

Congressional Closeup by William Jones

South Africa sanctions introduced in Senate

Legislation sponsored by Sen. Paul Simon (D-Ill.) and Sen. Alan Cranston (D-Calif.) was introduced in the Senate on Sept. 8. The bill, almost identical to one passed in the House in August, would require total disinvestment by U.S. companies and an end to almost all trade with that nation, allegedly for the purpose of pressuring it to end apartheid. The sponsors made it clear that they would not water down the bill in hope of its passage. At the moment, the only Republican supporting the bill is Sen. Lowell Weicker (R-Conn.).

Secretary of State George Shultz has already expressed to Foreign Relations Committee chairman Sen. Claiborne Pell (D-R.I.) the administration's strong opposition to the bill, and wanted this made known to other Democrats on the panel. If the bill is passed, it will most certainly be vetoed. Without more Republican support, the Democrats will not be able to override the veto. Simon and Cranston said that they might also be faced with a filibuster from conservative Republicans led by Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.).

A *Wall Street Journal* editorial on the subject indicates that the "tough" stance of the Congress on the issue of sanctions may have just the opposite of the desired effects, by stirring up reactionary opposition in South Africa to the Botha government's reforms. "Hard-line apartheid candidates for the October municipal elections are attracting sympathetic crowds," says the editorial, "with their attacks on the government as a timid servant of the wealthy mining conglomerates. They are demanding retaliation against sanctions."

The ones who will really bear the burden of the sanctions policy are the

black people of South Africa. Already thousands of South African blacks have lost jobs due to U.S. sanctions. The House sanctions bill has also helped to arouse South Africa's whites to push for countersanctions to deny the United States strategic raw materials.

Amendment permits death penalty in drug murders

On Sept. 8, the House passed an amendment introduced by Rep. George Gekas (R-Pa.) which would allow juries to impose the death penalty for persons who kill in the course of a drug-related felony. The amendment is attached to the Omnibus Drug Bill, and was passed 299-111.

Currently, the only federal crimes that carry a death sentence involve espionage by members of the armed services and aircraft hijackings that result in death. The Senate will take up the bill sometime before Election Day.

Congress pressed to conclude business

The Congress has a series of measures which it will have to pass in the last three weeks before the official adjournment in the second week of October. There are 13 appropriations bills in various stages of completion. Two of the 13 have been signed into law, and conferees have reached agreement on three other bills, which should soon come to the House floor for final passage.

Eight other funding measures must still be worked out in House-Senate conferences and passed by both chambers before Congress adjourns.

The intention is to pass each appropriation bill separately, but there is

a threat that the Congress will be forced to pass another Continuing Resolution, which would combine several of the bills. When President Reagan conceded to sign the last Continuing Resolution at the end of last year, he vowed that he would not sign another one if it were to come to his desk.

New legislation on abortion is one bone of contention between the White House and the Senate. The abortion issue is contained in the Senate version of an appropriations bill that provides money for the Departments of Labor and Health and Human Services. House and Senate negotiators have reached agreement on all other aspects of the money bill, but could not resolve the abortion issue. President Reagan has said that he will veto the bill if it includes a section approving federal funds for abortion for victims of rape or incest.

Final action is expected on legislation to implement the U.S.-Canada Free Trade agreement negotiated by American and Canadian officials last year. The agreement would phase out tariffs between the two countries.

The most contentious issue will undoubtedly be the Department of Defense appropriations bill. President Reagan earlier vetoed the DoD authorization bill, since it provided too little funds for the Strategic Defense Initiative and unduly restricted the President's ability to conduct arms control policy. The Democrats are considering attaching the vetoed defense authorization bill to the defense appropriations bill, along with some controversial defense procurement reforms. Reagan has threatened to veto the appropriations bill if it is not substantially different than the authorization bill.

It is not certain, however, whether the Democrats would want to lace the bill with amendments and additional

program restrictions that would provoke another veto by the President. This would tend to sharpen the differences between the two parties on the issue of defense policy and could serve to hurt Dukakis in the presidential campaign, adding grist to the mill of the Republican attacks on his liberal stance on defense issues.

If Congress and the White House cannot reach an agreement, money to keep the Pentagon going into next year could be included in a catchall spending bill, and would thus postpone the hard decisions until a new Congress and administration can deal with the issues next year.

‘Capitol Hill crawling with Russian spies’

This was the remark made by Rep. Trent Lott (R-Miss.), who is now running for the seat of retiring Sen. John Stennis (D-Miss.). He said it on several occasions in 1985, pointing to their presence on committee staffs and in the office of at least one member. Lott was confronted with his remarks on the campaign trail, and he refused to back down from his statement.

Eyebrows were raised at liberal fundraisers in the Capitol Hill area at the audacity of the Lott statements, but the folks in Mississippi just might send old Trent up to the Senate for “telling it like it is.”

Republicans confident of more Senate seats

National Republican Senatorial Committee chairman Rudy Boschwitz (R-Minn.) said that he sees 12 to 15 of the 33 Senate races going either way. To retake the Senate, Boschwitz said, the

Republicans will have to defend successfully all of their 12 incumbents, win 5 of the 6 open seats, and oust at least 3 of the 15 sitting Democrats.

“It’s ambitious, but realistic,” said Boschwitz.

Spending could exceed Gramm-Rudman limits

House and Senate negotiators will be working under very tight constraints imposed by last year’s budget agreement with the White House. While spending limits have served to avoid protracted debates on the money bills, they now present lawmakers with the very real possibility of exceeding the overall budget ceiling and forcing an automatic spending cut that would affect a wide range of government programs.

Office of Management and Budget director James Miller announced last month that the bills signed since Aug. 15 or about to be signed could put Congress within a mere \$700 million of triggering the automatic spending cuts. If Gramm-Rudman comes into play, there will be cuts across the board, and many items would be placed in jeopardy.

LaRouche Democrats challenge GOP incumbents

In what look to be very promising campaigns, members of the National Democratic Policy Committee, the political action committee of the LaRouche wing of the party, associated with former Democratic presidential candidate Lyndon LaRouche, have won their primaries in four

congressional districts and will be challenging the Republican incumbents in November.

Donald Hadley in the 5th Congressional District in Pennsylvania will be aiming at unseating Republican Richard Schulze.

George Elder, in the 21st Congressional District in the former steel belt of Pennsylvania, will be targeting the seat of Rep. Thomas Ridge, a member of the House Banking Committee and one of the key opponents of the Glass-Steagall Amendment of 1933. The commercial banks want to eliminate Glass-Steagall, in order to bring commercial banking into the very volatile and risky area of the securities markets, thus endangering the savings of the depositors—and Tom Ridge is their boy.

Don Marquis in the 39th CD of California will be working to unseat Republican incumbent William Dannemeyer, and Mark Brown in the 12th CD of Ohio is intent on replacing John Kasich as a U.S. congressman from Columbus.

Homosexual congressman hits campaign trail

Rep. Barney Frank (D-Mass.) who acknowledged his homosexuality publicly last year is now going on the speaking circuit.

On Sept. 8, he addressed the Lesbian and Gay Association at Georgetown University Law Center on the future of the civil rights of homosexuals in the United States.

Frank, who came out of the closet in mid-1987, helped to create an “adult entertainment” zone in Boston. In Mike Dukakis’s liberal paradise, nothing seems to be “banned in Boston” these days.