

Junket season: Where is your congressman?

by Kathleen Klenetsky

Dozens of congressional junkets are taking place during the month-long August recess, most of them financed by government funds. But they shouldn't be dismissed merely as a taxpayer ripoff. Many of these trips could adversely affect foreign and economic policy, or result in the brainwashing of your senator or Congressman.

Senate Majority Leader Robert Dole (R-Kan.), on the eve of his departure for a tour of Japan, China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and South Korea on Aug. 14, made it clear that his purpose is to engage in "Jap-bashing," no doubt believing that such a display will boost his presidential ambitions—even if it further alienates America's most important Pacific ally.

Dole told home-state reporters that he will use the threat of protectionist legislation to wrest trade concessions from Japan. "I think we have to be very—I don't want to say nasty—but we have to be very firm with the Japanese," Dole said. "And I'm willing to tell them . . . that unless there's some rather sharp change in the balance of trade over there very quickly, some of these [protectionist] bills are going to pass. . . . They're going to have to limit what they export to our country [and] start consuming more American goods."

The six senators traveling with Dole include Moynihan (D-N.Y.), Domenici (R-N.M.), Wilson (R-Ca.), McClure (R-Id.), Cohen (R-Me.), and Evans (R-Wash.).

The Soviet Union is a favored destination for Capitol Hill junketeers, who can be expected to be recruited to the Kremlin's pre-summit propaganda campaign against the Strategic Defense Initiative. The most important such trip is being led by Sen. Robert Byrd (D-W.Va.), who leaves Aug. 27 and will carry a letter from President Reagan to Mikhail Gorbachov. Also making the trip will be Senators Pell (D-R.I.), Nunn (D-Ga.), Mitchell (D-Maine), DeConcini (D-Ariz.), Sarbanes (D-Md.), Thurmond (R-S.C.), and Warner (R-Va.). Byrd will also stop in Budapest to promote U.S.-Hungarian trade.

Also traveling to the Soviet Union is a delegation of House Agriculture Committee members, led by Rep. Howard Volkmer (D-Mo.), which will discuss increasing U.S. grain sales to Moscow.

Sen. Jeff Bingaman (R-N.M.) returned in mid-August from a trip to the Soviet Union supposedly aimed at assessing

Russia's strategic defense program. Accompanied by two aides who both used to work for the State Department, Bingaman visited Soviet research facilities, and met with Soviet officials to discuss arms control. A Democratic liberal, Bingaman opposes SDI deployment.

Other overseas trips include:

- Rep. Steve Solarz (D-N.Y.) is visiting South Africa, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Kenya, Nigeria, Zaire, and possibly Angola. Rep. Norm Shumway (R-Ca.) is also touring South Africa.

- Rep. Jack Kemp (D-N.Y.) will swing through the Pacific, stopping in the Philippines, Japan, Korea and Taiwan.

- Ten House Armed Service Committee members are going to Tunisia, Spain, Morocco, Portugal, and Yugoslavia.

- Senate Intelligence Committee chairman David Dur-enberger (R-Minn.) is traveling to Warsaw, Stockholm, Zurich, Munich, and Heidelberg.

- Sen. Phil Gramm (R-Tex.) goes to Japan, Korea, and Hawaii to study the Pacific-military command structure.

- Sen. Ted Stevens (R-Al.) was in Geneva in mid-August for conferences on disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation.

- Sen. Edward Zorinsky (D-Neb.) goes to Ottawa in early September for a meeting of the Interparliamentary Union.

- House Democratic leader Jim Wright (D-Tex.) is leading a group of 12 congressmen to Yugoslavia, Geneva, and Italy.

- Rep. Pete Rodino (D-N.J.), chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, and six other committee members, are slated to visit China, Pakistan, Thailand, and Hong Kong to discuss drug smuggling and Kampuchean refugees.

In a class by itself is the 10-day trip to Israel of Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.), a powerful conservative on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Helms told the press in Tel Aviv on Aug. 10 that the United States should forge a defense pact with Israel modeled on NATO. He advocated such an accord because of "Israel's defense capabilities, which are of benefit to the entire free world," and recommended that much of the U.S. aid given to Israel be in the framework of a defense pact. "I hope the American people will understand that Israel is the only reliable ally we have in this region," said Helms. "It is for freedom, against communism, and its moral principles are impeccable in every way."

Helms's trip, reportedly arranged and financed by the Zionist Organization of America, should be viewed as part of an effort to brainwash the influential Senator, by the same people who have opposed him on the fundamental issues of defense, the effort to "decouple" Western Europe from the United States, and the nomination of "decoupler" Richard Burt to be ambassador to Bonn—which Helms fought in the Senate. These people are trying to push Helms into the arms of the Soviets' partners in destabilizing the Middle East, the faction of the former Israeli defense minister Ariel Sharon.