

CONSUMER AGENCY BALKED IN SENATE AS CLOSURE FAILS

OCT 6 1972

Move to End Debate Barred
a 3d Time—White House
Is Criticized for Its Role
NYTimes

By JOHN D. MORRIS

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Oct. 5 —

Legislation to create an independent consumer protection agency apparently died in the Senate today as sponsors failed for the third time to limit debate on the bill.

The bill had been depicted by consumer advocates as a legislative landmark and the most important consumer measure to come before the present Congress. It was set aside indefinitely after a vote of 52 to 30 in favor of invoking the closure rule limiting debate. This was three short of the necessary two-thirds majority of Senators voting.

Senate leaders said there were no plans to resume consideration of the measure.

Nixon Is Blamed

The bill, an expanded version of one passed by the House last year, was the target of intensive attacks by business lobbies. But the outcome hinged finally on the inability of its bipartisan managers to get any help from the White House in their repeated efforts to limit debate.

"The bill is dead for the year and there should be no doubt where responsibility for killing it rests—squarely on the Nixon Administration," Senator Abraham A. Ribicoff, Democrat of Connecticut, said.

"The Administration position," he added, "was simply that it wanted no bill at all—not even the House bill, which it previously supported."

The chief sponsor, was joined by the measure's Republican co-sponsors, Jacob K. Javits of New York and Charles H. Percy of Illinois, in blaming the Administration for the outcome. All agreed that the White House could have supplied the votes needed for closure.

Consumer's Interest

In the first closure effort, last Friday, the vote of 47 to 29 was four short of the necessary two-thirds. On Tuesday, the vote was 55 to 32, or three short.

The bill called for establishment of an independent agency with authority to represent consumer interests in proceedings before Federal regulatory agencies and courts. The House version included several restrictions on the agency's power to intervene that were omitted from the Senate text. It had the Administrations formal endorsement and was praised by Mrs. Virginia H. Knauer,

Continued on Page 17, Column 1

CONSUMER AGENCY BALKED IN SENATE

Continued From Page 1, Col. 3

President Nixon's special assistant for consumer affairs.

Administration - backed amendments to bring the Senate provisions into line with those of the House were to be considered if debate could be limited. Senator Percy said he and other sponsors had first offered to compromise and then to accept all of the amendments if the White House would support closure.

He said that the offers were made to John D. Ehrlichman, the president's chief assistant for domestic matters, who turned them down.

Requests for an explanation of the Administration's turnabout were met with "silence," the Senator reported.

Senators Percy and Javits were less pessimistic than Senator Ribicoff about the possibility of reviving the bill this session.

"I still feel there are approaches that can be made and we may work something out," Senator Percy said. "It's not dead so long as I am alive."

Senator Javits said there was a "remote chance" that the bill could be revived.

All of the sponsors promised to press vigorously for action next year in any case.