



Plotting thickens over trade agreements

By DAVID S. BRODER

WASHINGTON — One of the participants said it was his first time back in the White House since the Nixon years. Another easily topped that by remarking that it was his first return visit since Kennedy's time.

The two dozen men — lawyers, lobbyists and executives — met in their once-familiar surroundings recently to plot the opening moves in one of 1979's major battles: the fight for congressional approval of the new agreement setting forth the terms of international trade among close to 100 nations.

The group assembled by Carter's special trade representative, Robert S. Strauss, included some of the real powerhouses of the Washington influence community. Superlawyers Lloyd Cutler, Harry McPherson, Berl Bernharc, and Bill Hundley, were there, along with the superlobbyists Bill Timmons (President Ford's congressional liaison chief) and Tommy Boggs.

Loyd Hackler and Bob Keefe, two skillful Democratic legislative strategists, were exchanging viewpoints with Bill Eberle and William Walker, veterans of previous trade battles when they held Strauss's present job. Missing from the first meeting, but scheduled to join the ad hoc

strategy group, are former House Ways and Means Committee influentials Wilbur Mills and Joe Waggoner, and Charles Walker, the former Treasury official in the Nixon years who masterminded last year's successful drive for capital gains tax relief.

The presence of all these high-powered influence wielders in one room is one sign of the importance of the coming trade legislation battle. But even more significant was the location of the bipartisan gathering, in the White House itself.

While MTN (the Multilateral Trade Negotiation) has received less publicity than SALT (the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty), its approval has as high a priority for the President as any item on his 1979 agenda.

Like the SALT negotiators, the MTN bargainers have not quite wrapped up their agreement. But a quick conclusion to the trade talks in Geneva is more assured than a rapid windup of the SALT talks with the Soviet Union. And Carter last week gave Congress formal notice of his intention to submit the agreement in April.

Then Congress will have 90 working days to say yes or no to the package of tariff concessions and reductions in non-tariff barriers which are at the heart of the complex agreement. The lawmakers must take it whole or reject it; they are not allowed

to amend it piecemeal.

Despite the President's strong backing and the formidable array of economic power and political influence represented at the White House strategy meeting, the battle in Congress promises to be a tough one. Organized labor opposes concessions that it believes will threaten the loss of American jobs to foreign producers. With an estimated \$28 billion deficit in the U.S. balance of trade for 1978, many members of Congress will be susceptible to protectionist pressures.

To counter them, Strauss and his administration colleagues are trying to spread public awareness of the huge stake U.S. workers and consumers have in international trade. One-fifth of U.S. manufacturing jobs and one-third of America's farm acreage depend on export markets.

The ad hoc strategy group urged the administration to present the trade legislation, not as a tariff concession bill but as an export-expansion measure, sweetened with every legitimate device for helping U.S. firms find new markets abroad.

In a time of high inflation, there is also a consumer-oriented argument that liberalized trade will reduce the costs to Americans of the foreign products they want.

Strauss himself is bringing his consider-

able political and persuasive skills to bear on the toughest elements of the opposition, the steel and textile interests. The two groups stung the administration twice in the closing days of the last Congress, pushing through one restrictive trade bill that Carter was forced to veto and blocking a second liberal-trade measure he now must seek to have approved early this year, before the big trade agreement comes up for a vote.

Strauss is conducting intensive private negotiations with the textile and steel people. He is using the technique for which he became famous (or notorious) when dealing with supposedly implacable party factions in his previous job as Democratic national chairman. There, he perfected art of the last-minute compromise that somehow removed a roadblock to achieving his objective.

In the trade fight, he has the consistent backing of a President who, on this issue at least, has not wavered from the principles he enunciated in his campaign. He has some strong allies on Ways and Means and the Senate Finance Committee. And the economic-political power represented by the ad hoc committee is formidable.

All things considered, it would not be wise to bet the rent on the administration losing this fight.

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Welfare system: bucks versus bills

By JAQUELINE GRAPIN

PARIS — The French, like Americans, have become accustomed to social welfare. Indeed, only the most unreconstructed reactionary here would turn the clock back to the days before the system existed.

But the social welfare structure in France, which was initially introduced a generation ago, is currently encountering the same challenge it faces in the United States. Expenditures are outpacing revenues — so much so, in fact, that the system is sliding deeper and deeper into debt.

After much deliberation, the French government has decided to deal with the problem by raising deductions from wages and by imposing higher contributions on companies to cover their employees. The increase for individuals ranges from 15 percent to 54 percent, depending on income brackets.

