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Let's Not Surrender to the Enemy

Would the American people approve of an action by Congress ordering the armed services to run up a white flag in Vietnam and announce that they are yielding to the enemy as of Dec. 31, 1971?

This is virtually what 17 senators are proposing in the form of legislation which would prohibit the use of any funds to maintain American forces in Vietnam after the end of this year. Sen. George S. McGovern, D-S.D., who is openly seeking the presidential nomination of his party for the next campaign, is leading the movement. Similar legislation was defeated in September in the Senate by a vote of 55 to 39.

The amazing thing is that as many as 39 senators were willing to tell the North Vietnamese, in effect, that they need make no concessions in the peace talks, as the United States is soon to get completely out of Vietnam anyway.

America has sought valiantly to protect the right of self-determination for the people of South Vietnam. The Hanoi government — which has the backing of Red China and the Soviet Union — has not entered into any meaningful negotiations at Paris and is merely waiting for the day when America withdraws. The expectation by the Communists is that they then can take over South Vietnam and that they can expand previous attempts to infiltrate or seize other countries in Southeast Asia in behalf of the Communist cause.

As long as the United States

has stood up against them, the Communists have shown a hesitancy to move into other nations in Southeast Asia on a large scale. But, with so many U.S. senators publicizing their opposition to American policy, it may well be wondered whether all the effort made to defend small nations now will be of any avail.

President Nixon repeatedly has said that the United States wants to support South Vietnam and give it military help in the coming years. Indeed, the Vietnamization program already has proceeded to a point where South Vietnam has more than a million men in an organized force.

The United States will, of course, be urged not to be indifferent to any action taken by Hanoi against South Vietnam once the American armed forces are almost completely brought home. But the attitude of the large number of senators backing the McGovern proposal is discouraging because it indicates to the people of Southeast Asia that our government is about to reverse policies and will not come to the assistance of any of the nations, as pledged in the Southeast Asia treaty.

The administration, while carrying out its program of withdrawal over the next year or two, does not intend to take all troops from Vietnam but plans to keep about 50,000 men there, just as has been done in Korea. This would be a symbol of American concern, and the presence of our forces would warn the Communists that the

United States had not lost interest in Southeast Asia.

Also, the Department of Defense would be in a position to give advice and help constantly to the South Vietnamese army and guide its strategy in resisting moves that are certain to be made by the North Vietnamese. If, on the other hand, all Americans were taken out by the end of 1971 as a result of congressional action which refuses further funds for the maintenance of any military units in South Vietnam, it might be impossible for the United States to keep any residuary forces there.

Even more serious is the impact that a forced withdrawal of all our troops on a fixed date would have on American foreign policy not only in Asia but in Europe and Latin America as well. A question would be raised whether the United States is going to continue the course it heretofore has pursued in helping nations throughout the world when they have requested aid. This could impair confidence in the future of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and cause new problems in Europe.

Although the legislative proposal may be defeated, damage will have been done. The mere fact that a substantial number of senators seek to bring about what amounts to a surrender to the enemy by the United States, after it has fought a war that involved many sacrifices, will inflict on the prestige of this country abroad the worst blow it has received in recent years.