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NIXON BUOYS FOES OF CURBS ON WAR

Note Makes Senate Debate
More of a Personal Test

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WASHINGTON, June 5 —

President Nixon's personal intervention appeared today to have buoyed hopes of Senators seeking to block an amendment that would curb the President's authority to mount future United States military operations in Cambodia.

A message that Mr. Nixon sent late yesterday to the Senate Republican leader, Hugh Scott of Pennsylvania, gave at least moral encouragement to opponents of the amendment sponsored by Senators John Sherman Cooper, Republican of Kentucky, and Frank Church, Democrat of Idaho.

But the message, which Mr. Scott reportedly insisted that he put in writing, also made the three-week-old Senate debate on the issue more of a personal test for Mr. Nixon than it had been heretofore.

Byrd Move Backed

In the message, the President threw his support behind a move by Senator Robert C. Byrd, Democrat of West Virginia, to stipulate that the Cooper-Church Amendment would not "preclude the President from taking such action as may be necessary to protect the lives of United States forces in South Vietnam or to hasten the withdrawal of United States forces from South Vietnam."

The Cooper-Church amendment would prohibit the President from spending any funds to "retain" American forces in Cambodia after July 1 or to supply military advisers to the Cambodian Government without Congressional consent.

Senator Church said that adoption of the Byrd Amendment would "largely emasculate" the intent of his amendment by keeping the door open to a repetition of the present United States military thrust into Cambodia if the President determined that it would help protect American troops in South Vietnam.

Scott Appears Hopeful

Mr. Scott, who was said to have warned the President that he could not muster more than 40 votes for the Byrd Amendment without the President's personal intervention, now appeared hopeful of gaining additional support.

His assistant leader, Senator Robert P. Griffin of Michigan, said today that he foresaw a close vote on the Byrd measure. "I think that we've got a chance of winning on that," Senator Griffin told reporters.

Senator Scott joined Senator Byrd today as a co-sponsor of his amendment, and the Senate scheduled a showdown vote on it for 1 P.M. next Thursday.

Sources close to Senator Scott said that he had refused to accept anything short of a written commitment from the President behind the Byrd Amendment and that he had even stipulated how the letter should be worded.

The letter thus gave Mr. Scott the White House support he felt he needed, but at the same time it turned the vote on the Byrd Amendment into a decision on the President's position.

"The Byrd amendment reaffirms the constitutional duty of the Commander in Chief to take actions necessary to protect the lives of United States forces and is consistent with the responsibilities of my office," Mr. Nixon wrote. "Therefore, it goes a long way toward eliminating my more serious objections to the Cooper-Church amendment."

Concern Mounting

There was mounting concern among supporters of Mr. Cooper and Mr. Church that the President's action would make it difficult for them to retain the backing of some Senators whose support of the amendment was described as shaky. It for 2d add capital.

The Cooper-Church forces said privately that they were no longer certain that they could count on the votes of such Senators as Thomas J. McIntyre of New Hampshire, Alan Bible of Nevada and Henry M. Jackson of Washington, Democrats, or Winston L. Prouty of Vermont, a Republican.

Other sources said, however, that they felt Mr. McIntyre was not likely to waver in his support of the Cooper-Church amendment.

Neither the Cooper-Church amendment nor the Byrd changes in it represented the compromise that both sides had been seeking in lengthy private negotiations on Capitol Hill and with the White House.

The letter that Mr. Scott elicited from the White House was aimed at achieving a compromise, but the Senator was said to feel that it might be necessary to take another step toward narrowing the differences in language between the two amendments.

One possibility being discussed among supporters of the Cooper-Church amendment was wording that would be tacked onto it stipulating that nothing in the amendment was intended to infringe on the President's constitutional responsibilities as Commander in Chief.