

Investigator With Wit

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WASHINGTON, July 17—Not many members of the House of Representatives can claim to have killed a bill on the House floor with a single humorous speech. But there was Representative Otis Grey Pike standing in the well of the House floor a couple years ago, ridiculing a pending bill giving flight pay to deskbound admirals and generals.

Mr. Pike, his arms outstretched and swaying back and forth as if in flight, conjured up the image of the potential dangers of an admiral, his shoulder boards aflutter, spinning in his swivel chair and flying out a window of the Pentagon into the air-traffic pattern at National Airport. The Representatives, accustomed to more turgid rhetoric, laughed and applauded—and voted to defeat the bill.

Any survey to pick the wittiest members of Congress probably would end up with the name of Mr. Pike, a 53-year-old Suffolk County Democrat, high on the list. He does not hesitate to poke fun at himself, at others or at Congress, to which he was first elected in 1960.

Led Pueblo Inquiry

But there is a more serious side to the gray-haired, bow-tied New Yorker, who is not widely known outside Suffolk County or the House of Representatives. After years of devoting his attention to such things as ferreting out waste in the military, Mr. Pike was named today to be chairman of a revamped House Select Committee on Intelligence Activities.

Taking over a highly sensitive investigation into intelligence matters may provide the greatest test yet of Mr. Pike's humor. The committee, as previously constituted, became paralyzed in internal bickering between its chairman, Representative Lucien N. Nedzi, Democrat of Michigan, and younger Democratic members.

Yet it was Mr. Pike who in 1969 conducted a House subcommittee investigation into the North Koreans' capture of the intelligence ship Pueblo. The investigators concluded that the seizure of the ship as well as the shooting down of an American reconnaissance plane demonstrated that the nation's ability to react to national emergencies was imperiled by "serious deficiencies" in the military command structure.

Mr. Pike also gained some attention in 1967 by charging that the Defense Department was paying large sums of



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One of the wittiest members of Congress.

money for small spare parts that could be ordered for less money from regular mail order catalogues.

The Pentagon subsequently reorganized its buying procedures.

Each week Mr. Pike writes a weekly newsletter to his constituents—actually a column that is sent to weekly newspapers in his district—but which is widely read among House members and observers for its humor and occasional fresh glimpses of how Congress works.

Definition of a Conference

Once, "for example, Mr. Pike described attending his first Senate-House conference in which the conferees, "headed by Senator Richard B. Russell and Representative Carl Vinson, both Georgia Democrats, privately reconciled a huge military procurement bill passed by both houses.

"The conference ended with a figure of \$16,976,620,000," Mr. Pike reported. "A conference is two gentlemen from Georgia, talking, arguing, laughing and whispering in each others' ears."

Mr. Pike is something of a moderate, compared with some of the more liberal New York Democrats, which explains his repeated re-election in a rather conservative district on the eastern end of Long Island. "I've always said I'm surrounded on three sides by water and on the fourth by Republicans," he once said.

He was born in Riverhead, L. I., on Aug. 31, 1921, was graduated from Princeton University and spent four years in the Marine Corps. He was graduated from the Columbia University Law School in 1948.

He was elected on his second attempt as justice of the peace in Riverhead, and after an unsuccessful campaign for the House in 1958, he surprised most politicians by up-

setting Representative Stuyvesant Wainwright, the Republican incumbent, in 1960.

Until this year when he moved to the more prestigious Ways and Means Committee, Mr. Pike spent most of his time on the Armed Services Committee, finally working his way up to chairman of a subcommittee.

He runs a skillful but usually low-budget campaign. Once when an opponent ran a series of costly radio commercials complete with a choir, Mr. Pike countered by buying some radio time to plunk a ukulele.

He has sent Long Island newspapers a "blast Pike kit," pointing out his weaknesses to save reporters time in investigating his record.

He also once recalled how a constituent had written him to ask a favor, which Mr. Pike declined to perform. The constituent wrote back sarcastically: "Dear Otis, I knew I could count on you."

That constituent later ran against Mr. Pike, and a few days before the election Mr. Pike bought some ads in the local weeklies and in dead-pan manner reprinted the "Dear Otis" letter from his opponent. The opponent lost.