

U.S. Senate debates gay housing

WASHINGTON (UPI) — The Senate Appropriations Committee, skirting the issue itself, yesterday set up a conference committee battle over the rights of homosexuals and unmarried couples by changing two words in a House-passed housing bill.

At issue: an amendment the House wrote into the measure which would forbid the use of federal money to carry out a new regulation giving homosexuals and unmarried couples equal access to public housing with married people.

After some back-and-forth debating, members of the Senate panel agreed not to vote on the amendment itself. It merely dropped the word "funds" from the measure and changed "appropriated" to "appropriations" — then approved the full measure which carries \$67.5 billion to finance HUD and other agencies next fiscal year.

Just that little difference assures the matter must be taken up by House-Senate conferees for a compromise agreement because the wording in the two bills is different.

There could be a fight even before that on the Senate floor, since there is a possibility some members will push for even stronger restrictions against homosexuals and unmarried couples.

At the finance committee session, Sen. William Proxmire, D-Wis., sought adoption of the House's "anti-gay" language, arguing there is a waiting list for public housing and preference should be given to the traditional wife-husband "stable family relationships."

"We certainly don't want to say that homosexuals have equal access with families to public housing," Proxmire said. And Sen. Lawton Chiles, D-Fla., whose state gained national

attention when Anita Bryant fought successfully for repeal of a "gay rights" ordinance in Dade County, said the House amendment would not "deny gay rights" to homosexuals or persons living out of wedlock.

The question, Chiles said, "is as a matter of public policy whether we should assist them with subsidized housing."

Sen. Lowell Weicker, R-Conn., arguing that the amendment posed "some very deep constitutional questions," urged the committee to kill it. When Proxmire persisted, Weicker proposed the two-word language change and the panel adopted this approach without objection.

He said later the issue deserves "a quiet thoughtful discussion" and his amendment "is a technical change to permit that kind of discussion rather than some knee jerk reaction to a referendum in Florida."

Anti-abortionists want abortion funding cut

WASHINGTON (AP) — Anti-abortion forces asked the Supreme Court yesterday to let Congress immediately end all federal spending for abortions not needed to save the lives of mothers.

Attorneys seeking the funding cut-off said it would be in line with the high court's rulings Monday that states are not legally obligated to pay for the elective abortions of poor women.

While those decisions did not discuss federal funding, the same rationale is expected to apply.

Supreme Court action could come very soon on the request, which was made by two congressmen and others who oppose abortion-on-demand.

Their lawyers asked the court to set aside temporarily a ruling last October by a federal judge in Brooklyn, N.Y., that blocked enforcement of a law that would have ended federal funding of most abortions.

Congress passed the so-called Hyde amendment as part of an appropriations bill

for the Departments of Labor, and Health, Education and Welfare.

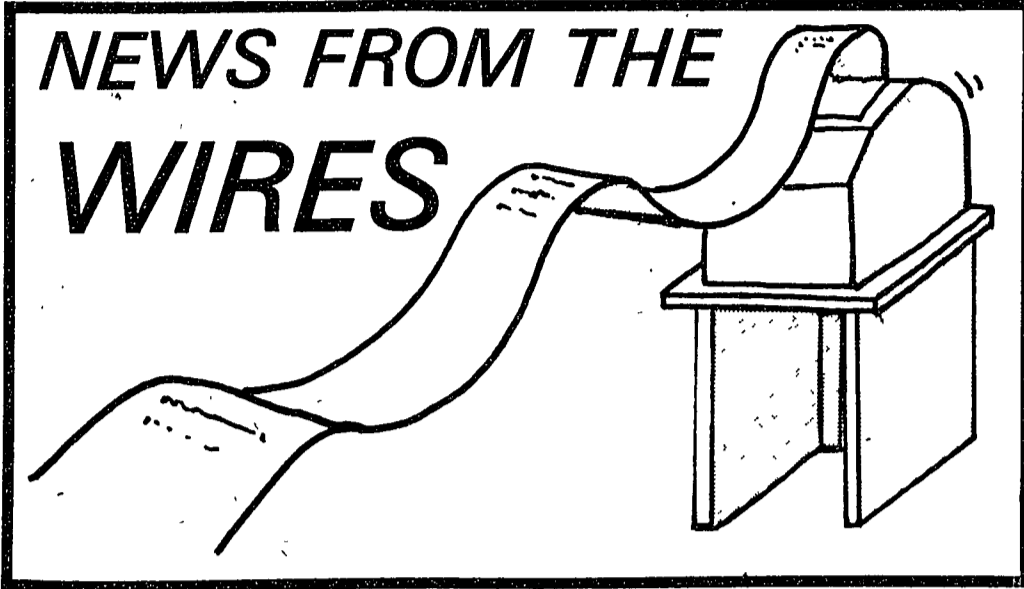
U.S. District Judge John Dooling ruled in a suit filed against the measure by a New York woman and Planned Parenthood of New York that the Hyde amendment was unconstitutional because it treated poor women unequally.

The judge said the amendment effectively took away abortion as an alternative to childbearing for poor women while wealthier women still had the alternative.

Dooling's decision was appealed by HEW officials and, separately, by Rep. Henry Hyde, R-Ill., the author of the amendment, Sen. Jesse Helms, R-S.C., former Sen. James Buckley of New York and Isabella Pernicone, a private citizen.

