

EDITORIAL/OPINION

Dellums leads Congressional debate on military budget

The Congressional debate on the military budget brings mixed news—some good and some bad. We can be very proud of Congressman Ron Dellums who almost single-handedly attempted to bring sanity back to the national budget. Repeatedly charging that an ever-growing military budget is madness that will lead the world to a nuclear holocaust and an end to mankind, he spent hours on the House floor debating, challenging the administration's philosophy, refuting the opposition's figures, and challenging them to demonstrate a need to spend more money on weapons while the American people are unemployed, hungry, in need of housing and medical care, and full of frustration. Nearly alone—with his firm supporters including Rep. John Conyers (D-Mich.) and Rep. Jim Weaver (D-Ore.)—he kept his end of the debate at a high level of intellect and integrity. Sharp, articulate, informed, he was clearly the leader on the floor, if not the winner.

• A Dellums amendment to eliminate nuclear powered aircraft carriers from the budget was defeated. Dellums charged that building aircraft carriers is trying to fight a World War II operation in the '80s. He alleged that these carriers are not planned to fight off a "Soviet threat," but to threaten Third World nations. He said the projected use of these ships to "keep the shipping lanes open" in the Indian Ocean will lead to nuclear war.

• Dellums' amendment to delete the B-1 bomber, which he called obsolete before it is built, was also defeated. Dellums challenged the idea of using manned bombers in an age of missiles. Preparing for conventional war in a nuclear age is a deceit—an attempt to make the American people believe a nuclear war is survivable, he said. The government should halt its confrontation policies and open lines of communication with the Soviets.

• Rep. John Conyers presented an amendment to delay all nuclear weapons for one year—an action he called "not a freeze, but a delay." This delay would provide an opportunity for the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. to engage in talks without an accompanying U.S. escalation. This amendment also was defeated.

• The House voted to delete funds for production of nerve gas for chemical weapons. The House removed \$54 million for the production of nerve gas bombs and skills from the administration request. If the appropriation is reinstated in the House-Senate Conference (the Senate had already approved the expenditure) it will be the first time the U.S. has openly manufactured chemical weapons since Nixon banned production 13 years ago. Reagan wants to spend \$2 billion over the next five years to replenish stockpiles. The bill also specifically bans using other funds on the production of binary chemical munitions.

• The House vote to fund the MX missile was close, indicating some attention to the growing peace movement. The House approved the bill to fund the missiles but put a hold on \$260 million in basing and deployment funds. The MX missile was first requested by Jimmy Carter, who wanted them spread out through the desert to avoid a Soviet attack. That idea has been rejected and everyone admits to not knowing where to put them.

The Senate cut all MX funding from its authorization bill in May. If the missile system is built it will cost more than \$25 billion and will not be on line until 1986.

The House debate on the military budget provided an opportunity for the American people to learn the truth about their government's expenditure for war, but not much of it will be covered by the press. We doubt that you will see any of Congressman Dellums' brilliant arguments on your TV screens or that you'll even read his name in your daily newspaper.

Black family income declines

The twin effects of inflation and a depressed economy resulted in a decline in black family median income in 1981, and an increase in the number of blacks below the poverty level, according to a report from the Commerce Department's Census Bureau.

This marks the second consecutive year in which inflation coupled with a recessionary economy resulted in significant declines in real family income and increases in the poverty population.

Median family income for black families was \$13,270 compared with \$23,520 for white families, and \$16,400 for Spanish-origin families. After adjusting for inflation, black families experienced a 5.2 per cent decline in their real median income. Real median income for Spanish-origin families remained about the same.

The poverty threshold in 1981 for a family of four was \$9,287; for 1980 it was \$8,414.

The report shows that median income for black families was \$16,590 in the West and \$12,280 in the South. Overall, real median family income for all families fell in three of the four regions of the Nation. The Northeast was the only region that did not show a decline in real income.

Changes in "real" median family income refer to comparisons after adjustment for inflation, as measured by the change in the annual

average Consumer Price Index.

A downturn in economic activity was a contributing factor in the number of persons who fell below the poverty level in 1981. The number of blacks below the poverty line rose by 618,000, from about 8.6 million in 1980 to 9.2 million in 1981. There were 21.6 million whites below the poverty level in 1981, up 1.5 million from 1980.

About 70 per cent of all black families below the poverty level in 1981 were maintained by women with no husband present. There were 1.4 million poor black families maintained by women in 1981, about the same as in 1980.

