

Congress Plans Escalation of Fight Against Cheney's War Plans

by Nancy Spannaus

Vice President Cheney's success on Feb. 5 in preventing a vote on the nonpartisan Warner-Levin resolution against the Bush Administration's plan for escalation in Iraq, has slowed down action in the U.S. Senate, but Congress as a whole is preparing an escalation of its own, against Administration war plans. While the Senate's approximate 50-50 split makes it very vulnerable to Cheney's pressure, and many of the Senators are too caught up in their desire to run for President, the strong Democratic majority in the House of Representatives provides a much more fortuitous environment for moves against the Bush-Cheney insanity.

The day after the Republicans whipped all but two of their members into line to prevent a debate on the Warner-Levin resolution, Democratic House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (Md.) announced that the House of Representatives would take up a resolution disapproving the surge the following week. Hoyer declared that every one of the 435 members of the House would be given five minutes to speak to the issue—in effect, forcing every Member to put him or herself on record for the American people. The debate is expected to last three days, after which there will be a vote.

Meanwhile, in the Senate, Majority Leader Harry Reid on Feb. 7 accused the Republican leadership of having stalled the debate on the war resolutions in order to “allow the President to move the troops over there, making it more difficult to stop it.” On Feb. 8, a group of seven Republican Senators sent a letter to the Democratic and Republican leadership, saying, “We respectfully advise you, our leaders, that we intend to take S. Con. Res. 7 and offer it, where possible, under the Standing Rules of the Senate, to bills coming before the Senate.” Besides John Warner (Va.), the signators are Chuck Hagel (Neb.), Norm Coleman (Wisc.), George Voinovich (Ohio), Susan Collins and Olympia Snowe (Me.), and Gordon Smith (Ore.). They write, “Monday's procedural vote should not be interpreted as any lessening of our resolve to go forward advocating the concepts of S. Con. Res. 7.” The letter ends, “The current stalemate is unacceptable to us and to the people of this country.”

Despite their efforts to fudge their capitulation to Cheney, in going along with the cloture vote that stopped debate, sources close to the Senate Republican leadership reported

to *EIR* that Senate Republicans have come under massive pressure from their constituents, who were furious at what they saw as a sell-out. Senator Warner, according to the sources, came under particularly harsh attack for his centrist capitulation.

The Senate's cave-in further underscores that the key test of the Legislative branch exercising its Constitutional responsibility to stop the lunatic Administration war drive will be in the House. “There are too many Presidential candidates already,” Lyndon LaRouche said, “and that is a screw-up factor. There is no competent action which will be initiated from the Senate at this point, but only from the House. Obviously the Senate is an important institution, but it is not presently functional. The leadership will come from the House.”

A Mobilization Under Way

The Senators and Congressmen are under intense pressure to take action, of course. They realize that the electorate spoke against the war in the Nov. 7 election, and that they have to act. In addition, activist groups such as the LaRouche Political Action Committee (LPAC), the LaRouche Youth Movement (LYM), and VoteVets are mobilizing non-stop for Congressional action against the war against Iraq, and a threatened war against Iran. LPAC and the LYM are insisting that the key to success is the removal of Vice President Dick Cheney, the Svengali of the simple-minded (to put it mildly) President Bush, *prior* to any action against Iran.

On Feb. 7, VoteVets, a group of veterans of the war in Iraq, joined with four U.S. Democratic Senators—John Kerry (Mass.), Patty Murray (Wash.), Jack Reed (R.I.), and Sheldon Whitehouse (R.I.)—to demand that the Senate be allowed to vote up or down on the issue of the President's escalation plan. John Soltz, co-founder and chairman of VoteVets, said: “On Monday, the minority of the United States Senate came out forcefully for an escalation of the war in Iraq, clearly ignoring the will of the American people and those of us who fought in Iraq and Afghanistan. Many of those Senators in recent weeks said they were against escalation. Well, talk is cheap, and you don't support our troops with lip service. In the debate on the Iraq war and an escalation, there are only two sides—with the troops or



John Stoltz, chairman of VoteVets, denounced Senators who said they were against Bush's troop "surge" in Iraq, but then voted to close off debate about it. "Talk is cheap," he said. "... In the debate on the Iraq war and an escalation, there are only two sides—with the troops or with the President."

with the President. You cannot have it both ways. Those Senators who have voted against the troops are now on official warning—vote in line with the will of the troops and the will of the people, or pay the price."

VoteVets has launched ad campaigns in the states of several Senators around the theme: "Support the Troops: Stop the Escalation." They were also present at the Feb. 3-4 Democratic retreat, where they spoke to the lawmakers.

VoteVets, like other voices of the military, is also riveted to the idea of preventing the *next* war that Cheney is planning, specifically an attack on Iran. When asked by *EIR* at the press conference, about the fact that the "surge" of troops to Iraq was actually intended to be preparation for hitting Iran, the VoteVets spokesman emphatically agreed.

Oversight Begins

Meanwhile, the House of Representatives, in particular, has taken up its Constitutional responsibility for oversight hearings on the Administration's conduct, a responsibility which the previous Republican-dominated Congresses had eliminated for 12 years. During the week of Jan. 29, the most significant one was held by Judiciary Committee Chairman John Conyers, on President Bush's record of "signing statements," the practice by which the President signs a bill passed

by Congress, but issues a statement saying he'll interpret it the way he wants. (The Judiciary Committee is the committee which would be responsible for initiating impeachment proceedings.)

Then, the week of Feb. 5, Rep. Henry Waxman (D-Calif.) held three days of hearings on the question of private contractor abuse in Iraq, while the House Foreign Affairs Committee, chaired by Tom Lantos (D-Calif.), brought in Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to be grilled on the Administration's foreign policy. Waxman's first hearing heard explosive testimony from former Coalition Provisional Authority head Paul Bremer on his malfeasance, including \$8.8 billion that was unaccounted for. All Bremer would say is that he had given the money to the Iraqi Finance Minister, a man in whom he had great trust.

LaRouche commented that the testimony in this hearing shows incredible corruption rampant in the Bush Administration's handling of the surrender in Iraq. "We had a manageable situation at the point of surrender, and this kind of thing typifies the fact that under the Bush Administration, a potentially manageable situation, post-surrender, was turned into the kind of chaos and death which we have lived through since that time."

The highpoint of the Foreign Relations Committee hearing Feb. 7 was a question by Rep. Ron Paul (R-Tex.), who asked, "Can you state clearly that we are not going to engage in a preemptive attack on Iran?" Barely keeping her composure, Rice responded that "our goal is not to attack Iran," but to be ready to respond to Iran's actions, because "the world knows that Iran wants nuclear weapons." Paul told Rice that allegations against Iran come from the same people who misdirected the United States on WMD in Iraq.

Stopping War Against Iran

Thanks to LaRouche's publications, and some military leaders, it is now common knowledge on Capitol Hill that the President's "surge" policy is simply a prepositioning for a U.S. (or Israeli) attack on Iran. The implications of such an insane move are terrifying many Congressmen, even though they have not yet acted.

There are, however, four resolutions that have already been introduced which would make explicit that the President does not have the power to attack Iran, except after explicit authorization by the Congress. All have been taken on Constitutional grounds: that it is the Congress that has the right to declare war, not the President.

The weakness of the otherwise commendable actions is that they do nothing to *preempt* the attack on Iran that the Administration is already intent on launching. The fact that Cheney is *intent* on a war with Iran, and is prepared to carry out provocations to insure that the war occurs, in itself, represents clear grounds for impeachment—especially when piled on the scores of "high crimes and misdemeanors" that he and Bush have already committed.