

## Return of POWs a Condition

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Washington

House Democrats, in their strongest statement against the war, voted 154 to 75 yesterday to work to cut off all funds for United States combat operations in Indochina as soon as prisoners are returned and arrangements are made for safe withdrawal of U.S. forces.

White House lobbyists tried all day to head off the vote, on grounds that it would jeopardize peace talks scheduled to resume in Paris on Monday.

But an attempt to water down the policy statement was easily rejected and the resolution—at the caucus of all party members—passed with the support of the new majority leader, Representative Thomas P. O'Neill (Dem - Mass.). O'Neill was earlier elected to the second ranking leadership post to replace Representative Hale Boggs (Dem-La.).

The resolution has no binding effect. But it indicates how House members may vote on anti-war legislation during the 93rd Congress which opens at noon today.

### BILLS

Meanwhile, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee met to discuss the war and agreed to start work in three weeks on Indochina fund-cutoff legislation if President Nixon has not negotiated peace by January 20 — Inauguration Day.

"The consensus of everyone present was that we did not wish to do anything to prejudice the negotiations starting next Monday," said Chairman J. William Fulbright (Dem - Ark.) "but if some settlement is not reached by the 20th, then it is our intention to employ legislative powers to bring the war to a close."

Senate minority leader

See Back Page

### From Page 1

Hugh Scott (Rep - Pa.), a committee member, did not attend the session. Secretary of State William P. Rogers and Henry A. Kissinger, the President's top negotiator, had been invited to brief the committee on the war, but did not appear.

House Democrats — at the party caucus — first defeated, 136 to 90, a substitute proposal by Representative Sam Stratton (Dem - N.Y.) that would simply have directed the Democratic leaders to seek an explanation from the President of the state of the war and peace efforts and report back to the caucus.

### SPONSORS

Sponsors of the withdrawal resolution accepted an amendment that made the fund-cutoff position subject to release of prisoners and safe withdrawal of troops. Opponents of a strong anti-war stand complained that

this severely weakened the resolution. But its principal author, Representative Lucien Nedzi (Dem-Mich.), said it had always been his intent that withdrawal would be subject to these conditions, and that it has been implied by one of the introductory "whereas" clauses.

O'Neill called it a strong statement, expressing "the will of the caucus that it wants this war stopped."

In contrast to yesterday's 154 to 75 vote, a resolution adopted by the caucus last year directing the House Foreign Affairs Committee to report out a bill fixing a date for U.S. withdrawal from Indochina received 135 votes. There are 13 fewer Democrats now.

Speaker Carl Albert, who was nominated for a second term as speaker by the caucus by a vote of 202 to 25 over Representative John Conyers (Dem-Mich.), did not speak on the proposal at the closed caucus, but has been opposed in the past to

fixing withdrawal dates or cutting off funds. O'Neill is the only leader of either party in the House to support such action. All others have agreed to let the President follow his own course.

### VOTES

Not only was the caucus closed, as usual, but the war votes were taken not by a roll call, which would have permitted any member to keep a tally, but by a recorded teller vote which is more difficult to keep count of and will not be made public. One of the reforms to be proposed at a later caucus, is to make public at least the way members vote at a caucus.

After O'Neill was elected floor leader without opposition, the caucus voted, 123 to 114, at his request, to keep the third ranking leadership position of whip an appointed rather than elective office. The whip is named by the majority leader with the speaker's approval.

Both Albert and O'Neill spoke in the caucus of the need for "congress to reassert its position as a branch of government co-equal with the presidency."

Reform issues dealing with seniority and secrecy will come up at a second House Democratic caucus January 10. The 192 House Republicans will have their caucus this morning.

Senator George McGovern (Dem-S.D.), the Democratic presidential nominee last year, said he will ask Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield to request Mr. Nixon to justify last month's heavy bombing of North Vietnam at a closed session of the Senate this week.

Mansfield was summoned to a White House meeting with the president yesterday afternoon. Afterward the senator said that the discussion centered on Vietnam, and that Mr. Nixon is aware of congressional opposition to his Vietnam policies.