

buy from. The American side contended that it was in the Soviets' own interest to provide the data because if they were going to need wheat, say, the United States needed to know how much to plant. (With the export reporting system instituted last June, the Russians will not be able to pull off another wheat deal.) In what was a definite concession, the Russians agreed to provide production data. Ten categories of data were decided upon at the November meeting. The first category, to be supplied by February 1974, is the "area, yield and production of all crops individually (data for preceding 10 years)." The list the Soviet ministry of agriculture provided last month gives figures for 1913 as well as the last 10 years, presumably to show the collective farms have made some progress, but the data fail to meet the agreed specifications. Some crops, such as tobacco, are not listed at all, while grains are lumped in a single figure

with a separate listing only for wheat.

A more important feature of the economics agreement is a provision for exchange of data about the current Soviet situation and outlook at two annual face-to-face meetings, the first of which is scheduled for April or May. "If the meetings turn out to be limited, the whole thing will be quite disappointing to us. This is what we need to avoid another 1972," says USDA economist Euler.

The secretariat for the exchange agreement is headed on the American side by John M. Beshoar, a former Foreign Service officer now with the USDA. Beshoar sees the agreement as "very advantageous to us—it would be worthwhile even without détente."

Historically the Russians have gone through periods of buying in Western technology, followed by a slamming of the door when they have got what they needed. Beshoar, however, believes that this time the basis exists for a long term

trading relationship between the two countries. The wheat purchase of 1972 was one indication of a Russian decision to put trade with the West above economic autarchy at the expense of the Soviet consumer. But trade will not blossom overnight. "They have just as many reservations about us as a supplier as we have about them as a buyer," he observes. The Soviets have tried, not very successfully, to develop markets in the United States. As trade expands, Beshoar says, an obvious way for them to cover the cost of their imports would be by sale of raw materials, such as Siberian liquid natural gas.

The agriculture pact between the two countries might easily have been either purely cosmetic or of less than equal value to the United States. In fact, the two sides have worked out an exchange that may yield solid advantages for both and, if so, will create a substantial measure of trading interdependence.

—NICHOLAS WADE

Land Use: Rules Panel and Nixon Leave House Bill in Limbo

National land use legislation appeared to be moving toward relatively easy passage when, on 26 February, the House Rules Committee quite unexpectedly voted by a 9-to-4 majority to defer floor action on it indefinitely.

The pending measure, the "Land Use Planning Act of 1974," would encourage state governments to assert themselves in many of the larger matters of land use planning and control. It has been rated by environmentalists, Nixon Administration officials, and prominent legislators such as Senator Henry M. Jackson as deserving a high priority on the congressional agenda.

Whether the Rules Committee can be persuaded to reverse itself and allow a floor vote on this bill is as yet unclear. Whatever happens, the recent committee action is a revealing commentary on the politics of land use and the present state of things on Capitol Hill and at the White House. Consider the following:

● *Absence of leadership by the*

Speaker of the House. The blocking of floor action on the land use measure—legislation already passed by the Senate and overwhelmingly approved (in a form slightly different from the Senate version) by the House Interior Committee—represents still another case of drift and confusion in the Congress. Speaker Carl Albert (D-Okla.) wants the bill brought to the floor. Yet, even though the Democrats on the Rules Committee are in a sense an arm of the majority leadership, six of the ten of them joined in the vote to defer action on the bill indefinitely. The Speaker had never discussed the bill with the committee, nor had the committee's 82-year-old chairman, Ray Madden (D-Ind.), ever consulted him about it.

● *Inconstancy at the White House.* Ever since early 1971, President Nixon has been calling for the enactment of land use legislation in a form quite similar to the pending bill. In fact, on 29 January, a few days after this mea-

sure was reported from the Interior Committee, Secretary of the Interior Rogers C. B. Morton expressed satisfaction with it and asked for its speedy enactment. Despite this, Republican Minority Leader John Rhodes of Arizona was able, on authority from the White House, to inform the Rules Committee that the President preferred a weak substitute measure sponsored by Representative Sam Steiger of Arizona. Rhodes recommended deferral of House action on the pending bill, and, of the four Republican members of the committee who were present, three voted in favor of such action.

● *Potent opposition at the Eleventh Hour.* Land use legislation, however bland it may seem when considered in the abstract, is inherently political in that constraints on the exercise of private property rights are implied. This explains why, even at this late hour in the pending bill's legislative history, strong opposition from conservatives and some economic and development interests is emerging.

The bill, perceived by its supporters as a modest and long-overdue response to a major national problem, is far more than a "planning act." It calls for a partial shift in the locus of political authority over land use matters—this at the expense of local officials, many of whom have had a

comfortable and sometimes corrupt relationship with land developers.