The new policy, which went into effect at the beginning of the year, has provoked protests from management and labor as well as from shopkeepers, craftsmen and professionals — in short, from almost everyone.

These protests may spell political trouble for the government, whose economic austerity program and the unemployment it has caused is already triggering strikes.

But the policy was chosen over two other possible alternatives, both of which were considered unfair. One would have been to finance the operation through taxes, which are largely indirect and thus inequitable. The other would have been to reduce benefits, thereby saddling people with a bigger share of their own welfare burden.

Even so, the deficit for the year ahead will exceed \$2 billion, and a key question is whether the new measure will be sufficient to keep the system out of the red in the future.

Social welfare spending in France runs to some \$70 billion per year, or nearly 23 percent of the nation's gross domestic product. The money goes mainly for health care and, to a lesser degree, into family allowances and support for the aged.

Everybody here takes advantage of the system, from paupers who depend on it to make ends meet, to millionaires who claim refunds on minor medical bills. I see it used — and sometimes abused — by relatives, friends and associates almost daily.

My mother, for example, is reimbursed fully and promptly for the large quantities of medicine she consumes, without any check on the validity of her prescriptions. My secretary regularly adds a week of "sick leave" with salary to her month's paid vacation.

Not long ago, a cousin who had suffered a mild heart ailment discovered after leaving the hospital that he was entitled to enter a special institution for three weeks of free therapy that he could have easily undergone at home. This and other kinds of assistance, all perfectly legal, have made social welfare here the butt of jokes. One

columnist recently compared the system to a huge and opulent mother constantly embracing her children. Wits have portrayed it as a sort of watering hole, where the French slake their chronic thirst for benefits.

Despite the humorists, though, there are several sound reasons for the spiraling costs of social welfare in France as elsewhere on earth.

One significant factor is demographic. The number of old people has nearly doubled over the past 20 years, while the birthrate has fallen since the end of World War II. This means heavier expenditures to care for the aged at a time when, with a shrinking labor force, wages are yielding less to social welfare coffers.

The rise in unemployment as a result of the recession is another important element in the picture, since the jobless are not only draining the government for compensation, but, without work, are unable to contribute to social welfare.

Add to this inflation, which is making medical attention increasingly expensive. The equivalent of \$700 per year per person is now spent on health care here, and the overall expenditure will rise this year, when medical services are broadened to include the entire French population. Until now, 53 percent of the population has been covered.

The system can certainly be reformed, but not as much as its critics contend. About 70 percent of government-subsidized drugs are consumed by old persons and those with major illnesses, and there is really little abuse in this sector. The "sick leave" deception, thought often publicized, is not widespread. And bureaucratic waste is less than it is in private insurance companies.

In fact, France spends a lower proportion of its national product on social welfare than do West Germany, Denmark, Belgium and Italy. The burden born by French wage-earners is also relatively low. On the other hand, the contributions by private enterprise to the system are the highest in the world.

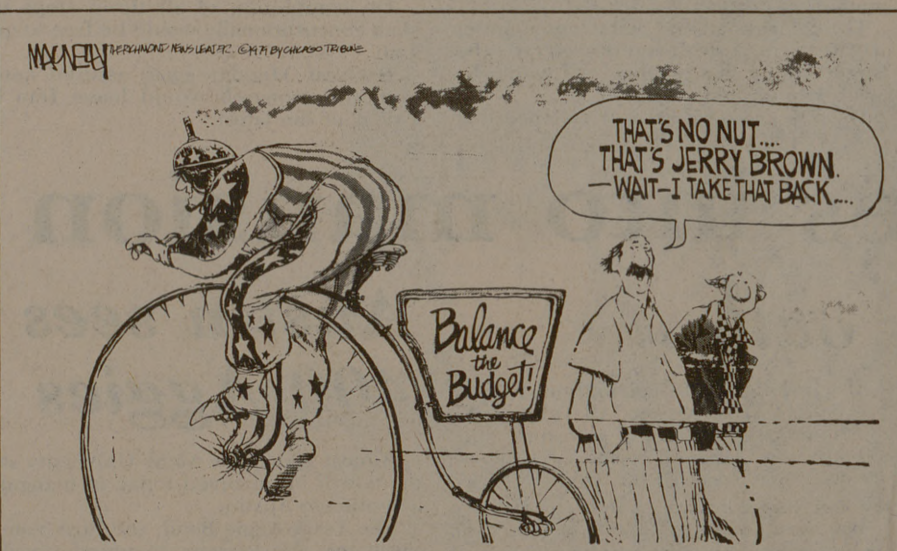
A possible path to reform, however, is through the French fiscal structure. Tax evasion is common, especially among businessmen and farmers, and though they receive social welfare benefits along with everyone else, their fraudulent practices deprive the system of funds.

