

Congressional Closeup by Susan Kokinda and Ronald Kokinda

Puccio rides roughshod over Senate Abscam committee

In a total abrogation of their mandate to investigate Justice Department and FBI wrongdoing in Abscam, the Senate select committee investigating Abscam meekly accepted former prosecutor Thomas Puccio's arrogant assertion to the committee July 27 that he did no wrong.

The most striking capitulation came from Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.), the liberal Senator who stood on the Senate floor during the debate on the expulsion of Abscam victim Harrison Williams of New Jersey, and announced: "On the basis of Puccio's behavior, he should not be in the employ of the government. Indeed, I question whether he should be allowed to practice law at all. And if I'm ever in the same room with him, I'll tell him that to his face."

During the hearings, while in the same room as Puccio, Leahy deferentially questioned him about the conflict-of-interest charges involving Puccio's negotiations for a book contract on Abscam while the prosecutions were still in progress. Leahy accepted Puccio's response that he had not discussed the book contract until three or four months ago, when he sought out literary agent Sterling Lord after Puccio had left his post as U.S. Attorney.

The witnesses appearing during the week's hearings have been interrogated almost exclusively by committee counsel James Neal, whose associations with Kennedy and Justice Department operative

Walter Sheridan date back to the prosecutions of late Teamster leader Jimmy Hoffa.

"Atari" Democrats target education

The "post-industrial society" proponents in the Democratic party, such as Gary Hart (D-Colo.) and Paul Tsongas (D-Mass.), have launched an effort to bring American education and educators into their brave new world. Tsongas introduced the National Teacher Retraining Demonstration Act (S.2743) of 1982 on July 13, while Hart put his American Defense Education Act (S.2663) into the hopper in late June. Both bills emphasize "computer literacy"—the code-name for destroying children's (and teachers) cognitive ability through computer-run brainwashing. The vision of children learning from modified "Pac man" set-ups has contributed to the coining of the term "Atari Democrats," which has stuck to Hart, Tsongas, and their co-thinkers.

Tsongas's bill would establish four national demonstration centers, where teachers will be trained in "new technologies." According to the legislation the centers would "provide a curriculum involving computer literacy, educational psychology of learning, recent developments in teaching techniques and materials, and career counseling, together with an emphasis on participation by members of the appropriate business community."

Hart's bill, ostensibly modelled on the National Defense Education Act which was born of the late-1950s panic over the Soviet sputnik, would contribute federal funds to local school districts who "revitalize their curricula in tomorrow's crucial areas of mathematics, the sciences, foreign languages, communications, and other new technologies." While the emphasis on math, science, and foreign languages may appear necessary and legitimate, Hart's purpose in "revitalizing" curriculum was made clear with his participation in the recent World Future Society conference on "Communications and the Future." Hart himself spoke on a panel with various lunatic anti-industry speakers, while his chief economist, Robert Hamrin (who is also a member of the Club of Rome) spoke on a panel devoted to the following: "The information revolution is spawning a structured transformation from a highly centralized economy based primarily on basic manufacturing and heavy industry to a decentralized one based on information, knowledge, and communications."

Senate caves in to water 'cost-recovery'

The Senate passed its reform of the 1902 water reclamation law, S.1867, on July 15, raising the acreage limitations on the amount of land that can receive water from Federal reclamation and water management programs. Despite the fact that the Senate succeeded in beating back various amend-

ments which would price water completely out of reach of U.S. farmers, the Senate and the House, in its version passed May 6, have both capitulated to the fundamentally anti-growth notion of "full cost-recovery" to be paid by water users. The Senate action means that its version will now go to conference with the House version. Reform of the 1902 law this year is essential, as the Interior Department will be required to implement a court order enforcing a 160-acre limit for less expensive water, a limitation that would wreak havoc with irrigated modern agriculture.

The most outrageous amendment was introduced by Richard Lugar (R-Ind.) and William Proxmire (D-Wisc.), which would have mandated partial-to-full cost recovery. Farms larger than 960 acres would have had to repay the cost in full. The amendment was tabled 58 to 39, after being denounced for creating a "new class of agricultural serfs," as only the large oil and agri-business firms could be expected to pay such costs. The bill as passed allows cheaper water for 1,280 acres per individual farmer, however, would destroy the growth and development of the tax revenue base before it could get off the ground.

The capitulation to full cost-recovery sets a dangerous economic precedent. It is based on the fallacy that such charges will help increase federal revenues. The Bureau of Reclamation has spent \$8.96 billion between 1902 and 1979 on such projects, and, according to the Denver Research Institute, these infrastructure projects

generated \$28.3 billion in new tax revenues. Attempts to collect the federal costs at the point of the individual farmer however, would destroy the growth and development of the tax revenue base before it could get off the ground.

Donovan wants more Teamster pension controls

Secretary of Labor Ray Donovan went to Capital Hill July 26 flanked by a squad of supporting government witnesses including Roscoe Egger, Commissioner of the Internal Revenue Service; David Glickman, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Treasury for Tax Policy; and Edward Densmore, Deputy Director of the Human Resources Division of the General Accounting Office, to request that Congress pass legislation before October 1982, mandating that independent asset managers be retained in charge of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters' Central States Pension Fund. Donovan, who was appearing before the oversight subcommittee of the House Ways and Means Committee, also requested certain changes in the Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA) to allow more selective prosecution of wrongdoers within the pension fund.

Faced with allegations of mismanagement and links to organized crime, the pension fund, which has had a higher rate of return on investments than most similar funds, has been under contract

with the Equitable Life Insurance Society to manage the fund since 1977 as part of a series of reforms mandated by the government as conditions to restore the fund to tax exempt status. This agreement expires on Oct. 3 and, according to Donovan, the fund has "not agreed that the [independent] manager should have *control* over not only the assets themselves but also the investment policy."

Government witnesses argued that if they did not have these tools in legislative form, their only recourse would be to deny the fund tax-exempt status when the next wrongdoing occurred, and thereby hurt all the potential pension-plan beneficiaries of the fund.

Subcommittee chair Charles Rangel (D-N.Y.), along with Rep. Jake Pickle (D-Tex.), seemed irritated that the government was back before Congress "*once again*" seeking additional legislation for Teamster's pension fund reform, a process that has continued since ERISA was passed in 1974. While these Congressmen are not favorable toward the Teamsters, many feel that more aggressive prosecution of wrongdoing in the pension fund on the part of the Labor Department and the Government should take care of the problem.

The Teamsters, who are not facing an easy time from either the Congressmen or the Department of Labor, may have set themselves up from within by bringing on former Sen. John Culver, a Ted Kennedy intimate, as their negotiator with the government. The Kennedy family role in "getting" the teamsters is well-known.