

Fuss Over Military Pay Raise Bill

By Drew Pearson

Rep. Mendel Rivers, who comes from Charleston, S.C., the city where the South first fired on the North, has staged his own rebellion against the Johnson Administration. He has proposed a 10.7 per cent pay increase for the military instead of the 4.8 per cent sought by the Administration.



Pearson

"The Administration pay increase is nothing short of scandalous," Rep. Rivers told Congressmen.

Rivers, who is Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, listened scornfully as Secretary of Defense McNamara explained to Congressmen that a 4.8 per cent increase would bring the total earnings of the average military officer up to or in excess of those of "an average college graduate—even one in engineering or science for the first 22 years, and (would) exceed such earnings by 20 per cent thereafter."

The McNamara increase would cost the taxpayers \$369 million annually. The pay raise proposed by the Congressman from South Carolina would cost the taxpayers \$825 million annually.

Not many who watched the by-play between McNamara and Rivers knew that almost

every weekend the Air Force has trundled out an airplane at the MATS terminal in Washington for Rep. Rivers to fly back to Charleston, S.C., with another plane returning him to Washington Monday morning.

Rivers is a charming, delightful person most of the time. He was one of the few Southern solons to welcome Lady Bird Johnson on her Southern political trip last October. However, as previously reported in this column in detail, he has disgraced himself on foreign junkets. Despite this, "seniority," which automatically promotes Congressmen if they remain in office long enough, has elevated Rivers to the powerful position of Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee.

Over the Brink?

The Joint Chiefs of Staff have been making secret recommendations to President Johnson regarding Viet-Nam. Their recommendations worry the President regarding the possibility of all-out war.

Here are some of them:

- The use of nuclear weapons against Red China if the Chinese send troops into North Viet-Nam. The Joint Chiefs have unanimously recommended a nuclear strike against the Chinese mainland, first to knock out the Chinese nuclear laboratories, later Chinese industrial cities.

- That we bomb Russian Ilyushin bombers recently

spotted in North Viet-Nam. The Air Force believes Russia sent them to test American reaction, therefore has recommended that they be blasted immediately.

Pentagon sources leaked the presence of the Ilyushin bombers to Pentagon-oriented newsmen when the President did not act immediately on the Air Force recommendation.

(Ilyushin bombers have been present in Cuba for two years, but the United States has taken the position under both Presidents Kennedy and Johnson that they are defensive weapons, actually considered obsolete.)

(• The Pentagon has recommended to LBJ that we bomb SAM anti-aircraft missile sites now being installed around Hanoi. We have not bombed similar SAM sites in Cuba, have considered them defensive and not dangerous.)

President Johnson has asked for an intelligence estimate as to the Russian reaction if we bombed their missile sites around Hanoi. The estimate came back that the Russians would protest bitterly but would not retaliate militarily. The President is not sure, however, that this is correct.

These are some of the difficult, dangerous decisions the President is weighing at a time when anti-American leader Mikhail Suslov is becoming more powerful inside the Kremlin.

One of the oddities of to-

day's market basket, now being studied by the President's National Commission on Food Marketing at a series of hearings, is the amazing disparity between what the farmer receives and what the housewife pays for the food she puts on the table.

One of the dangers is that this could lead to further mergers in our economy. At the Commission's hearings recently in Fort Worth, Tex., one heard such terms as "backward integration"; that is, the ownership of packing houses by big chain stores. This has helped force down the farm price of beef on the hoof and has some beef producers on the verge of bankruptcy.

You also hear the term "forward integration." This is the opposite technique being contemplated by some farm groups, such as the Ohio Farm Bureau and the Farmers Union, which have considered taking over food chains to market their own products, as a means of self-protection.

Of six major food items studied by the Department of Agriculture, all have risen considerably in retail price since 1947, while the price the farmer gets for the same items, in an unprocessed state, has dropped considerably. Only three products — pork, milk and eggs — have varied from this trend.