But to enforce tax collection in France would require a revolution, and that is an unlikely prospect. So the government's move to raise individual and corporate contributions to social welfare, while unpopular, was probably the only feasible course.

The lesson in all this for Americans ought to be clear as they contemplate the expansion of their social welfare system to include government medical care for all.

It may be socially just to guarantee everyone "equality in the face of sickness," to quote French President Valery Giscard d'Estaing. But is canbe done cheap.

(Grapin writes on economic issues for *Le Monde*, the French daily newspaper.)



Conspiracy afoot

By DICK WEST

WASHINGTON — Amazing things are being done in the field of acoustics these days.

All of us laymen were dazzled by the detective work performed by two acoustics experts retained by the House Assassinations Committee.

From a tape recording of sounds picked by an open mike on a Dallas police motorcycle assigned to the Kennedy motorcade, they were able to conclude that gunshots came from two directions.

Humor

And if you thought that feat was impressive, get a load of what is happening in California.

When Gov. Edmund Brown first went to Sacramento, he was certifiably type D, meaning he had Democratic blood.

Yet recent acoustical tests indicate beyond a reasonable doubt that he has been making noises like a Republican.

These findings were based in large part on voice patterns taken from a tape of Brown's second-term inaugural address last week.

Particularly revealing was the part where Brown called for a constitutional amendment to force the government to balance the federal budget.

GOP overtones in that segment were first detected by Californians who heard the governor's speech on radio or television.

To the state's Republican lieutenant governor, Brown's proposals sounded like "Republican principles." To an AFL-CIO official, they sounded like "warmed-over Herbert Hoover."

The naked ear, however, is not necessarily sensitive enough to pick up all the nuances in a political speech. Expert confirmation was needed.

Toward that end, Mark Freeway, author of the book "Rush to Jarvis," obtained a tape of the speech and had it analyzed by voice print experts.

What the acousticians did, essentially, was obtain some old recordings of Republican politicians calling for mandatory balancing of federal budgets. These were played back on a machine that registers voice inflection, intensity, sincerity, timbre and reverberations. Then the squiggly lines were compared with the squiggly lines made by the Brown tape.

According to Freeway, some of the sounds definitely fit the Republican pattern. The question that arises is whether it was a case of Brown acting alone or whether the speech was part of a conspiracy to deprive President Carter of a second term.

Critics of the conspiracy theory point out that if Carter doesn't run again the Democrats are more likely to turn to Sen. Edward Kennedy than to Brown. But those who subscribe to the theory are unmoved by that argument.

They point to the comment by a leading California liberal that the speech sounded like Brown was "seeking the Republican nomination for president."

So the speculation is that Brown, rather than conspiring against Carter with other Democrats, is conspiring with his alter ego.

Letters to the Editor

Opponent teams deserve respect, too

Editor: All right, that does it! The lack of courtesy among certain elements on this campus has often filled me with dismay and disgust. I almost fired off a scathing letter to the Batt last October, when, one week after the Aggie band was offended by Baylor's band playing during the Aggie War Dige, that same Aggie band kept playing while SMU played its fight song. The hypocrisy of this act was, and is, incredible; but I let it go.

However, after attending the SMU-A&M basketball game in Dallas Saturday night, I can keep silent no longer. After the Mustang band played the Aggie alma mater, it began its own; and who should

appear out on the court, with the SMU cheerleaders but the Aggie team, which began taking practice shots. As the final score indicates, the Aggies needed all the practice they could get and then some. But during the playing and singing of SMU's alma mater was not the time to do it.

There is no excuse for such rudeness. Fortunately for the Aggies, they were playing in civilization. If a visiting team were to pull such a stunt here, they would probably be drawn and quartered, tied and feathered, and keel-hauled in Rudder Fountain.

Aggies may preach all they want about friendliness, courtesy and respect for tra-

dition; but from where I sit, until they clean up their own act, it sounds (and smells) like so much flatus in the wind.

— Brian Barnette
SMU '77, A&M '79

Practice preachings

Editor:

I am a student at the University of Houston and attended the UH-A&M basketball game Jan. 10 in Houston. I was again appalled at the poor sportsmanship exhibited by your fans and yell leader.

