

Congressional Closeup by William Jones

Warner waffles on support for SDI

Speaking at an American Defense Preparedness Association luncheon on March 20, Sen. John Warner (R-Va.), the ranking Republican on the Senate Armed Services Committee, said that he could foresee the possibility of separating the anti-tactical ballistic missile program out from the Strategic Defense Initiative program and putting it on a separate line-item status.

Warner said that he would be working with Committee Chairman Sen. Sam Nunn (D-Ga.) to support deployment of a limited SDI in order to "give the voters some tires to kick."

This back-pedaling by Warner and some Republicans is in stark contrast to statements by Rep. Robert Dornan (R-Calif.), who, in a recent article, called for a "rapid deployment of these defense technologies." "Strategic defense against ballistic missiles can be a reality," Dornan wrote. "However, the program cannot survive another year of major budget cuts. Either defending America from the emerging threat of multinational missile proliferation will become a national priority, and be fully funded, or it will wither on the vine and die, diminishing our national security."

Leahy: Divert aid from Americas to E. Europe

Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) objected to the administration's proposed \$1.7 billion two-year package to Panama and Nicaragua while the United States is only willing to send a mere \$600 million to Eastern Europe.

Leahy presided over Senate appropriations subcommittee hearings on March 20 where Deputy Secretary

of State Lawrence Eagleburger defended the Bush administration's "Fund for Democracy" package for Nicaragua and Panama. Leahy also objected to the fact that a good portion of the aid was going to help Panama pay its arrears to the international banks. "I can't think of anything that makes less sense than trying to clear up Panama's back debts to the multi-lateral development banks at a time when they may very well need that kind of jump start," he said.

Congressmen: Lithuania is replay of 1776

On March 21, a letter was delivered to President Bush urging him to recognize an independent Lithuania. The letter, initiated by Reps. John Miller (R-Wash.) and Richard Durbin (D-Ill.), was signed by 100 Congressmen from across the political spectrum.

"The struggle in Lithuania has all the passion, drama, and virtue of our struggle of 1776," reads the appeal. "The dreams and aspirations of Jefferson, Madison, and Hamilton of 1776 are the dreams and aspirations of Landsbergis, Zingeris, and Prunskiene of 1990.

"Since 1940 the U.S. has never recognized Lithuania's incorporation into the Soviet Union as a result of the illegal Hitler-Stalin Pact. Since 1940 the U.S. has recognized Lithuania's legation as the diplomatic representative of the independent Lithuanian government which existed between the two wars. Both Republican and Democratic party platforms have called for independence for the Baltic states. Certainly, Mr. President, you do not want to renege on these promises of 50 years. . . .

"We write this letter not out of a

desire to embarrass President Gorbachov or the Soviet Union. After all, the Soviet Union has already recognized the illegality of the Hitler-Stalin Pact of 1939. We write instead so that the U.S., consistent with the stand we have taken for 50 years, can peacefully support freedom and self-determination for the Baltic States. . . .

"We strongly urge you to renew recognition of Lithuania's independence."

Resolutions call for recognition of Lithuania

On March 15, Rep. Richard Durbin (D-Ill.)

pressing congressional support for the Lithuanian people in their efforts to reclaim their independence.

The resolution calls on the Soviet Union to negotiate with Lithuania on an equal basis without economic intimidation, and asks President Bush to "strengthen his commitment to an independent and democratic Lithuania and to seek ways to actively demonstrate that commitment." It also urges President Bush to "plan for and take those steps, at the earliest possible time, that would normalize diplomatic relations between the United States and the new government of Lithuania."

"The time has come," said Durbin, "to build on our past policy by endorsing Lithuanian independence and taking steps to make this independence a reality." The resolution is expected to be voted on during March.

In a similar action in the Senate on March 21, Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) introduced an amendment to the Clean Air Act which urged the President to "recognize immediately the current democratic government of Lithuania

headed by President Vytautas Landsbergis and to establish direct relations with such government, since it represents the democratic aspirations of the people of Lithuania." The amendment further urges the Soviet Union "to desist from the threat of or use of military force, tactics of intimidation, or economic sanctions in order to suppress democracy in the independent Republic of Lithuania." The Helms amendment was defeated 59-36.

Sasser demands deeper defense cuts

Sen. Jim Sasser (D-Tenn.), chairman of the Senate Budget Committee, interviewed on the CBS News program "Face the Nation" on March 18, called for defense budget cuts of \$20 billion, \$5 billion more than he had previously proposed and twice as much as the Bush administration has indicated it will accept.

"A \$20 billion reduction is spending 3% less for defense than we spent last year, and that's not a large number at all," said Sasser. Sasser's proposal to gouge deeper into the defense budget is widely viewed as a counter to Rep. Dan Rostenkowski's (D-Ill.) proposed freeze in Social Security cost of living adjustments. Sasser said that the combination of spending and revenue increases he is recommending would provide enough money to meet the 1991 deficit target of \$64 billion and still leave room for allocating additional money to pressing domestic needs.

Treasury Secretary Nicholas Brady said in response to reports in the *New York Times*, which quoted "senior government officials" saying the administration is willing to accept cuts of \$10 to \$11 billion from the

\$306 billion budget, that the administration intends to stand behind its proposed defense budget of an inflation-adjusted cut of \$3.2 billion for fiscal 1991.

"I've sat in all of these discussions and there has been no talk about a \$10 billion cut," Brady said on March 18 on "Face the Nation." Nevertheless, Marlin Fitzwater conceded on March 19 that "if the trend continues toward arms control and reduced tensions, then there will be significant reductions in the defense budget in the future."

Clean Air Act meets stiff resistance

Fear of the economic consequences of the Clean Air Act package, coupled with intensive lobbying by industrial organizations, has led to numerous amendments being introduced attempting to limit the more disastrous effects of the legislation. Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell (D-Me.) warned his colleagues on March 20 that they would be working overtime the following week until they had finished action on the bill.

Sen. Robert Byrd (D-W. Va.) offered an amendment to provide financial relief and job retraining for miners of high-sulfur coal who might lose their jobs because of the plan now under consideration to control acid rain.

Some of the more ardent environmentalist senators have, on the other hand, criticized the compromise between the Senate leadership and the White House as inadequate and have turned the issue into a political showdown with Senate leaders.

On March 21, Senate leaders beat back a strong challenge to the compro-

mise, which wanted significantly tougher controls on smog-forming emissions from automobiles. An amendment offered by Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.) would require cities with severe smog problems to force motorists to use fuels that pollute less than gasoline, such as reformulated gasoline, alcohol, and natural gas.

Sen. Richard Bryan (D-Nev.) withdrew an amendment which would have required improved fuel efficiency by automobiles to reduce carbon dioxide in exhaust. Mitchell succeeded in getting Bryan to withdraw the amendment, promising to consider the proposal in legislation on global warming.

Of some 225 amendments which have been scheduled, Mitchell said only a few would actually be offered on the floor. Whatever amendments are tacked on, the overall costs of the environmental measures on industry will severely aggravate their present economic difficulties. Similar legislation has already been initiated in committee in the House.

Darman admits deficit larger than estimates

In testimony before the Joint Economic Committee on March 15, Office of Management and Budget Director Richard Darman admitted that the 1991 budget deficit will be greater than earlier predicted. He claimed that this was because of the poorer than expected fourth quarter of 1989, which saw GNP growth of only 0.9% as opposed to the 1.5% expected.

Darman added that "If global interest rates do not reverse their recent cycle upward, the adverse effects on both growth and the deficit will be worse."