

HOUSE DEMOCRATS ASK PULLOUT BY '73

Caucus Vote Is 138 to 62
on Indochina Withdrawal
—Action Is Compromise

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WASHINGTON, March 31 —

House Democrats called today for an end to United States involvement in Indochina by the start of 1973.

The action was almost identical to that taken by Senate Democrats a month ago. It was the first time that the House Democratic majority had spoken out on the issue.

A resolution, approved by a vote of 138 to 62, went further than some Democratic Representatives, including Carl Albert, the Speaker, had originally wanted.

Statement a Compromise

At the same time, it fell short of demands of the leading doves, who had pushed for total troop withdrawals from Southeast Asia by the end of this year.

Some indication of the sharp division within Democratic ranks was expressed by Representative Teno Roncalio of Wyoming as he emerged from the three-hour closed caucus.

"There is a feeling of togetherness in there," he said wryly. "Everyone is reasonably unhappy."

As finally adopted, the resolution represented a compromise hammered out in recent

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days between House leaders and antiwar forces.

The resolution states the following:

"Resolved, that it is the sense of the Democratic caucus of the House of Representatives that in the 92d Congress the House Representatives should work to end the United States military involvement in Indochina and to bring about the release of all prisoners in a time certain during the 92d Congress.

"Resolved, further, that in pursuit of these objectives, the Democratic caucus urges full support wherever possible by both House Democrats and Republicans of the initiatives of the President, the House committees and members, and the Senate, which may be pertinent to these ends."

While the resolution was adopted by a wide margin, the crucial vote came earlier when the Democrats voted, 101 to 100, to substitute the compromise for the more stringent proposal for withdrawal of troops this year.

A One-Vote Margin

Thus, by a mere one-vote margin, the Democrats blocked all chances for a vote on withdrawing troops this year.

The more militant antiwar spokesmen in the House — including Mrs. Bella Abzug of lower Manhattan and Ronald V. Dellums of California — termed the caucus action "a victory for Nixon."

Much the same view was expressed by the House Republican leader, Gerald R. Ford of Michigan, who applauded the Democratic action as one strengthening the President "in the courageous course he is pursuing."

More generally, however, the Democratic action was viewed as a major step in forcing the President to step up efforts to end the war.

"Sure, we didn't get as much as we wanted," said Representative Sam Gibbons of Florida, one of five co-sponsors of the proposal for total troop withdrawals by the end of this year. "But you've got to consider where we came from. A month ago, we didn't stand a chance of getting any antiwar resolution through caucus."

Opposition Overcome

In forcing the issue to a vote in caucus, leaders of the antiwar resolution had to overcome earlier opposition of Olin E. Teague of Texas, chairman of the House Foreign Committee and Mr. Albert.

Dr. Morgan, a supporter of the war policies of both the Johnson and Nixon Administrations, said he was satisfied with the caucus action.

Asked what message he felt it conveyed to President Nixon, Dr. Morgan replied: "I would consider this a directive, from Democrats in both branches of Congress, that this war has to be wound down during this session of Congress."

He said that this committee would open hearings, shortly after Easter, into various antiwar proposals introduced in the last few months.

Mr. Albert, too, said he was satisfied with the compromise. He termed it neither "a slap at President Nixon" nor "a vote of confidence in his conduct of the war."

Sponsors of the original proposal for troop withdrawals this year said they would continue to exert pressure on the Administration to end the war.

"We've come a long way," said Representative Spark Matsunaga of Hawaii, one of the five co-sponsors. "We may try again in a couple of months to set an early deadline for withdrawal. And, then, we can do other things, too. Vote against funds for Vietnam, for instance."

The resolution approved by House Democrats is actually more explicit in calling for an end of the war during this Congress than the one approved last month by Senate Democrats.