The "Beat the Hell Out of Cougar High" cheer is not meant to exhort your team to victory, but to taunt and irritate Houston

fans. This is bad sportsmanship. If "Cougar High" refers to academics, let me assure you that there are some very fine professors here.

If "Cougar High" refers to athletic tradition, let the record speak for itself. I have four brothers-in-law who attended A&M, one of whom is a faculty member. I am not an Aggie hater.

However, if this poor sportsmanship continues, I will be. If you insist on "Cougar High," ponder this: "Cougar High" 33 - Aggie Elementary 0. To get stomped that bad by a "High School" team your school must be an elementary, well — maybe junior high.

— Ralph Bivins
Houston

TOP OF THE NEWS CAMPUS

Aggie still in critical condition

Kaye Davis, 22, a Texas A&M student from Jasper, remains in a critical condition in Houston's Methodist Hospital Monday. Davis was injured in a car-motorcycle accident in College Station Thursday afternoon.

STATE

Davis jury gets case tonight

A district judge in Houston denied defense objections and jurors could consider both conspiracy and solicitation of capital charges against Fort Worth millionaire T. Cullen Davis Monday. Final arguments are scheduled for today and the jury will receive case tonight. Davis, 45, heir to a worldwide industrial fortune, named last August in a four-count indictment charging he solicited and attempted to arrange the death of his divorcee's judge Joe E. Eidson. Prosecutors began the thirteenth week of trial Monday by asking District Judge Wallace Moore to submit the solicitation and conspiracy counts to the jury. Defense lawyers argued that because Davis could only be convicted of one of the jurors should be restricted to considering only a single count.

Refinery strike averted for now

A strike by 7,000 workers at a Texaco, Inc., refinery in Port Arthur was averted at least temporarily Monday, but walkouts idled more than 3,500 workers at two other Texas refineries and two chemical plants despite the apparent nearness of a national labor contract. Some 275 members of Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Local 4-449 struck an Amoco Chemicals Corp. plant in Texas City Sunday over local issues including shift schedules and assignment of work.

NATION

Influence peddling trial opens

Rep. Daniel Flood, D-Pa., became a member of the 96th Congress Monday and went to trial on charges he peddled his Congressional influence for huge payoffs. Flood, 75, faces a maximum penalty of 15 years in prison on each of nine bribery counts, five years on a perjury count and five years on each of three perjury counts — a total of 155 years in prison and a \$220,000 fine. Some Justice Department officials have privately said they doubt Flood would ever be jailed — even if convicted — because of his age.

Supreme Court to set mail rule

The Supreme Court agreed Monday to lay down ground rules for citizens seeking damages from present or former federal officials in cases involving CIA mail openings and anti-war veterans. The court will hear appeals by former CIA Director William Colby and former deputy, Vernon Walters, who, along with a score of other former officials of the CIA and other agencies, are being sued for opening citizens' mail.

Steel companies go to court

Seven major steel companies went to court in Pittsburgh Monday in another effort to stop a strike by independent steel haulers aimed at paralyzing the nation's steel shipments. The companies contend the Fraternal Association of Steel Haulers has failed to comply with a U.S. District Judge Louis Rosenberg's directive last Thursday, which ordered the truckers to end their strike.

WORLD

American man stabbed in Iran

An American engineer was stabbed to death at his residence in southern Iran by unknown assassins, possibly because he was Jewish, U.S. officials said Monday. The U.S. Embassy identified the American as Martin Berkovitz, 53, of San Francisco, who worked for American construction company in Iran. The murder took place Sunday at Berkovitz's home in the southern town of Kerman where he was working as an engineer on a billion-dollar copper mine project near the Sarchashmeh mines. The Kayhan newspaper said a telephone had been cut and a note pasted on the front of his house said, "Go back to your own country."

Cambodian prince in hospital

Prince Norodom Sihanouk, the 56-year-old ousted ruler of Cambodia, was reported in satisfactory condition Monday at a Manhattan hospital suffering "extreme stress and exhaustion." Sihanouk, who last week appealed to the United Nations for aid for his country against Vietnam, was admitted to Lenox Hill Hospital Sunday. A hospital spokesman said Sihanouk "had been laboring under extreme stress and exhaustion."

WEATHER

Mostly cloudy and warmer today with drizzle. Winds will be southerly at 10-15 mph. High today 50 and a low of 40. There is a 30% chance of rain today, tonight, and tomorrow.

THE BATTALION

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Letters to the editor should not exceed 300 words and are subject to being cut to that length or less if longer. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit such letters and does not guarantee to publish any letter. Each letter must be signed, show the address of the writer and list a telephone number for verification.

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