

Congressional Calendar by Barbara Dreyfuss and Susan Kokinda

Muskie should "pull Carter down," says Senator

Senator Joe Biden (D-Del.) shocked a packed Senate caucus room on May 7, when he told Senator Edmund Muskie that he should walk out on Carter if the President does not back him up against National Security adviser Brzezinski. During Muskie's confirmation hearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Biden said: "It may not be diplomatic, but I think it must be said publicly, you and you alone have the power to bring the President down and prevent his reelection, and if he does not back you up against Brzezinski, you should walk out and do just that."

That was only the most explicit of recommendations to the Secretary of State designate. Committee Chairman Frank Church (D-Id.) and ranking Republican Jake Javits of New York, both prefaced their questioning of Muskie with support for the War Powers Act as a check against military adventurism. Church said: "The last two wars which this country fought were initiated by the President, and both ended with the country in a state of division and bitter recriminations. The War Powers Act was established to ensure a united voice stemming from the federal government."

Sen. Jesse Helms (R-NC.) however actually brought up a much more profound aspect of American foreign policy—its control by the Council on Foreign Relations and the Trilateral Commission. Helms stated that "a majority of Ameri-

cans consider that the administration's foreign policy up to this point is an unmitigated disaster," and attributed that to the influence of the CFR and the Trilateral Commission in formulating U.S. foreign policy. But Helms let Muskie off the hook by grilling him only on his formal relationship to the two named institutions (there is none) rather than on his adherence to their policies.

Commission to reorganize government proposed

Congressman Bolling has introduced legislation to establish a special commission to evaluate programs for reorganizing the executive branch in conjunction with the state and local governments. The commission would be titled Commission on More Effective Government, under the bill introduced Jan. 30. It would consist of 18 members of both political parties, and all sectors of the economy and continue its work for two years.

Bolling is modeling his commission on the first Hoover Commission for government reorganization, which streamlined the executive branch, establishing the Office of Management and Budget and the National Security Council in the late 1940s.

The Bolling-proposed legislation has 110 cosponsors in the House and was endorsed by Congressman Parren Mitchell (D-Md.) in a major OpEd in the *Baltimore Sun* May 4. However, Bolling is not

moving the legislation out of committee until the next session of Congress. He has been talking with the Brookings Institute and Common Cause, arranging that they will play a major part in shaping the work of the commission, acting as outside advisers.

In the Senate however, action is expected sooner. Congressman Roth (D-Del.), a member of the Trilateral Commission, which has called for limiting democratic government, has introduced a proposal similar to Bolling's. Roth has included a commission proposal in his sunset legislation, which will be taken up in the Senate this summer.

Hunts' silver market activities prompt legislation

On May 2, William Herbert Hunt and Nelson Bunker Hunt testified before the Senate Agriculture Subcommittee and a House Government Operations Subcommittee on their investments in the silver futures market. William Hunt said that the Commodity Exchange and the Chicago Board of Trade actions to raise margin requirements and limit trade when the price of silver escalated in March "were not fair or market neutral."

The hearings are being used to justify legislation that will place the futures market much more under the control of the Federal Reserve Board. "We have to see if we can halt these high-flying games," declared Rep. Ferdinand St. Germain

(D-R.I.) announcing to the Hunts that he and Senate Banking Committee Chairman William Proxmire intend to introduce legislation to create federal guidelines for the extension of credit on silver and other futures contracts. The legislation, still in the drafting stage, would set margin requirements in the futures markets and limit financing for futures investments. "The model for the legislation would be what's in place with stock margin requirements," declared an aide to Rep. St. Germain. The Federal Reserve Board now sets the margin requirements for stocks and there is a lot of discussion about extending the power of the Federal Reserve into commodity futures trading.

Move underway to eliminate oil import fee

A move has started in Congress to lift the 10 cent a gallon (\$4.62 a barrel) fee on imported oil that was declared April 2 by executive action because of expected congressional resistance to the proposal.

A resolution has been introduced in the House by Congressman Shannon (D-Mass.) with 121 cosponsors invoking Section 402 of the windfall profits tax legislation which provides for congressional review of all White House actions on oil imports. The resolution is before the House Subcommittee on the Environment and Energy and mark-up is expected after May 15. On that date, the oil companies will be allowed to pass on to consumers the oil import fee and backers of the

resolution expect a public outcry that will make speedy action on the resolution possible.

Meanwhile, Congressmen Mofett (D-Cn.), Markey (D-Mass.), Maguire (D-N.J.), Moore (R-Pa.), and Stockman (R-Mich.) along with several citizens groups and the Independent Gasoline Marketers Council went to Federal District Court on May 6 to seek a temporary restraining order and a permanent injunction against the fee. They asserted that the fee was unconstitutional because, in fact, it is a \$10 billion tax and only Congress has the power to tax according to the U.S. Constitution.

On May 5, the Federal Court rejected the temporary restraining order.

Food war in the making

Two Congressional "initiatives" in response to the economic crisis hitting the American agriculture sector have revealed themselves to be token efforts at best, and dangerous predecessors to a food war at worst.

Senator John Culver's (D-Iowa) opposition to the nomination of Lyle Gramley to the Board of Directors of the Federal Reserve Board seems to have crumbled in the face of the Fed's announcement that it is lowering the discount rate to 13 percent for small business- and agriculture-connected banks. Culver had vowed to fight Gramley's nomination on the Senate floor because it was a further indication that the administration "did

not understand" the effect of tight-money policies on those two sectors.

When the Senate Banking Committee voted 13 to 2 in favor of Gramley, Culver announced that "we have accomplished a great deal in the fight so far. ... we have been successful in easing credit to farmers, the administration is now listening to us ... and I have made no final decision on whether to continue the fight on the Gramley nomination on the floor of the Senate."

The second "initiative" centered around comprehensive hearings on the financial crisis in agriculture held by the House Agriculture Committee. Chaired by Washington Democrat Tom Foley, the Committee heard two solid days of testimony from the major agriculture-related financial institutions and individual farmers and farm-related businessmen. Asked what Foley or the committee planned to do about the tight money situation currently devastating agriculture, a committee spokesman said, "We have no proposals in the hopper on that." The staff member added that the committee is responding to the crisis in grain production brought about by the President's embargo of grain to the Soviet Union with a proposal to establish a 4 million ton food security reserve. Major farm organizations have opposed such a proposal, because they feared that the historic American commitment to feed the world might be subverted by the use of such a food reserve in a food war against, especially, the Third World.