

## Congressional Closeup by Ronald Kokinda and Susan Kokinda

### Water bill includes cost-sharing provision

An omnibus water projects authorization bill (H.R. 6) was reported out of the House Public Works Committee on June 26. The legislation accepts the administration's concepts of users' fees and cost sharing, in a major departure from traditional federal funding of necessary infrastructure projects.

The bill provides \$12 billion for 260 new water projects, and, if passed, would be the first legislation authorizing new projects since 1976. Authorization of new projects has been held up because of the debate between supporters of government-funded infrastructure, and the administration, led by the Office of Management and the Budget (OMB), which has fully adopted the free-market cost-sharing approach.

In a statement from the floor of Congress attacking the "accountant's mentality" in the Reagan administration, which insists that the commercial navigation industry be the sole beneficiary of government-supported water projects, Rep. Nick Joe Rahall (D-W. Va.) warned that "the system of ports, locks and dams which . . . allows for the free flow of commerce, will deteriorate beyond our nation's ability to restore it. Ultimately, those who will suffer are none other than the general public."

In a related development, the Senate backed away from its opposition to user fees, in an effort to pass the Supplemental Appropriations bill, which includes new water projects. The Senate agreed to an Office of Management and the Budget plan which increases the local share in constructing, operating, and maintaining ports and dams and which increases

the diesel fuel tax to pay for inland waterways.

The Senate had been trying to get a number of water projects through in the supplemental bill, before such cost-sharing measures went into effect. The administration had threatened to veto the supplemental bill if it included such projects. The House of Representatives had already backed down in the effort to put such projects through without cost-sharing.

### Intelligence officials testify on Soviet buildup

Under prodding from Sen. James A. McClure (R-Idaho) and others, the Senate Armed Services Committee and the Senate Defense Appropriations Subcommittee brought two senior intelligence officers on June 26 to testify on the administration's latest National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) on the Soviet strategic buildup.

The hearings were unusual in that high-ranking intelligence officials appeared at public hearings, and in that an unclassified version of the NIE was released. Deputy CIA Director for Intelligence Robert Gates and National Intelligence Officer Lawrence Gershwin testified.

Besides describing the massive Soviet buildup of missiles (see *National News*, page 62), the officials also stressed that the Soviet leadership's main objective is to develop a nuclear war-fighting capability. Gershwin stated that the Soviets are developing the capability to deploy a nationwide antiballistic-missile system in the next few years.

Senator Gary Hart (D-Colo.) attacked the very convening of the hearings, charging that the release of such

information served to "politicize" the CIA, in an effort to build support for President Reagan's defense budget. Defense Appropriations Subcommittee Chairman Ted Stevens (R-Alaska) defended the hearings by simply pointing out that the information released is known by the Soviets and by the U.S. government—and that it is only the U.S. population which has hitherto been in the dark. Senator Al D'Amato (R-N.Y.) interrupted Hart to say, "I am shocked that we continue to insulate the public from this information. We should get this information out, especially in the area of the Soviet strategic defense program."

McClure, who has taken a leading role in forcing the administration to admit to Soviet arms-control violations and in bringing the Soviet buildup to the public eye, responded to the NIE by saying that there is a "missile gap" between the United States and the Soviet Union. He also warned that the report indicates "that the Soviet Union plans to break out of the SALT II and ABM treaties."

### Senate Judiciary considers OSI probe

A Senate Judiciary Committee probe into the Department of Justice's Office of Special Investigations is under "active consideration," a spokesman for the committee stated to *EIR* on June 26. A decision to go ahead with hearings on the OSI could come within the next two weeks. The Committee is chaired by Sen. Strom Thurmond (R-S.C.).

Created under the pretext of hunting down Nazi war criminals, the OSI has been accused of being a Soviet operation, whose purpose is to harass

and drive out of the United States top scientists, particularly those working in vital defense programs. Several groups and prominent individuals, such as former Army Ballistic Missile Defense program head Gen. J. Bruce Medaris (see article, page 55), have charged the OSI with basing its investigations solely upon information manufactured by the Soviet Union and East Germany.

## **Dole seeks to push farm bill on fast track**

Senate Majority Leader Robert Dole (Kans.) has put pressure on the Senate and House Agriculture Committees to report new farm legislation out to the floor, so that action can be taken before the August recess. In response, the Senate Agriculture Committee voted to finish its work by July 15, while the House moved on a similar deadline.

The usual result of such pressure-cooker tactics on the part of Dole, is to steamroll through some particularly odious policy without debate. In the case of the farm bill, this means drastic cuts in agricultural production.

Some of the proposals to cut production, which saw legislative or executive action before the July 4 recess, included:

- A June 25 vote by the Wheat Subcommittee of the House Agriculture Committee to support a special referendum giving farmers a "choice" of methods by which they will cut production. The referendum will ask wheat and soybean farmers if they want to accept mandatory production cuts of as much as 20-35%, in exchange for higher price supports. If the referendum is not accepted by 60% of the

farmers, the wheat and soybean programs will revert to a more "market-oriented plan," which will cut prices.

For over a year now, the international grain cartels' spokesmen and associated think tanks have been arguing for exactly this: forcing farmers to choose between mandatory production quotas and a "free market" (and grain cartel-controlled) agricultural economy.

- A June 26 vote in the Dairy Subcommittee of House Agriculture Committee will resume payments to dairy farmers for not producing milk. Put together by subcommittee chairman Tony Coelho, and garnering general support from dairy producers nationwide, this portion of the farm bill establishes a dairy farmer-financed fund which will pay farmers not to produce, to reduce the dairy-products "surplus." The legislation also increases price supports.

Farmers were again presented with the choice of taxing themselves to pay themselves for not producing or of accepting the administration's proposal of lowering price supports and letting the "free market" drive them out of business.

- On June 27, Agriculture Secretary John Block proposed a 10-year, multibillion dollar "conservation reserve," which could retire as much as 20 million acres of the nation's most allegedly "erodible" cropland. According to a USDA spokesman, the Agriculture Department and farmers would share the cost of planting grass or trees on "erodible" land, and then farmers would be paid to keep that land out of production.

Block's embrace of this plan, which had previously been opposed by the administration, marks an acceptance of two dangerous concepts: one, that there is too much land in

production; and two, that some land should not be farmed because it is a fixed, "erodible" resource whose productivity cannot be improved with technology.

## **FEC receives setback in House**

The Federal Election Commission was dealt a setback in the House on June 26, when its FY 86 authorization failed by a vote of 263 to 160, short of the two-thirds necessary for passage under a suspension of the rules. Whether supporters of the FEC will attempt to bring the bill back onto the floor where it will face amendments and a recorded vote, or whether they will simply ignore authorization for the FEC, is unclear at this time. The Congress has continued to fund the FEC, but has not authorized the money since 1979.

Opponents charge that the FEC obstructs the democratic process by harassing candidates and placing unfair and unconstitutional restrictions on political campaigns. Congressional opponents of the Commission have fought in a more determined manner this year, after the FEC suggested several rule changes which would have insisted on no carry-over of funds from primary to general election campaigns, ending each campaign without a surplus, and other measures, which would create additional nightmares for candidates. Opponents are attempting to ensure that the FEC is stopped from making new laws by executive fiat.

Opponents in the House are not going after the elimination of the hated FEC bureaucracy, but are merely trying to lessen the extent of its interference in the election process.