

## Congressional Closeup by Ronald Kokinda and Susan Kokinda

### House Committee would halt ASAT procurement

The House Appropriations Committee is sending a defense appropriations bill to the floor which would eliminate advanced procurement for the ASAT anti-satellite system and demand that the President submit a comprehensive report to the Congress on "U.S. policy on arms-control plans and objectives in the field of ASAT and space weapons . . . to negotiate a verifiable agreement with the Soviet Union to ban or strictly limit existing and future ASAT systems" by no later than March 30, 1984. The House is set to begin floor consideration of the defense appropriations bill on Oct. 26.

An amendment sponsored by Rep. Matthew McHugh (D-N.Y.) would have stopped the testing of the ASAT as well, but a compromise killed the procurement while allowing testing to continue. The Soviets have already tested and deployed an anti-satellite system capable of threatening U.S. systems in space.

Other leading opponents in the Appropriations Committee of proceeding with procurement were Reps. Lawrence Coughlin (R-Pa.), Joseph Addabbo (D-N.Y.), Norman Dicks (D-Wash.), and the ranking Republican on the defense subcommittee, Rep. Jack Edwards (R-Ala.). While Edwards' office claims he supported the compromise so that ASAT testing would not also be lost, Edwards, in a recent town meeting in his district, said that the President's March 23 proposals for strategic defense "would never work," and that he did not support them. The ASAT system has been viewed by many as a test case for weapons in space.

ASAT proponents are deciding on a strategy to preserve the ASAT procurement. Some favor an attempt to amend the defense bill on the floor,

which, if the last ASAT vote is an indication, would pass by a 40-vote margin. Others, fearing a debate on arms-control strategy, want the House to pass the bill as is and knock out the House version in the House Senate conference. The Senate has approved ASAT advanced procurement and no moves are underway there to ban these systems.

### House sets hearings on beam weapon defense

The Investigations and Research and Development subcommittees of the House Armed Services Committee have scheduled a joint hearing on Nov. 9 on the People Protection Act (H.R. 3073) for directed energy beam defense. These will be the first House hearings on beam weapons since the President made his policy proposal on March 23. Introduced by Rep. Ken Kramer (R-Colo.), the act seeks to accelerate the strategic defense beam weapon program by encouraging organizational changes and greater unified effort by the Defense and Energy Departments and NASA.

Apart from Defense Department witnesses, those expected to testify include Dr. James Fletcher, who headed the task force that has now reported to the President on strategic defense; Dr. Edward Teller, who recently called for a "new Manhattan Project"; Dr. Colin Gray; Dr. Buzz Aldrin; and Reps. Ken Kramer and Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.).

### Clinch River breeder defeated in Senate

The years-long effort of environmentalist networks backed by the Soviet KGB to defeat the Clinch River Breeder Reactor finally succeeded on Oct. 26, thanks to the assistance of

"free enterprisers" of the Heritage Foundation circuit. By a vote of 56 to 40 the Senate defeated a private sector cost-sharing plan which would have allowed completion of the project. Construction on the breeder was scheduled to begin this fall. The project is vital to meet future U.S. energy needs and advanced nuclear capabilities.

President Reagan intervened forcefully into the debate by sending a letter to Energy Committee Chairman James McClure (R-Id.) which said, "It truly would be ironic if on this 10th anniversary of this [Arab oil] embargo, during a time of heightened tension in the Middle East, we refused to complete this project at a cost equivalent to approximately eight days of imported oil. . . ."

McClure, one the Senate's leading advocates of Clinch River, has stressed the same theme of Mideast instability and the danger to U.S. national security. McClure blamed not only his colleagues, but also the American people for their shortsightedness on critical national issues: "I am very much concerned that the attention span of the American people, directed as it is by the American media, is about that of a 3-year old. I have a 3-year-old granddaughter who has greater consistency of purpose than this Nation seems to have in meeting our energy crisis. We do have an energy crisis—past, present, and future."

Leading the floor fight against Clinch River were Dale Bumpers (D-Ark.) and Gordon Humphrey (R-N.H.). Bumpers is notorious not only for his participation in the Claiborne Pell-led delegation to Moscow in August which embraced Yuri Andropov's not-so-generous offer to ban (American) weapons in space, but for his political compatibility with his wife, Betty Bumpers, founder of the KGB's "PeaceLinks" women's group.

