

Welfare Reform Program Is Likely to Legislation's Supporters Doubt Earlier Passage

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WASHINGTON, Aug. 18— President Nixon's request for a year's delay in implementing welfare reform has sharply reduced the prospect that the welfare program will be enacted before the 1972 election.

Supporters of the welfare legislation have become increasingly pessimistic since the President included the request for a welfare reform delay in his new economic program, despite the official White House position that the Administration would continue to press for action on the program.

In New York this morning, Governor Rockefeller reported, after a breakfast meeting with the President, that welfare reform was "not dead" and that he had urged Congressional leaders to work for approval of a bill with an effective date in 1973.

An Administration official here said it was "our posture" that the welfare package should be passed this year but that, realistically, it was unlikely that any action could be expected before 1972.

The most optimistic schedule for Senate action on the House-approved welfare legislation, before the President's Sunday announcement, saw the omnibus bill reaching the floor late this year, in November or December.

Now, with Mr. Nixon having officially relaxed Administration pressure for the controversial measure, it appeared unlikely to come up for Senate consideration until well into the political season of 1972, with the impending Congressional elections further complicating approval.

Equally important, the decision to delay welfare reform has undercut its prospects by making it likely that the program will be judged on its own merits, with politically popular Social Security changes considered separately and much earlier.

Seeks 5% Benefit Rise

Senator Russell B. Long, Democrat of Louisiana, chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, indicated that he would bring a Social Security bill to the floor later this year, including a 5 per cent benefit increase effective in June, 1972, that the House has already approved.

This increase and a number of other major Social Security changes were incorporated in the welfare bill when it passed the House in June, in a deliberate attempt to make the omnibus measure more attractive to reluctant House members then and Senators later

Some Senators who back welfare reform, but in a more liberalized version than the House bill are considering trying to attach their plan to any Social Security measure that Senator Long reports out of the Finance Committee.

Such a strategy is based on a belief that the committee, dominated by conservatives of both parties, will never clear anything resembling the Family Assistance Plan and that such a welfare reform will have to be proposed as a floor amendment to another bill in any event.

Would Aid Budget

In his televised address on the economy Sunday night, President Nixon said that his proposed reductions in Federal taxes would necessitate cuts in the budget, and part of the savings could be achieved by a year's delay in the implementation of the \$10-billion welfare plan.

The House-passed bill would put most phases of the welfare reform program into effect on July 1, 1972. The Administration says it needs a year to set up the administrative machinery, so a delay of one year would permit final passage any time up to next June.

Senator Long is flatly opposed to the Family Assistance Plan, which would guarantee a family of four an annual income of \$2,400 and continue to provide reduced benefits as one or both of the parents worked their way off the welfare rolls with outside earnings.

To Study Alternatives

Mr. Long, remarking that he welcomed the postponement, said it would give the Finance Committee an opportunity to study some alternatives. Although he would not predict any welfare schedule, it was clear he did not feel any sense of urgency in the wake of the President's recommendation.

Some Republicans believe Mr. Nixon proposed the delay in tacit recognition of opposition to the welfare bill in the Senate committee. Others believe he would not be unhappy if Congress failed to reach final agreement on the reform program before he ran for reelection next year.

Conservative Republicans have been more critical of the welfare program than of any of the President's domestic efforts, and he might find it more comfortable to campaign against the Democratic Congress for failure to pass reform than to point to the radical and costly new plan as an Administration achievement.

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Be Delayed Until After Election in 1972

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OFFICIALS DISCUSS ECONOMIC PROGRAM: Seated around table, from left: Mrs. Virginia H. Knauer, consumer aide; Dr. Paul W. McCracken, economic adviser; George Romney, Secretary of Housing and Urban Development; Brig. Gen. George A. Lincoln, head of Office of Emergency Preparedness; Arnold Weber, Cost-of-Living

Council director; John B. Connally, Treasury Secretary; Charles E. Walker, obscured, Under Secretary of Treasury; Clifford M. Hardin, Agriculture Secretary; Maurice H. Stans, obscured, Commerce Secretary; James D. Hodgson, Labor Secretary; Laurence H. Silberman, Under Secretary of Labor; Arthur F. Burns, Federal Reserve chief.