

Congressional Closeup by Ronald Kokinda and Susan Kokinda

Congressional junkets sow chaos, destabilization

Congress has returned to Washington this week. We therefore resume our coverage of its pécadillos, but in the interest of continuity, we bring our readers up to date on the doings of that intrepid body during the recess. For those with short memories, it should be recalled that Congress snuck out of town in December, having left ticking the Gramm-Rudman bomb. Not content with ruining their own country, members of Congress then set off to travel abroad at the taxpayers' expense, to ruin the countries of our allies.

- A bipartisan Senate delegation including John Danforth (R-Mo.) and Alan Simpson (R-Wyo.) went to Japan for a meeting with Prime Minister Nakasone. They warned him that Japan's huge trade surplus "threatens world stability" and must be reduced by a sweeping campaign to boost imports. Nakasone replied that he needed time, since the export-oriented Japanese economy "does not move swiftly."

Meeting with reporters in Tokyo, Danforth accused Japan of behaving like a selfish child: "No other nation contributes so little to the open trading system of the world in proportion to what it gains. . . . The world trading system cannot long function when its second-largest economy abdicates its responsibilities. . . . Japan is a great nation. It should begin to act like one. . . . There's more to leadership than flooding the world with Walkmans and VCRs."

Danforth threatened that Congress is likely to approve protectionist legislation this year which could "wreck" U.S.-Japanese relations.

- Six congressmen led by Rep.

William Gray III (D-Pa.) traveled to South Africa, and left under a storm of criticism. South African radio said the delegation was "a form of foreign interference in the country's affairs that has grown dramatically in popularity among certain kinds of Western politicians in the last year or two. It finds expression in high-profile political activity, which, while ostensibly designed to accelerate reform in South Africa, in fact retards it." A black group, the Azanian People's Organization, refused to meet the delegation.

Congressman Gray told a news conference at the Johannesburg airport that the delegation was leaving convinced that Congress was right to support tough economic sanctions against South Africa.

- Senator Ted Kennedy (D-Mass.) went on an Ibero-American tour that included visits to Peru and Chile. In Peru, he attempted to put himself forward as the best friend of Peru in its battle with the international bankers: "While there is a Kennedy—and there are many more in my country—they will be dedicated to the people of Peru and committed to democracy," he said. He urged the banks to be more "flexible" in negotiating the debt with Third World countries like Peru.

In Chile, Kennedy was forced to cancel a visit to the Church's human rights office, when the country's cardinal refused to meet with him, because, he said, the meeting would have "political overtones."

Mexico enraged at Rangel's charges

Representative Charles Rangel (D-N.Y.) headed a six-person delegation

to Mexico during the winter recess, and denounced that country's government for allowing illegal drugs into the United States. The delegation warned Mexican officials, including President Miguel de la Madrid, that increased U.S. funds would depend on ending "corruption." Rangel charged that mobster Caro Quintero was able to leave prison "frequently" to dine in restaurants.

Mexican Attorney General Sergio García Ramírez angrily replied to these charges: "These are absurd and fantastic declarations coming from a man who did not even make the trip to Cu-liacan to see how narcotics are being destroyed." He demanded that Rangel come up with proof that Caro Quintero eats outside of prison.

Dole competes with O'Neill to cut defenses

Robert Dole (R-Kan.), the Senate majority leader, is cooking up an alternative to the Reagan administration's FY 1987 budget which will include a \$20 billion cut in defense spending. To meet the \$60 billion in cuts required by the Gramm-Rudman amendment, Dole also wants to slash domestic spending by \$20 billion, and to raise \$20 billion in new revenues by closing "tax loopholes" and imposing a national tax on consumption. The plan "is certain to provoke a bitter political confrontation with Reagan," commented the *New York Post* on Jan. 21.

Backed by Senate Budget Committee chairman Pete Domenici (R-N.M.), Dole also wants a spring "economic summit" between Congress and the administration. The aim would be to force President Reagan to accept the

Dole budget plan, or be faced with a stalemate which would trigger the automatic cuts provision of Gramm-Rudman. Dole's budget alternative is being drafted by unnamed "economic experts."

