

Congressional Closeup by William Jones

'Austerity Dems,' GOPers demand more budget cuts

Democrats, led by Reps. Tim Penny (D-Minn.) and Charles Stenholm (D-Tex.), pushed House leaders on March 4 to make \$10 billion of additional cuts in President Clinton's economic package for fiscal year 1994, and \$60 billion over four years, as budget negotiations move into a critical phase.

House Democrats met privately to try and reach a compromise with the "austerity Democrats," who believe that the Clinton package contained too many new taxes and not enough budget cuts. House Budget Committee Chairman Martin Sabo (D-Minn.) noted that pressure is growing for deeper cuts as recent estimates by the Joint Committee on Taxation and the Congressional Budget Office predict that the Clinton deficit reduction package will fall nearly \$17.5 billion short of its stated goals for fiscal 1997 and more than \$61 billion short for the five years ending in fiscal 1998.

During a bargaining session on March 3, Sabo offered to increase the spending cuts in Clinton's plan by \$3.7 billion in fiscal 1994 and by a total of \$21 billion over four years, according to Capitol Hill sources. Sabo, the Democratic leadership, and the White House are reluctant to accept additional spending cuts for fear of alienating those members who are trying to maintain necessary education and social programs.

Republicans have launched an offensive for deeper cuts with their usual charge that the Democrats are the party of the "big spenders." Republican senators held a press conference on March 4, where they attacked the Clinton administration for overestimating the deficit.

Rep. John Kasich (R-Ohio), the ranking Republican on the House Budget Committee, has worked out an alternate plan that would match Clin-

ton's deficit reduction targets without a tax increase. But many Republicans are reluctant to push the Kasich program for fear that by offering their own plan now, they would deflect the debate over the Clinton program.

Opposition to the Clinton stimulus package is especially strong in the Senate. A group of Democrats around Sen. David Boren (D-Okla.) are attempting to strip almost all of the new spending out of the bill, arguing that the economy is already on the road to recovery and therefore needs no stimulus. Sen. James Exon (D-Neb.), a key vote on the Senate Budget Committee, warned in meetings with Clinton and Vice President Al Gore on March 2 that they would have to eliminate the super-collider and the space station, as well as Clinton's pet national service program, in order to get their program through the Senate.

Debate on Bosnia policy heats up

As the House Armed Services Committee examined policy toward former Yugoslavia in committee hearings on March 4, a fight continues over whether to help the Bosnian Muslims.

A House Republican task force on the Balkan crisis is pushing for an end to American airdrops of supplies into Bosnia. Calling the airdrops ineffective, task force chairman Susan Molinari (R-N.Y.) said on March 4, "From all reports, these airdrops are doing nothing but provide bait" for Muslims to leave their towns to be attacked by Serbs. The task force said President Clinton should allow U.S. aid to be delivered on the ground by non-government organizations.

At the same time, momentum is building for stronger action in support of the Bosnian Muslims, who are subject to a Serbian policy of "ethnic

cleansing." A resolution sponsored by Rep. Steny Hoyer (D-Md.) has gathered 23 backers in the House, and a similar resolution sponsored by Sen. Dennis DeConcini (D-Ariz.) has gathered 14 backers in the Senate. The resolution calls for lifting the arms embargo against Bosnia, enforcement of the "no-fly" zone, the withdrawal of irregular forces, i.e., the Bosnia Serbs, from Bosnia-Herzegovina, and effective delivery of humanitarian aid.

Some are warning against the danger of doing nothing, or too little. In statements on the Senate floor on March 2, Sen. Alfonse D'Amato (R-N.Y.) warned: "Temporizing and half measures will not do. Time, and the Serbian aggressors, march on, paying no attention to our domestic debates about the economy or the deficit. The Serbians may even rejoice that we are distracted from their activities and appear unlikely to have the inclination, the will, or the strength necessary to decisively halt their aggression."

What is most dangerous, said D'Amato, is a situation "in which we do too little, too late, at every critical juncture, allowing aggression to succeed, allowing ethnic cleansing to go unreversed, allowing genocide to go unpunished, allowing the war to widen, and allowing the cost of correcting these developments to continue to escalate beyond the price that we are politically willing to pay at any particular point. . . . Instead of having a new world order, we face the possibility of an increasing world disorder."

