

G.O.P. Presses Campaign For Nixon's Peace Plan

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By **TERENCE SMITH** JAN 29 1972
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WASHINGTON, Jan. 28 — More than 123 members of Congress signed letters circulated by the Republican leadership today expressing support for President Nixon's eight-point peace proposal for Vietnam. *

In circulating the letters, the Senate Republican leader, Hugh Scott, and the House Republican leader, Gerald R. Ford, said they were seeking to demonstrate the widest possible backing of the President's new initiative among the 100 Senators and 432 Representatives.

Neither the text of the letters, nor the names of the signers will be released, sponsors said, until the letters are sent to the President.

Mr. Scott and Mr. Ford have stopped short, however, of proposing a formal resolution, apparently for fear that it would produce a major debate on the Administration's war policies

and provide a forum for the President's critics.

The letters, which will be sent to the White House after more signatures are gathered next week, appear to be the last phase of a full-scale Administration effort to rally support behind the President's offer.

The campaign has included daily news conferences and speeches by senior Administration officials, including Henry A. Kissinger and Secretary of State William P. Rogers, and well-publicized leaks about the aspects of the new proposal that can be portrayed as generous.

Yesterday, for example, Administration sources volunteered to reporters that the President had offered North Vietnam \$2.5-billion as part of a \$7.5-billion program for In-

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* From story by John W. Finney, NYTimes 27 Jan 72, this file:

The White House was obviously intent on obtaining maximum political gain from the President's speech. Before the speech yesterday, according to Republican sources, the White House called Republican Senators advising them to be prepared with statements applauding the President's proposals.

One Republican strategy that appeared to be emerging to keep the Democratic opposition silenced and on the defensive was the political theme that the President's proposal should satisfy all except those who advocate "surrender." [Story gives examples.]

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dochina reconstruction. The details of this offer were confirmed today by the White House press secretary, Ronald L. Ziegler.

The Administration appears to have a two-fold purpose in its efforts to sustain the momentum behind the new initiative: first, to persuade Hanoi that the majority of Congress and the country support the President and, second, to deflate the domestic critics of Mr. Nixon's policy.

Senator Scott has been in the forefront of the second effort, accusing the critics of advocating "abject surrender" to the North Vietnamese.

He repeated those charges to reporters today and added the observation that former Senator Eugene J. McCarthy was being "fatuous and disingenuous" in his continuing criticism of the President's handling of the war.

Also today, a group of opponents of the President's policies staged a "counterbriefing" in which they sought to rebut some of the arguments the Administration's spokesmen have put forward during the week.

A series of speakers, including Senators J. W. Fulbright and Gaylord Nelson, addressed an audience of nearly 200 crowded into a committee hearing room in the Rayburn House Office Building.

'Automated War' Assailed

Other speakers included Prof. Raphael Littauer of Cornell University, the coordinator of a recent study on the impact of the air war in Indochina; Earl C. Ravenal, a former Defense Department official now with the Institute for Policy Studies, and Fred Branfman, director of Project Air War, a nonprofit organization aimed at raising public consciousness about the air war in Indochina.

The speakers called for an immediate end to what Mr. Branfman described as "an automated war of total destruction" in South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

Senator Fulbright, the Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, argued that the President's new proposal was "hardly distinguishable from the previous offers we have made."

"It may contain some new details," he said, "but it still lacks the critical ingredient: A frank statement of our willingness to withdraw our forces and leave the political future of Vietnam up to the Vietnamese."

Hanoi Seeks Clarification

HANOI, Vietnam, Jan. 28 (Agency France-Presse) — The Communist party newspaper Nhan Dan said today that North Vietnam would respond officially to President Nixon's proposals only after further clarification.

Quoting the Paris correspondent of the North Vietnamese press agency, it said Hanoi would await the answers to precise questions asked yesterday at the Paris talks.

The agency correspondent summarized the questions as follows:

"Will the United States withdraw all its troops, weapons and equipment, dismantle their bases, cease using planes against North Vietnam and South Vietnam?"

"When will agreement be made fixing the precise manner and date of the withdrawal?"

The army newspaper, Quan Doi Nhan Dan, gave a much shorter report, but it published at length the Jan. 26 communiqués by North Vietnamese and Vietcong spokesmen in Paris and said they had "rejected the eight points." This paper is intended for military personnel.

Soviet Comment Skeptical

MOSCOW, Jan. 28 (Reuters) — The first Soviet commentaries on President Nixon's peace proposals today were highly skept-

tical but avoided outright rejection.

Vikenti Matveyev, a leading political commentator in the Government newspaper, Izvestia, made it clear that there were important questions to be answered, such as whether American aircraft would continue to operate in Indochina.