Other highlights:
• In 1981, 31.8 million, or one in seven Americans, were below the poverty level, an increase of 2.2 million persons over the 1980 total of 29.6.

• The number of poor children under 18 years old rose from 11.5 million in 1980 to 12.3 million in 1981, and the proportion of children below the poverty level rose from 18.3 to 19.8 per cent.

• Between 1980 and 1981, the poverty rate rose from 13.2 to 14.0 per cent and was highest among blacks (34.2 per cent) followed by persons of Spanish origin (26.5 per cent) and whites (11.1 per cent).

• The real median income for families maintained by women (\$10,960) declined by 4.6 per cent.

• Black women in the South, women under the age of 25, and fe-

male private household workers all experienced declines in their real median income.

• Real median family income in 1981 was down 3.5 per cent. On the average, family purchasing power was about \$2,150 below 1979 levels, the last year in which increases in family incomes kept pace with inflation.

• The increase in the poverty population occurred in all major geographic areas. Metropolitan and nonmetropolitan areas had increases of about the same size (1.2 million and 990,000 respectively) in the number of poor people between 1980 and 1981.

• The overall poverty rate for metropolitan areas was 12.6 per cent in 1981, but the central cities had a considerably higher rate (18.0 per cent) and areas outside central cities had a lower rate (8.9 per cent).

As in all sample surveys, the data in this report are subject to sampling variability and errors of response, including underreporting and non-reporting. A detailed explanation appears in the report.

The report also points out that the survey results reflect only money income and exclude non-cash benefits such as food stamps, medical, etc. It also cautions that the adjustment for inflation may be overstated slightly for the average household because of the treatment of housing costs in the calculation of the Consumer Price Index.

South Africa and Reaganism: Axis partners

by Dr. Manning Marable
"From The Grassroots"

While the attention of the world has been on the Falkland/Malvinas Islands and the Mideast during the past four months, racial unrest has been escalating in apartheid South Africa.

On July 6, two thousand black miners northwest of Johannesburg went on strike in a platinum mine. Their demand was quite simple: a decent wage. Blacks who work exactly as white miners do, receive about one-fifth (20 per cent) of whites' wages.

The racist regime's response was brutal. Fifty Africans were reported injured when police used tear gas. In nearby Venterspot gold mine, another 80 black miners were beaten and arrested for striking. Almost 500 miles away, at the Indian Ocean port city of Durban, black coal miners drove a tractor through one building, and set scores of other buildings on fire.

Why is black labor, and especially miners, on the offensive? First, keep in mind that South Africa's economy, which depends primarily on the world price of gold, is at the brink of disaster. Two years ago, gold prices exceeded \$600 an ounce. Assuming that the price would remain that high, the government and private sector launched a series of grandiose plans for mining and construction. One mine shaft system

near Johannesburg worth \$304 million has now been curtailed. General Mining Union Corporation, the country's second largest mining finance house, has trimmed its capital expenditures this year by 12 per cent. The reason: gold prices have declined to about \$300 per ounce. If the price of gold drops as low as \$250 an ounce, a general panic will set in; the number of South African mines that close will be catastrophic.

White laborers are also restless. At the height of early July's black miners' strikes, the trade unions representing 22,000 white miners asked for a 15 per cent raise. The miners and companies agreed to a 12 per cent settlement on July 6. Yet annual inflation in South Africa exceeds 16 per cent, so the white miners may continue to pressure management.

More than ever before, racist South Africa, the modern fascist state, needs the U.S. to provide critical support at its moment of turmoil. Once again, apartheid has found a genuine friend in Ronald Reagan.

According to Jean Sindab, the Executive Director of the Washington Office on Africa, Reagan and his advisors are encouraging the repressive posture of South Africa.

"Furthermore," she states, "the administration seeks to reassure South Africa of its desire for a closer alliance by strengthening bilateral ties in many areas."

The administration gave permission for the opening of honorary consulates in three U.S. cities: Seattle, Denver and Cleveland. Reagan has asked for \$2.3 million from Congress to train black South African inside South Africa, thereby reinforcing the segregated educational system. Export control regulations on such critical items as air ambulances, computers and helicopters have been weakened to help apartheid.

