

Congressional Closeup by William Jones

Senate upholds Civil Rights Restoration Act

In a much-publicized March 20 override of President Reagan's veto of the Civil Rights Restoration Act (or, as it is more commonly known, the Grove City Bill), the Senate opened the lid to a Pandora's Box. The name of the bill is a misnomer. It has nothing to do with civil rights.

According to the new legislation, a university (either secular or Church-affiliated) which takes nary a penny in federal aid, but which is accepting students who are receiving federal loans to finance their education, falls under the federal anti-discrimination laws. If a single institution in that university is receiving some form of federal aid, then the entire university falls under the federal anti-discrimination legislation.

Now what is this federal anti-discrimination legislation?

It encompasses the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (against discrimination on grounds of race, color, or national origin), Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (against discrimination because of sex), the Age Discrimination Act of 1978, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (concerning discrimination against the handicapped).

The bill gives a virtual carte blanche to the federal government to legislate the activities of private institutions. President Reagan noted in his veto, that it is a blow to religious freedom.

Such legislation, which applies purely negative sanctions to those whom government administrative

bodies judge to be guilty of discrimination, is incapable of dealing with the real grievances which minority groups suffer. The real problem, is that the economy of the nation as a whole is collapsing. Instead of civil rights being a program for equal sharing of economic progress, it has become a political game of sharing-out what has become a steadily increasing misery for all.

That was the case during the battles over school busing in the past, which set black and white communities over each other's throats. What is the point of busing children across town to a different school, when both schools are flooded with drugs, when the teachers teach "alternate sexual lifestyles," and when the child has no hope of a productive job upon graduation?

Today, the "civil rights" issue is being used as the pretext for irrational and dangerous policies, such as the failure to adopt public health measures to curb the AIDS epidemic, because of the lobbying of homosexual activist groups.

Let's look at the various rulings regarding section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. The previous Department of Health, Education, and Welfare extended the definition of "handicapped" to include drug addicts and alcoholics. This meant that employers receiving any form of assistance from the federal government were forbidden from refusing to hire persons because of their use of or addiction to alcohol or dangerous drugs.

In a Supreme Court decision on March 3, it was ruled that a communicable disease (in this particular case,

tuberculosis) is a "handicap." Recent decisions in the courts and administrative agencies have moved in the direction of extending this law to prohibit discrimination against AIDS patients. It is not at all unlikely that the Rehabilitation Act, combined with the Civil Rights Restoration Act, could be utilized to force hiring of AIDS patients by university cafeterias and hospitals.

In a particularly ludicrous example, recent court decisions have also ruled that transvestites can be classed as "handicapped," and therefore, are protected from "discrimination" by these same federal provisions.

INF supporters seek to block 'killer amendments'

In spite of attempts by Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) to try to attach several well-aimed amendments to the INF treaty before it is taken up on the floor by Majority Leader Sen. Robert Byrd (D-W.Va.), the supporters of the treaty have succeeded in bringing it through committee hearings virtually unscathed.

The fighting was fast and furious at times during the meetings of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, on which Helms is the ranking Republican member. At one point Helms had to leave the committee room in order to prevent a quorum vote on one of his proposals.

A committee vote is currently scheduled for March 29. Helms is asking that the Senate hold a closed hearing to examine whether the Soviets have submitted the correct figures as

to the number of SS-20 intermediate-range nuclear missiles they have. Helms and other opponents of the treaty feel that if the Senate understands how the Soviets have in fact already begun cheating, by submitting false data, then the enthusiasm that has been drummed up for the treaty may fade somewhat.

But the big fight is still to come, and will be held on the floor of the Senate. The issue is scheduled to be taken up by the full Senate after the Easter recess.

Senate Democrats seem adamant on attaching a proviso to the treaty, stating that government testimony during the hearings is authoritative for determining what the treaty actually means, and cannot be changed afterward. They wish to use this proviso to force the Reagan administration to keep to the "narrow interpretation" of the ABM Treaty, curbing research on the Strategic Defense Initiative.

Senate to keep nuclear agreement with Japan

The Senate voted on March 21 to reject attempts to rescind an agreement with Japan in the area of nuclear cooperation. The agreement, which will take effect at the end of April, allows Japan to reprocess U.S.-controlled spent nuclear fuel and to use plutonium separated from that fuel without the case-by-case approval required under the previous agreement. The previous agreement was originally to expire at the end of this century.

Despite a rather snide intervention by former Defense Department offi-

cial Richard Perle and Frank Gaffney, who had submitted written arguments for maintaining a case-by-case approach, the Senate conducted what was in essence a vote of confidence in a crucial U.S. ally and friend in the Pacific region.

But the issue of U.S. relations with Japan remains a topic of heated debate, and the bill coincided with a new explosion of that favorite congressional sport of "Jap-bashing."

Sen. Ted Stevens (R-Alaska) on March 22 called for the United States to pull its troops and military installations out of Japan, unless the Japanese contribute more for Western defense. "The yen has conquered a great portion of America," Stevens told a group of Pentagon officials during a hearing of a Senate Appropriations Subcommittee. "Now that the Japanese economy is going full tilt," Japan should pay the full cost of keeping U.S. troops and facilities on its soil. Stevens said he is "putting the Pentagon on notice" that he plans to offer a bill next year that would require U.S. military withdrawals from Japan.

D'Amato implicated in Wedtech affair

The scandal involving the Wedtech Corp. drew more New York congressmen into its expanding web on March 24, as Mario Moreno, former vice chairman of the company, continued his testimony in the trial in New York City concerning the now-defunct defense contractor. The seven defendants include Wedtech founder John

Mariotta, former Bronx Borough President Stanley Simon, and Rep. Mario Biaggi (D), who are charged with turning the company into a racketeering enterprise.

Moreno testified that he gave illegal political contributions to both Democratic and Republican politicians, including \$30,000 for Sen. Alfonso D'Amato (R) and \$5,000 for the late Rep. Joseph P. Addabbo (D), in exchange for lobbying favors.

A spokesman for D'Amato dismissed the charges as "ridiculous."

According to a report in the *New York Times* on March 25, D'Amato intervened repeatedly with the Army, the Navy, and the Small Business Administration, in efforts to win government contracts for Wedtech.

In October 1986, during D'Amato's re-election campaign, his unsuccessful Democratic opponent, Mark Green, said that D'Amato had received \$11,000 in campaign contributions from Wedtech officials since 1981.

In 1985, D'Amato lobbied the Navy in behalf of the company's efforts to obtain a \$55 million order for pontoons for use as floating docks. Moreno testified that without D'Amato's help, the company would probably not have gotten \$143 million in Navy contracts that were awarded to it starting in April 1984.

Moreno said that Wedtech contributed to political organizations "in exchange for favors we expected to get." Asked what favors he expected from the Republican State Committee in New York, he replied, "We expected to have the Republican Party in our pocket."