Victories Won on Southern Africa in Foreign Aid Bill

Anti-apartheid activists won three important victories when Congress finally passed the foreign aid authorizations and appropriations bills in December. Victories were won in retaining the Clark Amendment, reinstating funding for the U.N. South Africa Trust Fund, and retaining funding for the U.N. Institute for Namibia. The victories are particularly significant given the conservative climate on Capitol Hill and Reagan's influence with Congress. The bills were characterized by a cut in economic aid to the Third World and a large increase in military assistance to U.S. allies.

Clark Amendment is Retained!

Due to the hard work done by concerned activists in Washington and around the country, the House/Senate Conference Committee approved the Foreign Aid Authorizations Bill on December 14, refusing to accede to the Reagan Administration's request to repeal the Clark Amendment. The Clark Amendment, passed in 1976, prohibits U.S. military or para-military assistance to factions in Angola without Congressional authorization. On March 19, Reagan asked Congress to repeal the Clark Amendment, presumably to aid the South African-supported UNITA guerillas in southern Angola.

These plans for intervention suffered a setback when the House Foreign Affairs Committee (HFAC) voted 19 to 5 to retain the Clark Amendment on May 12. On May 13, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (SFRC) voted to repeal the Clark Amendment but with stipulations on sending aid to UNITA or other groups, including the condition that there be a ceasefire and preparations for internationally supervised elections in Namibia. On September 30, the full Senate rejected this compromise when SFRC chair Charles Percy (R-IL) joined Senator Nancy Kassebaum (R-KS), chair of the Africa Subcommittee, in opting for full repeal. The Senate voted 66 to 29 to repeal the Clark Amendment.

Despite the fact that it appeared there would be no House vote on the bill (Clement Zablocki (D-WI), chair of the HFAC, said he would not bring the bill to the floor without sufficient Republican support), the nation-wide campaign against U.S. intervention in Angola continued. With only a short time to go before Christmas break, the House finally took up debate on the bill on December 9, following heavy lobbying by the administration. The administration was assisted in its lobbying efforts by Jonas Savimbi himself, leader of UNITA, who arrived in Washington one week before the vote. Besides meeting with Secretary of State Alexander Haig and other State Department officials, Savimbi lobbied many legislators and their aides.

On the day of the vote, Rep. Edward Derwinski (R-IL), who had previously announced he would offer the amendment to repeal the Clark Amendment, unexpectedly withdrew his amendment at the last minute. He did so under pressure from the administration and the House leadership who were united in wanting to see the bill pass, and feared it would not. Reagan wanted the bill specifically to ensure military aid to Pakistan, El Salvador, Sudan, and other countries, and the repeal of Congressionally-imposed restrictions on military aid to Chile, Argentina, and UNITA (the Clark Amendment). The House leadership wanted the bill because of pressure from Reagan and because it knew that failure to pass the bill would call attention to the breakdown of the legislative process.

The bill, which passed by a vote of 222 to 184, was threatened by an unusual coalition of liberals and isolationist conservatives. The liberals opposed the bill because it heavily favored military over economic aid (the very reason why Reagan wanted it passed). The isolationist conservatives, who always oppose foreign aid, opposed the bill because they believed they were approving "give-away" programs overseas. In the face of this opposition, Reagan tactically retreated on the House floor to obtain passage of the bill. Even if the House voted to repeal the Clark Amendment, the debate would have been so long and rancorous, and the vote would have
been so close, that the bill itself probably would not have passed. Knowing that the Senate version of the bill was similar to his original request, Reagan retreated in the hope of gaining what he wanted in the conference committee.

This gamble failed with regard to the Clark Amendment. When the conference began on December 11 it was clear that repeal of the Clark Amendment was the number one priority for the administration. Reagan personally lobbied Percy and Zablocki, the co-chairs of the conference committee, for repeal without compromises. The House delegation stood firm, however. Backed by a letter from the Congressional Black Caucus stating its members' intention to vote against the conference report if it contained repeal of the Clark Amendment, the House members effectively told the Senate delegation and the administration: Keep the Clark Amendment or no bill. On December 14, the committee agreed to retain the Clark Amendment. Because the legislation is good for two years, the administration will have a very difficult time repealing the Clark Amendment soon, although there is a strong possibility it will request repeal in its FY 82 Foreign Aid supplemental authorizations request in early spring.

Funding for Trust Fund Reinstated

The House/Senate conferees for the Foreign Aid Appropriations Bill earmarked money for a U.S. contribution to the U.N. South Africa Trust Fund on December 16—despite a request from President Reagan to eliminate the U.S. contribution. The Trust Fund's purpose is to promote human rights in South Africa; it gives money to several projects, including the project of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law to defend South African political prisoners. Last March, Reagan requested that no money be appropriated for the Trust Fund as part of a general cutback on U.S. contributions to U.N. programs and to rid the U.S. of participation in a program that actively promotes South African human rights. Although Congress appropriated $400,000 for the Trust Fund in FY 81, the chances for funding this year looked bleak given the budget-cutting mood in Congress. Supporters of the Trust Fund did not stand still, however. When the House Foreign Affairs Committee marked up the Foreign Aid Authorization Bill in May, it accepted an amendment offered by Rep. George Crockett (D-MI) to keep the $400,000 in the budget for the Trust Fund. The House Appropriations Committee likewise agreed to a $400,000 appropriation. Both committee mark-ups were upheld on the floor.

Unfortunately, there was no such initiative in the Senate. Thus the Senate versions of the two bills contained no money for the Trust Fund. When the appropriations conferees met, Reps. Bill Gray (D-PA) and Julian Dixon (D-CA) pushed for the House funding level, which the committee accepted.

Congress Continues Funding for the Namibian Institute

The foreign aid appropriations conferees also approved funding for the U.S. contribution to the U.N. Institute for Namibia. The Institute's purpose is to train Namibians in various skills at the facilities in Lusaka, Zambia. The committee approved a $500,000 appropriation for FY 82.

Although the Reagan Administration did not ask for a cut-off of funds to the Institute, its funding has been threatened the last several years by right-wing members of Congress who have denounced it for being pro-SWAPo. This year, when the Senate took up debate on the Foreign Aid Appropriations Bill on November 17, Senator Jesse Helms (R-NC) made another attempt to cut off the U.S. contribution. Senator Robert Kasten (R-WI), chair of the Senate Foreign Operations Subcommittee and manager of the bill, accepted an amendment by Helms, and modified by Senator Nancy Kassebaum, which prohibits funding for the Institute "except if the President determines and submits in writing to Congress that providing such funds will promote an internationally recognized settlement in Namibia."

The House/Senate conferees rejected this language, however, and appropriated the $500,000. U.S. voluntary contributions to international organizations for FY 82 total $213.4 million.

Keep the Export Controls!

A decision is pending in the State and Commerce Departments on whether to rescind controls on non-military exports to the South African military and police. President Carter instituted these controls in an effort to comply with the U.N. arms embargo. The Reagan Administration must now decide whether it will comply. Given a sixty day extension, the new deadline for a decision is February 23. Write immediately expressing your support for the controls to: Assistant Secretary Chester Crocker, U.S. State Department, Washington, D.C. 20520 and Director Richard Tenders, Operations Division, Office of Export Administration, Commerce Department, Washington, D.C. 20230.