

## **Congressional Closeup** by Ronald Kokinda and Susan Kokinda

### **Senate hears call to shut down waterways**

The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee held hearings Feb. 22 on the Grace Commission's recommendations to implement 100% cost recovery on the nation's ports and inland waterways. User fees of that scale would effectively shut down water transportation in the United States.

J. Peter Grace, chairman of the President's Private Sector Survey on Cost Control, put forward the "free enterprise" argument at the hearings, stating that "when government services or products benefit a specific identifiable group of beneficiaries and those services and products are not shared by the general public, those beneficiaries should pay for those services and products provided."

Grace thus ignored the evidence that transportation efficiency is a fundamental factor in determining the productivity of the entire goods-producing sector.

Capitol Hill observers noted that Grace's appearance before the full committee was orchestrated to give a major boost to S.1739, a committee-passed bill which establishes the principle of cost recovery on a widespread basis for the first time. Although S.1739 calls only for partial cost recovery from the users, Grace identified the importance of the precedent:

"If it is impractical, because of political reasons, to impose user fees at a level which makes good business sense, we would strongly agree with the concept advocated by Senator Simpson that at least some effort should be made to reduce the costs that government absorbs each year."

Water subcommittee chairman Sen. Jim Abdnor (R-S.D.), a traditionalist who supports the government's role in water and power development, would normally be expected

to conduct hearings on such a topic, but appeared not to want to give Grace a platform. The hearing was held at the full committee level with the most rabid cost-recovery advocates such as Alan Simpson (R-Wyo.) and John Chaffee (R-R.I.) present.

S.1739 is expected to pass the Senate this year, because there is pressure to implement cost recovery, but also because it is the first bill to authorize new water projects—on any basis—in many years.

### **Melcher blasts blockage of Philippines aid**

Senator John Melcher challenged Deputy Secretary of Agriculture Richard E. Lyng on Feb. 23 to respond immediately to an urgent request from himself and diverse individuals and organizations in the Philippines for U.S. food assistance.

Speaking before a Senate Agriculture Subcommittee on Foreign Agricultural Policy, Melcher said that a Dec. 27, 1983 letter from Jaime Cardinal Sin to the administration asking for a \$9.9 million food assistance commitment from the United States has gone unanswered.

Melcher noted that the request could be met in two days' time, "but we can't jack a commitment out of the bureaucracy." Melcher traveled to the Philippines at the end of 1983 and has been advocating increased aid to the country, in exchange for certain political concessions by President Marcos, as a way of stabilizing a vital U.S. ally.

Melcher pointed to the growing military capabilities of the Soviet Union in the area as grounds for the United States to take dramatic steps to upgrade its relationship to the Pacific Basin and to stabilize key allies in the region.

According to Washington sources,

Melcher's efforts to present a workable policy to the Reagan administration for U.S.-Philippines relations has not moved to the appropriate levels necessary for action. Melcher said, "Despite . . . the fact that we in Washington are in general agreement on the necessity of increasing, through sales, trade, or barter, the distribution of surplus agricultural commodities, the administration seems unwilling to act swiftly or realistically."

On the day Melcher made his appeal, Sen. Ted Kennedy (D-Mass.) and Rep. Steven Solarz (D-N.Y.), were hosting a leader of the State Department-created "moderate" opposition to Marcos, Salvador Laurel, at a Capitol Hill luncheon. Laurel's tour of the United States has been sponsored by organizations tied to Ramsey Clark and Richard Falk, who were instrumental in bringing the Aytollah Khomeini into power in Iran and who are intent on the Iranization of the Philippines.

Kennedy is the sponsor of Concurrent Resolution 71, which calls for an independent investigation into the assassination of Filipino opposition leader Benigno Aquino and would fuel the destabilization moves against the Philippines. The resolution has not been acted upon because Senator Melcher has used his Senate prerogative to put a "hold" on it.

### **Blackmail builds on the federal deficit**

Congressional pressure continues to build against the White House to slash the U.S. defense budget, cut entitlement programs, and increase the burden on the American taxpayer. The point man threatening an economic downturn unless the White House capitulates is Federal Reserve Board Chairman Paul Volcker. But the polit-

ical heat on deficits being generated by Congress is giving Volcker the leverage he needs.

