

Congressional Closeup by Kathleen Klenetsky

A scramble in the wake of Gramm-Rudman ruling

The Supreme Court's declaration that a key part of the Gramm-Rudman act, the automatic trigger mechanism, is unconstitutional, has spurred Congress into new heights of lunacy on economic policy.

Rather than drop the silly idea of "balancing the budget," and instead attack the problem of the economy by going to the source—lack of productive investment—Congress instead is scrambling to gerry rig new mechanisms for slashing a deficit gone out of control.

On July 17, Congress certified its irresponsibility in the economic arena by overwhelmingly ratifying \$11.7 billion in spending cuts made via Gramm-Rudman's automatic trigger in March. These were also ruled unconstitutional by the Court.

Meantime, Gramm-Rudman's principal sponsors—Sens. Phil Gramm (R-Tex.), N.H.) and Ernest Hollings (D-S.C.)—have proposed new legislation that would repeal Congress' powers to dismiss the head of the General Accounting Office, putting that agency in the category of major independent regulatory commissions.

The move is designed to deal with the Supreme Court's major objection, namely, that the GAO is an agency of Congress, and therefore the provision within Gramm-Rudman allowing the GAO's director, the controller-general, to dictate across-the-board budget cuts to the President, violates the constitutional separation of executive and legislative powers.

But the proposal has generated little support. The current controller general, Charles A. Bowsher, has is-

sued a statement strongly opposing the idea, on the grounds that the GAO "should remain the congressional watchdog and continue its independent and objective audits. . . ." Congressional leaders, including House Speaker Tip O'Neill (D-Mass.), have also rejected the proposal as an infringement on congressional powers.

Senate readies tough South Africa sanctions

The U.S. Senate is preparing to impose tough economic sanctions against South Africa, amid growing indications that the Reagan administration may be inching away from its current no-sanctions stance.

Senate leaders say enough support exists within the chamber to pass some form of sanctions. Senate Foreign Relations Committee chairman Sen. Richard Lugar (R-Ind.), considered bellwether on the issue, declared July 15, "A large majority of the Senate would like to take some action on South Africa. They'd like to cast a vote to indicate their unhappiness."

Sen. John Heinz (R-Penn.) curred: A sanctions bill "will have all the votes it needs."

Congressional sources report a strong possibility the Senate may vote up a bill as harsh as that adopted by the House last month, mandating total U.S. disinvestment and a complete ban on trade.

The Senate began its deliberations on the issue with Banking Committee hearings July 15. Key witness Sen. Ted Kennedy (D-Mass.), two of the four sanctions bills under Senate consideration, told the committee that isolating South Africa economically offered the "last chance" of

avoiding civil war and eliminating apartheid.

"I deeply regret that Congress did not act last year," Kennedy told the committee. "We cannot let another year go by. The policy of the administration is a disgrace and an embarrassment. The Congress must act now to put the United States back on the right side of history. . . . The United States of America has become the last best friend of apartheid."

The Senate push for sanctions coincides with an administration review of its South African policy, and is expected to bolster those in the administration who want Reagan to take a tougher line with Pretoria.

Reagan is being urged by some advisers and key members of Congress to make a major address on U.S. policy before July 23, the date Secretary of State George Shultz is scheduled to testify on South Africa before Lugar's committee.

Should the United States take punitive economic actions against Pretoria, as urged by Kennedy et al., it will be shooting itself in the foot. As the *New York Times* gloated July 15, were the West to cut off trade with South Africa, the West's only alternative source of vital strategic minerals would be the Soviet Union.

Congressman threatens to undermine war on drugs

On the same day that U.S. military forces were assisting the Bolivian government in what promised to be an historic crackdown on that country's cocaine industry, U.S. Rep. Larry Smith (D-Fla.)

off all aid to Peru and Colombia and to terminate a U.S.-Mexican drug-

eradication program, if these countries failed to eradicate their drug exports.

Smith, apparently oblivious to the fact that Peru and Colombia have also asked for American military assistance, made his threats at July 17 hearings sponsored by the House Committee on Foreign Affairs's Task Force on International Narcotic Control, which he chairs.

Smith said the Congress could refuse to okay the additional \$2 million for the U.S.-Mexican program that the State Department has requested. He also bragged that Bolivia had turned to the United States for military assistance only after the United States had threatened to terminate aid to that country last month, pursuant to an amendment Smith added to last year's foreign assistance act.

Smith's claim flew in the face of statements made by Bolivia's ambassador to the United States on ABC-TV's "Nightline" the night before. Fernando Illanes denied there was any relationships at all between the threatened cut-off and the Bolivian government's decision to invite U.S. forces in. Illanes stressed that the operation was planned months before, in April, and "does not have anything to do with the latest action from Congress."

The Smith hearings provided a forum for the most rabid fulminations imaginable against key Ibero-American governments, especially Mexico. James Millis, author of a widely-publicized (and palpably fraudulent) book on drugs, accused Mexico's President and attorney-general of covering up the murder of U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration agent Enrico Camarena in Mexico two years ago.

"If all of the facts on the Camarena murder become known, the govern-

ment of Mexico would collapse," Millis asserted. He read from a 1983 "classified" government report, claiming that 75% of the total export earnings of Mexico and Colombia "probably" come from drug trafficking.

The author pleased Smith no end by declaring that the export of illegal drugs to the United States is a hostile act, and that President Reagan should declare war on Mexico, Colombia, Peru, and Bolivia—not the drug mafia, but the countries!

"Our President should stop telling people that the drug problem in the U.S. is a domestic one, that we can stop drugs at the border," said Millis. "There has been a war on drugs in every administration since Nixon. This is not an effective war. The President has to say: 'We tried stopping drugs on the border. It has not worked.' He has to be honest and say the following countries are truly and simply in the drug business: Colombia manufactures 80% of the cocaine of the United States; Peru and Bolivia grow together over 95% of the coca; Mexico is the major exporter to the United States of marijuana, heroin. . . . These are hostile acts. We are in effect in war with these countries."

Nunn spearheads assault on strategic defense program
Senator Sam Nunn has taken over the leadership of the anti-SDI gaggle in the Senate. The supposedly pro-defense Georgia Democrat, ranking minority member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, has launched a multi-flanked attack on the program, including a move to force the administration to stick by the so-called "strict

interpretation" of the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty.

Nunn's actions stem from an administration decision last fall that a broad interpretation of the treaty was permissible. The decision was based on a section of the treaty called "Agreed Statement D," which explicitly exempts technologies based on "new physical principles" from the pact's restrictions.

Although Reagan, under prodding from the State Department, announced that the United States would continue to abide by the more narrow reading for the time being, the arms-control mafia went berserk over this new threat to the ABM accord.

Nunn and several of his cohorts are now preparing a legislative challenge to the validity of the administration's interpretation, and has asked for access to the detailed record of the treaty negotiations so they can "decide for themselves" whether the administration is right.

The administration has so far refused, asserting executive privilege. Nunn has upped the ante with a bill to block spending of appropriated funds for SDI if the administration continues to refuse to let the Senate have access to the records.

Congressional officials say that various compromises, some of which would restrict the number of senators who could see the material, have been suggested, but Nunn isn't buying. In a June 18 letter to Senate Armed Services chairman Barry Goldwater (R-Ariz.), es: "As long as the administration insists on deciding what parts of the record we can and cannot see, we cannot reach an independent and objective judgment as to the validity of its recent reinterpretation."