Dole's "summit" plan is meant to help congressmen escape the wrath of constituents who are furious about the Gramm-Rudman cuts. The idea is to forge a "grand coalition" that would involve members of both parties and both houses, in such a way as to "immunize members of Congress from political risk by creating a framework of bipartisan cooperation and an atmosphere of national purpose," the *New York Times* reported Jan. 18.

Wright moves left, boosts KGB line

Jim Wright is not only seeking to succeed Tip O'Neill as Speaker of the House, he seems bound and determined to emulate the present Speaker's politics as well. The latest Soviet arms offer could help the United States to cut its budget deficit, because it would make military budget cuts possible—if you believe what House Majority Leader Jim Wright (D-Tex.) told a press conference on Jan. 19.

According to the *San Antonio Light*, Wright declared: "We are spending \$300 billion this year on military strength for fear of what the Soviet Union will do to us if we didn't. Meanwhile, the Soviet Union is spending a like amount on military strength for fear of what the U.S. will do if they don't. Wouldn't it make sense to free up that money?" Citing the growth of the federal deficit over the last five years, Wright claimed, "We can't take a glib attitude [toward

Gorbachov's proposal] by saying it's just politics. We have a responsibility to take it seriously."

Wright's statement was vigorously contested by Elizabeth Arnold, who is challenging his congressional seat in the 12th C.D. Mrs. Arnold's campaign is backed by the National Democratic Policy Committee (NDPC).

In a press conference in Fort Worth, Texas on Jan. 20, she charged that Wright was "not morally fit to serve." "It is apparent," she said, "that Jim Wright believes that a requirement for election as Speaker of the House is the support of the Kremlin. . . . What Jim Wright did not tell the press is that the Supreme Soviet in Moscow issued a 10-page appeal to the U.S. Congress, on Friday, to 'raise their voices' on behalf of the Gorbachov policy."

If Mrs. Arnold is correct, and Wright does believe that KGB patronage goes with the job, then perhaps the Texan also plans to emulate other characteristics of the outgoing Speaker. If so, Washington area tavern-keepers can also look forward to continuing high-level patronage.

Lugar to 'observe' Philippines elections

Senate Foreign Relations Committee chairman Richard Lugar (R-Ind.) announced on Jan. 24 that he will be heading a congressional delegation to "observe" the Philippines elections, which are scheduled to occur on Feb. 7. A spokesman for Lugar's office said that the delegation was intended to "send a signal that we're on the side of democratic reform."

Congressional liberals are making a last-ditch effort to oust President

Ferdinand Marcos, as election day approaches. Rep. Stephen Solarz (D-N.Y.), chairman of the House Subcommittee on Asia and Pacific Affairs, opened hearings on Jan. 21 to try to prove that Marcos and his wife have secretly channeled millions of dollars of U.S. aid into private property holdings in the United States.

If Solarz is so anxious to stop "corruption," he might look closer to home. New York City is now hit by scandals involving its judiciary, its criminal justice system, the city administration, and the Queens Borough president's office. In recent years Brooklyn congressmen have been prosecuted for everything from child molestation to vote fraud. But Solarz is so busy examining the mote in his neighbor's eye that he cannot see the beam in his own. Rep. Gerald Solomon (R-N.Y.) charged that Solarz "is doing this for the sole purpose of bringing down President Marcos," and had accepted campaign contributions from Filipino supporters of opposition candidate Corazon Aquino. "I could say Mr. Solarz has been paid to conduct this witchhunt," Solomon said. "It's disgusting."

The *Washington Post* and the *New York Times*, which have devoted thousands of column-inches of copy to the attack against Marcos, nevertheless saw fit to delete the charge of illegal campaign contributions from their reports on Solomon's statement.

Solarz also came under attack from Rep. Toby Roth (R-Wisc.), who called his hearings a "kangaroo court." Solarz and company could not meet his challenges to the witnesses to produce ownership papers with the Marcos's name on them. Roth said that the hearings were "politically motivated and an attempt to influence the democratic elections in the Philippines."