Both those appeals are pending before the Supreme Court, which has not yet decided to hear either.

The anti-abortion forces want the court to let last year's Hyde amendment take effect while Dooling's ruling is being appealed.



Blacks march on police

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa (UPI) — Police yesterday turned back more than 200 black students who were marching on a police station near Pretoria to demand the release of black leaders arrested during last week's racial unrest.

Black police in riot gear stood by an armored "Hippo" personnel carrier with batons and teargas grenades at the ready as senior students mobilized children from lower grades to advance on the Altridgville station.

However, the students withdrew to nearby Hofmeyr High School, closed the gates and jeered at police who soon left the scene without incident, police said.

The episode came six days after black student leaders called for a period of mourning to commemorate the deaths of 618 blacks during six months of racial rioting which began June 16, 1976, with the killings of two black children in the Soweto ghetto outside Johannesburg.

School attendance in the black townships throughout South Africa increased yesterday, a survey showed, but has not reached pre-June 16 levels.

Students at Soweto's Orlando High School continued a boycott of classes which began last Thursday to protest the detention of Sechaba "Dan" Montsitsi, leader of the Soweto Students Representative Council.

FDA restriction approved

Saccharin ban blocked

WASHINGTON (UPI) — The House voted yesterday to block for at least one year the Food and Drug Administration's proposed ban on saccharin.

Rejecting arguments the move was unwise because of new evidence linking the artificial sweetener with cancer, the House approved a standing vote on an amendment which would forbid the FDA from using federal money to promulgate or enforce the ban through Sept. 30, 1978.

The provision was attached to a measure carrying \$12.7 billion to fund the Agriculture Department and related agencies for the new fiscal year starting Oct. 1.

The House then approved the overall bill 380 to 35, and sent it to the Senate.

The amendment was sponsored by Reps. Harold Volkmer, D-Mo., and Jamie Whitten, D-Miss.

FDA stirred a storm of criticism in proposing to outlaw use of saccharin in the manufacture of foods and beverages on the basis of Canadian tests showing the substance produced cancer in rats.

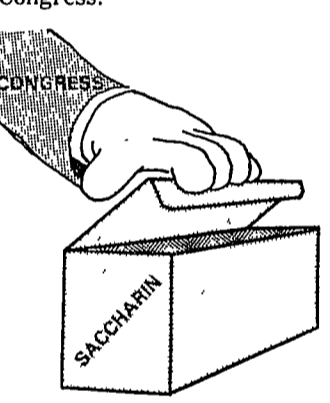
The agency had closed out its period for public comment on June 14, and had hoped to put the ban into effect by late August.

But new scientific evidence surfaced during the weekend

indicating saccharin caused bladder cancer in human males, so the FDA reopened the comment period for an additional two months.

Thus the ban probably could not go into effect before September.

Whitten acknowledged the FDA still could rush the ban through before the beginning of the new fiscal year on Oct. 1, but said such action was unlikely since it would clearly contradict the intent of Congress.



his health subcommittee could hold hearings on a bill ordering an 18-month delay in the saccharin ban, including the new evidence of human cancer.

"We don't want the House members in a position of sticking their necks out before they know what's going on," said Rogers.

Rep. L. H. Fountain, D-N.C., said he understood why some lawmakers would vote for the amendment "from a purely political point of view" because of pressure "from their saccharin-loving constituents."

"But it would be a serious mistake if we say to the FDA we in the Congress are the scientists of this country, and we're simply going to reverse you on a political vote," Fountain argued.

The bill also includes \$1 million for further tests on saccharin's cancer-causing potential with a mandate that the FDA use dosage levels closer to the actual amount likely to be consumed by humans.

Whitten said if definite proof is found in the next year that saccharin causes cancer in humans, Congress could rescind its action and allow the ban to go into effect.

Up until the FDA announced plans to ban it, saccharin was the only artificial sweetener which could legally be used in diet foods.

Proponents of the amendment argued the Canadian tests were not sufficient to prompt a ban because such large concentrations of the sweetener were used. But opponents said the new evidence of a human cancer risk made the Volkmer-Whitten move "a serious mistake."

Rep. Paul Rogers, D-Fla., urged the House to wait until

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Korean bribe probe persists

WASHINGTON (UPI) — The wife of Louisiana Gov. Elwin Edwards testified in secret yesterday before congressional investigators probing allegations of South Korean bribery on Capitol Hill.

Emerging from her session with investigators of the House Ethics Committee, Elaine Edwards laughed off reporters' questions as to why she did not tell her husband when Tongsun Park, alleged paymaster of the South Korean influence peddling effort, gave her \$10,000 in cash in 1971.

"Oh come on now," she said with a chuckle in declining to answer that question.

"Nothing more has transpired since the last time we talked about Tongsun Park, therefore I have nothing more to say than I did the last time."

Mrs. Edwards, whose husband was formerly in Congress, was questioned on the eve of public testimony before another congressional committee by Kim Hyung Wook — a former Korean CIA director who has named Park as a KCIA agent.

His appearance today will mark the first public testimony by a witness in the congressional probes of covert Korean activity in the United States.

The Ethics Committee is investigating allegations that Park, a wealthy businessman formerly based in Washington, ran a covert South Korean effort to influence U.S. military and commercial policy, plying members of Congress with cash, gifts and favors in the early 1970s. Park has left the country.

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