

Congressional Calendar by Barbara Dreyfuss and Susan Kokinda

Senate Judiciary to probe Billy Carter, Vesco

Two separate but related investigations are underway in the Senate Judiciary Committee on Billy Carter and fugitive financier Robert Vesco.

The more publicized of these involves Billy Carter's activities on behalf of Libya and the relationship of various members of the Carter administration to that. On July 23 the Senate Judiciary Committee voted to appoint a four-man panel to work out the mechanics of such an investigation.

Members are Birch Bayh (D-Ind.) (acting chairman of the Judiciary Committee—Senator Kennedy has excused himself from the investigations for obvious political reasons), Max Baucus (D-Mont.), ranking Republican Strom Thurmond (R-S.C.) and Senator Bob Dole (R-Kans.).

Whether the investigation will be carried out solely by the Judiciary Committee, or by a combination of the Judiciary Committee and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, or by a totally new "Watergate" committee, is still to be worked out. Senator Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) has called on the Foreign Relations Committee to participate in such an investigation.

Less publicized, but potentially very damaging, is a Judiciary Committee investigation which has been ongoing for three months. Senator Dennis Deconcini (D-Ariz.) and Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) began an in-

vestigation in April of the Justice Department's closing of several politically sensitive investigations. The most explosive of these is the Robert Vesco case, which Deconcini and Hatch are now concentrating on.

This involves attempted influence-buying by Vesco of top administration officials; and it could implicate Hamilton Jordan, DNC chairman John White and Carter/Mondale Committee chairman Robert Strauss in shady business deals.

At the July 23 Judiciary Committee meeting the suggestion was made to combine the two investigations. Deconcini disagreed, and the Vesco investigation will continue separately from the Billy Carter investigation. But observers noted that numerous links have already surfaced between Vesco's and Billy Carter's Libyan connections, and that the two investigations will undoubtedly interlock.

House debates railroad deregulation

The House postponed debate July 21 on the controversial proposal sponsored by Congressmen Florio (D-N.J.) and Madigan (R-Ill.) to deregulate railroad industry tariffs. The postponement was made in an effort to work out a compromise with the opponents of the bill led by Congressman Eckhardt (D-Tex.), who fear that the rate deregulation will severely hurt farm and utility

interests. Congressman Eckhardt met with Transportation Secretary Neil Goldschmidt and White House economic advisor Stu Eizenstat who are backing the bill. No agreement was reached.

Congressman Eckhardt intends to introduce a number of amendments. One particular amendment would allow the ICC to enter the picture when railroad rates exceed a certain percentage of a railroad's variable costs. Eckhardt also wants to exempt those who ship grains, cotton, soybeans and rice.

However, the House is expected to pass the bill in some form.

Biden issues drug report

Senator Joe Biden (D-Del.) chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee subcommittee on criminal justice, released a report on July 17 which details the results of his trip to the Mediterranean and the Middle East to investigate international drug running activities.

Biden had earlier proposed to the NATO Committee on the Challenges of Modern Society that NATO play a greater role in the fight against international narcotics. In the same speech, delivered in late 1979, Biden stated that he was going to use his subcommittee to provide information which would hopefully prompt Western Europe to accept greater supranational control over narcotics enforcement.

In the report Biden states: "A major new source of heroin—in the unpoliced tribal areas of Iran, Af-

ganistan and Pakistan—dwarfs anything we have seen in the past.” He states that this new influx of heroin is already swamping Western Europe and then adds “this colossal failure in European law enforcement and the potential for a similar failure here derive mainly from the size and complexity of the threat; not from the incompetence of the law enforcement here or in Europe . . . the first step toward turning back the deadly tide of heroin must clearly be a mandate from the aroused peoples of the Western democracies to their governments.”

Emergency Ex-Im funding moving

Prodded on by a Senate resolution, the House Foreign Aid Appropriation subcommittee on July 22 rushed out a \$526 million bill to keep the Export-Import Bank in business.

The Ex-Im Bank has been virtually out of money since before the July recess, because Congress failed to pass this year’s foreign aid appropriations bill which includes the bank’s funds.

As a result Ex-Im had been held off last year’s funding levels and had virtually run out of funds to finance foreign trade.

The House subcommittee action followed the July 21 introduction of a resolution by Senator Jake Garn (R-Utah) which urged the House to move immediately to restore Ex-Im funding.

Garn noted that his Senate Joint Resolution 191 was technically an appropriations bill which by tradition should originate in the House, but Garn said in introducing the resolution, “The purpose of this resolution is informational . . . so the hope would be that the House would pass a resolution very similar to this which we could then pass quickly and send to the President without delay.”

The Garn resolution would increase the available direct loan authority from \$3.75 billion, which has already been used, by another \$1.25 billion to a total of \$5 billion.

Because of budget ceiling constraints, the increase has to be authorized in a series of smaller amounts, and this method is what the House approved on July 22 with their \$526 million appropriation. The rest of the money will come over the course of the year as the second and final budget ceilings are set by the Congress.

Senate debates Alaska lands bill

The Senate began debate July 21 on the very controversial Alaska lands bill, a bill that will determine whether the enormous economic resources of Alaska will be tapped for economic development or kept locked up by the environmentalists. The bill under consideration was drafted by the Senate Energy Committee, and would place 102 million acres under permanent protection

as national parks, wildlife refuges and wild and scenic rivers and forests.

A bill passed last year by the House would have placed even more lands under protection, closing 128 million acres to timbering, oil drilling and mining.

Alaska Senator Mike Gravel (D), who has led the fight against the environmentalists made it clear that the issue involved is much broader than the question of one state’s resources. “The issue here is not Alaska lands and Alaska. That couldn’t be farther from the truth,” the Senator declared. “What’s at stake here is the next great battle between the preservationists and those who favor economic growth.”

Environmentalist groups have launched a campaign, with the backing of the Carter administration, to force the Senate to withdraw more acres from development. They are urging the Senate to support substitute legislation by Senator Paul Tsongas (D-Mass.), which would put more land into wilderness and highly protected classifications.

At a meeting in the East Room of the White House, held to inspire environmentalists and other members of the Alaska Coalition seeking to keep Alaska closed to development, President Carter declared that he was determined to prevent development of Alaska’s resources. “Preserving Alaska’s priceless natural resources is my number one environmental priority.”