

## Congressional Closeup by William Jones

### Gregg battle heightens as vote approaches

Senate Republicans on the Foreign Relations Committee are pressuring Democrats to move forward on the nomination of Donald Gregg as ambassador to South Korea. Led by Bush hatchet man Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.), ting panel business meetings in protest against Asian subcommittee chairman Sen. Alan Cranston's (D-Calif.) tempt to probe Gregg's connections to the Iran-Contra affair.

In addition McConnell has used Senate rules to prevent business meetings from being held while the Senate is in session, thus limiting the time available for such meetings. On June 6, the absence of the Republican members forced a delay in final action on the \$4.5 billion State Department authorization bill.

Democrats are concerned about the sabotage of the work of the committee. "It is apparent that we are unable to do business," said Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.), are objecting to the fact that a legitimate committee inquiry is taking place with respect to a nominee, Mr. Don Gregg."

Cranston has decided to hold further hearings with Gregg on June 15, and has scheduled a committee vote on June 20 to decide "whether or not to proceed to vote on the nomination." The vote will take place if the administration produces all requested documents and information by June 16, he said, but so far it has not cooperated. "Late last month I sent several letters to administration officials asking for documents and information relating to Gregg. I not only have received no material, I have received no response."

The Republican pressure tactics

may, however, have the opposite effect from that intended. There are clear signs that Senate Democrats are getting a bit upset. "The administration seems to me to be showing some contempt for the committee in regard to this particular matter," Cranston said. "We may not determine anything for awhile. . . . This committee may not have any hearings on anything, including Gregg. . . . If this committee can't meet on anything else, maybe the committee also can't meet on Gregg."

### Pell introduces spoon-bending legislation

On May 16, Sen. Claiborne Pell (D-R.I.) commission to conduct an 18-month study and to make recommendations on ways to "promote personal excellence and the highest levels of human potential." The proposal calls for two of the commission's 25 members to have training and experience in "extraordinary human performance research."

At last year's Senate hearing, Dr. Herbert Benson of Harvard Medical School suggested that the study encompass "relaxation techniques such as those used in the practice of Zen, Yoga, and Transcendental Meditation." At Pell's request, Dr. Benson then led the senators in meditation, asking them to close their eyes and repeat a word, a technique he likened to prayer. "I think it would probably be a very good idea if more committees had similar interludes themselves," Mr. Pell said after the exercise.

Religious and civil liberties groups say they are concerned that the mea-

sure could threaten constitutional protections to freedom of worship.

Pell, a longtime advocate of psychic research, reinforced his reputation as a dabbler in the occult in 1987 when he organized a congressional meeting featuring the internationally known spoon-bender Uri Geller. Ironically enough, the most outspoken opponents of the Pell proposal are the groups opposing school prayer, because they believe it violates the separation of Church and State. They claim that the New Age philosophy has also the aspects of religion, and that such a direct government support to the New Age philosophy therefore violates the Constitution. As Jim Baumgaertel, founder of Citizens Against a State Religion put it, "Claiborne Pell is pushing the same old jargon the other New Agers use. And it's a danger to a free society."

### Pentagon consultants may get easement

The Office of Management and Budget proposed on June 7 a less onerous set of disclosure requirements than those proposed earlier by the U.S. Senate in the wake of U.S. Attorney Henry Hudson's operation against Pentagon consultants last summer, entitled Operation Ill Wind. The measures are designed to ferret out potential conflicts of interest between consultants and federal agencies.

While industry officials said they were pleased that the proposed rules did not go as far as the Senate requirements, Sen. David Pryor (D-Ark.) claimed that the OMB proposal was full of loopholes that would "gut" consultant reform. Pryor, a leading figure in the crusade against the U.S. defense industry, was able to secure Senate

approval for legislation last year which would have required all government services companies to register with the government and to list all their clients for the previous three years when applying for a contract. The Pryor proposal was not included in the House version of the measure, and conference committee members referred the matter to the OMB.

The OMB proposal exempts engineering, technical, legal, and accounting services, as well as some contractors with industry self-governance ethics programs. It also allows an agency head to grant a waiver to the conflict of interest policy on "public interest" grounds.

## **Helms proposes China trade ban**

Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) proposed on June 8 an end to all trade and development assistance to China until the Chinese government institutes democratic reform. There is a great deal of support on Capitol Hill for his proposal.

Liberal Congressman Rep. Stephen Solarz (D-N.Y.) "it took Deng xiao-ping to bring Jesse Helms and me together."

The sanctions legislation would go into effect, however, only "if the murder rampage continues." The bill, Helms said, would "roll back trade and related matters to the level at which these relations stood before the start of this decade." It would suspend China's most-favored-nation trade status and instruct U.S. representatives to vote against benefits to China in the Asian Development Bank and other international organizations. The legislation would also suspend ap-

proved licenses for high-technology exports to China.

Rep. Jack Buechner (R-Mo.) and several House members from both parties also sent President Bush a letter supporting the existing penalties against China but called for "possible follow-on action, especially if the carnage continues."

## **House restrictions put on FSX agreement**

The House voted June 7 to place restrictions on a U.S.-Japanese deal to develop the FSX fighter. The 262-155 vote, in which the administration succeeded in holding the loyalty of most Republicans, falls far short of the necessary two-thirds votes to override what will undoubtedly be a presidential veto of the measure.

The Senate had adopted identical legislation by a 72-27 vote last month and it will now go to the White House. The vote is an indication of the anti-Japanese hysteria which has been festering on Capitol Hill. Opponents of the accord say that the Japanese should instead be buying the American-made F-16 instead of trying to develop their own with the help of U.S. technology.

The legislation stipulates that a future joint production agreement, as distinct from the accord to develop the plane, shall prohibit the transfer to Japan of "critical" engine technologies. Japan would also be barred from selling or transferring to third countries major FSX sub-components developed or produced with help from the United States.

Administration supporters say that the restrictions infringe upon the President's right to make agreements with foreign powers.

## **Senate panel approves Negroponte nomination**

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee on June 8 approved the nomination of John Negroponte as ambassador to Mexico and sent it to the full Senate for certain approval.

The Negroponte nomination had been delayed for some time due to a superficial investigation of his possible role in the Iran-Contra affair. Negroponte was ambassador to Honduras at the time of the illegal aid to the Contras.

## **Hitler-Stalin Pact authentic, experts conclude**

A group of U.S. federal archivists, working as part of an investigation launched by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, announced on June 5 that the microfilm copies of the Hitler-Stalin Pact seized at the end of World War II are authentic and prove beyond doubt that the secret protocols, which handed over the Baltic republics to Moscow, indeed exist.

Their conclusion was reached despite the fact that the original copies of the Hitler-Stalin Pact were destroyed.

George O. Kent, a professor of history at the University of Maryland, said, "The film authenticates the protocol more positively than even a purported original," since the protocol "was filmed between a great many other documents whose validity has not been questioned, it would be harder to counterfeit a whole roll of film than a single document." Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.), who is overseeing the Senate investigation, said he had established "the chain of custody documenting the authenticity of these secret protocols."