

Congressional Closeup by William Jones and Carl Osgood

Dole seeks conservative support for welfare bill

Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole (R-Kan.) has adopted tougher language in his welfare-reform proposal, in an attempt to win over conservative Republicans and a veto-proof majority for his take-down of the welfare system. In August, Dole, realizing that he did not have the votes to override a certain presidential veto, postponed introducing it until after the Senate returned from summer recess in September.

The new legislation includes a "cradle cap," whereby states would not be allowed to give higher cash payments to welfare families who have more children. It would provide a "bonus" for states that reduce out-of-wedlock births; require that for three years states spend 75% of what they spent the previous year on welfare, work, and child care benefits; and exempt from sanctions single custodial parents who fail to work because of "demonstrated need" for child care, with the states defining what constitutes "demonstrated need."

On Sept. 9, the Senate also passed a measure that would deny certain welfare benefits to fugitive felons and probation violators.

Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.) characterized the bill as a "home alone" bill, referring to the fact that parents would be forced to work without being able to provide proper day-care for their children.

"The system will be overwhelmed," Sen. Daniel Moynihan (D-N.Y.) said. "Sixty percent of the children in Detroit are on welfare. There are not enough social workers, not enough nuns, not enough Salvation Army workers" to fill the need, he warned.

In his weekly radio address, President Clinton implicitly admonished

the Republican leadership "not to pander to extremists" on the issue of welfare reform. The Democratic alternative on welfare reform was defeated on Sept. 7 in a 56-41 vote.

The Republican bill is by no means "home free," however. With as many as 200 amendments having been offered, there remain many unresolved issues. On Sept. 11, the Senate rejected a Democratic proposal to set aside \$11 billion in child care funds for welfare mothers who are forced to go to work under new Republican guidelines, claiming that the flexibility given the states in running welfare programs in the Republican proposals would free up resources to cover any additional need for child care. Mindful of the consequences of such "buck passing" in a campaign year, Sen. Nancy Kassebaum (R-Kan.) introduced an amendment to prevent states from shifting money away from a child-care "block grant" to any other purpose.

Missile defense deployment gets okay

After two days of heated debate, the Senate on Sept. 6 passed by a vote of 85-13 an amendment to the 1996 Defense Authorization Bill that commits the United States to "deploy as soon as possible affordable and operationally effective theater missile defenses capable of countering existing and emerging theater ballistic missiles."

The measure is a considerably scaled-down version of an earlier proposal calling for the deployment of a missile defense system by the year 2003. The Clinton administration indicated that it would veto the earlier measure because it would have vio-

lated the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty with the Soviet Union, a treaty that Republicans would like to renegotiate.

In the face of strong administration opposition, a compromise agreement was reached that set no fixed date for deployment of such a system. Defense Secretary William Perry called the compromise a "dramatic improvement" over the original draft, although the administration still has problems with it. Less ambitious than the Reagan-era Strategic Defense Initiative, the policy includes the development of a national missile defense system and a provision to negotiate with Russia to modify the ABM Treaty or, failing that, to consider the withdrawal of the United States from the ABM Treaty.

Sam Nunn (D-Ga.), who introduced the amendment, said, "It clarifies the intent of the United States with respect to decisions about future missile defenses," it "defuses a potential constitutional contest and confrontation between the Executive and Legislative branches," and it "makes clear to the international community our policy toward the ABM Treaty."

The House had previously passed a similar measure as a part of its defense spending bill which committed increased funding to missile defenses and called for deployment of a national system "as soon as possible." The two bills will now go to conference committee.

Senate panel okays end of Commerce Department

The Senate Governmental Affairs Committee approved on a vote of 5-3 on Sept. 7 legislation that would effectively dismantle the U.S. Department

of Commerce. The measure, offered by committee Chairman William Roth (R-Del.), who is slated to replace Bob Packwood (R-Ore.) as chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, would consolidate the government's trade programs in a proposed U.S. Trade Administration and would make the department's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration an independent agency.

In an attempt to eliminate dirigist economic policies, the Conservative Revolution jacobins have targeted Commerce for eradication. The Roth bill would scrap several Commerce agencies, including the Economic Development Administration, which helps stimulate industrial and commercial growth in economically distressed areas in the United States and provides communities with public works and planning assistance; the National Institute of Standards and Technology; and the U.S. Travel and Tourism Administration. It would also eliminate the Minority Business Development Administration and the Advanced Technology Program, which provides cost-shared awards to industry to develop high-risk technologies that can enable significant commercial advances.

Majority Leader Bob Dole (R-Kan.) was instrumental in garnering the support to get the bill moving through committee.

John Glenn (D-Ohio) praised Commerce Secretary Ron Brown for having transformed the department "to an export-promotion dynamo," and argued that it should be allowed to continue promoting trade and technology. Under Brown, the department has also played a key role in generating economic support for the peace efforts of the Clinton administration in Northern Ireland, the Middle East, and elsewhere.

Panel cuts social programs but not environmental regs

The Senate Appropriations subcommittee for Housing and Urban Development, Veterans Affairs, and Independent Agencies cut important social programs, but danced around "politically correct" environmental programs that the House had virtually axed. While adding \$1 billion to the House proposal for the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) budget, the Senate panel also provided \$770 million more than the House for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), eliminating all but one of 17 House provisions curbing enforcement of environmental laws.

The House had eliminated many of the restrictions proposed by the EPA over the years, but Senate Republicans, fearful of being labeled as anti-environment, restored these measures. EPA's enforcement budget was cut only modestly by the Senate panel, with most of the cuts coming from the Superfund, created by Congress to deal with abandoned "toxic waste sites," and from earmarked water and sewer projects.

The Senate proposal does, however, eliminate the EPA's ability to overrule Army Corps of Engineers permits for draining wetlands, and cuts funding for the Climate Change Action Plan and the Montreal Protocol Fund, two priorities of the environmentalist lobby.

The subcommittee also took aim at some important social programs that were the personal initiatives of President Clinton. The panel provided no funding for the President's national service program, modeled on President Kennedy's Peace Corps, but for domestic use, and for his Community Development Financial Institutions program, which mandated financial

institutions to maintain banking and other activities in economically depressed areas. The subcommittee also allocated \$500 million less for veterans' medical programs. In the panel proposal, the HUD budget was cut to \$5 billion below what Congress approved a year ago.

Limits on legal immigration proposed

The U.S. Commission on Immigration Reform, set up by the Republican-led Congress to advise on reforming immigration laws, came out with its report to Congress on Sept. 12. The commission would reduce annual immigration from the 725,000 expected in 1996, to 550,000 by the next century, by changing the qualifications for immigration. The recommendations of the commission would make it harder than it has been in the last 70 years to enter the United States legally.

Under the slogan of "family values," the recommendations would allow spouses and minor children to immigrate together with the applicant, but not their adult brothers and sisters. They would also not allow applicants to bring their parents unless they were able to afford health insurance for them. They also bar unskilled immigrants not members of "nuclear families." (With this item, the commission hopes to eliminate 10,000 immigrants per year.)

The "family values" provision would not apply to those badly needed (and badly paid) seasonal workers who come to harvest the fields of California. The study also calls for the "Americanization" of immigrants. The Senate began hearings on immigration reform on Sept. 13.