

Congressional Closeup by Ronald Kokinda and Susan Kokinda

Committee passes waterway user fees

The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee passed an omnibus water projects bill on July 18 which firmly establishes the precedent of waterway user fees. If enacted, the bill would be the first major water-projects bill to pass the Congress since 1976.

Needed investment in the nation's water infrastructure has ground to a halt because of conflicts between those who have wanted to maintain the traditional "American System" method of national support for infrastructure, versus those who have pushed a "free enterprise" model of forcing local communities and users to bear costs.

The bill that passed the Senate Committee falls firmly in the latter category. For inland navigation, the bill would double the existing tax on barge fuel from 10¢ per gallon to 20¢ per gallon in 1995. A .04% tax would also be placed on the value of all cargo loaded on vessels using U.S. harbors, including the Great Lakes. Efforts, by supporters of the just opened Tennessee Tombigbee Waterway, to exempt that project from the barge fuel tax, were defeated in committee.

In related developments, the House passed HR 2959, a \$15.3 billion energy and water development appropriations bill. As evidence that the traditionalists have lost substantial ground, HR 2959 was passed with the proviso that any new cost-sharing provisions contained in the new water authorization bills will be applied retroactively to projects appropriated in HR 2959.

Rep. Bob Edgar (D-Pa.), one of the leading anti-water environmentalists in the House, who has banded together with the free enterprise crowd

to push user fees, enthusiastically supported HR 2959, declaring, "I believe we are really on the road to a new direction in water policy." Earlier in the year, Edgar had won a key House vote, by the narrow margin of 203 to 202, to establish the concept of waterway user charges.

Kissinger plan, variations debated in Committee

The House Banking Committee continued its series of hearings on the Third World debt crisis, with testimony on versions of the Castro and Kissinger plans to save the international banking system.

At hearings before the International Development Institutions Subcommittee of the House Banking Committee on July 25, Rep. Stephen Neal (D-N.C.) asked the witnesses what they thought of Henry Kissinger's proposal to create a "Marshall Plan" for the Third World. Neal quoted Kissinger's concern that the existing lending institutions had reached the limits of what they could achieve in "stabilizing" the international debt situation. Kissinger was scheduled to testify before the subcommittee on July 23, but, with no explanation cancelled at the last minute.

The witnesses, who included former U.S. Executive Director of the IMF William Dale, and Edward Fried of the Brookings Institution, dismissed Kissinger's proposals, insisting that the Bank and the IMF were still adequate to the tasks before them. The witnesses tended to discount the political dislocations caused by IMF austerity packages, and made no mention at all of outright starvation.

However, witnesses before a sec-

ond subcommittee, the Banking Subcommittee on Economic Stabilization, chaired by Rep. John LaFalce (D-N.Y.), focused more on Kissinger-type palliatives to the crisis. In his opening statement, LaFalce pointed to the economic and social costs of IMF austerity measures on the Third World and also on its effects on the U.S. economy. LaFalce said, "According to one recent estimate, the U.S. has lost 800,000 jobs from the turn of events in Third World debt."

LaFalce was intrigued by the testimony of Raul Prebisch, an Argentine economist and top Anglo-Swiss bankers' agent, who proposed a scheme whereby countries such as Argentina would carry out the necessary austerity measures to collect the debt owed to the international banks. Prebisch proposed that an agreement should then be worked out between Argentina and the banks so that only a portion of those funds would be returned to the banks and the rest could be used in Argentina for "investment." Prebisch's proposal falls in a category similar to Kissinger's, in that it puts forward a facade of allowing for some development, while maintaining the overall framework of the IMF austerity adjustments.

Conservatives miss the point on Ogarkov

Several conservative members of the House of Representatives took to the floor on July 23 to attack Soviet disinformation deployments into the West. Ironically, Rep. Bob Dornan (R-Calif.) singled out the role of Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov as head of the Soviets' disinformation division, detailing his past deception activities.

