

Congressional Closeup by Carl Osgood

GOP Still in No Hurry To Get Out of Town

With less than two weeks to go before the Nov. 7 elections, the GOP Congressional leadership was still showing no eagerness to end the session to campaign for re-election. The House and Senate meanwhile finished work on three more appropriations bills and came closer to agreement on some others. Clinton signed a fourth continuing resolution on Oct. 19, which expired on Oct. 25, but said that he would only sign one-day extensions from here on out, in order to keep Congress working.

Clinton signed the \$58 billion Transportation Appropriations bill on Oct. 23, and conference reports on the Agriculture and the Veterans Affairs-Housing and Urban Development bills were sent to the President on Oct. 18 and 19. The House and Senate also acted on the Energy and Water Development bill, which Clinton had vetoed on Oct. 7. The House overrode the veto on Oct. 11, but the Senate didn't have the votes, so Republicans took out the provision on Missouri River management that Clinton had objected to.

The \$78 billion Agriculture bill left many people on both sides of the aisle unsatisfied. The bill would allow sales of food and medicine to Cuba, but is largely symbolic, because it prohibits financing by government export financing agencies and U.S. banks. The bill includes \$2 billion in aid to farmers suffering from drought-induced losses. White House spokesman Jake Siewert told reporters on Oct. 19 that Clinton would be signing the bill with "deep reservations." Farmers need help, but the bill is "deeply flawed," he said. There are things in the bill "that are, at worse, missed opportunities or, in some cases, steps backwards."

The Foreign Operations Appropri-

ations bill, which had been held up over disagreements over U.S. aid to international organizations that promote abortions in other countries, will soon be ready for action. An agreement worked out by Reps. Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) and Sonny Callahan (R-Ala.) deletes language restricting overseas abortions, but doesn't allow any money to be spent until Feb. 15, 2001, leaving the decision to be made by the next Administration. Both sides in the negotiations indicated that the White House would sign the bill.

Republicans are also working on an end-of-year tax-cut package that they intend to send to Clinton before they leave town. It would consist of tax cuts that have already received bipartisan votes, but didn't make it into final bills. It would also raise the annual contribution limit for Individual Retirement Accounts (IRAs) and 401(k) pension plans, use tax breaks to spur investment in poor urban and rural areas, and link tax breaks to small business to an increase in the minimum wage. Republicans estimate that the package comes to about \$260 billion over ten years. The White House is, so far, reserving judgment until it sees the final package.

Sharon Provocation Backed by House Bill

On Oct. 19, twenty-three House members from both parties introduced a bill to cut off U.S. assistance to the Palestinian Authority unless the President certifies that the PA "has publicly renounced violence as a means of political expression" and "has taken all actions within its capacity to bring an end to the violence" in the West Bank and Gaza.

Anthony Weiner (D-N.Y.) claimed that the legislation is necessi-

tated by "the recent combination of Palestinian intransigence at the bargaining table . . . and the organized violence that has been turned on and off at the whim of chairman [Yasser] Arafat." Weiner said, "The time has come to send a signal to Arafat and to the world that we will not stand idly by while taxpayer funds are used for acts of hatred against Israel."

Peter Deutsch (D-Fla.) characterized the visit of Likud Party leader Ariel Sharon to the Temple Mount, which provoked the violence, as "peaceful," ignoring the thousands of police officers that provided Sharon's escort.

While a free-standing bill has little chance of passage in the waning days of this Congress, Weiner promised that the bill's sponsors would make every effort to include the language of the bill in the Foreign Operations Appropriations bill and, "if necessary, continue to pursue this measure in the coming session of Congress."

Byrd Calls for Curbs on Media Violence

In remarks on the Senate floor on Oct. 17, Robert Byrd (D-W.V.) disparaged the lack of attention to the marketing of violence by the entertainment industry, as an issue in the ongoing election campaigns.

Byrd warned that "in the midst of all our affluence, we are rearing a generation that is appallingly casual about violence, a generation that is appallingly self-centered about getting, or taking, what they want." He attributed this to the "unrealistic expectations" that children learn from the movies—in particular, the violence and mayhem that film heroes leave in their wake without paying for the consequences. "I have always instinctively, intu-

itively felt," he said, "that people who can look with equanimity on this kind of violence . . . might themselves be open to such action."

