

Congress Acts to Restore Rural Aid

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WASHINGTON, March 1 — Congress stepped up its demands today that President Nixon spend funds as it directed.

The apparent escalation of the dispute over the Administration's impoundment of money came with House passage of one bill and Senate passage of another, both directing the President to restore rural grant programs that he had halted.

Even Republicans who had supported the President in other budget-cutting legislative tests in recent weeks departed in droves, leaving only a handful of Administration loyalists opposing renewal of the two programs.

As fellow Senators sat pensively, Senator Herman E. Talmadge, Democrat of Georgia, paced the aisles to deliver a final pep talk on restoring legislative authority.

"If you want to be a mere debating society, not a legislative body, I suggest you go back to college," he said.

"Or the United Nations," quipped Senator Russell B. Long, Democrat of Louisiana.

The Senate bill, passed by a vote of 71 to 10, would reinstate the Rural Environmental Assistance Program (known as REAP) and specifically direct the Administration to spend the full \$225-million earlier appropriated by Congress.

The House passed a similar bill nearly a month ago by a vote to 251 to 142, but the Senate version goes a step further by mandating the spending of \$10-million more for a water bank program that was also halted by the President in his drive to hold down spending.

The House is expected to accept the water bank provision, possibly next week, clearing the bill for action by the President.

With some Administration

sources hinting that the President will veto the REAP bill, it appears this will be the first test this year in the continuing struggle between Mr. Nixon and Congress over impoundment of funds and termination of Congressionally mandated programs.

Only hours before the Senate acted today, the House challenged President Nixon's termination of still another farm program involving grants for construction of rural water and sewer facilities.

There, too, calls for "legislative independence" were made as members moved forward to press their coded cards into the electronic voting machine stations. The bill passed, 297 to 54, and now goes to the Senate.

In both the Senate and House, the margins by which the two rural bills were approved far exceeded those of earlier votes and indicated constant decline in support for the Administration.

For instance, the Administration rolled up its heaviest vote on Feb. 7 with House passage, 251 to 142, of the REAP bill. Last week, the Administration's support sagged, with House passage of a bill directing reinstatement of a rural disaster loan program, by a vote of 269 to 95.

In the only previous Senate vote this year on a rural program halted by the President, the vote was 69 to 20 to restore low-interest loans for rural telephone and electric cooperatives.

Meanwhile, Senator Jacob K. Javits, Republican of New York, claimed a partial victory today for Congress in its efforts to prevent President Nixon from dismantling the Office of Economic Opportunity.

He was referring to a statement before a House subcommittee earlier today by Howard J. Phillips, the acting director of the antipoverty agency, that all but the community action programs would be provided

funds at least until the end of this fiscal year, on June 30.

Senator Javits said that this would help clarify the situation on such programs as legal services that he said had been "strangled by uncertain funding." But he said that Congress would continue fighting the White House plan to phase out the Community Action Program.

Representative Carl D. Perkins, Democrat of Kentucky and chairman of the House Education and Labor Committee, accused the Administration today of "destroying the forum of the poor" by dismantling O.E.O.

"We're going to do our best to stop you," Mr. Perkins told the O.E.O. directors.

Medicare Cut Protested

There were Congressional protests today, too, over another of the Administration's budget-cutting moves as 13 of the most senior Senate Democrats attacked the President's proposal to require the elderly to pay a larger share of the hospital and doctor costs under Medicare.

"This proposal simply lacks the backing of the American people," said Senator Frank Church, Democrat of Idaho, who led the move last year for a 20 per cent increase in Social Security benefits, over Administration opposition.

Even Senator James O. Eastland, Democrat of Mississippi, an opponent of Medicare when it was first enacted in 1965, joined the Democratic protests.

Others protesting the increased Medicare costs were Harrison Williams Jr. of New Jersey, Thomas F. Eagleton of Missouri, Henry M. Jackson of Washington, Howard W. Cannon of Nevada, Edmund S. Muskie of Maine, Vance Hartke of Indiana, Abraham A. Ribicoff of Connecticut, Frank E. Moss of Utah, Warren G. Magnuson of Washington, John L. McClellan of Arkansas and Jennings Randolph of West Virginia.