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Nixon's bus is stuck, his advisers worried

WASHINGTON — The failure of House conservatives, particularly Southerners of both parties, to get behind President Nixon's proposed moratorium on school busing is deeply worrying administration strategists.

Instead of the united conservative support the White House had bargained for, such key House Southerners as Democratic Rep. Joe Waggoner Jr., of Louisiana and Republican Rep. Fletcher Thompson of Georgia are bitterly complaining that Mr. Nixon's anti-busing program is too little and too late — a "Yankee relief measure," as Waggoner calls it.

A just-completed White House survey of pending desegregation cases, however, shows that the South would benefit more than any other geographic area if the President's proposed moratorium, banning new court-ordered busing, became law.

Southern school districts

Out of 50 such cases, about 34 directly

Louisiana's Waggoner calls busing moratorium 'Yankee relief measure'

affect Southern school districts, including all but one of the 11 Southern states.

Presidential aides trying to build political backing for Mr. Nixon's moratorium are now emphasizing this point: that although Southern school districts where court-ordered busing is now taking place will get no relief, these 34 new districts may become targets of court-ordered busing soon if the moratorium fails.

Even if the administration can make that argument stick, however, the President's moratorium is far from secure. For example, many congressmen from South and North are rushing to add their names to the petition to discharge the proposed anti-busing constitutional amendment, now buried in the House Judiciary Committee.

But even if the discharge petition eventually attracts the required 218 names, forcing the issue to the floor of the House, a constitutional amendment to ban school busing for racial balance could not be ratified until long after the November election, if ever. What that means is that many congressmen opposed to court-ordered busing see greater political gain in backing a pie-in-the-sky constitutional approach than in the more modest moratorium.

ROGERS AND MAO

Henry A. Kissinger, President Nixon's top foreign policy adviser, gave an emphatic

explanation when congressmen and senators demanded to know why Secretary of State William P. Rogers was excluded from the President's session with Mao Tse-tung, China's top political boss.

Kissinger, who accompanied Mr. Nixon

Rowland Evans and Robert Novak

alone to the meeting with Mao, stated that it had been set up on the spur of the moment as a "ceremonial" handshake between Chairman Mao and Mr. Nixon.

A business session, Kissinger went on to say, was to be held later, with Rogers definitely present.

Suddenly transformed

However, Kissinger said, the first meeting was suddenly transformed from a mere handshake into a business meeting that lasted one hour. That conducted the working session with Chairman Mao, obviating any second meeting.

MUSKIE MONEY TROUBLE

The first conclusion of Sen. Fred Muskie's campaign manager was that the session to identify their