

Congressional Closeup by William Jones

Democrats reject GOP call for 'Whitewater' hearings

House Speaker Tom Foley (D-Wash.) rejected on Jan. 26 Republican demands that three committees hold hearings into the Whitewater-Madison affair, involving allegations of wrongdoing by President Bill Clinton. Minority Leader Robert Michel (R-Ill.) had written Foley requesting the hearings.

Foley indicated that he had spoken with Michel on the subject. "There is no evidence of any credible nature pertaining to any misconduct by the President or First Lady. None. Zero," he said. Under pressure, Attorney General Janet Reno had appointed a special counsel, Robert Fiske, Jr., a former U.S. Attorney in New York, to investigate allegations of misconduct by the Clintons regarding the collapsed Madison Guaranty Savings and Loan Association and its ties to Whitewater Development Corp. Despite the appointment of the special counsel, Republicans are now pushing for a congressional investigation.

In a letter to House Banking Committee Chairman Henry B. Gonzalez (D-Tex.), all 20 committee Republicans demanded hearings. A similar letter was sent to Senate Banking Committee Chairman Don Riegle (D-Mich.), signed by all the Republicans on that committee. Riegle would not comment on the letter, but said he had told Attorney General Reno that he was not inclined to conduct an inquiry because it could "jeopardize future prosecutions that may arise in this case."

End arms embargo against Bosnia, says Senate

The Senate approved an amendment to the 1994 Foreign Relations Authorization Act by a vote of 87-9 on Jan. 28, expressing the sense of the Senate

"that the President should terminate the United States embargo against Bosnia, pursuant to Article 51 of the U.N. Charter, and provide military assistance to the government of Bosnia and Hercegovina upon receipt of such a request."

Sen. Bob Dole (R-Kan.), the chief sponsor of the amendment, said that "by providing arms to the Bosnians we not only improve their ability to defend themselves, but enable them to protect and deliver critically needed humanitarian aid." Dole said the vote "sends a message and supports the President" in opposition to the position taken by the British and French.

Sen. Russell Feingold (D-Wisc.), a co-sponsor of the legislation, noted that the Bosnians appear to be doing quite well on the battlefield despite the embargo, but added that "you cannot help but recognize that over the course of time the Serbs—particularly supported from the outside over this entire period of time—have had an extraordinary ability to work their will and to create a disequilibrium at the negotiating table." He added, "There was no reason at all why [lifting the embargo] could not have been done a year ago."

NATO membership backed for eastern European states

By a vote of 94-3 on Feb. 1, the Senate approved an amendment to the 1994 Foreign Relations Authorization Act that supports the entry into NATO of Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and other former Warsaw Pact states.

President Clinton's Partnership for Peace program is "a positive step toward maintaining and furthering their security" which prepares them for NATO membership "by the end of the century," Sen. William Cohen (R-Me.) said in motivating the amendment. "I

think it is important that we send a signal to the Russian military . . . that the United States is going to support the opening up of NATO . . . to those European nations who qualify, who measure up to the standards that we insist be met by NATO members."

Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.), the sponsor of the amendment, criticized the Clinton administration's go-slow approach toward NATO membership for eastern European countries.

Cut ties to Nambla or lose funding, U.N. told

In a unanimous vote on Jan. 27, the Senate called on the Clinton administration to sharply reduce funds to the United Nations unless the U.N. severs ties with the North American Man-Boy Love Association (Nambla) which promotes pedophilia. Last summer the U.N. gave consultative status to the Brussels-based International Lesbian and Gay Association which includes Nambla as one of its members.

Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.), sponsor of the amendment, said the State Department is "horribly embarrassed about this episode, and they should be."

The amendment to the State Department authorization bill states that the United States should withhold almost \$119 million from international organizations in both fiscal years 1994 and 1995 unless the President certifies that the U.N. has no ties with organizations that promote pedophilia. The State Department issued a written statement, in response to a question taken on Jan. 27, that the United States was "firmly in favor of denying the International Lesbian and Gay organization any status with the U.N. if the pro-pedophilia groups in its membership are not expelled at its board

meeting in June. . . . It has always been the U.S. view that pro-pedophilia groups are reprehensible and have no place in any United Nations forum."

Gonzalez seeks repeal of 25th Amendment

Rep. Henry Gonzalez (D-Tex.) on Jan. 26 introduced a resolution to repeal the 25th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution dealing with presidential succession, because it allows into the presidency a person not voted by the people.

Gonzalez cited the resignation of President Nixon in 1974. "What happened in 1974?" he asked. "We had Chief of Staff Alexander Haig, and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, both positions which are filled by appointment, not election by the people, saying, 'President Nixon, if you do not resign, we may invoke the 25th Amendment.' These two unelected officials were going to use the disability clause of the 25th Amendment to make a decision for the American people, to force the President out of office. Later, upon the attempted assassination of President Reagan in 1981, Alexander Haig, as secretary of state, was again on the scene, claiming to be in charge of the country when, in fact, there were three men ahead of him in the line of presidential succession. Such ambition, and such ignorance of our Constitution and the 1947 Presidential Succession Act, is precisely the danger inherent in the disability clause of the 25th Amendment.

"The result," he said, "is that we have a standing invitation in law, in the Constitution, to overthrow the President through the operation of the disability clause in the 25th Amendment."

Leach pushes regulation of derivatives market

In a bill introduced on Jan. 26, Rep. Jim Leach (R-Iowa) called for the establishment of a Federal Derivatives Commission, which would be comprised of the heads of the existing major banking and currency regulatory agencies, to regulate the derivatives market.

However, while the legislation mandates some form of supervision in order to prevent derivatives activity from leading to a financial collapse, Leach wants to maintain the independence of the Federal Reserve and the use of highly speculative derivatives as financial instruments.

Calling for "risk management," "strong capital requirements," derivatives "guidelines," and "internal controls," the Leach legislation falls far short of demands made by House Banking Committee Chairman Henry B. Gonzalez (D-Tex.) to bring the regulatory agencies, including the Fed, under the control of the U.S. government. Such proposals have been reflected in administration calls for "consolidating" the regulatory agencies into one agency under tighter government oversight.

Objections raised against GATT agreement

The 44 Senate Republicans sent a letter to U.S. Trade Representative Mickey Kantor protesting the subsidy provisions of the recently concluded General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade round, complaining that the agreement represents "industrial policy" that permits large increases in government subsidies for private companies.

One of the GOP targets is an R&D subsidy which the administration says

is needed to protect research programs at the National Institutes of Health, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, and the national laboratories. Sen. John C. Danforth (Mo.), the ranking Republican on the Senate Finance Subcommittee on International Trade, said that by opening the door to increased government assistance to industry by Europe and Japan, the United States would be forced either to match the aid or give other countries a competitive advantage.

Nunn urges China MFN status be maintained

Sam Nunn (D-Ga.), chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, urged his colleagues not to revoke Most Favored Nation trade status for China despite its abominable record on human rights.

Appearing on "Meet the Press" on Jan. 30, Nunn said that restricting trade with China because of its human rights record would be "too heavy a weapon. . . . I think we have to deal with China on a level that continues the relationship, and I believe that they have to be persuaded to help us on sanctions [against North Korea], first of all, in letting it go through the U.N. and, second, cooperation to the maximum extent possible. Without China and without Japan, economic sanctions will not really have an effect on North Korea. . . . Our priority has to be . . . to prevent proliferation, to prevent the nuclear arms race.

The Clinton administration has said that it will not renew China's MFN status unless China improves considerably in the field of human rights. Secretary of State Warren Christopher indicated recently that China has not met the administration's requirements.