



NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES

(Formerly American Municipal Association)

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THE 90TH CONGRESS

The Tone - go slow

A cautious and conciliatory President Johnson presented his fifth State of the Union message to Congress Tuesday night. The new Congress had already indicated its mood by denying one of its members a seat and by selecting some conservatives for leadership positions.

Congress responded quickly to the mild "Guns and Butter" Administration program. In the face of a proposal to raise income taxes (less than enough to balance the budget) prevailing Congressional attitude seemed to favor reducing the already minimal funding of many domestic programs. The recommended 6% income surtax received polite support at best.

Nevertheless, cities have reason to be cautiously optimistic. While neither the President's message nor the Congressional response represented a strong conviction that there is urgency in attacking the obvious "Crisis of the Cities," the President did state his support of a number of essential federal-urban programs.

The Mission - retreat and regroup

As lawmakers returned to Washington they were admonished by Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield not to anticipate many new Administration proposals but to concentrate on a "major re-examination" of existing programs. This followed on the heels of demands by Democratic Governors to slow the pace set by the 89th Congress.

The President agreed. As the first of his four steps "to carry forward our progress" the President said, "We must see to it that these new programs work effectively.... Every program will be thoroughly evaluated. Grant-in-aid programs will be improved and simplified...."

The President stated a frequently heard complaint that could further delay additional federal commitments to meet urban area needs.

Each State, county and city needs to examine its capacity for government in today's world. Some will need to reorganize and reshape their methods of administration--as we are doing. Others will need to revise their constitutions and their laws to bring them up to date--as we are doing. Above all, we must find ways in which the multitudes of small jurisdictions can be brought together more efficiently.

The Commitment - "to continue to build a better America"

The President rededicated the Administration to the support of a number of programs of primary interest to cities:

"I recommend we intensify our efforts to give the poor a chance to join

(over)

the Nation's progress....I urge special methods and special funds to reach Americans trapped in the ghettos of our cities - and through Head Start to reach out to our young children."

"We should transform our decaying slums into places of decency through the landmark Model Cities Program. I intend to seek for this effort the full amount Congress authorized last year."

"We should call upon the genius of private industry and the most advanced technology to help rebuild our cities."

"We should vastly expand the fight for clean air with a total attack on pollution at its source..."

"We should carry to every corner of the Nation our campaign for a Beautiful America - creating more parks, more seashores, and more open spaces..."

The Safe Streets and Crime Control Act of 1967 - the one major new proposal

In contrast to the rhetorical treatment of other urban problems and programs, the President spelled out details of an "allout effort to attack crime." The President proposed federal grants to state and local communities of

-90% of the cost of developing state and local plans to combat crime,

-60% of the cost of training new tactical units, developing instant communications and special alarm systems, and introducing the latest equipment and techniques to combat crime,

-50% of the cost of crime laboratories and police academy-type centers to assure the best-trained equipped police, and

"We will recommend new methods to prevent juvenile delinquents from becoming adult delinquents. We will seek new partnerships with States and cities to deal with the narcotics problem."

Congressional Leadership Shifts

In the Senate, conservative Robert C. Byrd (D-W.Va.) defeated Pennsylvania liberal Joseph S. Clarke by a vote of 35-28 for the position of Secretary of the Senate Democratic Conference, the third-ranking Democratic leadership position in the Senate.

California's conservative junior Senator, George Murphy, defeated Hugh Scott, Pennsylvania moderate, for chairmanship of the Republican Senatorial Campaign Committee.

The death of Rep. John E. Fogarty (D-R.I.) on the opening day represents a severe blow to supporters of health legislation. Fogarty has been chairman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health, Education and Welfare.

Rep. Carl D. Perkins (D-Ky.) succeeds Adam Clayton Powell (D-N.Y.) as chairman of the House Education and Labor Committee. Perkins has been a strong supporter of Administration legislation during the 89th Congress.

Rules - another debate

The Senate started its work this week with its annual debate over amending Rule 22, the cloture procedure for ending filibusters. The Rule is not likely to be altered this year. Debate will continue into next week.

House leadership lost an opening day skirmish when the House refused to retain the 21-day rule adopted by the 89th Congress. That rule permits the Speaker to call upon a legislative committee to call up a bill favorably reported if the bill had not been considered by the House Rules Committee with 21 days. This could result in a showdown or blocking of key Administration legislation. House leaders have another ace to play -- the Rules Committee may have two liberals added to its membership to outvote its current conservative alignment headed by its new chairman William M. Colmer (D-Miss.). Colmer replaced Howard W. Smith (D-Va.) who was not returned to Congress.

Coming Up

The Senate Subcommittee on Intergovernmental Relations (Muskie, Chm.) will resume hearings on the effectiveness of grant-in-aid programs. Governors will appear the last week in January. Local government spokesmen will testify February 6, 7 and 9.

House Ways and Means Committee (Mills, Chm.) will open its activity with consideration of Social Security Amendments. It will not get to the proposed income tax increase until early April.

President's budget message is expected to reach Congress about January 24. Details of State of the Union recommendations should start flowing to the Congress about the same time.

Senate Subcommittee on Air and Water Pollution (Muskie, Chm.) will hold hearings on automotive air pollution during February in Los Angeles, Denver, and Detroit. Other hearings in New York and Washington and other cities will be scheduled later.