Among recent moves is Senate Concurrent Resolution 96, introduced on Feb. 22 by Lawton Chiles (D-Fla.) and 26 other Senate Democrats. The resolution calls on President Reagan to resubmit an entirely new budget to Congress within 30 days which will reduce deficits by at least \$200 billion over three years by a "balance of fair spending, restraint, and revenue increases."

The most dangerous pressure on the White House comes from Republicans like Robert Dole (R-Kans.) who, as chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, is working on its own plan for a \$100 billion deficit reduction. Dole and House Ways and Means Committee chairman Dan Rostenkowski (D-Ill.) are preparing to submit plans for tax increases, a move that will be strenuously resisted by Rep. Jack Kemp (R-N.Y.) and a group of over 100 House Republicans.

In a statement announcing his committee's hearings, Dole approvingly cited the House resolution from 1983 demanding deficit reductions passed through the efforts of freshman Democrats.

Congressional Democrats have meanwhile agreed to return to the bipartisan deficit reduction negotiations initiated by President Reagan, despite lack of action on their earlier demands that the administration suggest specific ways to cut the Defense Budget. The Democrats' latest proposal, borrowed from former President Gerald Ford, is to save \$173 billion by stretching defense programs from five years to six.

Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger denounced such proposals because they would slow down reconstruction of U.S. defense capability, and increase the cost of the programs in the long run.

## Committee airs Cuban drug-running role

The Task Force on International Narcotics of the House Foreign Affairs Committee conducted hearings on the Cuban role in narcotics trafficking through the Caribbean and Latin America. At the Feb. 21 hearings, Rep. Larry Smith (D-Fla.) charged that "we have growing evidence that Cuba not only helps in the transshipment of drugs but also that it is the keystone in the shipment by drug traffickers of arms to terrorists."

Leading witness Sen. Lawton Chiles (D-Fla.) urged the administration to wage a public campaign against the Cuban role in drug trafficking, using such forums as the United Nations and the Organization of American States. Chiles has introduced a resolution to that effect in the Senate, with 22 cosponsors. Rep. Ed Feighan (D-Ohio) announced that he would pursue a similar resolution in the House, although Rep. Henry Hyde (R-Ill.) questioned the value of pursuing anything in the United Nations. Chiles remarked on the apparent reluctance of the State Department to embark on any public campaign against the Cuban role, speculating that it was a result of "State Department career-type activities."

It is well known in Washington that so-called foreign policy considerations have often been used as the pretext by Kissinger protégés in the State Department to protect the drug-running networks of their international allies.

State Department spokesman James Michel, representing U.S. Ambassador to the OAS William Miden-dorf, testified after Chiles, and went so far as to state that Cuba, which is involved in the training of Latin American insurgent groups in guerilla and terrorist techniques and in the supplying them with arms, "still finds at-

tractive the protection of drug traffickers . . . in order to facility arms deliveries" to the rest of Latin America.

## Anti-beam senators call for U.S.-Soviet space cooperation

Senators Spark Matsunaga (D-Hawaii), Claiborn Pell (D-R.I.), and Charles Matthias (R-Md.) have introduced a resolution calling for "East-West cooperation in space as an alternative to a space arms race." The resolution calls upon the President of the United States to renew the five-year space cooperation agreement with the Soviet Union that was initiated by President Nixon in 1972 and allowed to lapse in 1982. The resolution also urges the President to renew East-West planning for joint activities in fields such as space medicine and biology, space rescue, planetary science, and space exploration.

While the resolution makes no mention of "a space arms race" other than in its title, its three sponsors are among the Senate's leading opponents of the beam weapon ballistic missile defense system President Reagan proposed last March 23, portions of which would be based in space. Indeed, Pell, one of the top Harriminate Democrats in the Senate, was the last Westerner to see Yuri Andropov alive during an August 1983 meeting in which Andropov urged the senator and his allies to push for a ban on a space arms race.

In a related development, sources on Capitol Hill report that the President's request for funding for beam weapons could run into difficulties on Capitol Hill. The sources cite the fact that the administration has not yet appointed a head for the newly created office, which will function under the secretary of defense, and state that the lack of a spokesman to defend the program leaves the funding request open to attack.