to increase the ceiling on the federal debt.

### McCloskey attacks Vance-Owen plan for Bosnia

In a debate on the McNeil-Lehrer News Hour on Feb. 2, Rep. Frank McCloskey (D-Ind.) attacked the Vance-Owen plan for Bosnia as "seriously flawed." McCloskey warned that the semi-permanent stationing of U.N. forces in the area as "peacemakers," which is envisioned in the plan, would lead to a greater commitment of military force than would a firm stand against the Serbs now.

U.N. Special Envoy Cyrus Vance, also on the show, insisted that the conflict was a civil war, again excusing Serbian genocide.

McCloskey also attacked Vance and European Community negotiator David Owen for giving credibility to the "peaceful intentions" of the Serbian leadership, and for portraying communist dictator Slobodan Milosevic as a "man to be trusted," as Vance had put it. "Mr. Karadzic and other Bos-

nian-Serbian extremists are very well on the record that they plan to go on with their move toward a greater Serbia," said McCloskey. "Even as we speak now, there are Chetnik paramilitary or White Eagle forces operating in Kosovo and moving more and more into the Macedonian area, particularly around Skopje, for the ethnic cleansing movement to go on." McCloskey urged the use of selective air strikes on targets in Bosnia and possibly Serbia, and allowing the Bosnians to arm themselves.

Sen. John Warner (R-Va.), also appearing on the program, argued against the commitment of ground forces, and also expressed concerns about the use of air power.

On Feb. 3 on the House floor, McCloskey said that the Vance-Owen plan "rewards genocidal aggression" and would lead "to further Serb aggression in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Macedonia."

### Gonzalez links BNL probe to abuse of banking system

In comments on the House floor on Feb. 2, House Banking Committee Chairman Henry B. Gonzalez (D-Tex.) made clear that his pursuit of the Banca Nazionale del Lavoro (BNL) banking scandal was aimed at creating a greater consciousness of the type of control international financial interests exert over the U.S. economy and to "illustrate clearly and concisely how foreign governments can, and sometimes do, and continue to do so even as I speak today, abuse the United States banking system."

Gonzalez warned of a "very disturbing trend" where "no existing laws on our books . . . govern these heavy cash flows of money across international lines. . . . Branches and agencies of foreign banks currently

hold over, very conservatively, \$700 billion in the United States. And too often this money is dedicated to activities that are harmful to our national security or are in actual violation of U.S. law.

"Activities like drug money-laundering, which is huge, continues unabated and with the collateral activities of the offshore facilities that enable our corporations, from banks to everything else, to escape taxes and also to set up activities in lax or non-existent regulated atmospheres," Gonzalez warned.

### Ford demands DOJ probe of trial proceedings

Rep. Harold Ford (D-Tenn.), who is being re-tried for federal fraud and conspiracy charges after his first trial ended in a hung jury in 1990, has demanded a Justice Department investigation of the process, claiming that events have shown that the jury pool in Jackson, Tennessee "has been poisoned by the publicity."

The first trial lasted three months and led to a deadlocked jury voting 8-4 to acquit Ford. The prosecution then moved to limit jury selection for the trial to the predominantly white district of Jackson. Ford appealed the decision, unsuccessfully, to the U.S. Supreme Court. The jurors are to be bussed from Jackson to Memphis for court proceedings.

The Congressional Black Caucus has sent a letter to President Clinton, asking his "assistance to correct an injustice that is about to occur to our colleague." Chairman Rep. Kweisi Mfume (D-Md.) asked Clinton to "identify an appropriate individual at the Department of Justice to examine this question anew."

In the defense's *voir dire* of potential jurors in the new trial, many have

been found to be prejudiced against Ford, leading the defense to again question the rationale behind the bus-sing decision. In his letter, Mfume questioned "the idea that the popularity of a political figure, particularly a black political figure, should disqualify that person from trial in his home town."

### **Clinton wins passage of 'family leave' bill**

President Clinton signed the Family Leave Bill into law after the House passed it by a vote of 265-163 on Feb. 3. The legislation allows workers to take up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave during any 12-month period for child-birth, care of a child or immediate relative, or for a serious health condition which makes them unable to perform their job.

The bill had passed the Senate by a vote of 71-27 on Feb. 4, after a threatened Republican filibuster was warded off when Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell (D-Me.) agreed to allow a vote on a Republican proposal to reinstate the military's ban on homosexuals during the six-month period during which Congress will hold hearings on the issue. Republicans were threatening to place the reinstatement of the ban on the family leave legislation, thus endangering its passage.

### **Some Republicans can see the 'recovery'**

Four Senate Republicans challenged President Clinton's plan for a \$31 billion package of new spending and tax breaks, claiming that a recovery is already well under way. Minority Leader Robert Dole (R-Kan.) and Pete Domenici (R-N.M.), Robert Packwood

(R-Ore.), and Don Nickles (R-Okla.) sent Clinton a letter on Feb. 7 stressing that the real problem with the deficit is "spending." They warned that any stimulus package planned by the administration would only aggravate the deficit.

"We fail to see how any short-term 'stimulus' package can have any significant impact on our economy that is now experiencing a solid recovery," they wrote. Domenici, interviewed on CBS's "Face the Nation" on Feb. 7, complained that the \$320 billion budget deficit already represented the biggest "stimulus" the economy has received since World War II.

### **Specter would allow lawsuits to stop imports**

Sen. Alan Specter (R-Pa.) introduced a bill on Feb. 4 which would allow private parties (a company, a union, or an individual) who are "injured" by subsidized goods from abroad, to sue in federal court to stop goods from coming into the United States which are subsidized, dumped, or in violation of U.S. trade laws.

Specter, like others who are blaming America's problems, not on their own legislation, but on "foreign competition," wants to speed up the process whereby foreign companies are penalized for alleged wrongs to U.S. producers. Complaining that government enforcement of U.S. trade laws is "extremely time consuming," Specter wants to place the regulation of trade with the courts.

### **Clinton urged to consult allies on cuts in NASA**

Capitol Hill is rife with rumors that President Clinton is planning to cancel Space Station Freedom. In early Feb-

ruary, Office of Management and Budget Director Leon Panetta called for major cuts in the NASA budget and for an end to building a permanent human base in orbit.

Clinton met with his senior advisers on the issue on Feb. 4. According to Capitol Hill sources, both Vice President Al Gore and Treasury Secretary Lloyd Bentsen argued against Panetta's plan.

Rhetoric against the space station has escalated as NASA revealed some estimated cost overruns associated with the Johnson Space Center. Sen. Alfonse D'Amato (R-N.Y.) railed against the NASA administration on the floor of the Senate on Feb. 2, accusing it of "sloppy management," indicating another uphill battle for NASA appropriations this year.

Foreign governments are concerned about cancellation of the project, since many are preparing projects connected to it. Ian Pryke, the European Space Agency representative in Washington, in an interview with *Space News* on Feb. 8, expressed the hope that "the current administration is sensitive to the international ramifications of such an action, and would seek consultation with the international partners before taking such an action."

There are also plans to create a grass-roots movement on the state level to demand a constitutional convention to legislate a balanced budget amendment.

A balanced budget amendment failed to pass the House last year by nine votes, and attempts to bring it up in the Senate were thwarted when proponents fell four votes short of shutting off a filibuster. Backers of the amendment say that they have a better chance this year, because of the 10-seat Republican gain in the House and the support the amendment received during the election campaign from many House freshmen.