

Congressional Closeup by Ronald Kokinda and Susan Kokinda

Ottinger introduces population legislation

Representative Richard Ottinger (D-N.Y.) introduced the Global Resources, Environment, and Population Act of 1983, a bill designed to establish a national goal and policy of "population stabilization," the first week in May.

An interagency council "directing, monitoring, and coordinating ongoing assessments of the . . . relationship between population, resources, and the environment, both at home and abroad . . . to enable the federal government . . . to tailor its policies and programs to suit shifting demographic patterns" would be created to enforce this population stabilization policy.

Sen. Mark Hatfield (R-Ore.) is introducing identical legislation. Last year both congressmen introduced similar bills, which went nowhere.

Ottinger's bill uses plain language. "It is the public policy of the United States that the federal government," it states, "use *all practical means*, including financial and technical assistance, to *establish and maintain conditions* which promote the achievement, at the earliest possible time, of national population stabilization in the United States . . . [and] to assure . . . in the administration of federal laws, regulations, and policies, and the planning and administration of the programs of the federal government, the goal of national population stabilization [emphasis added]."

Byrd's new response to Reagan defense policy

Senator Robert Byrd (D-W.Va.), Senate Minority Leader, called for a U.S. effort in research and develop-

ment of directed-energy weapons as the necessary prerequisite to negotiating an arms control treaty in space. Byrd's May 6 speech dropped the initial response of the Manatt Democrats to the President's March 23 proposal, the claim that beam weapons were fictional "Star Wars" technology.

"First, U.S. research and development funding for military space systems should be at a level where we can match Soviet capabilities in approximately the same time frame," Byrd stated, "This should help convince the Soviets to negotiate restrictions on the use of these technologies for military means.

"Second, we should offer to reopen the anti-satellite talks and extend them to include a ban on destructive space systems of any kind, and devices with a capability of upsetting the strategic balance, such as directed-energy satellites or ground-based systems aimed at satellites.

"President Reagan has made a very bold proposal regarding the use of new technology in the cause of peace. He has suggested that our inventive genius be put to work to make obsolete the awesome destructive power of nuclear weapons. He proposes to banish the nuclear genie from threatening our annihilation. This is a noble concept, a possibility which excites the imagination."

After listing the arguments against the President's proposal, Byrd said, "There are, of course, elements of truth in all these critiques. . . . But anyone who raises those arguments simply does not understand the rapid development of these technologies. . . . The Soviets have a very ambitious directed-energy weapons program—space-based laser satellites. They are ahead of us in this technology."

Byrd proceeded to ally with Sen. Malcolm Wallop (R-Wyo.) in opposing the President's proposal to explore

the possibility of sharing this technology with the Soviets at some point in the future.

Emergency farm credit passes the House

The House passed a watered-down emergency farm credit bill, H.R. 1190, on May 3 by a vote of 378 to 35, in an attempt to relieve the massive debt burden on the U.S. farm sector. This sector is suffering the highest bankruptcy and foreclosure rates since the Great Depression.

"For some farmers, the last few years have been an economic disaster," House Agriculture Committee chairman Kika de la Garza (D-Tex.) said when the bill was passed, "and we all realize that credit alone will not raise prices and incomes. But timely and compassionate use of credit may help some good, efficient producers hang on until the income situation improves."

One provision of the legislation allowed for loans which had been taken out from the Farmers Home Administration (FmHA) to be rescheduled or deferred for one year on a case-by-case basis. If a borrower can establish to the satisfaction of the Department of Agriculture that he, as a good farm operator, was unable to repay his loan because of "conditions beyond his control," and that he would be able to fully repay if a deferral were granted, he will qualify for debt relief under the new legislation.

However, the original legislation, sponsored by Rep. Ed Jones (D-Tenn.), the chairman of the Agriculture Subcommittee on Conservation, Credit, and Rural Development, and its ranking member, Rep. Tom Coleman (R-Mo.), would not have forced the burden of proving that he is credit-worthy on the individual farmer. This

bill would have provided more general and more accessible debt relief.

As a step toward ameliorating the credit crunch, which made loans for spring planting unavailable to farmers in many states, the House legislation authorizes an additional \$200 million in insured farm operating loans for FY83.

The bill also reactivated the Economic Emergency Loan program and required the federal government to operate the program through Sept. 30, 1984. A total of \$300 million in additional loans will be available for FY83, and \$600 million would be available for FY84.

How much debt relief is actually granted to farmers will now be largely a political question; the decision is in the hands of the Secretary of Agriculture. If the USDA does not take sufficient action, the Agriculture Committee may well have to mandate a new relief formula.

House Committee cuts \$300 million from defense

The House Armed Services Committee has reportedly cut \$300 million from the ballistic missile defense (BMD) program in the defense budget for fiscal year 1984. The committee report, expected to be released May 16, contains funding figures that run directly counter to President Reagan's March 23 policy announcement of developing directed-energy strategic defense systems.

The cut in BMD funding came as the committee marked up its authorization for FY84 and cut \$10.5 billion from the administration's defense budget. The cut allowed for a 6 percent rate of increase in defense spending after inflation, rather than the administration's request for 10 percent. A total of \$2.8 billion came out of

military R&D.

Committee chairman Rep. Melvin Price (D-Ill.), in a statement circulating within the committee, justified the action because of budgetary constraints, and said that BMD funding was cut "since there is no defined program for ballistic missile defense." One observer interpreted this as a reflection of Pentagon resistance to the strategic defense policy, as well as inter-service infighting.

Capitol Hill sources have indicated that the administration is planning to reprogram funds allocated for BMD research and development into developing directed-energy systems, without making requests for major net new funding. A \$300 million cut in overall funds at this time would jeopardize the acceleration of the directed-energy weapons effort.

Long and Tydings call for population program funds

Former Senator Joe Tydings of Maryland testified before the House Appropriations Foreign Operations Subcommittee May 10, attacking the Reagan administration for allowing no increase in funding for population control programs. Tydings singled out Turkey, Egypt, and Mexico as countries that desperately need to cut their population growth.

Subcommittee chairman Rep. Clarence Long (D-Md.) agreed with Tydings, stating he regretted the zero growth in funding for these programs. Because of "moral, religious," and other objections, he said, "there will be a tough fight in the committee on increased money and a close vote." Long added that he "would do whatever he could" to see that the additional population control funds were allocated.

A National Democratic Policy

Committee spokesman testified that his organization intends to see that Long loses his fight in the committee. The NDPC statement called on Congress "to cut all funding in all agencies of the government for population control efforts. . . . In addition, Congress must respond to the calls in the developing sector for a new international financial structure that would put President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's American Century policy into effect, calling for development, rather than reduction of, the world's population.

Reagan wins MX vote in Senate

The Senate Appropriations Committee voted 17 to 11 to approve \$625 million for engineering and testing the MX missile, after the President sent another letter to the senators who had attempted to force him to carry out the recommendations of the Scowcroft Commission by threatening to kill the MX program.

The President's letter of reply to Sens. Charles Percy (R-Ill.), Sam Nunn (D-Ga.), and William Cohen (R-Me.) was similar to generalized and qualified endorsements of the Scowcroft report sent May 12 to House members, with an additional and even more general endorsement of the concept of a "build-down" of nuclear warheads.

The "build-down" proposal called for by the Scowcroft Commission would require destroying two nuclear warheads for every new one deployed. But the President's letter endorsed neither the ratio nor a specific plan to incorporate the concept into the Geneva strategic arms talks, as demanded by Kissinger-Harriman forces in Congress.