

Congressional Closeup by William Jones

Clinton 'retreatism' flailed by D'Amato

In floor remarks on May 26, Sen. Alfonse D'Amato (R-N. Y.) attacked the recent statements by Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs Peter Tarnoff as "retreatism" and "Jimmy Carter's foreign policy warmed over." Tarnoff had outlined a policy of U.S. disengagement from world affairs.

D'Amato also referred to testimony given by Secretary of State Warren Christopher at recent hearings on Bosnia, where he stated that the United States had no moral right to intervene in the conflict, as "proof of the authenticity of this policy." D'Amato characterized the statements as "outrageous." "Our allies and foes alike view the United States as weak and ineffectual," he said, warning that by refusing to act in Bosnia, Clinton had "abdicated our position as a world leader" and "compromised our integrity as a nation."

Term-limit legislation introduced in the House

On May 26, Rep. Martin Hoke (D-Ohio) introduced legislation which would impose a 12-year limit on the terms of all members of Congress and provide for an increase of House terms from two years to four. The amendment would also prohibit congressmen from running for the Senate unless they resign from the House or choose to seek this office during the final year of their current term.

The term-limit issue has been touted by pundits such as syndicated columnist George Will as designed to bring in "new blood." But the net effect would likely be to strengthen the influence of think-tanks, staff, and news media, all heavily dominated by the Eastern Establishment.

The legislation was introduced as

a constitutional amendment since the length of terms are determined by the Constitution. Although the "term-limit" issue has been championed by populists, gaining the two-thirds majority needed in both houses of Congress (as well as among the states) to change the Constitution is not going to be an easy task.

Even in states where some form of term limits has been imposed by popular vote, the constitutionality of the measures has yet to be tested in the courts. Speaker Tom Foley (D-Wash.), whose home state had imposed term limits in a referendum last fall, is challenging the measure in court. The Washington legislation would require its House members to leave office after six years of service.

Pakistan not a 'terrorist nation,' says Collins

Rep. Barbara-Rose Collins (D-Mich.) warned against labeling Pakistan as a terrorist state, a measure which would make it ineligible for any U.S. aid, including humanitarian aid, and would require Congress to vote against any loans to Pakistan from multilateral lending agencies. The U.S. State Department had issued a statement on Jan. 8, which said that Pakistan would be placed under "active continuing review" because of alleged terrorist activities in Kashmir and Punjab.

Collins referred to the close collaboration between the United States and Pakistan, especially following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, and noted that Pakistan was not named in the April 1993 State Department annual report to Congress on "Patterns of Global Terrorism, 1992." Collins underlined the fact that Pakistan is the world's third largest moderate Muslim country. "With many

Muslim countries perpetuating anti-American sentiments, Pakistan serves as our one and best opportunity to develop and change the relationship America has with Muslim nations," she said.

Kaptur: Drug traffic threatens NAFTA

Rep. Marcy Kaptur (D-Ohio) urged Congress not to approve the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) unless U.S. borders are "locked tight from drug runners."

Kaptur referred to an article in the May 24 *New York Times* which reported that Mexican cocaine smugglers, working with Colombian drug cartels, were "buying *maquiladora* factories just south of the border, to use as front operations for drug-running if the NAFTA agreement is accepted."

"Trade negotiators committed an appalling oversight when they neglected even to discuss the illegal drug trade," said Kaptur, "in spite of repeated urgings by members of Congress."

Ban on immigration of HIV positives is upheld

The Senate passed by voice vote on May 28, a medical research bill that bans immigrants infected with the AIDS virus.

The bill was sent to President Clinton, who, although he opposes excluding immigrants on the basis that they are HIV-positive, is expected to sign the measure. The White House has said it would be inappropriate to hold up funding for women's health research over the immigrant ban, which has been upheld by both houses of Congress.

Long-term mandate for U.S. role in Somalia

The House passed a resolution on May 25 which would give *carte blanche* to President Clinton to utilize U.S. troops in connection with the United Nations-led force in Somalia for as long as one year. The resolution was introduced by House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Lee Hamilton (D-Ind.) and passed by a vote of 243-179.

Although U.N. forces were to have taken over from the United States in Somalia, there are still 2,700 U.S. troops remaining. The Hamilton resolution allows the President to deploy these (and other) U.S. forces in Somalia, although this time under U.N. command, if he deems fit. The ostensible aim of the resolution was to make clear to the Somali war lords that the United States would come back if they resumed pillaging.

The resolution preempts any need for President Clinton to turn to Congress for permission to deploy more troops, which is required by the War Powers Act. According to the resolution, U.S. Armed Forces would "serve as a tactical quick reaction force, under United States operational control, to respond to requests for emergency assistance from the United Nations Force Commander in Somalia."

Bacchus argues Space Station helps economy

In floor comments on May 27, Rep. Jim Bacchus (D-Fla.) reminded members of the importance to the economy of investments in the space program, in an appeal for support for Space Station Freedom. He also referred to a recent survey by Yankelovich Partners indicating strong public support for the space program.

"Support was particularly strong for maintaining a human presence in space through such programs as the space shuttle and space station," said Bacchus. Nine out of ten respondents said they view the shuttle as a "remarkable technological achievement" and "a source of pride for the United States. . . . In addition, 70% favored a program to build a permanently manned space station to orbit Earth." Seventy-six percent of those surveyed said they "approve of America's current civilian space program," with 57% agreeing that America's civilian program should be expanded. He noted that 87% of those surveyed believed that the civilian space program "has a vital role in allowing the United States to remain economically competitive and continue its status as a world leader in technology."

"I hope we will remember," said Bacchus, "as obviously the American people remember, that for every dollar we invested in the space program, we generated \$7 in additional gross national product for the American people. I hope we will remember that during the past half-century, two-thirds of our productivity increases can be attributed to advances in technology, such as the space program."

Budget resolution barely passes House

After intense White House lobbying, the Clinton administration's five-year deficit reduction plan passed the House by a slim six-vote majority. According to Capitol Hill sources, assurances were given by the administration that the package would have to be whittled down, especially the BTU energy tax, in order to pass the Senate. This was enough to bring some Democratic critics of the plan on board the President's proposal.

The White House claimed "victory," but it promises to be a pyrrhic one. Already, the administration has had to agree to limits on the growth of entitlement programs, with deeper cuts still to come as further efforts are made to jockey the resolution through the Senate. Democratic senators critical of the reduction package, such as John Breaux (La.) and David Boren (Okla.), indicate that there is a compromise in the offing when the bill comes before the Senate. Boren had introduced an alternative that would impose even more drastic caps on entitlement spending than those agreed to by the President.

Congressmen denounce Croatia's Tudjman

In an open letter to President Clinton released at a press conference on May 25, a bipartisan group of 12 congressmen expressed their concern about "the authoritarian tendencies of President of Croatia Franjo Tudjman, who has exhibited an intolerance toward free press and political expression in Croatia."

The letter calls for "a fair and objective investigation into the murders and attempted assassinations of opposition leaders in Croatia. In addition, we urge you to encourage Tudjman to allow the establishment of independent television and radio stations in Croatia and to stop his campaign against free press."

The congressmen signing the letter are: James Traflicant (D-Ohio), Joel Hefley (R-Colo.), Louis Stokes (D-Ohio), Vic Fazio (D-Calif.), Luis Gutierrez (D-Ill.), Paul Henry (R-Mich.), Ron Dellums (D-Calif.), Howard Berman (D-Calif.), Edolphus Town (D-N.Y.), Benjamin Gilman (R-NY), Martin Frost (D-Tex.), and Pat Schroeder (D-Colo.).