

Congressional Calendar by Barbara Dreyfuss and Susan Kokinda

Senate Judiciary Committee on trail of Cartergate

The two-month-long feud between the Senate Judiciary Committee and the Justice Department over the closing of potential criminal cases involving Carter loyalists has the potential to explode into a national scandal, if the Senate Committee chooses to push it.

Since April, the committee, which is chaired by Sen. Edward Kennedy, has been trying to elicit information from the Justice Department's Criminal Division and its Public Integrity Section concerning 15 cases which were closed by Justice without indictment. The Judiciary Committee is concerned that the cases—which include the Robert Vesco case, the Milton Shapp campaign contribution case, and the Billy Carter case—were closed for political reasons.

In May, the committee was forced to subpoena Criminal Division head Phillip Heymann and Public Integrity Section head Tom Henderson to gain their appearance before the committee. At that time, they refused to turn over the case files to the Judiciary Committee, even though nine of the files had already been turned over to the Senate Government Affairs Committee, chaired by Abraham Ribicoff. A Judiciary Committee source said bluntly, "The administration knew that Government Affairs would handle this in an exculpatory manner and that we wouldn't."

Judiciary is prepared to subpoena Justice if necessary, but on June 25, the Justice Department came to a tentative agreement to give the committee access to the files.

However, sources say that committee members are skeptical that

they will be given complete access to the sensitive cases before the election. "Let's face it, they will stone-wall on something like the Vesco file and if they ever produce it, it will be a cleaned-up version." Another source counterposed this political favoritism by Justice to the Department's use of Abscam/Brilab to blackmail Kennedy supporters. "This is worse than Nixon and Watergate," he added.

The principals involved in the investigation, Senators Dennis DeConcini (D-Ariz.), Max Baucus (D-Mont.), and Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) reportedly want to hold open hearings after the July 4 recess if they do not get cooperation from Justice or if the files reveal improprieties. But the big questionmark in the whole affair remains Senator Kennedy and whether he will use his powerful chairmanship to expose all of Justice's dirty dealings.

New version of Dereg rubberstamped by Senate

Within 24 hours, the House version of trucking deregulation sped through the House of Representatives, and was rubberstamped by the Senate, which had previously passed a different version. Thus, it avoided a conference committee and went straight to the President's desk. Despite a last-minute attempt by the Teamsters to get a labor protection clause, and by the American Trucking Association to get a one-House veto over future Interstate Commerce Commission rulings, the bill remained essentially the same as the one passed out of the House Committee three weeks prior:

In the June 19 House floor votes, the Teamsters lost by a landslide their proposal to assure job loss payments of 80 percent of wages to truckers who lost jobs because of deregulation. The American Trucking Association proposal was defeated by only three votes, with administration arm-twisting in evidence.

House votes to resume draft registration

The House of Representatives voted final approval June 25 for a resumption of draft registration. The Democratic tally was 145 for and 107 against; among Republicans, it was 89 in favor and 61 opposed. The measure provides for males born in 1960 and 1961 to register for possible conscription, probably beginning this summer. Already passed by the Senate, the bill now goes to the White House. Conscription itself has not been reinstated.

Five senators on the Armed Services Committee continue to press for a renewal of the draft, although the way they phrased it June 25 was, in the words of Democrat John Stennis of Mississippi, that "the only way to avoid Selective Service" is to improve the quality of recruits to the present all-volunteer army. Stennis heads the committee; his views are joined by Sam Nunn (D-Ga.), J. James Exon (D-Neb.), Harry F. Byrd (Ind-Va.), and John Warner (R-Va.).

Sam Nunn declared to the Senate that the Carter administration and its supporters in the Army are waging "a campaign of deception" to cover up the pitiable state of the military branch. Nunn charged that

Army recruits include "an increasingly large number of individuals with lower mental abilities who cannot perform their missions," citing new figures to show that 43 percent of artillerymen failed their qualification tests last year. The failure rate for combat engineers was 49 percent, for military intelligence 51 percent, and for communications operators, 69 percent, he said.

Secretary of the Army Clifford Alexander responded by calling Senator Nunn's charges "patent nonsense" based on "shopworn and outdated" statistics. He offered no more specific refutation, but added, "Any fair reading of skill qualification test scores demonstrates beyond a shadow of a doubt that more and more soldiers this year are better able to perform their military mission."

Senator Nunn is sponsoring a controversial bill, now on the Senate floor, to cut the Army's strength by 25,000 unless more high school graduates are recruited as volunteers.

House Armed Services Committee investigates industrial collapse

Sources close to the House Armed Services Committee report that Richard Ichord (D-Mo.) is pushing committee chairman Price (D-Ill.) to hold hearings on the inability of the U.S. industrial base to sustain a strategic buildup. Ichord, chairman of the research and development subcommittee of House Armed Services, has expressed dismay at the proportional decline of the defense budget devoted to basic Re-

search and Development. Ichord has heard from members of the civilian aerospace community that the decline is nationwide and has affected the entire industrial base of the economy.

If Price agrees to chair full committee hearings, they would likely take place in late July.

Effort to lift grain embargo underway

Senator Bob Dole (R-Kan.) introduced legislation on June 20 that would repeal the grain embargo to the Soviet Union. The measure now has the support of 20 Senators, 12 Republicans, and eight Democrats. In introducing the bill, Senator Dole declared that the embargo was not effective against the Soviets and in fact hurt U.S. producers more than it did the Soviets. "The embargo action is falling apart . . . it is very counterproductive. It puts our farmers in a straight jacket, while all the other exporting nations are free to sell."

The measure has also been introduced into the House by Congressman Jim Abner (R-S.D.). In the Senate, it is now in the Banking Committee, but no hearings have yet been scheduled. Senator Dole, who has been working most closely with Senators Eagleton (D-Mo.) and Boschwitz (R-Minn.) has been considering linking the bill to another piece of legislation to force action on it in the Senate. "We are doing strategizing now," declared an aide.

The administration is still very opposed to lifting the embargo. In an interview with farm broadcasters, Agriculture Secretary Bob

Bergland declared that if Congress passes the Dole bill it would be "an unmitigated disaster" for the United States.

An aide to Senator George McGovern, however, has said that he thinks the bill is irrelevant to the embargo itself. The embargo as far as its effects on the Soviet Union is concerned has already fallen apart, with even Canada and Australia about to resume sales. The administration has already permitted big grain companies to sell *foreign grain* to the Soviets. The only point of Bergland's protestations must be that Carter wants to keep on hurting the U.S. farmer as much as possible.

Senate passes coal conversion bill

By a vote of 86 to 7, the Senate passed a bill June 24 which orders major utilities to convert from oil to coal. The bill was sponsored by Sen. Wendell Ford (D-Ky.) and had as co-sponsors Senators Byrd (D-W.Va.) and Jackson (D-Wash.), and was originally introduced March 24. It directs 38 power plants to convert from oil to coal. These plants are largely located in the Northeast. The legislation authorizes \$4 billion to assist the utilities in their conversion. The target date for the full conversion is 1985.

The same measure has been introduced into the House subcommittee on energy and power, which has already held hearings on it. However, there is opposition to the bill there, including from the subcommittee chairman Congressman John Dingell (D-Mich.) and Capitol Hill sources report that he may not move it in the subcommittee.