

Congress Cannot Evade Responsibility To Move To Impeach Cheney

by Nancy Spannaus

As the U.S. Senate spent the week negotiating over the shape of a bipartisan resolution rejecting the Bush Administration's expansion of the war, Vice President Dick Cheney, and his puppet George Bush, made it perfectly clear, once again, that they intend to go ahead with the deployment, no matter what protests are raised. The bottom line, as Lyndon LaRouche has stressed, is that, to avoid catastrophe, the Congress must move immediately for impeachment, starting with Cheney.

There are many in Congress who are hoping against hope that they will not have to take such action, because they fear that it might impair their careers. Perhaps they think that the Libby trial, which has Cheney in the crosshairs, will do the job. But that is wishful thinking. Although the possibility of Cheney getting caught in a perjury trap exists, it would be folly to depend on that.

On the other hand, the Congress has a wealth of documentation, starting with the Vice President's perpetration of fraud against the Presidency on the matter of Iraqi intelligence, and including his explicit violation of Federal laws, which fall within the range of impeachable offenses. A groundswell within, and outside, the Congress for action against the "in your face" Vice President, is the only acceptable pathway toward removing him from office.

The Senate Resolution

Both Bush and Cheney have declared repeatedly that they will not pay heed to any Congressional expression of disapproval of their "surge" plan. Yet those statements didn't prevent the Vice President from trying to strongarm the Republican Senators during a meeting on Jan. 30, into backing the Administration's policy. He spurred "raucous debate," according to the *Washington Post*, but failed.

Instead, the authors of the two bipartisan resolutions before the Senate—Biden/Hagel and Warner/Nelson—negotiated a unified resolution, based on that put forward by the Senate's "Mr. Military," former Navy Secretary John Warner (R-Va.). The revised resolution, co-sponsored by Democratic Armed Services Committee head Carl Levin (Mich.), which has not yet been made public, still opposes the troop increase, and drops an earlier provision by Warner suggesting support for some additional troops. While some Democratic Senators have disavowed the compromise, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (Nev.) has said that the Senate will begin debate

on the resolution the week of Feb. 5, and Sen. Joe Biden (D-Del.), who endorsed the major Democratic resolution, has indicated support of the new draft.

While it is considered highly likely that the Warner Resolution would pass, that would only be the first step.

Still pending, is Senate action to prevent the Administration from launching war against Iran, despite many Senators having raised the question of the massive military deployment of U.S. forces to the area. Sen. Jim Webb (D-Va.) has released a letter which he sent Jan. 30 to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, demanding that she answer his question from Jan. 11, namely: "Is it the position of this administration that it possesses the authority to take unilateral action against Iran, in the absence of a direct threat, without Congressional approval?" Rice had promised a written answer to Webb's oral query.

The only other action taken so far by the Senate on Iran, comes from Sen. Robert Byrd (D-W.V.), whose S.R. 39 insists that the President seek and receive the approval of Congress before American troops are committed to any new war. LaRouche has proposed a vital amendment: Any such resolution should state explicitly that a violation of this law would be an impeachable offense.

Exploring Other Options

Meanwhile, the Senate held two other hearings the week of Jan. 29 on how to deal with the Administration's unconstitutional and disastrous conduct of the Iraq War.

On Jan. 30, the Senate Judiciary Committee held a hearing, chaired by Sen. Russ Feingold (D-Wisc.), on whether or not Congress has the Constitutional authority to end the war. Five legal scholars, including the Clinton Administration's Solicitor General, Walter Dellinger, testified, four of whom agreed that Congress does have the authority to limit the size, scope, and duration of military actions. The possibility of achieving this objective by revisiting the October 2002 Iraq War resolution was raised, and endorsed by Dellinger, who noted that the language of that resolution was a virtual blank check for the President.

