

House, Like Senate, Bars Deadline in Troop Pullout

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WASHINGTON, June 17—The House, following the lead of the Senate, refused today to impose a Congressional deadline on the President for withdrawal of American forces from Indochina.

By a vote of 256 to 158, the House rejected an amendment to a military procurement bill that would have provided that none of the funds authorized in the measure could be used to support United States forces in Indochina after the end of this year.

The amendment—offered by Representatives Lucien N. Nedzi, Democrat of Michigan, and Charles W. Whalen Jr., Republican of Ohio—was the House counterpart to the McGovern-Hatfield "end-the-war" amendment to a Selective Service bill. The amendment rejected yesterday by the Senate by a vote of 55 to 42.

The action by both House and Senate represented a Congressional vote of confidence in the Vietnam policies of the Nixon Administration. But the Administration's victory in the Senate was probably more significant than its victory in the House, since it had been assumed that the more conservative and hawkish House would support the Administration.

For the war critics in the House, however, there was the consolation that for the first time they had succeeded in forcing a direct vote on the Vietnam war issue and been able to muster the support of more than one-third of the membership.

In the past, the House leadership had always maneuvered to prevent direct action on Vietnam by resorting to procedural votes that obscured the issue.

Because of the more stringent House rules on germaneness, the Nedzi-Whalen amendment would have been less binding in requiring withdrawal by the end of the year than the amendment put forward in the Senate by George S. McGovern, Democrat of South Dakota, and Mark O. Hatfield, Republican of Oregon. But the underlying purpose was the same—to impose a fixed withdrawal deadline on the Administration.

Unlike the McGovern-Hatfield Amendment, which would have cut off all defense funds, the Nedzi-Whalen amendment would have applied only to new weapons authorized in the military procurement bill. Since most of the procurement funds will not be spent before the end of the year, Mr. Nedzi acknowledged that his amendment would not have the

effect of "mandating withdrawal" by this December.

The acknowledged ineffectiveness of the amendment became one of the principal points of criticism by the Administration's supporters.

Representative Gerald R. Ford, the House Republican leader, dismissed the amendment as "symbolic" and "meaningless." But at the same time the Michigan Republican said that if the amendment were enacted it would prevent the President from honorably and effectively negotiating a peace in Vietnam.

Representative John J. Flynt Jr., Democrat of Georgia, a former hawk who has turned against the war, replied that "this is the only way we have to express our opposition to a wrong war in the wrong place at the wrong time."

The doves, led by Representative Bella S. Abzug of Manhattan, cheered as Mr. Flynt strode up the aisle to cast his vote for the Nedzi-Whalen Amendment.

In opposing the amendment, Representative F. Edward Hébert, chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, relied heavily on a letter from Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird.

In the letter, which Mr. Hébert read to the House, Mr. Laird said:

"To arbitrarily terminate United States support to those to whom we have given the ultimate commitment of the lives of our fighting men would be a tragic mistake."

Democratic Leaders Split

The Republicans were fairly solid in opposing the amendment, but a split developed within the ranks of the House Democratic leadership.

Speaker Carl Albert of Oklahoma and Representative Hale Boggs of Louisiana, the majority leader, opposed the amendment. Representative Thomas P. O'Neill Jr. of Massachusetts, the Democratic whip, supports it.

Reflecting the long-standing position of the House leadership, Mr. Albert said that Congress should not attempt to "tie the hands of the President in any way."

Before defeating the Nedzi-Whalen amendment, the House rejected various other amendments that would have set the withdrawal deadline for April 30, 1972, or made withdrawal contingent upon a cease-fire and release of war prisoners.

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