After referencing the recent Federal Trade Commission report on the mass marketing of violent content to children under 17, Byrd said, "Our children are dazzled by the entertainment industry's lurid images. The industry beckons our children with advertising and once they are in the industry's clutches, the children are fattened up with more violent material."

Byrd was not optimistic that legislation addressing the problem will be dealt with by the 106th Congress, but he vowed "to revisit this issue next year." In the meantime, he urged that the issue be addressed in the election campaigns. Given that the entertainment business makes millions in campaign contributions, he asked, "When will the candidates be asked piercing questions about their stands on matters such as this?"

Armenia Genocide Resolution Is Withdrawn

At the urging of President Clinton, House Speaker Dennis Hastert (R-Ill.) withdrew from consideration a resolution calling on the President to recognize as genocide the campaign of the Ottoman Empire against Armenians in 1915-23. Even though the resolution declares that the current Turkish government is not responsible for that genocide, Istanbul nonetheless expressed extreme displeasure with the resolution, and threatened to stop the no-fly enforcement operation against northern Iraq that is being carried out from air bases in Turkey.

The resolution passed the House

International Relations Committee by a vote of 24-11 on Oct. 4, but attracted the opposition of many national security policymakers, including Secretary of Defense William Cohen and a number of former secretaries, both Democrats and Republicans. In a letter to Hastert, President Clinton warned that passage of the resolution "could have far-reaching negative consequences" for the United States, which would have an impact on not only the containment of Iraq, but also on Mideast peace efforts and efforts to improve relations between Turkey and Armenia.

Hastert said that what Clinton had asked for was "not an idle request," and that the President's concerns must be taken into consideration, "especially given the latest developments in the Middle East." Some media reports said that Hastert's withdrawal was seen in some circles as helping Republicans running for re-election in districts that include large Armenian-American communities. The name most often mentioned in this regard was James Rogan (R-Calif.), who was one of the House managers in the impeachment of President Clinton.

Zinni Rejects 'Clash of Civilizations' Thesis

At Senate Armed Services Committee hearings on Oct. 19, convened to hear testimony on the attack on the *USS Cole*, Gen. Anthony Zinni (ret.) rejected the idea of a "clash of civilizations," as propagandized by geopoliticians Samuel Huntington and Zbigniew Brzezinski.

Pat Roberts (R-Kan.) and Tim Hutchinson (R-Ark.) referred to newspaper editorials characterizing the attack on the *USS Cole* as an act of war. Roberts quoted Huntington declaring

that after the Iranian Revolution of 1979, a "quasi-war" developed between Islam and the West.

Zinni said that he "strongly disagreed that there is a clash of civilizations. We are not at war with Islam. . . . It is not the teachings of the Koran or Islam to do this [terrorism]. These are extremists. These are radicals that you can find in any religion." To deal with such radicals, he said, "you have to go after the root cause" which lies in economic conditions and injustices.

Zinni said that if a state sponsors the terrorist act, it is an act of war, and such a response is appropriate. But, he said, we now have independent actors who have the same capabilities as states. We have to wage war against a "network" in this case. "I'm not sure who we could declare war *against*," said Zinni. "Go into Afghanistan? It is difficult."

In Spring 2000, Zinni earned the ire of Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) and some in the Clinton foreign policy team, when he ridiculed the Iraq Liberation Act as a scheme to bankroll a bunch of "silk-suited, Rolex-wearing guys in London." He warned that if the United States put any money into backing such a plan, it would result in a "Bay of Goats."

Most of the questions to Zinni dealt with logistics issues, such as the decision to refuel U.S. Navy ships in Aden and the Navy's lack of at-sea refuelling capabilities. Committee Chairman John Warner (R-Va.) reported that in the last ten years, Navy has gone from 32 refueling tankers to just 21. Zinni commented, "I did not have an adequate number of tankers to use for [refuelling at sea]. . . . I was never given an option to have an oiler full time" to meet refuelling requirements for ships on station in the Persian Gulf or for those entering and leaving the area.