Nunn warns of further cuts in defense budget

Sen. Sam Nunn (D-Ga.), chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, warned against trying to "raid" the defense budget in order to bring

down the deficit.

In comments on the floor of the Senate on March 5, Nunn complained that too many of the cuts demanded in the Clinton budget come from the Department of Defense, and called instead for more cuts in entitlements and other discretionary programs. "None of the other categories of the budget summit—entitlements, interest payments, or revenues, all of which were affected when the recession hung on longer—have met their share of the savings required by the budget summit," Nunn said.

Nunn noted that the Pentagon also takes an \$18 billion cut indirectly through the federal pay freeze proposed as a part of the Clinton package. He indicated that he thought the pay freeze could run into considerable opposition when it is taken up by Congress.

Attorney General nominee will speed up executions

In testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee, President Clinton's attorney general nominee Janet Reno said that she would be willing to speed executions by cutting back on the appeal rights of death row inmates. "I have watched people at my office who we have prosecuted," said Reno. "We have gotten the death penalty, and to find those people still in prison without that penalty carried out after 10 and 13 and 15 years makes a mockery of the justice system and makes a mockery of what we try to do."

Reno, who said that she was personally opposed to the death penalty, also said that as a prosecutor she had "regularly" asked for the death penalty in Florida.

Although there were attempts to cast aspersions on her personal life,

the Reno nomination was generally well-received by Democrats and Republicans alike, judging from the hearings on March 10-11.

Sen. Charles Grassley (R-Iowa) pressed Reno to look into the Department of Justice's recent handling of the case against black congressman Harold Ford (D-Tenn.). After complaints by the Congressional Black Caucus regarding possible racial stacking of the jury in a retrial of Ford on bribery and conspiracy charges, acting Attorney General Stuart Gerson supported Ford's request to dismiss the jury and choose another. Reno said that she had already discussed the matter with Gerson and was satisfied he had not acted due to political influence. "I don't see any further action to be taken on it," she told Grassley.

Trade Center bombing fuels death penalty push

In the wake of the terrorist bombing of the World Trade Center in New York, Sen. Alfonse D'Amato (R-N.Y.) presented on March 5 the Bombing Homicide Death Penalty Act.

The D'Amato legislation calls for consideration of the death penalty in cases where the perpetrator caused death through the use of a bomb or other destructive device. Aggravating conditions meriting the death penalty would exist if the individual in question had previously been sentenced to life imprisonment for another offense, had had a previous conviction for a violent drug offense or a serious drug felony conviction, or a previous conviction for a violent felony involving a firearm.

D'Amato noted that the alleged terrorist arrested in connection with the Trade Center bombing, Moham-

med Salameh, had entered the United States on a business visa and stayed beyond the expiration of his visa. He also called for tougher restrictions in the procedure for granting asylum.

Glickman to stress 'economic intelligence'

The House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence held hearings on March 9 with CIA head R. James Woolsey appearing in an open hearing to explain the needs of the intelligence community. This is an innovation set up by Rep. Dan Glickman (D-Kan.), the newly appointed chairman of the committee.

The open hearings are designed to "demystify" intelligence activities, according to Glickman, who succeeded Rep. Dave McCurdy (D-Okla.) as chairman. Although McCurdy was deposed from his House intelligence seat by Foley on the pretext of having been on the committee for a record nine years, Foley extended that limit to 10 years for Glickman, who has been on the committee for six years already, so that he could conclude a full four-year stint as chairman.

Glickman is known to be keen on increasing the CIA role in "economic intelligence." The March 9 *Washington Post* reported Glickman saying: "I'd like to be involved in determining, sensibly and rationally, how we involve ourselves in economic issues . . . economic intelligence, economic espionage, trade and technology transfer issues. . . . In a modern world of economic conflict, industry should be aware of the threats that it faces."

Concern over the stress on "economic intelligence" is strong in Germany and Japan, where it is viewed as hostility by the United States against traditional U.S. allies.