

Many Congressmen Frustrated and Bitter Over

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WASHINGTON, April 23— Three months after watching President Nixon recite his second oath of office on the Capitol steps, Congress is still trying to find a formula for working its will on the White House.

The Senate and House of Representatives adjourned for an Easter vacation last week in a mood composed of bitterness, frustration and concern over the future both of Congress and the Presidency.

"One of the primary issues during last fall's campaign was alienation of the voters who are turning off Congress because of its inability to enact changes," Representative Edward Mezvinsky, Democrat of Iowa, said on the House floor last Wednesday. "Since the election, I think the disillusionment with government has grown rather than diminished," he added.

The 93d Congress took office in January amid pledges to restore authority over spending and war in particular to Capitol hill. But President Nixon has made his first two spending vetoes stick. His policy of bombing raids over Cambodia and Laos has gone unimpeded by any act of Congress. And only the Watergate conspiracy case seems likely to impair the influence of the White House over the actions of Congress.

Impeachment Discussed

For the first time last week, following disclosures that senior White House aides might be implicated in the Watergate case, serious conversations were held in Congressional cloakrooms about the possible use of the ultimate weapon—impeachment—to bring President Nixon to bay.

But the impeachment talk, while it reportedly reached into the offices of the House Speaker, Carl Albert, Democrat of Oklahoma, was more an illustration of frustration than an expression of real intent.

"There's been a lot of talk around the House the last few days that perhaps some thought should be given to the procedures for impeachment," said a leading Congressional strategist. "But nobody is actually advocating it. Nobody wants to destroy public trust in the one office that usually has had public trust. It's just that people feel it might come to that."

Ray J. Madden, the 81-year-old Indiana Democrat who chairs the House Rules Committee, agreed with that assessment.

"It's a hell of a thing when you hear talk about impeaching a President," he said.

Speaker Albert was said by associates to be morose last week as one after another of the leadership's initiatives was defeated or delayed. The House, for example, refused to insist that President Nixon roll back prices, rents and interest rates to March levels. Republicans forced postponement of action on a plan to continue a program of emergency public employment. A House Foreign subcommittee wrestled in vain to produce a bill curtailing the President's war powers. And a caucus of House Democrats on the spending issue demonstrated the lack of unanimity on any of several proposals to require the President to adhere to Congressional budget decisions.

All 30 of the first-term House Democrats took the floor, for

four hours on Wednesday, to plead for solidarity. Mr. Albert joined them, making clear that he had nothing rash in mind.

"Following the Civil War," he said, "we almost had anarchy when they came very near impeaching a very good President, the first President Johnson. The legislature practically took over, and we almost had legislative tyranny in this country at that time."

"Today," Speaker Albert continued, "it seems to me that we have a President, whether well-intentioned or not, who is taking steps which if not checked will lead to what amounts to executive tyranny."

The pleas of the freshmen Democrats amounted to a request for Congressional parity with the White House rather

than superiority, for Congressional action rather than acquiescence. These were some of the comments:

GERRY E. STUDDS, of Massachusetts on the war in Indochina:

"It is with great sadness and great frustration that we note in the three-and-a-half months we have been here, throughout almost all of which bombing has continued, and so far as we know it is continuing at this moment, there has been no action in this Congress. No voices of any note, of any power have been heard. No action has been taken by this Congress."

WAYNE OWENS, of Utah, on Mr. Nixon's withholding of appropriated funds:

"Insulated with four more

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years,' the President of the United States, in pursuit of his own legislative and political ends, terminates by arbitrary executive fiat programs which he could not defeat in the orderly, lawful process of our government. And Congress, in its docile, dependent mood, at times seems determined to give the President what he wants, up to and including the Congressional birthright."

BARBARA C. JORDAN of Texas, on responsibility:

"Congress must regain the will to govern. We cannot forget that last October the House passed a spending ceiling which surrendered all discretion over budget cuts to the President, reflecting Congress's appalling willingness to shrug off the responsibility for difficult deci-

sions and leave them to the President. We must be willing to take the political heat involved in making hard choices between competing public needs."

GILLIS W. LONG, of Louisiana, on the stakes involved:

"Our message to the President is that he is risking retaliation from the Congress for his power grabs, that support for the counter-offensive is found in the whole range of Congressional membership — old members and new, liberal and conservative, Democratic and Republican — and that if Congress and the President lock horns in a wasteful and destructive battle, there is no chance of either the President or the Congress achieving the goals set for the country."