Left unmentioned by Dornan, Phil Crane (R-Ill.) and the others who spoke is Ogarkov's public resurfacing as the reported new commander of the Warsaw Pact. Nor do they, or anyone else in the U.S. Congress, acknowledge Ogarkov's past year's deployment as head of the Western Theater of War or his implementation of the "Ogarkov Doctrine" to carry out a first strike against the United States.

Ironically, the sources which Dornan and Crane rely on to "prove" the extent of Soviet disinformation, are themselves quite often part of the Soviet effort itself. Both congressmen cite Kissinger associate and New York advocate Larry Eagleburger on the "corrosive" effects of Soviet disinformation, and its impact in preventing an adequate defense of Europe! Equally ridiculous is Dornan's praise of *Washington Times* editor Arnaud de Borchgrave. The *Times*, which on July 23, "broke" the story of the Ogarkov doctrine, portrayed it as a plan to carry out a conventional assault on Western Europe.

Everybody misses the point on Africa

Liberals and conservatives alike engaged in varying forms of histrionics on the House floor over the ongoing crisis in Africa. Since the outbreak of violence and emergency rule in South Africa, numbers of Congressmen, including Sen. Edward Kennedy, and Reps. Bernard Dwyer (D-N.J.), Sander Levin (D-Mich.) and Louis Stokes (D-Mo.), have intoned sanctimonious speeches condemning emergency rule and demanding that the Reagan administration break from its policy of "constructive engagement"

with South Africa.

Each one of those speakers voted in favor of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), whose policies have caused economic devastation and starvation in the rest of Africa.

But the liberals weren't the only ones to skirt the issue. On July 23, a group of conservative congressmen, led by Rep. Toby Roth (R-Wisc.) engaged in an hour-long colloquy condemning the "holocaust against black Africans" taking place in Ethiopia. Roth was joined by conservative "aquarian" Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.) who charged that "Ethiopia may symbolize for the next generation a Third Reich of the Third World, that it is as horrible an example in the modern African context as Nazi Germany was."

Gingrich, Roth and others lay the blame for the death and starvation solely in the lap of the Marxist government of Ethiopia. While there is no question that the Soviets and their allies are capable of and have carried out genocide of cataclysmic proportions, and are wholly complicit in exacerbating the crisis in Ethiopia for political purposes, the conservative congressmen have conveniently turned a blind eye to the starvation and epidemics ravaging the non-Marxist countries of Africa. Just as with the liberals, no mention of the moving force behind the holocaust—the International Monetary Fund and its Nazi austerity policies—is made.

Kennedy-Reagan alliance doesn't save line-item veto

A week-long effort to override a Senate filibuster against the line-item veto appeared to be doomed, despite the combined support of President Rea-

gan and Sen. Ted Kennedy (D-Mass.) for the proposal. The "line-item veto" would give the President the power to veto specific sections of spending bills, rather than having to veto the entire bill as he now must.

Senator Mack Mattingly (R-Ga.) is the chief sponsor of legislation (S. 43) which would give the President the item veto for a trial period of two years.

After two unsuccessful attempts to shut down a filibuster by opponents of the measure, led by Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Mark Hatfield (R-Ore.), Senate Majority Leader Robert Dole (R-Kan.) indicated on July 24 that he would pull S. 43 off the floor.

Support for S. 43 was running high in the Senate and had garnered substantial support from voters because of increasing frustration over the U.S. budget deficit—but that is principally caused by Federal Reserve policies, which Congress ignores.

Supporters of the line-item veto argue that it will allow the President to cut particularly egregious spending items.

In reality, the line-item veto is a constitutional abomination which destroys the balance of power between the executive and the legislature. In effect, the President would be afforded legislative power through his ability to precisely remold legislation by vetoing specific items. Indeed, Ted Kennedy's full-fledged support for the proposal should serve as a warning bell to its conservative proponents. Fiscal conservatives who want to see such power in President Reagan's hands, should imagine what another Jimmy Carter could do to the defense budget, were he given such pinpoint capabilities.