

## Congressional Closeup by William Jones

### **G**ore bill an attack on Brazilian sovereignty

An environmental protection bill introduced into the Senate on Jan. 25 by Sen. Albert Gore (D-Tenn.) includes an attack on the national sovereignty of Brazil and other Third World nations. The bill, a compendium of assorted environmental measures allegedly designed to alleviate the "ozone problem," would place severe restrictions on any industrial activity emitting substances which the bill defines under "ozone-depleting potential."

Although the bill recommends criminal penalties for violation of the restrictions within the United States, it primarily targets countries like Brazil, which are accused of contributing to the ozone problem through economic policies which serve to deforest the Amazon Basin.

The bill recommends that international financial institutions "such as the World Bank" be utilized to pressure these countries into line. Ironically enough, these are the same institutions that, through the years, have forced such "slash and burn" policies on Brazil and other Third World countries as a "quick fix" for paying back the debts owed to them. The financial institutions are encouraged to "reassess their investment policies" in order to make further loans to Brazil contingent on the implementation of these environmental restrictions.

Already the bill has been attacked by the Brazilian government as a violation of its national sovereignty. An aide to Senator Gore said that the purpose of the bill was not to "dictate policy to Brazil," but rather to convince the Brazilians to "do it themselves." Nevertheless, the bill "directs the Secretary of the Treasury to enter into discussions with the President of

the World Bank and with appropriate officials of the governments of other major contributors to that institution, for the purpose of working out guidelines for advance disclosure and discussion of prospective bank loans prior to their approval within the Bank."

The bill is not yet scheduled for hearings in the Committee on Environment and Public Works, according to an aide to Gore, but the Senate is "revving its engines" on the issue. The bill also calls for increased funding of "family planning," although stopping short of actually paying for abortions.

### **E**xperts caution on 'greenhouse theory'

In hearings held in a House Energy and Commerce subcommittee on the "greenhouse effect," several experts cautioned against drawing any hasty conclusions on the basis of a totally unsubstantiated theory.

Patrick J. Michaels, a University of Virginia professor of environmental sciences, cautioned the subcommittee against acting on the basis of a "clouded vision," because lawmakers may take action they'll regret. He also warned against "public hysteria" and the "politics of fear."

Experts agree there is a greenhouse effect but they know that they are gazing into "a very dirty crystal ball," according to one witness. Although there's no single set of figures to show how much the earth has warmed, Michaels said the planet "at best, appears to have warmed up only half as much as our average forecasts indicate it should have."

Among the recommendations given to the subcommittee were stepped-up investments in efficient energy pro-

duction, accelerated testing of non-fossil fuel alternatives, development of climate-adapted crop strains, and coastal planning to deal with rising sea levels and storm surges.

### **W**atkins vows reforms in nuclear administration

Energy Secretary-designate James D. Watkins said in hearings on Feb. 23 before the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee that the nation is "paying the price" for 35 years of secrecy and mismanagement that turned its nuclear weapons plants into places where there is "little risk in being careless, little incentive to excel."

Watkins said he would make major changes in the management system which he characterized as "antique" and "obsolete." He said that it would take six months to install a new system and a couple of years to alter the department's production-first mentality. "The worst thing we can do," said the retired admiral, "is move rapidly on poor intelligence. I'm getting poor intelligence now and am having to put a whole new ground crew in place."

Watkins also referred to the recent incident at the Savannah River Plant in South Carolina, where some valves and piping were damaged when operators overpressurized a reactor cooling system. "I don't believe that the accident . . . is solely the responsibility of the United States [government] when the procedures the contractor agreed to were not followed," said Watkins.

Watkins told the Senate committee that he would play a part in developing the administration's acid rain policy, which he called a "front-burn-

er" item. He also stated that the administration's energy policy would be "sensitive" to the threat posed by the "greenhouse effect."

## **Darman on the hot seat in hearings**

Budget Director Richard Darman underwent a grilling when he testified before the Senate Budget Committee on Feb. 21. The senators wanted to know the concrete details of the somewhat opaque Bush budget.

Budget Committee Chairman Jim Sasser (D-Tenn.) said the administration has yet to give details of spending levels for those domestic discretionary programs to be frozen at the current year's \$136 billion spending level. "Where are the cuts going to come from?" asked Sasser. "We don't know. The Bush administration has yet to tell us. Will Superfund be cut? Or will compensatory education programs be slashed? Or will child nutrition programs be reduced?"

"I don't think the negotiations should focus exclusively on the \$136 billion," said Darman. "It's only a problem so long as you keep a box around it."

Sen. Ernest Hollings (D-S.C.) called the Bush budget proposal "the phantom of the budget." "You say, 'Come on over to the White House, and we'll let you in on it.'" said Hollings. "And the dummy Democrats will go over there with you, and when the collapse comes, they'll blame us."

But not only the Democrats were frustrated. Sen. Warren Rudman (R-N.H.) cut his own questioning short after listening to the OMB director sidestep questions for most of the morning. "A good rule amongst trial lawyers," Rudman commented, "was,

'Don't ask a question you're not going to get an answer to.' And based on the last three hours, I yield back my time."

"To a great extent," said Democratic majority whip Tony Coelho (D-Calif.), "the more they have to talk about their budget, the more damage it does to 'kinder, gentler.'" "We're all engaged in an enormous sham," commented Sen. Kent Conrad (D-N.D.).

Senator Sasser said lawmakers will continue to pursue a two-track budget plan, working through the traditional congressional budget process while continuing informal meetings with administration officials.

## **Soviet navy built up by Gorbachov**

Rear Adm. Thomas A. Brooks, director of naval intelligence, in testimony before a subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee on Feb. 23, said that the future Soviet navy is likely to be "smaller numerically, but certainly more capable than today's." Countering the impression created by intelligence assessments claiming that the Soviet navy took more surface ships out of active service last year than any year in recent history and began selling combat ships for scrap on the world market, Brooks cautioned against "drawing conclusions from a story that is in its first chapter."

Intelligence reports commented that most Soviet naval exercises last year were relatively short and were conducted near the Soviet mainland, emphasizing "defense of the homeland and submarine bastions." Brooks noted that the decline in steaming hours and the increased time at anchor have increased the number of ships in port ready to respond to an enemy attack,

thus improving the ability of the Soviet navy to make the rapid transition to war.

Brooks discounted earlier U.S. estimates that a new facility in Tartus, Syria would become a major port for the Soviet Mediterranean fleet. "Facilities added in 1988 have been minimal," said Brooks.

## **Demand military lead in war on drugs**

The U.S. military has "got to take the lead" in the war against illegal drugs, no matter how much of the Pentagon's budget is needed, said Rep. Nicholas Mavroules (D-Mass.), chairman of the House Armed Services investigations subcommittee. Marine Lt. Gen. Stephen Olmstead, deputy assistant secretary of defense for drug policy and enforcement, and Army Lt. Gen. Thomas Kelly, director of operations for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, testified that the armed services are far along in committing the \$308 million that Congress allotted for the military's antidrug war last year, including \$40 million to finance larger roles for the National Guard in the District of Columbia and several border states.

Rep. Larry Hopkins (R-Ken.) told the generals "there is no way" the United States can win its war against drugs "with the effort we're now putting out. We want more effort."

General Olmstead said the Defense Intelligence Agency is studying ways to use techniques and intelligence from the CIA and the National Security Agency in the antidrug war, including the possibility of keeping track of drug activities by "national means," referring to orbiting satellites that could detect drug production.