

AN OBSCURE CONGRESSMAN TO KEEP AN EYE ON

One of the most troublesome leaks in Lyndon Johnson's umbrella of congressional consensus is Congressman Michael A. Feighan, a 60-year-old Ohio Democrat whose 23-year career in the House has been marked chiefly by his ability to get himself re-elected. Feighan has sponsored but one piece of legislation (a 1958 bill concerning Hungarian refugees), and he took a brief turn in the headlines when in 1964 he tried unsuccessfully to bar Richard Burton from the U.S. on the grounds that Burton and Elizabeth Taylor had "behaved immorally." Beyond this, Feighan is a pre-emptive and demonstrably reckless anti-Communist and an adamant foe of flooding the country with foreigners he considers undesirable. It is in this latter respect that the Congressman is causing the Administration anguish, for he now heads the House immigration subcommittee and in this position blocks Lyndon Johnson's efforts to overhaul U.S. immigration policies. The Administration's measure would abolish the present "national origins" quota system in favor of admitting into the U.S. any foreigners possessing a needed skill or professional training, regardless of nationality. Feighan has effectively stymied every effort to pass the bill for the past 22 months, since it was first introduced by John Kennedy.

For the limited number of Capitol observers aware that he is around, Feighan is a puzzle. He is a Princeton and Harvard Law School graduate. When first elected to Congress in 1942 from Ohio's 20th district, he

was known as a liberal, having defeated an arch-reactionary America Firster, Martin Sweeney. But thereafter Feighan drifted swiftly into the camp of ultra right-wingers and accumulated a staff to match, notably Edward M. O'Connor and Philip Corso. O'Connor's present title is staff director of the Joint Committee on Immigration and Nationality Policy—a misleading job title, since the joint committee has no staff and has never met since it was created in 1952. Its budget is \$24,000 a year; O'Connor's salary is \$22,945.20.

Among Corso's distinctions is that of having spread a story following the Kennedy assassination to the effect that Lee Harvey Oswald was in the pay of the CIA.

Shielded by O'Connor and Corso, Representative Feighan has managed to avoid notoriety as he consolidated his committee positions. In a rare interview recently, the reporter was requested to submit questions in advance. These Feighan answered by reading from a prepared paper, tracing each line with his index finger. When he appeared to falter, O'Connor would break in with "the Congressman meant to say this," then go on to answer the question himself. Feighan, at these times, stared out the window.

Yet the obscure Ohioan has contributed occasional erratic outbursts of his own. At a private dinner during a 1963 conference on immigration in Geneva, he shocked U.S. officials by describing President Kennedy as a "Communist sympathizer" and a "nigger lover." (More recently, the late President's brother, Senator Ted Kennedy, retaliated by introducing everyone at the head table of an immigration banquet *except* the Congressman from Ohio, who promptly stormed out of the room.)

To proponents of the immigration reform measure, it seems inconceivable that Feighan can roost on the bill through another entire session in the face of White House persuasion. He will need what presidential help he can get to keep his seat in 1966.

Yet the worry over Michael Feighan goes far beyond his opposition to the immigration bill. What really concerns the White House and many congressional Democrats is the fact that only 77-year-old Representative Emanuel Celler outranks Feighan on the mighty House Judiciary Committee, which controls critical legislation in the field of civil rights, voting and antitrust.

Celler and Feighan not only disagree politically, but are bitter personal enemies.

"What can I do about Feighan?" Celler pleaded with a colleague recently. "He's driving me crazy."

"Live, Manny," the congressman replied. "You've got to keep living."