

Carter Deploys 'Topsy' O'Neill

Who's Koreagating Whom

House Speaker Tip "Topsy" O'Neill (D-Mass) has just seized control of the highly explosive Congressional "Koreagate" scandal, vowing to fully pursue trumped-up charges that over 100 Congressmen have received illegal contributions from the South Korean government. O'Neill's power grab — which de facto robs the traditionalist-dominated House Ethics Committee of its mandated authority to investigate the Korea-Congress link — was ordered by the beleaguered Carter Administration for two principal reasons: to blackmail a reluctant Congress into enacting the Carter no-energy program in the three weeks remaining before the August recess; and to put the lid on moves by Republican and other Carter foes to judo the Korean brouhaha against the rancid Administration itself, and particularly the Attorney General Griffin Bell.

Tip O'Neill — an old Boston crony of the corrupt Kennedy machine — emerged as the Koreagate "Enforcer" just a few days after he put his colleagues under lock and key until the Administration's energy package is passed. Amid vociferous demands by Common Cause, the *New York Times* and other Trilateral Commission mouthpieces that the investigation be taken out of the hands of Rep. John Flynt (D-Ga.), the conservative chairman of the Ethics Committee, O'Neill declared yesterday that he would personally oversee an "aggressive, independent" inquiry. The House Speaker said his first task would be to find a person of "impeccable reputation" to replace Phillip Lacovara, the former chief investigator for the Ethics Committee, whose resignation last week deliberately triggered the latest escalation of the Koreagate scenario. Late July 20, O'Neill announced that Leon Jaworski, the former Special Watergate Prosecutor, has agreed to take the job.

O'Neill has promised that the new chief investigator will be granted extraordinary powers. A "memorandum of understanding" worked out between Jaworski and the Ethics Committee July 21 provides Jaworski with "full and complete independence in the fact-finding process of the investigation." The Committee also promised Jaworski that he can only be fired by the full House and that it would automatically comply with his requests for subpoenas and any other "compulsory process" he decides to use. The House Speaker has backed this up with his own assurances that he will personally lean on

anyone impeding the investigation. "If he runs into any difficulty," threatened O'Neill, widely rumored to be a heavy drinker, "I would personally move in such a manner to straighten it out."

Although Jaworski has vowed that "If I find a crook involved in this matter, I want to bring him out and I want the public to know about it" no matter what party he belongs to, there are signs already that Jaworski himself may be implicated in the Korean connection. House Ethics Committee member Bruce Capute (R-NY) yesterday raised the possibility that Jaworski's law firm may have had dealings with agricultural interests that do business with South Korea.

Congressional sources around O'Neill are freely admitting that the House Speaker's power grab is designed at circumventing the Ethics Committee.

Koreagate into Cartergate?

O'Neill's Administration-ordered intervention into the Koreagate situation is intersecting a general atmosphere in Washington which one highly informed observer characterized as "reeking of Cartergate." This source reported that a whole wave of scandals is about to descend on Carter's brainless head involving improper campaign financing, the near-bankruptcy of Office of Management and Budget director and Carter "good ole' boy" Bert Lance's Georgia bank, and charges that Attorney General Bell is conducting a cover-up of the Korea scandal. The Republican Party has officially called for the appointment of a Special Prosecutor, charging the Justice Department with stonewalling.

In fact, the possibility that the Korean affair might get out of control and bring down the Administration has several Carter cronies terrorized. An aide to one leading Democratic Senator raged against the Republicans' call for a Special Prosecutor in an interview yesterday, charging that they are intent on "going after Bell and others in Justice and maybe even higher" targets in the Administration.

Carter, meanwhile, has opened himself up fully to such a judo operation. In a letter to the Republican Congressional leadership released July 18, the President turned down their demand for a Special Prosecutor on the grounds that since no one in his Administration was implicated, the Justice Department need not be bypassed.