

## Two-Year Extension

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# Assassination Probe Upheld

### Washington

A divided House voted yesterday to give its beleaguered assassinations committee two more years to probe the murders of President John Kennedy and civil rights leader Martin Luther King.

The final vote on continuing the committee, which has been in hot water since the first day of the current legislative session, was 230 to 181. Without the approval, the committee would have died at midnight today.

Committee Chairman Louis Stokes (em-Ohio) said after the vote he believed the approval came only because the committee's controversial chief counsel, Richard Sprague, resigned earlier in the day in an effort to save the investigation.

Stokes said an informal survey Tuesday indicated the committee would lose its battle to stay alive by 20 votes if Sprague had remained.

The final vote came after opponents of the committee tried to get the House to hold a rare secret session to hear evidence the committee has uncovered. The ma-

neuver failed 226 to 185 after Stokes said the committee feared information such as the names of witnesses the committee had talked to or wants to talk to would leak out and put their lives in danger.

The Senate occasionally holds secret sessions, but House staffers said the last time the House held such a meeting was in the 1880s.

The vote to extend the commit-

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committee were not reconstituted because the American people would not be able to have these questions about the assassinations answered," said Stokes during the debate.

But Representative B. F. Sisk (em-Calif.) told the House he had attended one of the committee's secret sessions and, "The truth is the only thing I heard was that you have evidence that X overheard Y and Z say something."

And Representative Harold

tee's life came after a sharp debate in which opponents claimed the committee had nothing but hearsay evidence. Supporters of the panel argued that terminating the committee at this point would convince the American public that a coverup was going on.

"It would be a tragedy if this

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Sawyer (Rep-Mich.) said he was convinced the House probe could do nothing but "attract a lot of kooks" because of its public nature.

Stokes, however, argued that the committee is pursuing new leads and has new witnesses in both investigations. He also said the strife that has plagued the panel is now behind it.

Stokes later told reporters that George De Mohrenschildt, who apparently committed suicide in Florida Tuesday, "was one of the crucial witnesses." He declined to elaborate.

De Mohrenschildt was found fatally shot in an oceanfront mansion near Palm Beach.

The assassinations committee accepted Sprague's resignation by an 11-to-1 vote at a meeting hours before the decisive House vote. Several committee members bitterly accused former committee chairman Henry Gonzalez of what they called smear tactics and character assassination to drive Sprague out.

Gonzalez declined immediate comment.

Associated Press