

Congressional Closeup by Ronald Kokinda

Farm-production controls backers gain headway

The House Agriculture subcommittee on Wheat, Soybeans and Feedgrains held hearings on March 31 on proposed changes to the 1985 Farm Bill, including supply management or mandatory production controls. While supporters do not expect the Congress to enact such legislation this year, they feel that with growing farm sector and budget deficit problems, time is on their side.

The "Family Farm Act" sponsored by Sen. Tom Harkin (D-Iowa), S. 658, and Rep. Richard Gephardt (D-Mo.), H.R. 1425, in the Senate and House respectively, is the leading production control bill.

Harkin-Gephardt proposes a 70% of cost of production or parity price for 1988, which would increase 1% per year for five years, with a goal of 80% of parity for farm goods by the year 1998-2000. Seventy-five percent of parity was the average farm price for the 1960s and 1970s, but farmers get 40-50% of parity today. Rather than limiting acreage put into production, their bill would put limits on the units of the commodity which the farmer would be allowed to produce.

While introducing the parity concept, it accepts the dangerous premise that the current collapse in purchasing power and consumption is an over-production glut.

Gephardt's office admits that this approach could affect input industries such as fertilizer, pesticides, etc., already in depression conditions. When acreage is limited, farmers usually increase the energy inputs into their better land. Committee opponents also fear that it could harm exports, increase costs to consumers, and hurt the livestock sector dependent on feed

grains.

The Reagan administration has proposed roughly \$5 billion in farm program cuts, but House Budget Committee Chairman Rep. Bill Gray (D-Pa.) has informally indicated that about \$1 billion in cuts will be required.

Gephardt advocates his farm proposal partly on the basis that it is a "major budget bill" projected to save \$75 billion over 10 years.

Bentley calls for Marshall Plan for U.S.

Rep. Helen Bentley (R-Md.) called for a Marshall Plan for America March 26 "similar to the Marshall Plan that helped our World War II enemies to rebuild their shattered economies and emerge into the postwar, contemporary era as industrial giants."

Bentley has introduced a non-binding House Joint Resolution entitled "To Establish a Committee for the Restoration of the Industrial Base," which she terms a Marshall Plan Commission. The committee would have nine members appointed by the House and Senate, to study and formulate ways to help rebuild the industrial base.

"It is time to recognize we are backing, without direction, into a position of economic and industrial dependence on the rest of the world," Bentley said. "It is time to admit this position is untenable, and that aggressive inspired leadership is necessary to initiate the sweeping changes in national attitudes and policies we so desperately need." Bentley said that "in certain areas of government activity such as taxing, regulatory control, purchasing, trade, etc., new and clear cut policies and priorities must be es-

tablished."

"U.S. tax laws, instead of stimulating domestic investment in new plants, equipment and technology, have encouraged American corporations to move offshore," Bentley said. They got the tax break whether they "built their plants inside the country or abroad."

Bentley urged that an investment tax credit be used to, among other things, promote a "resurgence in research and development."

She criticized the Trade Agreements Act of 1979 for allowing the President to waive any "Buy America" provisions of previous laws. "This myopic policy has led to billions of dollars in purchases of foreign products by the U.S. government—including everything from machine tools to trucks," she said.

Congress struggles for advantage on Contra funds

The Senate failed to stop a filibuster by Contra supporters, allowing the last \$40 million installment of \$100 million in aid voted for the Contras last year to be disbursed. But the 54 votes which Contra opponents mustered (60 being necessary to cut off debate), has set off new efforts to redefine U.S. policy toward Central America and Nicaragua.

Sen. Frank Murkowski (R-Alaska) said March 25 that he voted to honor the \$100 million commitment, but that he had done so "with the understanding that in the future, we are going to have to find a new basis for a national consensus on policy toward Nicaragua." Sen. Larry Pressler (R-S.D.) made a similar statement.