South Africa is the greatest moral question confronting black and progressive people of our time. If we stand silent as the Reagan South-Africa axis builds, we must be condemned as involuntary partners in the destruction of black mine workers in Durban and Johannesburg. We must demonstrate in front of all apartheid consulates in the U.S., demanding an end to all U.S.-apartheid relations. No U.S. businesses in South Africa, and freedom for our sisters and brothers.

Editor's note: Dr. Manning Marable is Director of the Race Relations Institute, Fisk University, Nashville, TN.



Washington Hot Line

by Congressman Ron Wyden

Q. The Senate last week voted to raise \$98 billion in taxes from a variety of sources. Do you support this tax hike?

A. I have two major problems with the tax bill approved by the Senate.

First, I have a lot of trouble with the notion of raising taxes during a recession. I am concerned that a tax increase—particularly one of this magnitude—could strangle what little economic recovery we are expecting later this year, thus prolonging the recession and keeping the deficit up.

Second, I am concerned that some components of the proposed tax hike put the burden on those least able to bear it.

For example, the proposal takes a bite out of the average wage-earner by increasing taxes for telephone use and reducing deductions for medical expenses.

It also adds to the financial problems of senior citizens and other people on fixed incomes by withholding 10 per cent of earnings from savings and dividends.

Perhaps the most amazing thing about this tax proposal—the largest proposed tax hike in the history of the United States—is that it comes just one year after the Administration pushed through Congress the largest tax cut in the nation's history.

At best, this represents poor planning. At worst, it represents an unforgivable attempt to fool the taxpayers.

I cannot support the tax bill in its present form. Although I would gladly support a bill that closes billion dollar loopholes for oil companies and others, I cannot support a bill that takes the bite out of taxpayers who did not receive any tax relief last year.

Q. Last Thursday the House gave the go-ahead to production of the MX missile. How do you feel about this vote?

A. I have always questioned the wisdom of building the MX. The weapon is cumbersome, costly and potentially vulnerable, and thus of questionable value to our national defense.

But I am especially outraged that the House voted to spend \$1.14 billion for production of nine MX Missiles when a basing mode has not yet been determined.

It is nothing short of criminal for the House to set aside this kind of money for such a questionable project, when it is asking senior citizens, the poor and other vulnerable Americans to give up programs they need just to survive.

It is an inexcusable use of taxpayers' money—and one which I cannot support.

Letters to the Editor

To the editor:

Khomeini's aggression in Iraqi territory is yet another result of his expansionist policies and his total disregard for peace in the region. This time Khomeini has openly rejected the Security Council's Resolution for a peaceful settlement. Similar to the one carried out 23 months ago by Iraq, this aggression will undoubtedly deteriorate the present situation in the Persian Gulf.

Khomeini's foreign policy, which advocates the exporting the so-called revolution, laid the groundwork for the outbreak of the war. He has openly put forward the ouster of Saddam's government as one of the conditions for ending the war. In a speech delivered from Jamaran on May 17th, Khomeini declared that "if the other governments of the region do not behave according to Islam [meaning Khomeini's wish], they must keep in mind that they are not stronger than Saddam."

Clearly, as long as Khomeini exists, the Middle East will not see peace, stability, and friendship. He is pursuing his ideas for revising a Caliphate under his own control in the Islamic countries, from Afghanistan to Iraq and Bahrain. Furthermore, the ruling clique's propaganda, running the "Holy War" against the invader, has had no purpose but to put a lid on the profound internal, social, political and economic crisis and in providing a justification for the internal suppression of the well-organized opposition, mainly, the Mojahedin.

On the other hand, Khomeini is faced with the problem of having to explain the 170,000 dead and the human wave tactics he has used in the war. This has become even more difficult now that Iranians must fight on Iraqi territory, when the Iraqis have expressed their willingness to establish peace on the basis of both countries' territorial integrity.

Khomeini cannot stay in power without creating crises. Yet, none of

his last-ditch efforts to save himself seem to portray a bright future for his regime.

Julie Jessie

To the editor:

I want to congratulate Al McGilberry on a very fine awards banquet July 16th. There were many comments about the success of that evening.

Ron Dellums was truly exceptional. His speech was informative and at times, frightening. Certainly his message was heard and should encourage each of us to work even harder for a nuclear freeze.

Again, Al, congratulations on a successful event and thanks for acknowledging some very talented, effective and committed persons.

Kay Dean Toran
Director,
Affirmative Action Office,
Governor's Office



MEMBER



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