

Congressional Closeup by William Jones

Family leave veto sustained in House

House members again failed in a 232-195 vote on July 25, to override President Bush's veto of legislation that would have given American workers the right to take up to 12 weeks of annual unpaid leave to care for newborn children and seriously ill family members. The House was 53 votes short of the two-thirds needed for override.

Democrats intend to make this legislation, which is already in place in most other industrialized countries, into a major issue in the election campaign this year. During his 1988 presidential campaign, Bush had endorsed the right of mothers to enjoy leave time to be with their newborn children. He says he vetoed the legislation because it required all businesses with 50 or more employees to provide the benefit.

Sen. Christopher Dodd (D-Conn.) caustically commented, "One of the first opportunities he had to live up to a campaign pledge, he walked away from it."

House Speaker Thomas Foley (D-Wash.) predicted that the family and medical leave issue will not disappear. "We're going to have this kind of legislation enacted, if not this year in this session, next year or the year after."

This was the 13th veto that Bush has issued since becoming President, none of which has been overridden by the Democratic-controlled Congress.

'Bipartisan' budget summit falls apart

The budget summit was canceled on July 26, with Democratic leaders indicating that major obstacles exist to a budget agreement.

The "bipartisan" talks have been

characterized by bitter partisan attacks, with House Republicans blaming Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell (D-Me.) as a "consistent roadblock" in the talks, and Bush blaming the "fiscal follies" of the Democrats as the reason for the deficit. By July 24, both parties had agreed to cool down the rhetoric, but differences on how to implement austerity which has been agreed upon, were too great to allow agreement to be reached at this time.

House Majority Leader Richard Gephardt (D-Mo.) said on July 24 that although he didn't know if they would be able to work out a package, they would give it the "good old college try." But after the latest cancelation of talks, chances are fading for any agreement to be reached before the summer recess.

House Budget Committee chairman Rep. Bill Frenzel (R-Minn.) commented that the summiters were "still laboring."

Austerity mongers attack 'fat cat' farmers

Austerity advocates suffered a minor setback when the House on July 25 defeated an amendment that would have excluded "rich farmers" from agricultural subsidies.

The amendment, sponsored by Reps. Richard Arney (R-Tex.) and Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.), was an attempt to reshape farm programs by a coalition of austerity-minded urban liberals and suburban conservatives. "These farmers are people who are very, very rich," said Schumer. "If they need a subsidy, everybody needs a subsidy."

Opponents of the bill successfully argued that forcing rich farmers out of subsidies could encourage overpro-

duction, lower farm prices, and result in greater payments to those farmers still in the programs. "If you take the largest farmers out of the program you no longer have a successful program," said Rep. Glenn English (D-Okla.). "The only way a farm program makes sense is if we have one that requires everyone to carry out the same tasks."

After four hours of heated debate, the amendment was defeated. "How can you accuse a former shoeshine boy from Mission, Texas, of protecting the rich and the greedy? Ridiculous!" shouted House Agriculture Committee chairman E. "Kika" de la Garza (D-Tex.) in ridiculing the nature of the debate.

On July 24, both houses of Congress had defeated farm bill amendments that would have lowered price supports for sugar. The Senate version of the sugar amendment, sponsored by Sen. Bill Bradley (D-N.J.), was defeated by a close 54-44 vote. The House version was decisively beaten 271-150.

Any version of the farm bill will nevertheless be threatened by possible austerity cuts coming out of a budget agreement. President Bush has also threatened to veto the bill if it doesn't meet the parameters of his budget guidelines.

Judiciary Committee passes thrift crime bill

The House Judiciary Committee, by a voice vote, approved the thrift anti-crime bill which calls for increased penalties and the creation of a national commission to investigate the S&L debacle.

The committee also reinstated the life-sentence provision for "S&L kingpins," a feature of the Senate bill which had previously been dropped

from the House version.

Instead of changing insane economic policies, such as deregulation, which have led to the S&L and general economic crisis, Bush and the Congress are involved in the circus of going after "S&L fraud."

The Omnibus Crime Bill was characterized by Virginia congressional candidate Lyndon LaRouche as something "which makes the Hitler administration of Germany seem a peace-loving, humanitarian organization by comparison."

Rep. Frank to get 'reprimand' for behavior

The House of Representatives voted on July 26 to reprimand Rep. Barney Frank (D-Mass.) for his actions, including fixing parking tickets, on behalf of the male prostitute, Steven Gobie.

The 408-18 vote was an implicit rejection of Republican-led efforts to impose more severe sanctions. The House Ethics Committee, equally controlled between the parties, had recommended a simple reprimand for his wrongdoing in his now-infamous relations with Gobie. The Democrats on the committee are said to have favored no more than a letter of reproof, while the Republicans were pushing for more.

House Republican Whip Rep. Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.) had wanted to censure Frank, an action that would have stripped Frank of a subcommittee chairmanship if agreed upon by a majority of the House. Rep. William Dannemeyer (R-Calif.) urged the House to expel Frank for his unethical behavior. Dannemeyer said that the Frank case was part of a "cultural war" between the "Judeo-Christian ethic" and "moral relativism."

Senate censures David Durenberger

Following the unanimous recommendation of its Ethics Committee, the Senate, in a unanimous vote of 96-0, censured Sen. David Durenberger (R-Minn.) and ordered him to pay more than \$120,000 in restitution for improper honoraria and Senate travel reimbursements.

Durenberger was the ninth Senator in the history of the U.S. Senate to be denounced or otherwise censured.

Watkins asks labs to study environment

In testimony before the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee on July 25, Secretary of Energy James D. Watkins called upon the three principal U.S. nuclear weapons laboratories to expand their non-military work in such areas as new energy sources, environmental problems, and industrial competitiveness.

"With peace breaking out, so to speak, and without the threat of global conflict," said Watkins, "this is the time to strengthen research" to help restore American competitiveness in civilian markets.

Panel chairman, Sen. J. Bennett Johnston (D-La.) said, "the laboratories are on the brink of major changes in the way they operate. The past emphasis on weapons research and development is no longer appropriate." The shift away from defense priorities is coupled to waging economic warfare against what is portrayed as an economic "threat" by U.S. allies in Europe and Japan.

The director of the Sandia National Laboratories in Albuquerque, New Mexico, Al Narath, said that the principal threat was now "global economic competition."

Earlier in July, Sen. Sam Nunn (D-Ga.), chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, in a viewpoint appearing in *Aviation Week* magazine, called for "harnessing defense to save the environment." Nunn suggested that the Defense Department make environmental cleanup a top priority, calling environmental technology "the growth industry of the next 20 years."

Garn blames budget cuts for problems at NASA

"We need budget reforms, not NASA reforms," said Sen. Jake Garn (R-Utah) at hearings of the Senate Appropriations subcommittee responsible for the space agency's budget on July 17. The hearings were called by subcommittee chairman Sen. Barbara Mikulski (D-Md.) for the purpose of an "inquiry of recent problems" in the space program, including the Hubble telescope, the Shuttle hydrogen leaks, and Space Station Freedom.

Most of the witnesses, however, took issue with the media hype about NASA's "loss of credibility." Senator Garn noted that the Senate Budget Committee gave that subcommittee \$2 billion less to spend than the comparable House Appropriations subcommittee. He also warned that the media and "some politicians" who are raising doubts about the competence of NASA, are laying the basis for "further budget cuts" which are at the root of the problem to begin with.

NASA Administrator Adm. Richard Truly noted that programs which are at the cutting edge of technology will always have "problems," and that "the government doesn't print enough money to take all the risk out of space flight."