

Congressional Closeup by William Jones

Senate adds conditions on lifting Iraq sanctions

Not to be out-done by the United Nations Security Council, the U.S. Senate passed a resolution on March 22 requiring of the President that he not lift sanctions against Iraq until that nation "has released all prisoners of war and has accounted, as fully as possible, for all those missing in action, including Kuwaiti civilians and military personnel captured during the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait."

Higher dairy prices rejected in conference

U.S. dairy farmers were doublecrossed on March 21 when a House-Senate conference committee on the 1991 Dire Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Bill, rejected a provision which would have provided at least some minimal assistance for the nation's economically hard-hit dairy farmers.

Under the threat of a veto by the Bush White House, the committee deleted the provision, in spite of the fact that the measure was considered "budget-neutral."

The measure, sponsored by the two senators from Vermont, Patrick Leahy (D) and Jim Jeffords (R), was not a major boost to the rapidly falling dairy prices, which have seen a 25% drop in the last few months, but it would have provided a little more support, \$1.20 per hundred pounds of milk, for most farmers. Dairy farmers estimate that they need over \$20 per hundred pounds in order to break even, while they are presently getting \$10 for a hundred pounds.

The measure had the support of 60 members of the U.S. Senate. But the opponents of the amendment are using

the fallacious argument that the rise in the milk price to farmers would deprive many pregnant women from participating in the government-sponsored Women, Infant, and Children (WIC) program, since the government would cut their purchases of milk for the program. However, the drop in dairy prices has not resulted in lower prices to consumers.

Gonzalez blames usury for U.S. economic crisis

House Banking Committee chairman Rep. Henry B. Gonzalez (D-Tex.), warned his colleagues on the floor of the House on March 21 that the country is grossly underestimating the economic crisis now engulfing it. He especially noted the devastating effect that usurious interest rates have had on the U.S. economy.

At a time when highly doctored statistics are being used to convince voters that the "recession" is lifting somewhat, Gonzalez warned that there is "no perception at this point, in or out of the Congress, in or out of the Executive branch, or in or out of the general media as to the depth, the complexity, or the difficulty of the crisis."

Gonzalez noted that there is a general attitude "to say that we are going to go ahead and do business as we have in the 20th century and just patch it up as we reach each crisis." Not only the problem with the savings and loan crisis (now rapidly spreading to the commercial banking industry), but also the rapid movement of huge volumes of money around the globe, are creating a crisis of global dimensions, he said.

Gonzalez said that usurious interest rates have had a devastating effect

on U.S. industry and that maintaining the bloated U.S. financial structures by a rapid influx of foreign investment has led to the devaluation of the U.S. dollar "to the point where it has lost 60% of its value or more." This will lead to the dollar being replaced as an international reserve unit, he warned. Gonzalez contends that "if that happens, we will have a catastrophe," since all U.S. debt—private, governmental, corporate—"will have to be paid back in somebody else's currency."

As a lone voice crying in the wilderness of the U.S. capital, Gonzalez echoes the concerns often voiced by U.S. presidential candidate Lyndon LaRouche, who was imprisoned for being the "Cassandra" warning of the deluge which was about to engulf the United States if the policy directions of the last 25 years were not quickly reversed.

Democrats try to out-gun Bush on Persian Gulf

Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell (D-Me.), interviewed on the NBC News program "Meet the Press" on March 31, said that President Bush should encourage U.S. planes to shoot down Iraqi helicopters engaged in fire missions against Kurdish rebels. He was seconded by Rep. Lee Hamilton (D-Ind.), chairman of the House Foreign Affairs subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East who thought that such action would help to "ratchet up the pressure a little bit." These Democratic leaders, who had opposed the the military operations in the Persian Gulf seem now to be attempting to out-gun Bush on the issue of military action in order to undermine Republican accusations that

the opponents of the Persian Gulf war were "appeasers" of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

Rep. Robert Torricelli (D-N.J.), a member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee and a strong supporter of Bush's decision to go to war against Iraq, commented that perhaps Mitchell and Hamilton were trying to "get to the other side of George Bush" after having opposed him on the war.

The administration has been holding back on such a decision, although the first meetings with Kurdish and Shiite rebel leaders, who were to arrive in Washington the first week in April, are scheduled with a team of officials of the U.S. State Department headed up by the Assistant Secretary of State for Middle East Affairs, John Kelly. Negotiations with the rebel leaders have been previously conducted by officials of the British Foreign Office.

Congress offers stop-gap measures for drought

Rep. George Miller (D-Calif.) introduced on March 21 a bill, the Reclamation States Emergency Drought Relief Act, which at best would attempt to regulate the present drought now facing California and other states in the far west.

The bill would allow the secretary of the Interior Department to move water to where it is most needed and to "assist willing buyers and sellers of water to make transactions," i.e., those who have the money can buy water. Other sections of the bill would give the secretary "permanent authority" to respond to drought conditions, rather than waiting until Congress provides emergency authority.

The overall orientation of the bill,

as indicated by the remarks of Rep. James Hansen (R-Utah) when it was introduced, would be to "mitigate drought losses" and to "move water and store water currently not allowed under existing law."

The bill is intended as a form of "crisis management" approach rather than an attempt to solve the serious drought in the west. Only a re-introduction of projects such as the North American Water and Power Alliance (NAWAPA), a project sponsored as legislation in Congress in the 1960s by former Senator Frank Moss (D-Utah), can provide the necessary water. NAWAPA, which would bring water from the Canadian northwest through a system of canals and artificial rivers into the American west, would increase by 50% the fresh water currently available to the lower 48 states.

Unless Congress is able to break through the "budget deficit" syndrome, however, the western United States is in for a long dry spell.

Threat to cut off food aid to Sudan

In an escalation of the attempts to undermine the government of the Republic of Sudan, Rep. Tony Hall (D-Ohio), chairman of the House Select Committee on Hunger, is threatening to use food as a weapon to bludgeon Sudan into submission to U.N. control.

Hall is calling for tighter U.N. control over world food supplies. In an article in the April 1 issue of the *Christian Science Monitor*, Hall demands new, sweeping powers be given to the United Nations to control food. He calls, first, for a U.N. Convention on the Right to Food, which

would "spell out specifically how the right to food should be understood and enforced."

Secondly, he is calling for the creation of a post of Undersecretary for Humanitarian Affairs, which would "have the exclusive responsibility for organizing relief efforts at the first indication of a crisis."

Hall vents his ire particularly at Sudanese President Hassan El Bashir, since El Bashir has been insistent that relief organizations must be invited into a country, in order not to violate the sovereignty of that country. Sudan has been particularly targeted for this type of pressure because it had the courage to ally itself with Iraq during the Persian Gulf war. There have been ongoing operations by U.N.-affiliated non-governmental organizations to undermine the government of El Bashir in the ongoing civil war there.

On March 21, the government of Sudan also came under fire by Republican Senators Don Nickles (Okla.) and Nancy Kassebaum (Kan.). Nickles claimed that "the government of Sudan has yet to demonstrate a sustained willingness to address issues of human suffering."

Kassebaum demanded that "the international community must focus on the crisis in Sudan." Kassebaum called for greater U.N. coordination of relief efforts, and urged Secretary of State James Baker III and President Bush "to become actively involved in this issue." Kassebaum also insisted that the Sudanese government should be "as cooperative as possible." The U.S. ambassador to Sudan and most U.S. Embassy personnel had left Sudan during the Persian Gulf war, but, according to Kassebaum, were "anxious to return."

In all likelihood, Sudan will be one of the next countries targeted by Bush's new world order.