

Congressional Closeup by William Jones and Carl Osgood

McCloskey blasts British policy on Bosnia

Rep. Frank McCloskey (D-Ind.), anticipating that the Bosnian Serbs will reject the latest partition plan for Bosnia, called again on June 14 for lifting the arms embargo against Bosnia. He also asked that the West provide air support to the Bosnians "to avert an ongoing, one-sided bloodbath."

"Think of the splendid basic logic of the British mandate," McCloskey said ironically. Either "the warring parties agree to the plan, or it will pull out with no lifting of the arms embargo or other support for the Bosnians. Why should the Bosnian Serbs disagree with a British green light to gear up their killing machine?"

McCloskey warned that the Bosnian-Croatian alliance, "a singular achievement of the Clinton administration," is "in peril." McCloskey was referring to conditions in Mostar, where Muslims are still being forced from their homes by gangs without any intervention from Croatian authorities in the city. If these crimes are not stopped, McCloskey warned, "the Bosnian-Croatian alliance will be short-lived indeed."

Health care reform at top of debate agenda

As Congress returned from recess on July 11, congressional leaders prepared for a heated debate on the Clinton administration's health care reform legislation. House and Senate leaders are working to build support for President Clinton's demand for universal health care.

One point involves welding together varying forms of complex reform legislation amid firm opposition to a key part of Clinton's plan—a pro-

posal that employers pay 80% of workers' health insurance. Immediately, on return from the holiday break, Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell (D-Me.) held a series of closed-door meetings with both Democrats and Republicans to try to pull together two versions of legislation passed by Senate committees.

In the House, Speaker Thomas Foley (D-Wash.) and Majority Leader Richard Gephardt (D-Mo.) are trying to fashion a single piece of legislation out of separate bills passed by the Ways and Means Committee and the more liberal Education and Labor Committee.

The biggest controversy is the so-called employer mandate, which the White House says is the best way to cover 39 million uninsured Americans. The White House has steadfastly stuck to its call for a mandate but, at the same time, has indicated a willingness to negotiate on how to get universal coverage. "What's alive is universal coverage, and to get to universal coverage you have to have some kind of mandate . . . whether it's employer, whether it's employee, whether it's 50-50," White House Chief of Staff Leon Panetta said on the CBS News program "Face the Nation" on July 10.

Universal coverage was given added support when the National Conference of Catholic Bishops came out publicly in favor of it. At the same time, the bishops indicated that they could not accept a measure which also funded abortion. On "Face the Nation," Panetta indicated that the administration is willing to find an "approach that, frankly, provides that choice, allows people to make that decision, doesn't have the government necessarily impose one approach or the other."

The administration is also attempting to counter a campaign against the employer mandate by the National Federation of Independent Business, whose members are mostly small firms with five or fewer workers. Republicans have said they will not vote for legislation that includes the mandate, and conservative Democrats have expressed reservations about it. Clinton says he wants Republican support, but Panetta said that the White House is prepared to push legislation through the Democrat-controlled Congress without them. "We've got to get health care reform passed and if it has to be done just by Democrats then so be it," Panetta said.

GOP derails striker replacement measure

Senate Democrats made a final, futile attempt on July 13 to break a Republican filibuster, which was launched to prevent the "Workplace Fairness Act" from taking effect. This legislation would make it illegal for employers to permanently replace workers striking for higher pay and other economic benefits.

Under existing legislation, it is illegal to replace workers striking against unfair labor practices. The Clinton administration strongly supports the legislation and has lobbied hard to get the necessary votes. Business groups, however, with the National Association of Manufacturers in the lead, have been bitterly opposed to the legislation.

A similar bill died in the Senate in 1992 after two unsuccessful cloture votes. The same bill has, however, already passed in the House. Union

leaders point to the threat of permanent replacement as the tool successfully wielded by management to force striking Caterpillar workers back to work without a settlement.

Malthusians say 'poor have too many babies'

A gaggle of malthusian genocidalists made their pitch to the House Foreign Affairs Committee in hearings on July 12. Representatives were told that poor countries are having too many children.

Former World Bank President Barber Conable testified that, while poor people benefit from broadly distributed economic growth, growth is offset because poor people "suffer from population growth which reduces per capita income and erodes the potential for an improved quality of life." This occurs, he said, because "illiteracy, infant mortality, and lack of options for women limit real family choices," not because families choose to have lots of children. Conable also complained that "45% of the population in sub-Saharan Africa is under the age of 15 years." Although "contraceptive use is going up quite sharply in some parts of Africa," Conable lamented that that was because of fear of AIDS, not because of a "newfound desire to limit family size."

The malthusians tried to shore up support for the September population conference in Cairo.

Rep. Henry Hyde (R-Ill.) asked the population control advocates how, "in view of the eugenics of the predecessor organization of Planned Parenthood," they intended to deal with the latent racism "underlying the urge of the United States, in all its wisdom

and arrogance in telling other countries, particularly Third World countries, how many children they ought to have?" Hyde pointed to the obvious fallacy in the malthusian argument by asking if we couldn't "direct [our efforts] toward economic development, like trying to teach people how to farm," instead of "trying to be the great condom dispenser of the universe."

Hyde ripped into the alleged "concern" of present-day malthusians for the "health of the woman" by quoting figures presented by Dr. Margaret Ogawa of Kenya in the July-August issue of *Social Justice Review*. "Doesn't this disparity in the West's provision of population control devices versus simple and cost-effective medicines foster the impression that our main priority is limiting the numbers of people in developing countries rather than improving their health and well-being?" Hyde asked.

Amendment on Baltics draws outcry from Russian Duma

The Senate introduced an amendment to the Foreign Operations Appropriations bill on July 13 which would prevent the appropriation of any of the funds designated as aid to Russia after Aug. 31, unless all Russian troops have withdrawn from Estonia and Latvia by that time. Aug. 31 was the date settled on for withdrawal in negotiations between the parties, but the amendment raised an outcry from the Russian Parliament.

Although Russian withdrawal from Latvia appears to be proceeding according to schedule, difficulties have arisen in Estonia because of the uncertain status of Russian officers

who have retired there. There is also a dispute between the two countries regarding the border between Estonia and Russia.

The Clinton administration helped to mediate agreements between Russia and Latvia, and Russia and Estonia. President Clinton was well received in Riga, Latvia, during his July European trip and took the occasion to encourage the Baltic leaders to treat fairly the Russian minorities remaining in their countries.

Compromise likely over 'racial justice' measure

The White House was working overtime during the July recess to lobby the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) to drop or modify its position on death penalty provisions that are tying up the crime bill. The House version of the bill would allow death-row defendants to contest their sentences based on statistics indicating racial inequity in death penalty cases. The Senate version does not contain that provision.

Republican senators are hell-bent on pushing through legislation which would leave less leeway for appeals on death row, and a half-dozen senators have threatened to filibuster if the measure remains in the final bill.

In a meeting on July 14, the CBC voted to oppose the rule on the crime bill if the legislation emerges from conference without the "racial justice" provision. Opposing the rule would seriously delay a vote on the measure. The CBC is not united on the issue, however, and a number of the members are prepared to support the administration. The crime bill has been stuck in conference since last spring.