

Congressional Closeup by William Jones

McCloskey blasts Clinton policy on Bosnia

Rep. Frank McCloskey (D-Ind.) attacked the Clinton administration for instructing a special task force on Bosnia not to brief House and Senate committees on its recommendations for U.S. military intervention. The task force of experts, which had been formed at the request of the White House, had just returned from Bosnia. Such instructions from the administration are not surprising, McCloskey said. "The administration has totally backed away from the idea of doing anything significant to stop the slaughter."

Among the task force's recommendations are proposals to station U.N. peacekeeping troops in or near contested areas to deter fighting; develop punitive measures that will persuade Serbian leaders in Bosnia and Serbia to permit food aid to reach besieged communities; deliver seeds to the Bosnians so they can grow their own food; help establish a radio station in Bosnia; continue airdrops of food supplies, and help repair power plants and improve coal production.

Clinton's investment tax credit under fire

President Clinton's proposed investment tax credit is in trouble in Congress, according to the April 10 *New York Times*. Not only do key Democratic leaders, including Senate Finance Committee chairman Daniel Moynihan (D-N.Y.) and House Ways and Means Committee chairman Dan Rostenkowski (D-Ill.), oppose it, but so do many industry groups, such as the National Association of Manufacturers, on the grounds that the \$30 billion credit is too small to make a difference. The *Times* insists that opposition is so strong that the tax

credit "is not likely to be enacted."

"The carrot is so small, I find very few people, if any, in favor" of Clinton's proposal, said Mark A. Bloomfield, president of the American Council for Capital Formation.

One argument being raised against the proposal is that the version which the administration sent to Congress in February is far smaller and much less comprehensive than what Clinton talked about during the campaign. The credit would be permanent only for companies with sales under \$5 million a year; for all other companies, it would be phased out after two years. It is also an "incremental credit," meaning that it could be claimed only on the amount of investments above the average investments in previous years.

Harold Ford acquitted on all counts

In a stunning defeat for the Reagan-Bush Department of Justice (DOJ) apparatus, Rep. Harold Ford (D-Tenn.) was acquitted of all charges against him (18 counts of mail fraud, bank fraud, and conspiracy) by a jury of 11 whites and one black on April 9. Ford, a congressman for 18 years, was first indicted in 1987, and has been reelected three times since then.

Ford's first trial in April 1990 ended in a hung jury, with eight black jurors voting for acquittal and four white jurors voting for conviction. The DOJ retried him, with jury selection moved to a predominantly white, rural area about 100 miles northeast of Memphis, because of Ford's popularity in Memphis. The retrial itself was held in Memphis, and began on March 1.

Before the retrial began, the Congressional Black Caucus had sent a letter to Bush charging that Ford had

been "railroaded" by the DOJ. Then, on Feb. 3, Rep. Kweisi Mfume (D-Md.), chairman of the Black Caucus, wrote to Clinton and asked him to order a DOJ review of the jury selection, Acting U.S. Attorney General Stuart Gerson met with a 26-member delegation from the Black Caucus, which protested that the unusual change of venue and selection of a nearly all-white jury was a "travesty of justice" and "racially prejudicial." Immediately thereafter, Gerson ordered local prosecutors to join in Ford's motion to have the new jury dismissed. The U.S. Attorney in Memphis resigned in protest of Gerson's order, and two of his assistants also resigned from the case.

Republican congressmen attempted to make the Clinton administration's intervention into the Ford case an issue in the confirmation hearings for Attorney General Janet Reno, but Reno defended the administration's handling of the case.

Ford's two co-defendants were also acquitted.

After the verdict was announced, Ford said he would ask the House Appropriations Committee to pay his \$4.5 million in legal expenses, since he was the target of a vendetta by the Reagan-Bush administration. "Our government should not abuse citizens like this. They were being vindictive . . . and they were wrong."

Biden calls for end to Bosnia arms embargo

Speaking in Zagreb, Croatia on April 8, Sen. Joseph Biden (D-Del.) said that he would urge President Clinton to press for the U.N. arms embargo against Bosnia to be lifted immediately.

