

Congressional Closeup by William Jones

House gives little to desperate dairy farmers

The House passed H.R. 2837, the Milk Inventory Management Act of 1991, on July 16, which raises the minimum price to farmers from the current \$10.10 per hundred pounds (cwt) to \$12.60 for 1992 and 1993. But in order to be "budget neutral," it drops back to \$12.10 in 1994, and \$11.60 in 1995. The Bush White House opposes even this paltry aid.

The price to farmers for milk has dropped 30% in less than a year, to less than \$11 per cwt for raw, fluid milk, whereas a parity, or fair price would be about \$26.

The dairy sector is now the most prominent part of a broad farm and food crisis in the United States, and worldwide. It has been the policy of the U.S. Department of Agriculture over the past 25 years to permit the underpayment for farm commodities by cartel companies that now control the chain of food production, processing, and distribution.

As a stopgap, state-ordered price increases have been issued in recent months in Wisconsin, New York, Pennsylvania, California, Maine, and Virginia. After opposition from the Bush administration, a similar Senate measure was dropped in March. The administration claims that there is too much milk and too many dairy farmers, and that "market" forces will raise prices by driving farmers and cows out of operation.

The House bill has stringent inventory management programs to curtail what House Agriculture Committee Chairman Rep. Kika de la Garza (D-Tex.) calls "excess production." It creates a mandatory two-tier farm price system in which per farm quotas for volume of milk marketing are assigned—an unprecedented action. If a farmer tries to market more than his market share, he will get a very low

price.

The House wants to send a bill to Bush before the Aug. 4 recess. The administration has said that Bush will veto the bill, ruining thousands of dairy farmers before year-end.

Already there is a serious national milk shortage, masked by the drop in purchasing power in unemployed households. Waiting in the wings is Archer Daniels Midland, the soybean processing monopoly, that has plans to market "soy milk" in the way that they have made billions off "soy butter," i.e., margarine, and are now promoting "soy meat," the vegetable patties they call "Harvest Burgers."

Penny resolution on Iraq children gains steam

The amendment sponsored by Rep. Tim Penny (D-Minn.), which calls for unfreezing Iraqi assets to provide medical and food aid for the children of Iraq, now has 60 co-sponsors, and the list continues to grow. The resolution sponsored by Rep. Henry Gonzalez (D-Tex.), which would lift sanctions against Iraq entirely, has also begun to pick up co-sponsors, the latest being Rep. Charles Rangel (D-N.Y.).

The Bush administration, in its rage at Saddam Hussein, continues its opposition to even the Penny resolution, which would direct that any aid be distributed through U.N. relief organizations. The U.S. claims that Iraq has money to aid its people.

In testimony before a joint session of the Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East and the Subcommittee on Human Rights and International Organizations on July 18, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Thomas Pickering claimed that the U.N. sanctions did not prohibit the import of medicine and that the sanc-

tions committee had routinely approved applications for equipment for the medical infrastructure of Iraq. Pickering claimed that a growing proportion of such sales were commercial, implying that the Iraqi government had hidden resources available for such purchases.

Assistant Secretary of State John Bolton said that President Bush had "made it clear that he would not lift sanctions against Iraq while Saddam Hussein was in power," and that "Saddam's demonstrated capacity and willingness to turn international good will to his own sinister purposes" meant that relaxing sanctions to allow Iraq to obtain humanitarian supplies would not alleviate the suffering of those in need. Bolton added that the U.S. would not unfreeze any Iraqi assets since there were already "many legitimate claims against those resources by U.S. citizens, and sorting that out will be a lengthy and difficult process."

The criminal U.S. intransigence occurs at a time when even the U.N. commissioner on humanitarian assistance in Iraq and Kuwait, Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan, has requested that Iraq be allowed to sell oil to meet humanitarian needs. The State Department on July 23 was, however, still punting, with State Department spokesman Richard Boucher saying that they were in the process of investigating reports that Iraq did have food supplies, but that these were not getting to the areas where they were needed.