"I suggest that the question should not be the overthrow of the government of Nicaragua," Murkowski said, but a trade-off which he introduced as Sen. Res. 172. "U.S. Contra aid would cease completely if the Soviets, Cubans, and their weapons are withdrawn, not just new Soviet aid suspended."

While Murkowski supports the Arias (President of Costa Rica) peace plan with this modification, 111 Congressmen sent a letter to Reagan March 30 urging a cutoff in military aid for a 90 day ceasefire in the region and bilateral U.S.-Nicaragua talks. Signers included 42 House members who had voted for the \$100 million last year.

Sen. Chris Dodd (D-Conn.) introduced S. 184 on Jan. 6 to provide \$300 million in assistance to Costa Rica, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras, and end Contra funding entirely.

Contagion 'civil rights' faction holds key posts

Several Congressmen who submitted a friend of the court brief to the Supreme Court in the *School Board of Nassau Co., Fla., vs. Arline* decision supporting the court's opinion that people who have contagious diseases are protected as handicapped under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, hold key committee positions with jurisdiction over the nation's public health laws.

In their *amicus curiae* brief, they argue that Sec. 504 of the Act "unambiguously prohibits discrimination against individuals who have or are perceived to have contagious diseases," consistent with their view that AIDS has civil rights. They claim they

"would oppose any interpretation" of Sec. 504 "that would require exposing school children, or any other individuals to an appreciable risk of contracting a serious disease." Appreciable risk is the key phrase as they argue that "for example, if a disease can be transmitted only by biting, a two-year-old might be excluded from a program but an adult would not."

Sen. Lowell Weicker (R-Conn.) is ranking on the Senate subcommittee on the handicapped. Rep. Augustus Hawkins (D-Cal.) is Chairman and Rep. James Jeffords (R-Vt.) is ranking member of the House Education and Labor Committee, which has jurisdiction over Sec. 504. Rep. Henry Waxman (D-Cal.) is chairman of the House Subcommittee on Health and the Environment with jurisdiction over all public health and health regulatory laws. Sens. Cranston (D-Cal.), Inouye (D-HI.), Kennedy (D-Mass.), Simon (D-Ill.), Stafford (R-Vt.), and 27 other House members signed onto the brief.

LaRouche statements highlight NDPC testimony

The National Democratic Policy Committee (NDPC) has submitted testimony to several committees of the 100th Congress on important issues, and more NDPC appearances are scheduled during April. Policy statements by 1988 Democratic presidential contender Lyndon H. LaRouche have been prominently featured.

The NDPC submitted testimony on the trade issue to the Senate Finance Committee in February, and the House Ways and Means Committee in early

March. Two LaRouche releases, "Treasonous Trilaterals Threaten Trade War," and "Brazil Action Brings Down the IMF," were included, as well as NDPC legislation to the federal government on Emergency Economic Measures, and the Vatican document on debt, which has not been mentioned in Congress.

Testimony was also submitted to the House Foreign Affairs International Operations and the Senate Foreign Relations committees calling for a cutoff of funding to the National Endowment for Democracy, and a full investigation into this secret government apparatus, which has aided the drug lobby and Soviet interests. The NDPC is scheduled to appear before the Appropriations subcommittees that have jurisdiction over NED in early April. Mr. LaRouche's introduction to *EIR's* "Project Democracy" special report was heavily excerpted.

The House and Senate Appropriations Agriculture subcommittees received testimony, including Mr. LaRouche's policy statement "Keep the Local Banks Functioning," which applies to the insolvent Farm Credit System.

The House and Senate Appropriations Energy and Water subcommittees have also received testimony, although only the House heard oral testimony from the NDPC on April 1. LaRouche's statement condemning the Reagan veto of the highway bill and explaining the importance of infrastructure spending to help generate an economic recovery, prompted several questions from the three members at the hearing, an unusually high number. The NDPC is scheduled to testify on defense, NASA, Foreign Operations, AIDS and other issues during April.