

Congressional Closeup by William Jones

Trade bill sent to White House for veto

The controversial trade bill was sent to the White House for what promises to be an inevitable veto by President Reagan. Senate Democrats made efforts to eliminate one provision of the bill restricting the export of Alaskan oil in order to win a couple of swing votes from Alaska's two Republican senators, votes needed to override a veto. Senate Republicans succeeded in stopping the motion.

The bill also includes the plant-closing provisions, which President Reagan has said he could not accept. The Democrats are making political hay out of the provisions, as Massachusetts' Dukakis is the only governor who has introduced such measures.

If the trade bill is vetoed, the Congress could, theoretically, work out another bill minus the Alaska oil provisions and the plant-closing provisions, but as the plant-closing provisions have been made into a major presidential campaign issue, it is unlikely that congressional Democrats would want to eliminate them. It is also considered almost impossible time-wise to work out another bill this year. This means that the United States will remain without trade legislation, a situation which could negatively affect next month's trade statistics and, consequently, the financial markets. A deadlocked U.S. government does not generate much optimism, in spite of administration attempts to "talk it up."

Two parties vie as fierce anti-drug fighters

With elections approaching, both Democrats and Republicans are vying to portray themselves as the real war-

rriors against the drug mafia, an issue which has become of prime concern for the voters. As the Reagan administration's much-touted "War on Drugs" fades into oblivion due to a lack of resources and a real lack of will to actually eliminate the problem, the drug issue is becoming a major election issue, and even the more vociferous liberals from yesteryear are tending to jump on the bandwagon, at least until after the elections.

The issue which has received the most debate and the most publicity is the question of using the U.S. military in a bigger way in the war on drugs, for instance, by deploying U.S. military forces on the U.S. borders. One particular proposal, raised by Armed Services Committee chairman Sam Nunn (D-Ga.) and Sen. John Warner (R-Va.), the ranking Republican on the committee, would put the military in charge of drug-trafficking surveillance and would expand anti-drug efforts through logistical and communications supports networks.

An alternate proposal offered on Tuesday, May 10, by Sens. Alfonse D'Amato (R-N.Y.) and Pete Wilson (R-Calif.) would expand the use of military personnel and equipment to help detect, pursue, seize, and search vessels and aircraft carrying illegal drugs into the United States. This would allow the military to arrest drug suspects outside U.S. borders. Senator D'Amato, who played a very prominent role in the campaign to nail Panamanian General Noriega on trumped-up drug charges, may perhaps have other motives than a simple concern about the drug problem, when he wants to give the U.S. military the power to arrest foreign citizens on foreign soil.

The Pentagon is not so keen on the idea of being drawn into the war on

drugs at the cost of their constitutionally stipulated mandate to defend the country. Fighting tooth and nail for the necessary funds to maintain their present programs, Pentagon officials are not enthusiastic about being given assignments which would put a strain on their resources, draining money from other valuable programs. In a period of budget austerity, it is clear that there is skepticism as to whether the additional funds would be forthcoming.

It is estimated that a massive shift of the military to drug interdiction would require 90 infantry battalions, 50 helicopter companies, 54,000 Army troops, 110 AWACS aircraft, 30 E2C Hawkeye surveillance planes, 90 P3 antisubmarine aircraft, 50 tethered balloons carrying radar gear, more than 1,000 fighter aircraft and 160 cruisers and destroyers, according to Pentagon officials.

House approves defense budget of \$299.5 billion

The House on May 11 passed a \$299.5 billion defense budget for fiscal year 1989 with a vote of 252-173. The total spending level was already worked out in last year's budget summit, although the House bill includes some changes on individual weapons programs that the administration opposes. Spending on the Strategic Defense Initiative was cut from the \$4.6 billion sought by the administration to \$3.5 billion. The Senate, however, wants to stick with the \$4.5 billion recommended by the Armed Services Committee. This indicates a likely House-Senate compromise of about \$4 billion, allowing a minor increase over current spending.

The House version of the bill has reduced the \$792 million requested by the Pentagon for the 10-warhead MX program to \$100 million, and increased the \$200 million requested for the single-warhead Midgetman program (which the Pentagon ultimately wants to phase out)

A similar proposal, introduced in the Senate by Paul Simon (D-Ill.) roundly defeated 61 to 36.

The House bill would bar the Pentagon from testing possible low-trajectory intercontinental ballistic missiles so long as the Soviet Union does the same. As has been the case in previous years, the Senate voted against such a proposal thus assuring that it will not be included in Congress's final version of the defense bill. The Senate version of the bill is still under debate.

Space program imperiled by budget-cutting

The budget austerity rampant on Capitol Hill could be the death knell of the U.S. space program, as the sums now under consideration would be insufficient for any program of manned space exploration. Either the funds available to NASA must be dramatically increased or the program would have to be directed to accomplish more limited goals, according to a report drafted by the Congressional Budget Office (CBO). Without an increase in the funding, the proposed international space station would either be seriously delayed or canceled altogether.

The draft report concluded that paying only for the existing program will require a budget of \$14.4 billion by 1993, in fiscal 1988 dollars, and \$16.4 billion by the year 2000. The

more ambitious program of a manned mission to Mars, proposed some years ago by Democratic presidential candidate Lyndon LaRouche and adopted in limited form by the Reagan administration in the fall of 1986, would require, according to the CBO report, a budget of more than \$30 billion by the turn of the century.

Such accountant's logic misses the point entirely, as was explained in testimony submitted by a representative of the National Democratic Policy Committee to the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Housing and Urban Development. In that testimony, it was shown how a Moon-Mars colonization program could be the type of science-driver project which could help pull the United States out of its present tailspin toward a new depression and create high levels of economic growth.

The CBO report emphasizes that maintaining the shuttle program is a *sine qua non* for every part of the NASA program.

Congressional aide in apparent suicide

Attention was focused on the congressional office of Rep. Roy Dyson (D-Md.)

aide, Tom Pappas, fell from the 25th floor of the Helmsley Palace Hotel in New York on May 1, in an apparent suicide.

A *Washington Post* article published on the day of Pappas's death, referred to stories from disgruntled staffers saying that Pappas hired mostly young males, some of whom were requested to socialize exclusively with Pappas and other staffers. In one case, according to the *Post*, a staffer was asked to perform a male striptease at

an office retreat. The *Post* article implied homosexual activities. It is possible that Pappas committed suicide because he felt that the *Post* article had ruined his career.

Ironically, Pappas boss, Rep. Roy Dyson, a conservative Democrat from Maryland, got his House seat in 1980, when his predecessor, Robert Bauman, a harsh critic of the House Democratic leadership, was charged with soliciting sex from a 16-year old boy. These revelations split Bauman's conservative activists, costing him enough votes to swing the election to Dyson.

At a press conference held several days after Pappas's death, Dyson was grilled on the social practices of his office, and was asked point-blank if he was a homosexual, which he adamantly denied.

Abrams attacked on House floor

On May 10, Rep. Don Edwards (D-Calif.) entered into the *Congressional Record* an article from the *Christian Science Monitor* attacking Elliott Abrams and William Casey for their "ideological zealotry."

Referring to the demise of the Reagan administration, Edwards said. "The end of control over our policy by the likes of William Casey and Elliott Abrams gives us the opportunity to repair our relations with our neighbors in Central America. . . . After years of promoting instability in Mexico, it is time for the United States to recognize the value of Mexico as an ally and a trading partner. . . . Now, the United States must continue to work with Mexican leaders in helping to establish a stable economy in that country."