Biden, who was sent on a fact-finding mission to Bosnia by President

Clinton and U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher, said, "I have not changed my view that the United States should continue to encourage that the U.N. should lift its arms embargo on the Bosnians."

Biden held talks with President Slobodan Milosevic of Serbia and Croatian President Franjo Tudjman, but his plane was unable to land in Sarajevo where he had been due to meet Bosnian leaders. He said both Milosevic and Tudjman were opposed to lifting the arms embargo on Bosnia. "They are both concerned about the establishment of an Islamic state . . . whether it suits them to think that or whether they really believe it, I don't know," he said.

House leaders optimistic on Russian aid package

House Majority Leader Richard Gephardt (D-Mo.) and House Minority Leader Bob Michel (R-Ill.), who recently returned from Russia with a House delegation which had met with Russian President Boris Yeltsin, expressed cautious optimism that Yeltsin would survive the April 25 referendum. They also felt that a modest, long-term aid program for Russia would be able to win bipartisan support.

Gephardt said that a sum close to the \$1.6 billion of reprogrammed funds which was offered to Yeltsin by Clinton during the Vancouver summit would be needed each year for the indefinite future to support technical assistance and expanded exchange programs. Gephardt said that the aid could be financed by trimming U.S. assistance to Israel and Egypt, and by cutting defense and domestic spending.

Gephardt and Michel said that a U.S. contribution to a "currency stabilization fund" would be done only in

collaboration with Europe and Japan, and if the Russians first take steps to slow down the massive printing of rubles. Gephardt also expressed concern on the April 25 referendum, that "weak and discredited as it may be, the Communist Party still has the only apparatus out there with the capability for delivering votes."

New evidence may be considered in death cases

The Senate Judiciary Committee on April 1 took up legislation introduced by Sen. Howard Metzenbaum (D-Ohio) that would force federal courts to consider any claim of new evidence of innocence before a death sentence could be carried out. Two innocent men recently released from "Death Row" gave testimony that stunned even the bill's opponents.

Metzenbaum's bill, S. 221, is cosponsored by Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.), Mark Hatfield (R-Ore.), and Carl Levin (D-Mich.). Metzenbaum said he introduced the bill because "I was shocked by the [U.S. Supreme] Court's ruling in the *Herrera* case. If the court won't grant a hearing to a Death Row inmate who has newly discovered evidence of innocence, then Congress must authorize that a federal hearing be conducted in those rare instances."

Hearing witnesses mentioned 10 cases in the last decade where Death Row prisoners were proven innocent years after their convictions. Walter McMillian, a 51-year-old black man released in March from Death Row in Alabama, described how, because he was dating a white woman, police and prosecutors framed him up for a murder he knew nothing about.

Randall Dale Adams, whose story is the subject of the movie *The Thin Blue Line*, told senators that he spent

12 years jail, and came within 72 hours of being executed, because of three witnesses who gave false testimony. A Texas clemency proceeding (the remedy recommended for those with new evidence in the *Herrera* case) had denied him clemency.

"Executive clemency is the most political forum there is," Leonel Herrera's attorney Talbot D'Alemberte told the senators. Sen. Howell Heflin (D-Ala.) said, "It may well be that we will have to consider making the withholding of exculpatory evidence a federal crime. You have prosecutors who will do anything to win."

Clinton lambasts GOPers for blocking stimulus

President Clinton lambasted Senate Republicans for "holding hostage" his stimulus program at the annual Easter egg roll on April 12, blaming the Republicans for wanting "more people out of work."

While upping the rhetoric against the Republican filibuster of his \$16.3 billion stimulus package, Senate Democratic leaders, in collaboration with the White House, are working toward some compromise which would allow them to break up the Republican unity on the filibuster. Measures to either cut parts of the package or to delay much of the spending until next year, a proposal earlier floated by Sens. David Boren (D-Okla.) and John Breaux (D-La.), will likely be agreed upon.

Clinton used the week following the Easter week to take his program to the people, with speeches before the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and an appearance at a conference on job training. Local officials are also targeting districts of vulnerable Republicans, making the case for the benefits that would flow to their communities if the package were passed.