

Candidates Find Fault With Plan

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The political debate on Vietnam that President Nixon sought to still Tuesday night, by revealing the frustration of his secret negotiating efforts, broke forth again yesterday, with most of Mr. Nixon's challengers finding fault with his latest formulation of the American bargaining position.

While several other White House hopefuls joined in commending the President's new initiative, only Sen. Henry M. Jackson said the Americans should stand pat on the eight-point plan revealed Tuesday.

Sens. Hubert H. Humphrey and Edmund S. Muskie of Maine, the leading rivals for the Democratic presidential nomination, backed the President's initiative but raised substantial questions about its terms.

Three other Democrats, Sen. George S. McGovern, ex-Sen. Eugene J. McCarthy and New York Mayor John V. Lindsay, and Republican challenger Rep. Paul N. (Pete) McCloskey, faulted the President for what they said was an offer that conditioned a settlement on the preservation of the present government in South Vietnam.

Many of the presidential candidates and a large bloc of other Senate critics of the war called for the President to adopt the simpler formulation of Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield: withdrawal of all American forces by a specific date, contingent only on the release of American prisoners.

Mansfield said he would press for re-enactment of his amendment, which has been approved several times by the Senate but never passed by the House. The tone of the reaction among war critics of

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both parties indicated the Vietnam issue would again provoke a major division in Congress—the eventuality the President had sought to forestall with his Tuesday speech.

The Washington Post yesterday asked the major presidential candidate to say what bargaining position they would recommend, in the light of the President's disclosure of the failure of his two-year effort to end the war through secret negotiations.

Responses were received directly from Jackson, Lindsay, McCarthy, McGovern and McCloskey. Relevant excerpts from statements made earlier in the day in press conferences by Humphrey and Muskie are also included. Several other candidates could not be reached. Here are the responses:

HUMPHREY

Sen. Hubert H. Humphrey of Minnesota: "I am pleased that the President has chosen to make public negotiations he has been holding with the government of North Vietnam. The eight-point plan outlines our government's position for negotiations at the Paris peace talks and will undoubtedly be a subject of conversation during the President's visit to Peking. I am hopeful that the plan will lead to an immediate and total withdrawal from Indochina. I do not want to criticize his offer for the sake of criticism.

"Its acceptance, however, may depend as much on a clarification from our own government as it does on the response from North Vietnam and the National Liberation Front."

"One crucial point which is noticeably absent in the President's proposal is the offer of a precise date for the withdrawal of American forces from Indochina in exchange for American prisoners of war."

"This point has been the basis of the Mansfield Amendment, which I have consistently supported and which the majority of the Senate and the American public has accepted. We should resolve the military conflict first by offering a date for withdrawal tied to the release of our prisoners."

JACKSON

Sen. Henry M. Jackson of Washington: "On Sept. 1, 1970, I initiated a letter to President Nixon, in which a biparti-

san group of 28 Senators joined me, calling on the President to ask for a cease-fire under international supervision; prompt, free elections throughout South Vietnam supervised by a mixed electoral commission representing all views, including the National Liberation Front; release of all prisoners of war and political prisoners on both sides; and withdrawal of all outside military forces within a specified time of the cease-fire taking effect.

"It now appears that the President proceeded to pursue these recommendations, as indicated by his speech to the nation."

"I therefore feel that the North Vietnamese have a responsibility to respond to the proposal. I think we should keep our last offer on the table, and press them for a counterproposal."

"I also think that when the

President goes to Peking, he should have as priority No. 1 a request for the Chinese government to use its considerable influence in Hanoi to implement this proposal by a release of our prisoners and to push for a stand-still cease-fire throughout the area of Southeast Asia."

LINDSAY

Mayor John V. Lindsay of New York — "If I were President I would say I am hereby announcing a date of total withdrawal — period. I would simultaneously ask the Paris negotiators to turn immediately to the question of repatriation of prisoners, direct that bilateral talks begin with the North Vietnamese on that subject, initiate the necessary resolutions in the United Nations on return of prisoners, and enlist the assistance of the International Red Cross to facilitate the exchange of prisoners.