On Jan. 31, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee convened the first of another series of hearings which featured testimony by former Secretaries of State and National Security Advisors, on the situation in Iraq and the President's



U.S. Marine Corps/Lance Cpl. Brian A. Jaques

Sen. John Warner, shown here greeting U.S. Marines at a base in Iraq in September 2005, is continuing his tradition of defending the military, by pushing his bipartisan resolution against the Cheney-Bush “surge” in Iraq.

“plan.” Former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright was joined by former National Security Advisors James Baker III, Brent Scowcroft, and Zbigniew Brzezinski in addressing the committee. Albright, in particular, expressed her concern about the buildup against Iran, while Brzezinski repeatedly attacked the Administration for having destroyed Iraq. Brzezinski also strongly urged every possible Congressional action to get out of Iraq, and to stop possible military action against Iran.

Both Baker and Scowcroft stuck to their longstanding commitment for the Administration to talk with Iran and Syria, as expressed in the Baker-Hamilton Commission report, but Scowcroft was uncharacteristically at pains to avoid attacking the Administration.

Action From the House?

In the House of Representatives, hearings to examine the unconstitutional activity of the Administration began the week of Jan. 29 in the Judiciary Committee, where any bill of impeachment has to originate. Rep. John Conyers (D-Mich.), the new Committee chairman, opened Jan. 31 hearings on the question of President’s use of signing statements, with a powerful statement, which, although it concentrated on President Bush, not his Svengali Cheney, took direct aim at violations of the Constitution:

“Many have joined me in expressing concern about the growing abuse of power within the Executive Branch. This President has tried to take unto himself absolute authority on issues such as surveillance, privacy, torture, enemy combatants, and rendition. Today we are taking up the very important item of Presidential signing statements, which supposedly give him the power to ignore duly enacted laws he has negoti-

ated with Congress and signed into law.

“All too often, the Administration has engaged in these practices under a veil of secrecy. This is a constitutional issue that no self-respecting federal legislature should tolerate. And so, we announce that out of this oversight hearing we will today begin an investigation of the specific use and abuse of presidential signing statements.

“In particular, I intend to ask the Administration to identify each and every statutory provision they have not agreed with in signing statements, and to specify precisely what they have done as a result. For example, if the President claims he is exempt from the McCain Amendment ban on torture, I want to know whether and where he has permitted it. And we want to know what has he done to carry out his claims to be exempt from many other laws, such as oversight and reporting requirements under the PATRIOT Act, numerous affirmative action obligations, and the require-

ment that government obtain a search warrant before opening the mail of American citizens. . . .

“We are talking here about systematic, extra-constitutional conduct by the White House. That conduct threatens to deprive the American people of one of the basic rights of any democracy—the right to elect representatives who determine what the law is, subject only to the President’s veto. That does not mean having a President sign those laws, but then say that he is free to carry them out or not, as only he sees fit.”

Oversight on the Administration’s fraud and abuse in Iraq will also soon begin in the House, as Congressman Henry Waxman (D-Calif.) opens hearings on Feb. 6 on the conduct of contractors such as Dick Cheney’s Halliburton.

The Congressional Progressive Caucus, one of the largest in the House, also held a hearing, dedicated to the dangers of war against Iran. A panel of witnesses was assembled to present diplomacy as an alternative to the preemptive military action which is currently being brazenly prepared. Col. Sam Gardiner (ret.) described how every step the Bush Administration is taking, from aircraft carrier deployments to propaganda, is geared to preparing for war. Dr. Trita Parsi, president of the National Iranian American Council, concurred with Gardiner, and urged Congress to take up the diplomatic route, if the Administration does not. Dr. Paul Pillar, a former CIA officer, also urged Congressional diplomacy.

Rep. Barbara Lee (D-Calif.) moved on Jan. 31 to introduce legislation to stop a preemptive attack on Iran—with language very similar to Senator Byrd’s.

But, if asked whether Cheney and Bush will listen to their protests, any sane Congressman would say “no.” The only alternative is a drive to impeach, *now*.