

Congressional Calendar

Most of Carter program stalled

Major portions of the President's energy proposals are now stalled until after the August recess of Congress. The efforts of the administration and friendly congressmen to get bills through have come to naught.

Senate majority leader Robert Byrd explained a week ago:

"I found members of the policy committee, the committee chairmen, and the members of the energy committee quite willing to cancel a week, or even two weeks [of the recess] if necessary, in order to get the energy legislation passed. But in those discussions Mr. Muskie, the chairman of the Budget Committee, felt that a task force should be appointed to study the budgetary implications of the energy bill. Senators Bellmon and Muskie felt that their study would require more than just a few days; in fact, they believed it would require a few weeks. I felt that their proposal was justifiable ..."

The chairman of the task force appointed by Muskie is Sen. Gary Hart (D-Col.), an intimate of Ted Kennedy. The "study" could take a very long time.

Regarding the "windfall profits tax" with which President Carter wants to finance a synthetic fuels program, Byrd reports that Finance Committee Chairman Russell Long stated that he could not report that legislation committee before the recess.

House votes standby rationing

The one part of President Carter's energy program not now stalled in House committee is standby gas rationing. That part, however, is stalled in Senate committee.

The House reversed itself July 31 and gave the president broad authority to come up with a rationing plan, by dropping the demand that any plan be subject to a one-house veto before an emergency. One amendment was added—weakening the requirement on building thermostat settings—and then another amendment was added—giving either house the right to veto the plan at the time the President wants to implement it, but not in advance.

Environmentalist congressmen were upset. "This is the only thing the public has seen come out of Washington as a conservation measure," said Connecticut Democrat Toby Moffett after the House vote. He was referring to the thermostat requirement of 78 degrees in summer and 65 degrees in winter. The amendment permits more comfortable temperatures for commercial establishment during business hours provided they showed "comparable energy savings" during off-hours. Said Moffett, "Now we're sending the public mixed signals."

The standby gas rationing authorization now requires the President to submit his plan 60 days before his announced intention to

implement it. The House or the Senate can then veto it within 15 days of submission.

The rationing authorization is only part of a bill that would give the president broad conservation powers. The Senate has passed the conservation part, but not the rationing part. The House has now granted rationing authorization, but has not acted on the conservation measures.

House backs Breeder program; McCormack backs fusion

As in 1978, the House once again went on record in favor of the Clinch River Liquid Metal Breeder Reactor (LMBR) program. The LMBR technology, already operational in France and the Soviet Union, is the only fission technology that produces more fuel than it consumes, making it an essential fuel-recycling feature of any broad nuclear development program. The Carter Administration's effort to kill the breeder program by eliminating funding in the Department of Energy appropriations bill was rejected July 26 by a 237-182 vote. The bill goes to the floor from the House Science and Technology Committee with full funding for Clinch River stipulated.

A contingent of industry-oriented, urban Democrats—of the Daley-machine variety—appear to have been responsible for attempts to save the breeder program. The

breeder has no place in the administration's energy program, which emphasizes only pre-20th century technologies.

This important energy battle now shifts to the Senate, where the same Department of Energy authorization bill has been reported to the floor *without* breeder funding. Energy committee members like Bennett Johnston (D-La.) and Jim McClure (R-Idaho) plan to lead a pro-breeder fight.

It is unlikely that either house could override an almost certain presidential veto of breeder funding. But continued, vociferous congressional support reflects the pronuclear sentiment of constituencies which no president, or presidential candidate, can successfully ignore.

On the day of the House vote, Mike McCormack (D-Wa.), the leader of pro-nuclear forces in the House, announced that he is requesting a major increase in funding of magnetic-confinement approaches to the development of fusion power. "The goal of this accelerated effort would be to have a magnetic fusion electricity demonstration-plant on line before the end of the century. I consider nuclear fusion to have the greatest future potential of any advanced energy technology."

McCormack's funding request is related to the breeder program vote, because the transition to an economy based on safe, clean and virtually inexhaustible fusion would depend beforehand on accel-

erated applications of fission technology, including fusion-fission hybrid generating plants. The fuel-conserving features of the breeder program would permit the interim period step-up of fission and hybrid development without encountering the difficulties of uranium-supply shortfalls.

Republicans chart British campaign

Several days ago, House Republican leaders met with GOP chairman Bill Brock and announced that they will model the 1980 Republican election campaigns on the policies and tactics of British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. The Republican campaign will be focused around the budget issue, with Republican candidates asked to use rhetoric about free enterprise and tax cuts as the basis for a carbon copy of Thatcher's austerity campaign platform and programs. The Republican National Committee has even hired Jim Killough, the political consultant who ran Thatcher's publicity drive. Brock was in Britain during the last four weeks of the Tory leader's campaign. House Republicans were treated to a film last week on British Tory methods.

Spearheading the sale of this plan to freshmen GOP Congressmen is Rep. Newton Gingrich (R-GA.), a former history professor, who, in the words of the *Washing-*

ton Post, has "an admiration for British politics."

"Newt is interested in far broader issues than the budget" an aide declared. "He's involved in completely reorienting the way U.S. politics operate. So while we're not working for a Parliamentary system per se we are moving in that direction."

A Republican Economic Policy Statement released July 26, authored by a committee chaired by Senator Danforth (R-Mo.), supported a whole array of cheap labor programs and economic austerity policies. The statement recommends more effective IMF surveillance over "the surplus economies," meaning the developed nations. It also calls for close control over the Eurocurrency markets and an end to the role of the dollar as the world's reserve currency.

The statement coincides with Republican presidential campaign strategy. The programmatic points are taken from British programs.

—Susan Kokinda
and Barbara Dreyfuss