

It is evident from reports emanating from yesterday's closed-door meeting of the Foreign Relations Committee that members are having second thoughts on the Senate's rash vote to kill the foreign aid authorization bill. But it is equally apparent that there is nothing approaching agreement on the new directions foreign aid must take in order to muster adequate support in the Congress.

Senator Fulbright and others are talking in terms of stop-gap legislation that would emphasize humanitarian programs, particularly those administered by international institutions, and greatly reduce the military component of aid which accounts for more than half of the Administration's foreign assistance package. There is merit in this approach, but it is doubtful whether a bill tailored to Mr. Fulbright's exacting requirements could command a majority at this time, especially in view of the support the Administration was able to rally behind its military proposals before Friday's final negative vote.

It would be equally unrealistic for the Administration to try now to ram the foreign aid bill through the Senate in anything like its present form. Although it was not the only factor by any means, an important component of the Administration's defeat on the aid bill was Congressional and national disillusionment with Presidential policies involving heavy military support for authoritarian governments, particularly in Southeast Asia. Unless there is some revision of these policies, and of the aid requests that are designed to support them, there is little hope for rebuilding a Congressional consensus in support of a broad foreign assistance program, even with the sweeping reorganization proposed last year by the Peterson Commission.

A period of hard bargaining is ahead in which both the President and his Congressional critics will have to make concessions. In the meantime, to prevent a national disgrace from turning into an international disaster, it is essential that Congress act promptly to keep the foreign aid machinery intact through another continuing resolution, extending the aid program at current levels beyond the Nov. 15 expiration date. In view of the depth of current disagreements, such an extension should allow at least ninety days for tempers to cool and for thoughtful reappraisal.

There is also need for prompt action to provide supplemental funds, as already requested by the Administration, to help care for the nine million or more Pakistani refugees. There surely can be no quarrel over this urgent humanitarian need.

In reconsidering foreign aid, it would be helpful if both Congress and the Administration disabused themselves of a myth that has been irresponsibly fostered lately by both the President and some of A.I.D.'s Congressional critics—the notion that the United States is bearing more than its share of the international development burden rightly assumed by the "have" nations for sharing with the "have nots."

Although the United States is still the largest contributor in absolute terms to overseas development programs, the United States contribution measured in terms of ability to pay—aid as a percentage of gross national product—ranks twelfth among the sixteen aid-donor nations. There is no place for pride or self-pity in this performance.