

# Aid Hanoi? Nixon has a bear by the tail

NEW YORK — At least since President Johnson's speech at Johns Hopkins University in April, 1965, the United States has been committed to the economic reconstruction of Indochina, including North Vietnam, after the end of the war. Now it begins to appear that the Nixon Administration has a bear by the tail in its desire to fulfill this commitment.

Sen. George McGovern, for one, has abandoned the full-blown support for rebuilding North Vietnam that he registered during his presidential campaign. Now that he is getting ready to run for re-election in South Dakota, he is feeling the heat from his constituents — as are senators and representatives from all over.

## The widespread political reaction

Even as the titular leader of his party, McGovern's opposition is less important than this widespread political reaction. In part, it seems from Nixon's sharp reductions in numerous federal programs of substantial benefit to numbers of voters. When REA loans are being ended and rural environmental funds impounded, for example, South Dakota voters can hardly be expected to be enthusiastic about exporting dollars by the billion to North Vietnam — or any other country, for that matter. Even now, for another example, Nixon is trying to cut back veterans' benefits.

## Nixon greatly responsible

On at least two other counts, the President is greatly responsible for his own dilemma. First, there were the bloodcurdling speeches in which he indulged himself over the last few years, while drumming up support for his conduct of the war and the peace negotiations. Labeling the officials in Hanoi as "outlaws" and predicting that they might slaughter "millions" in South Vietnam, if they ever took it over, was not necessarily the way to induce in American bosoms a feeling of generosity toward these supposed outlaws and butchers.

It appears, further, that some members of Congress are viewing aid to North Vietnam in the context of the larger congressional struggle with Nixon over the power of the purse. Thus, in a committee hearing the other day Sen. Clifford Case of New Jersey went out of his way to seek a commitment from Secretary of State Rogers that the administration would not bypass Congress and divert funds to Hanoi from other programs. Rogers said honestly enough that he wasn't prepared to rule out that possibility, although he promised ample congressional consultation on the matter.

## Case drafts opposing legislation

Now Case is working on a draft legisla-

tion to prevent Nixon from starting up an aid program without congressional approval — although since Nixon asserts the constitutional power both to impound appropriated funds and to divert to his own purposes

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funds appropriated for other programs, the real question is whether there is any legislative means of stopping him.

Another problem for the administration in seeking its North Vietnamese aid package is the general disillusionment in Congress — which never did pass last year's aid bill — with foreign aid, its practical results in economic development as well as its potential for entangling the United States in foreign commitments.

## The root problem

At root, of course, the problem is that it is hard for the American people almost overnight to stop viewing the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong as "the enemy" — and if the cease-fire continues to be unsettled and uncertain, that difficulty will continue. No comparable situation comes readily to mind. North Korea was not offered aid in the 1950s. The Marshall Plan for Europe came several years after World War II and was offered mainly to allies and in no small part as a barrier against communism — which made it salable at home.

But when Nixon was bombing Hanoi at Christmas, can he expect public support by, say, Easter for rebuilding what the bombs destroyed? It won't be easy, but somehow he will have to manage it. Not only is the commitment to reconstruction one of the strongest outstanding American pledges of the whole Indochina involvement; it is also embodied in the formal documents by which the cease-fire was brought about in January. This may not be binding on Congress but those who wanted the war ended — McGovern and Case, for example — can hardly turn their backs on the instrument by which it was done.

## Rogers voices confidence

Rogers has expressed confidence that in the end Congress will do the "responsible" thing and fund an aid program for Indochina — in which the exact sums going into North Vietnam no doubt will be conveniently obscured. Probably Congress will, since the commitment is so plain and was made by the Presidents, one of each party. For his part, Nixon, having made the problem so much more acute, might now ease it somewhat by appealing on television to those whose support for the war he used to whip up so adeptly.