States accepting planning grants under the measure would be ultimately responsible for identifying and controlling both critical areas, such as wetlands or the land around a major airport, and critical uses, such as the development of a new community or the construction of a major oil refinery. In most cases, the state might only review and approve local government decisions, but, even so, many land development activities would be placed under tighter regulation than is now common.

Some years ago, the Rules Committee was a wholly untamed body, which, rather than doing the will of the majority leadership, was an instrument in the deft hands of its chairman, Representative Howard W. ("Judge") Smith of Virginia, an old-style Dixie Democrat of archconservative persuasion. Unwilling to tolerate this situation any longer, Speaker Sam Rayburn decided in early 1961 to gain control of the committee by enlarging it. Rayburn won a showdown vote on the floor, and Judge Smith's Southern Democrat-Republican coalition lost its dominant influence over the committee.

After this disciplining, the committee saw its independence eroded still further in the mid-1960's, when Smith left Congress and was succeeded in the chairmanship by William Colmer, a Mississippian whose mediocrity and lack of flair had never been questioned. In 1973, Colmer too gave up his seat, and, such being the vicissitudes of the seniority system, the aging Dixiecrat was succeeded as chairman by an

aging, labor-oriented congressman, Ray Madden. According to a colleague in a position to observe him closely, Madden is forgetful and not up to the job.

Ordinarily, the committee is responsive to the majority leadership, but, when no leadership is asserted, it may behave in a manner at least vaguely reminiscent of the Judge Smith era. In the present instance, Representative Steiger, having failed to persuade the Interior Committee to accept his substitute (which called for hardly more than a program of planning grants), took shrewd advantage of the Rules Committee and the leadership vacuum.

Steiger urged the U.S. Chamber of Commerce to stimulate its constituent groups, companies, and individual members to let Congress know that they opposed the land use bill and to give particular attention to the members of the Rules Committee. Dan Denning, a Chamber of Commerce representative in Washington, says that such an action call was sounded and got a "very, very good" response. The chamber got help from an odd bed-fellow when the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners, a union of 900,000 members and the largest in the building trades, informed Madden, its old friend, of its strong opposition to the bill. Madden was himself among those voting for deferral.

President Nixon's seeming abandonment of meaningful land use legislation followed a conversation with Steiger on the evening of 6 February, when the Arizona congressman and about a dozen other Republican "hard hats" (Steiger's phrase) were guests at the White House. According to

Steiger, the President showed real concern at his (Steiger's) characterization of the pending bill as one that would create a bureaucratic mare's nest and lead to an invasion of property rights. An alternative explanation of the President's new attitude, however, is that, faced with the threat of impeachment, he seized this opportunity to curry favor with the Republican right wing.

Representative Morris Udall (D-Ariz.), a senior member of the Interior Committee and sponsor of the land use bill, hopes to get the measure back on track with the help of Speaker Albert, who is said to have been embarrassed and angry at the Rules Committee's behavior. Success in this endeavor may depend, however, on whether some more or less plausible face-saving device can be found to make it easier for several members of the committee to change their votes.

For its part, the Nixon Administration is collaborating with the House Minority Leader in the preparation of substitute legislation. Officials at the Department of the Interior are hopeful that the essential elements of the Udall bill—that is, the provisions for control of critical areas and uses—can be retained. But Steiger frankly admits that he does not want even his own bill to pass the House, for he fears that later, in conference, "we [would] eat the Senate bill." In light of that, together with the fact that there seems no possibility of a genuine compromise between the Udall and Steiger points of view, the new Administration effort gives every appearance of being a charade, conscious or unconscious.

—LUTHER J. CARTER

Herbicides: Academy Finds Damage in Vietnam after a Fight of Its Own

A National Academy of Sciences (NAS) committee looking into the herbicide program in South Vietnam has found that "under present conditions it may take well over 100 years for the mangrove area to be reforested." The

committee also reported that a number of Montagnard children may have died after direct exposure to herbicides.

The long awaited report of the Committee on the Effects of Herbicides in Vietnam is expected to strengthen the

case of those in Congress and in the arms control community who want to see first uses of herbicides in war banned.* The report was released 28 February after occasioning some of the most bitter internal fights in academy history. Describing the clash, NAS President Philip Handler told *Science*: "This has been the most traumatic incident" involving an academy committee and a review panel set up to oversee it in his term as president.

Several sources on the herbicide

* Committee on the Effects of Herbicides in Vietnam, *The Effects of Herbicides in South Vietnam, Part A, Summary and Conclusions* (National Academy of Sciences, Washington, D.C., 1974).