Humphrey is steered by the Heritage Foundation and his staff member Henry Sokolski, also close to the Heritage group. Each of the presidential candidates present (Glenn, Cranston, and Hart) voted against Clinch River.

Supporters of Clinch River knew that they had to win in the Senate since support for the project has long since been undermined in the House. The strategy was to pass the necessary amendment in the Senate and then seek de facto House approval during conference committee action between the two houses. While supporters will look for a way to revive the project, most view the defeat as final.

## **D** Decline of agriculture exports debated

The precipitous drop in the value and volume of U.S. exports of agricultural products came under Congressional scrutiny in hearings before the House Agriculture Committee on Oct. 18. Virtually every witness—from the administration to Congressional witnesses to agricultural spokesmen—pointed to the international debt crisis as the fundamental reason for the collapse in U.S. exports.

But the solutions proposed have been worse than the problem in most instances. Block, in testimony at the Oct. 18 hearings, and again on Oct. 25 before the same Committee, called for Congressional approval of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) bailout bill as the answer to the U.S. export collapse. Block showed the dangerous Malthusian thinking which has infected the administration as it continues to support the austerity policies of the IMF, by arguing that the problem of hunger in Africa stems from the "rapid population growth" which has curbed the continent's ability to produce food.

A State Department spokesman testifying at the Oct. 25 hearings, Mr. Streeb, argued that the problem of world hunger is related to many other factors: "It is linked to limiting population growth, to health measures and to the prevention of further environmental destruction."

But it was Under Secretary of State for Economic Affairs, W. Allen Wallis, who laid out the most chilling implications of the current regime of austerity. Wallis argued that "Demand will continue to grow relatively slowly for at least the next few years, and certainly will grow much more slowly than production, which almost everywhere is increasing." Demand, to the mind of the book-balancers, clearly means what countries can pay for under current conditions of indebtedness, not what their increasingly undernourished populations need to stay alive.

Congressional alternatives to the agricultural export collapse have been shortsighted at best. Rep. Cooper Evans (R-Iowa), who testified on Oct. 18, eloquently laid out the magnitude of the debt crisis and then proposed to sidestep it by arranging barter deals with countries which do not have the foreign currency to purchase U.S. farm products. Senate Agriculture Committee Chairman Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) has proposed to extend the PIK (Payment In Kind) program to those who export American farm surplus. Under PIK, farmers are given government-owned surplus crops to sell in exchange for cutting back on production, on the perverse assumption of an "oversupply" of products.

## **H**ouse slaps Philippine government

The House of Representatives passed House Concurrent Resolution 187 on

Oct. 25, deploring the assassination of opposition leader Benigno Aquino and calling for U.S. policy to "support genuine, free, and fair elections to the National Assembly [of the Philippines] in May 1984." The passage of this resolution, which restates obvious U.S. intentions, is widely interpreted by Capitol Hill observers as a not-so-disguised slap at the Philippine government and its President, Ferdinand Marcos.

The resolution was sponsored and initiated by Rep. Stephen Solarz (D-N.Y.), in his capacity as chairman of the Asia and Pacific subcommittee of the House Foreign Affairs Committee. An opponent of U.S. military presence overseas generally, Solarz was nevertheless one of the most outspoken advocates of U.S. military assistance to the British during the Malvinas war.

The resolution passed by an overwhelming 413 to 3, with five members voting "present," because the administration and its allies in the Congress were able to arrive at a more "balanced" resolution as that originally proposed by Solarz.

But as Rep. Eldon Rudd (R-Ariz.), one of the strong opponents of the resolution, put it, the resolution "contains a thinly veiled message that is likely to do nothing more than make both the Marcos government, and all of its enemies—radical or not—even more intractable. By explicitly stating our resolve 'that the Philippine Government's actions [be taken] into account in our relations,' are we merely stating the obvious, or are we making matters worse by appearing like the arrogant colossus of the North?"

"I am afraid that the resolution will be interpreted by all Philippine factions in this negative light, not as the type of diplomatic encouragement critically needed at this crisis point in the Philippines," he said.