"I would ask for an immediate cease-fire on the basis of the withdrawal announcement, but whether or not it is accepted, I would adhere to the withdrawal deadline.

"My fundamental difference with the Nixon administration position, as it was with the Johnson administration, is that they have insisted that we are required to prop up the Thieu government or somehow be a party to their rigged election. We do not and never have had an obligation to sup-

port that regime.

McCLOSKEY

Rep. Paul N. (Pete) McCloskey of California—"The President's proposal was unrealistic in two ways. It continued to insist on the existence of an independent nation in South Vietnam, and it assumed that any free election could be held in South Vietnam, when the Phoenix program has marked for execution anyone even suspected of being a Vietcong supporter.

I agree with the President that we should not overthrow the Thieu government, but we do not have to support that government, either. If it is overthrown by the natural political processes, our sole obligation is to provide political haven for those who wish to leave.

"Our goal should still be that stated in the Mansfield amendment, to leave Vietnam if we get our prisoners back. The President, by insisting on the preservation of South Vietnam and its government, asks too much, and that is the sticking point in the negotiations."

McGOVERN

Sen. George S. McGovern of South Dakota: "The President's performance last night was a clever election-year maneuver, which may gain some temporary political advantage, but won't end the war.

"I would accept the offer that the other side has made, in which they've said that if we would set a definite timetable (for withdrawal) they'd release the prisoners. I would announce the deadline on the assumption they mean what they say. I would set no other condition in advance.

"I don't believe the President when he says they insisted we physically throw out Thieu. I think all they've said is that we'd have to withdraw our support from Thieu. I'm convinced that once we agree

to get out, the Thieu regime will be replaced by local political forces and a government will come to power that will negotiate an end to the war."

MUSKIE

Sen. Edmund S. Muskie of Maine—"I welcome the fact that the President is taking this new initiative. This plan incorporates a proposal for a complete withdrawal of American forces within six months after the signing of an agreement, conditioned upon the return of American prisoners of war. These two elements of the proposal are, of course, an initiative that many Americans, including myself, have been urging upon the President for some time.

"The proposed new presidential elections in South Vietnam under international supervision, coupled with President Thieu's offer to resign a month before the election, is a new element. Whether or not elements not now represented in the government, including Vietcong, would feel that their political rights and their involvement in that election are sufficiently safeguarded by the proposal is something I can't evaluate. But I would think this is a basis for negotiation and discussion in Paris.

"On the military side, the one sticking point in the proposal is that it would call for a cease-fire throughout Indochina, not simply in Vietnam. That means that our withdrawal from South Vietnam would be tied to a settlement of the military activities in Cambodia and Laos as well as in South Vietnam. This

could well lead to a stalemate in Paris, and to a prolongation of the war."

McCARTHY

Former Sen. Eugene J. McCarthy of Minnesota—"There is no reason to expect Henry Kissinger to do in 12 days what David Bruce and William Porter could not do in roughly three years. What the President is proposing is in substance no different than what Johnson was proposing. There are a few new flourishes, but nothing substantive.

"What they (the Communists) have been asking for all this time is our agreement to support a new government in South Vietnam to replace Thieu and Ky. That's what they talked to me about, and it is what they are seeking now.

"I don't care whether you call it a coalition government or a new government, but it has to be an acceptable government. And if the South Vietnamese leaders refuse to stand aside for a new government, we must make it clear to them that we are ending our involvement and phasing out.

"The agreement to replace the South Vietnamese government is the key. The promise of free elections is quite meaningless. The war wasn't fought over the issue of free elections. That is a red-herring, just as the prisoner-of-war issue is. Return of the prisoners is implicit in any settlement that ends the hostilities. Mr. Nixon has it twisted around to the point that it sounds as if the war were fought to free the prisoners; a consequence has become a cause. The key is the replacement of the Saigon government."