

Crime Panel About to Be Mugged

By Jack Anderson

The House Crime Committee is about to become the victim of its own success. Its enemies are converging on it from all directions.

The committee was set up four years ago under crusading old Claude Pepper (D-Fla.) to expose interstate crime and drug abuse. For two years, it plugged along ineffectively.

Then Pepper installed a vigorous new staff. Seldom has a congressional committee produced such useful testimony and challenging reports in any two year period.

It exposed mob infiltration of sports, tying Frank Sinatra to a syndicate-run race track in the process. It hauled grumbling, growling Mafia bosses Raymond Patriarcha and Carlos Marcello into the public spotlight.

Pepper infuriated Dun & Bradstreet and the dignified accounting firm of Peat, Marwick, Mitchell & Co., by showing they were used unwittingly in a nationwide phony securities scheme.

He horrified the TV industry by demanding that the pill and tonic ads, which bring in billions of dollars, be totally banned from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. to keep children from becoming pill addicts.

So aroused are the pharmaceutical firms that they have flooded committee offices with queries about Pepper's pro-

posals. Calls have even come from stockbrokers worried about what would happen to their drug investments.

Worst of all, Pepper stepped on the toes of powerful congressmen who felt he had intruded into their jurisdiction.

With such a record against the special interests, a counterattack was inevitable. Some three weeks ago, Minority Leader Gerald Ford (R-Mich.) slipped into Speaker Carl Albert's office and strongly urged him to kill the crime committee. Albert listened but made no commitment.

White House Unhappy

The White House is also unhappy with the Pepper unit. If the committee gets a new lease on life, the administration is due to get a going over for its failure to curtail street crime. White House insiders have bad-mouthed the committee for years.

Shortly after it was set up, John Dean III, then a top Justice Department aide and now a presidential counsel, was dispatched to see what the committee was up to. His negative report caused Justice to refuse to cooperate fully with Pepper. In fact, Justice denied Pepper the names of the 10 top heroin financiers even though their identities were known to Justice.

Within the committee itself, ranking Republican Charles Wiggins (R-Calif.) and Rep.

William Keating (R-Ohio) are working to kill it. Both have contacted the leadership of the Judiciary Committee in an attempt to get the crime unit's functions transferred there.

Significantly, Keating has two major pharmaceutical firms in his district, and the committee has lambasted the industry for producing goof balls and pep pills that wind up on the black market.

Judiciary's new chairman, Peter Rodino (D-N.J.), is also eager to see the Crime Committee die. He wants to build up his jurisdiction, even if it means gobbling up the committee of his old friend, Claude Pepper.

At present, Pepper's opponents plan to bury the committee's funds and authority in the Rules Committee without bringing the issue to a floor vote. A floor vote would put the law-and-order minded Republicans and their Democratic allies in the uncomfortable position of assisting the Mafia and the drug interests by openly killing the only House committee now dealing exclusively with crime.