Bereuter attacks hint of CIA role in Gandhi death

Rep. Douglas Bereuter (R-Neb.) vehemently denied on the House floor on June 26, allegations in the Indian press of possible CIA involvement in

the assassination of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi.

According to the June 14 *Washington Post*, the Indian press opined: "The CIA killed Gandhi because he was a strong leader who would have transformed India into a great world power that would have challenged the United States on the international stage." The article quoted from an article in the Indian weekly *Sunday Observer*, that it is "the desire of the industrialized world, particularly the United States, to ensure that India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh remain impoverished, weak, and unstable."

In attempting to disprove these charges, Bereuter cited Executive Order 12333 as absolutely prohibiting assassinations. Bereuter claims that "as a result of this ban on assassinations, the Executive branch of the U.S. government does not directly or indirectly assassinate people." Further, he said, the rationale cited in the article was totally inconsistent with the facts, claiming that the polices of the United States were directed toward helping India achieve stability and climb out of poverty.

Bereuter accused India's "ruling elite" of needing a massive course of group therapy and of attempting to distract the attention of the Indian people from those responsible for "the mess India is in."

Dingell begins probe of EPA fraud

The Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, both chaired by Rep. John D. Dingell (D-Mich.), have audited the Environmental Protection Agency and charge that the EPA failed to pursue potential waste and fraud in over \$8.6 billion

worth of government contracts, including work on the Superfund hazardous waste cleanup program.

Backed by the committee's ranking minority member, Rep. Thomas J. Bliley, Jr. (R-Va.), the charges may blow the lid off some gigantic environmentalist scams. Most of the money being spent on "environmental" restoration is lining the pockets of lawyers and consultants, and little is being used to remedy the alleged disasters. Environmental regulations have cost the U.S. economy over \$1.2 trillion since 1972, according to official EPA figures.

Senate vote maintains Space Station funding

The Senate endorsed on July 17 the \$2 billion requested by the Bush administration to continue Space Station Freedom.

The announcement the same week that the administration underestimated the 1992 deficit by nearly \$70 billion had provided fuel for those who wanted to junk all "big-ticket items" like the Space Station.

Sen. Dale Bumpers (D-Ark.), a liberal, led the pack against the Space Station, proposing to eliminate the entire \$2 billion from the 1992 spending bill. He argued that the "health of veterans, the benefits of real and relevant scientific research, and the prudence of deficit reduction" should rule over the "empty promises" of the Space Station.

Lobbying for full Space Station funding by committee chairman Sen. Barbara Mikulski (D-Md.), a liberal who has been a strong supporter of the space program, and others, helped carry the day in the Senate. Mikulski called the station "a national institute of space science in the sky," and com-

plained that people can't have "a 19th-century attitude for 21st-century challenges."

Jake Garn (R-Utah), the only senator who has been in space while in office, pointed out that the breakthroughs which would come out of the Space Station could not be concretely indicated beforehand, but insisted that they would be of a fundamental nature. Garn said that one of the major results of the space program was the development of the pacemaker, which has saved thousands of lives.

Sen. Bob Graham (D-Fla.) pointed out that there were 15 countries involved in the development of Space Station Freedom which had pledged \$8 billion collectively to the project. "Cancellation of the program would hurt our ability to participate in future multinational scientific ventures," he said. The Senate rejected the Bumpers amendment 64-35.

DeConcini proposes steps to recognize Baltics

Sen. Dennis DeConcini (D-Ariz.) on July 19 announced that he was sponsoring a Senate Joint Resolution which would require the Bush administration to take concrete steps towards recognizing the Baltic states of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia.

DeConcini is seeking four steps: establishing an American presence, such as an information office, in each of the Baltic states; channeling government and private assistance directly to the Baltic states; recognizing and establishing direct ties with their Parliaments; and proposing observer status for the Baltics in the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) at the next opportunity.

A similar resolution is being sponsored in the House by Rep. Steny Hoyer (D-Md.)