

# White House Eyes the Hill

## Nixon's Liaison Man Sizes Up the 93d Congress

By David S. Broder

Washington Post Staff Writer

The top White House lobbyist has advised President Nixon that he "can expect some trouble" from Capitol Hill if there is no end-the-war agreement by spring.

William E. Timmons, the head of the President's congressional liaison office, said, "I don't think there will be any Vietnam resolutions passed in the month of January" and "I am cautiously optimistic that we can get into the spring if it takes that long."

But he warned that "at some point, I don't know when it is exactly, if there is no movement in Paris and the war continues, I think that they could try to take it away from the President."

Timmons, 42, a Tennessean who came to the White House from the staff of Sen. Bill Brock (R-Tenn.), discussed the prospects of revived congressional debate on Vietnam during an interview in his office last week, before President Nixon ordered an end to bombing above the 20th parallel.

In the course of the tape-recorded interview, he also:

- Discounted the effect of Republican disaffection from the President be-

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WILLIAM E. TIMMONS  
... cautiously optimistic

### TIMMONS, From A1

cause of his limited personal campaigning.

- Pinpointed three freshman Southern Democrats as keys to the balance of the new senate.

- Said that, overall, the new Congress should not be much harder or easier for the President to deal with than the old one.

In discussing the possibility of a new conflict between Congress and the President over Vietnam, Timmons said that although "there will be some talk when they are all back together again ... I don't think they will start any resolutions until after they've got their committees organized and heard the State of the Union and so forth."

He said he did not expect the bombing renewed Dec. 18 and halted yesterday or the breakdown in negotiations to become "an issue in the confirmation hearings" of Elliot L. Richardson as secretary of defense or on several appointees to second-echelon posts in the State and Defense Departments. The President hopes to see those appointments cleared by the Armed Services and Foreign Relations Committees and confirmed by the Senate before his Jan. 20 inaugural.

But Timmons said that "in February, we may see some movement" on anti-war resolutions. He noted that the foreign aid program is being funded under a continuing resolution that expires Feb. 28.

"That would seem to me to be a vehicle for them to tack on some Vietnam resolutions," the presidential assistant said.

"A lot depends on what happens between now and, say, Feb. 1," Timmons continued. "It depends on if we are back at the table. If we're engaged in very sensitive negotiations with Henry (Kissinger) ... over in Paris, I think the Senate is responsible enough to go ahead and see it through for a while longer. So, I am cautiously optimistic that we will get into the spring if it takes that long ... without any restric-

tions on the President through appropriations or authorizations.

"But," he said, "if it folds up, if there is no movement of any kind, we can expect some trouble on that issue ... The Senate has passed end-the-war things before, and the House has bailed out on them in conference, but they are not going to continue to do that forever, you know. ..."

"At some point, if there is no movement in Paris and if the war continues, I think they could try to take it away from the President," Timmons said. "But, again, I am optimistic that isn't going to happen. I just think that what the President is doing is going to work and that we are going to have an agreement ... before they are compelled to do that."

"I think that most of the members of Congress are really pulling for the President to pull it off. They'd love to get the thing behind them ... and they know he's working his heart out to do it ... To even insinuate that he isn't really seeking peace is absurd. He has everything to gain by peace. ..."

"But," Timmons said, "I am also aware that if they're not meeting in Paris, if there is no on-going negotiations, and the bombing is still going on, and there is no light at the end of the tunnel, that they are going to start moving" on Capitol Hill.

The White House legislative chief said that despite the two-seat Democratic gain in the Senate and the 13-seat Republican pick up in the House, "I don't really see any big philosophical swing either way as a result of the election."

Timmons noted that "some of the net increase in the house" resulted from Republicans replacing southern Democrats "who voted about the same anyway." In the Senate, he said, conservative Republicans' victories in New Mexico, Oklahoma, Virginia and North Carolina were about offset by the defeat or retirement of Republican incumbents in Colorado, Iowa, Delaware, Maine and South Dakota.

"So I think the complexion of the

Senate will be about the same," he said "and a lot will depend on three key guys," the new Democratic senators from Kentucky, Georgia and Louisiana.

Kentucky's retiring Republican senator, John Sherman Cooper, "was with the administration on a number of issues," Timmons said, "but on a number he was quite independent of the Administration and actually opposed it."

Referring to Cooper's successor, Sen.-elect Walter (Dee) Huddleston (D-Ky.), Timmons said, "I think Huddleston will probably swing from issue to issue much in the same way Cooper did, although the issues may be different."

Timmons said it will be "the same with Sam Nunn replacing Dave Gambrell" as the Georgia Senator. Both men are Democrats, but Nunn defeated Gambrell in the primary. "Gambrell was hardly an administration supporter," Timmons said, "and I think there is a hope that Sam Nunn may support the administration more than Gambrell did."

Timmons characterized the late Sen. Allen Ellender (D-La.) as "a maverick in some ways. He was generally supportive but he went off on his own some."

He said "it remains to be seen how" Ellender's successor, Sen. J. Bennett Johnston, Jr. (D) "will do down there."

"Those are the three keys," Timmons said. "If all three of them align on the anti-Administration side, then we have got some bad troubles. I could not expect that they would align with the Administration consistently. I think more often they are going to be jumping, depending on the issues, between the Administration and the anti-Administration forces ... so I think it is kind of a wash."

The presidential aide said he was aware there is "some resentment among Republicans about what the President did and didn't do for them in the campaign. They may feel that if the Administration isn't going to support them when they need help, why



should they support the Administration, particularly on difficult issues?"

"Frankly," Timmons said, "I think that is a wrong approach for them to take, because I believe the President did quite a bit for candidates on the Hill."

He mentioned letters of endorsement, pictures in the Oval Office, television and radio clips, adding that "he sent out surrogates for them all over the place, to the point that some districts and states said, 'Oh my gosh, no more surrogates!'"

Timmons said, "I have reason to believe that . . . there was some money probably channeled into some areas . . . When a big giver gave as much as he felt he could give to the President's re-election, it was suggested that he give some to some selected candidates around."

He said he and his aides had alerted candidates to "issues we thought might be useful," like the spending ceiling,

and that "on the last weekend the President called a number of Republicans running for statewide office . . . and urged them to turn out a big vote and wished them well."

Timmons said "the big criticism we hear is that the President didn't come in and personally campaign. I am not convinced that the mere presence of the President in a city or a town necessarily elects the candidate there."

"So I think that if members are upset, they really have little cause to be. In fact, the Senators that lost—the Senate candidates—I think you can probably pin that on local issues more than the President's participation or lack of it."

But Timmons conceded that whatever the merits of the argument, "the Republican members may be a little more independent because they feel that the President and the administration didn't take care of them. And that could be harmful."

Also, he noted, they know "the President will not be running again . . . and they may be a little more independent for that reason."

"On the other hand," he said, "working for us is . . . the fact that the Democrats don't have to worry about cutting him down, because he's not going to be a candidate again . . . And that will help us a little bit."

"Also, they have to recognize that this President has some support around the country—61 per cent is a pretty healthy margin. The Democrats will probably be reluctant to take him on frontally, considering his mandate."

"There are some minuses up there and some pluses," Timmons concluded.

"On balance, I don't see the 93d Congress much different in terms of party ratios, in terms of philosophy, in terms of partisan attitude. I think we will have to go up and sell each bill on its merits, just like we have tried to do in the past."