

sued by the recently established Committee for Congressional Reform and Common Cause, the "citizens lobby" established a few years ago by John W. Gardner (former Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare). Common Cause recently reported that 145 of the 243 Democrats in the House have indicated, in response to the lobby's questionnaire, that committees should conduct their business in open sessions,

with only such exceptions as necessary to protect the national security and rights of personal privacy. The Committee for Congressional Reform, though not as active as Common Cause, has helped let members of Congress know that there is a growing public and a significant group of "opinion leaders" who are concerned about congressional secrecy. The committee is a coalition of 44 organizations—religious

groups, several labor unions, the National Education Association, the American Civil Liberties Union, Environmental Action, the League of Women Voters, the National Urban League, and Common Cause, among others.

The main burden of reform falls, however, on the members of Congress themselves. In the House, the reform initiatives have come principally from members of the Democratic Study Group; in the Senate, such initiatives are coming from a small number of senators, including Charles McC. Mathias, Jr. (R-Md.) and Adlai E. Stevenson III (D-Ill.)—who have joined in establishing an informal ad hoc committee on reform—and Lawton Chiles (D-Fla.), the latter being principal sponsor of a "Government in the Sunshine" bill modeled in part after a Florida law by that title which has illuminated some dark corners in Florida's state and local governments.

Enactment of the Sunshine Bill would represent probably the ultimate any reformer could reasonably expect with respect to ending congressional secrecy. This bill, cosponsored by 22 other senators, would, like the House open-meetings resolution, require a vote by committees before any meeting is closed; but, in addition, it would apply to House-Senate conferences as well as to committee meetings and would flatly forbid the closing of any meeting except when necessary to protect confidential information. And, even where such an exemption applies, the committee would have the duty to make public, within 7 days of the closed meeting, a record of all votes taken and a verbatim transcript with only confidential information removed. The requirement for the transcript could be expected to discourage promiscuous closing of meetings for alleged reasons of national security. On this point, it is significant to note that Stuart Symington, second ranking Democrat on Senate Armed Services Committee and a former Secretary of the Air Force, is a cosponsor of the Sunshine Bill.

Of course, the closed mark up session is a traditional institution with its own articulate defenders. Sam Ervin, Jr. (D-N.C.), chairman of the Senate Committee on Government Operations, makes perhaps the best case possible for keeping mark up sessions of committees closed. In a recent letter to a member of Common Cause, Ervin says:

I do not favor open meetings at such time as the committee "marks up" a bill, simply because it is necessary for com-

Chemical Corps To Be Diluted

Virtually overlooked in the Army reorganization announcement of 11 January, is a plan to deprive the U.S. Army Chemical Corps of its independent status and to place it under the Ordnance Corps. The Chemical Corps, which dates back to World War I, is regarded as the strongest proponent of chemical and biological weapons in government.

The Army announced that the U.S. Army Chemical School at Fort McClellan, Alabama, is slated for "disestablishment" and that the 5000-member Corps itself will be reduced. One who is familiar with the Corps said, "If you had to list the three biggest enemies of the Chemical Corps in the military, the Ordnance Corps would be about number two."

The move could affect the Nixon Administration's future stance concerning the 1925 Geneva Protocol, which has 101 other nations as parties, but has never been ratified by the United States. The Chemical Corps supervises the manufacture, purchase, and use of herbicides, tear gas, and other riot control agents. Its active intramilitary lobby in favor of these weapons is well known; it has sometimes been a stumbling block to other military departments which have sought a limitation on chemical weapons. One proponent of the limitation stated that the move might make the battle for the protocol easier: "If I were a Russian, and I saw that the Chemical Corps was being put under the Ordnance Corps, I would interpret this as meaning that the United States was more willing to go ahead with a ban, and I would pressure more for it."

Action on the protocol has been delayed since April 1971, when the Senate Foreign Relations Committee requested that the President "reconsider the Administration's interpretation that the Geneva Protocol does not prohibit the use of tear gas and herbicides in warfare," in the words of Senator J. William Fulbright (D-Ark.). The Administration had exempted herbicides and riot control agents such as tear gas on the grounds that the language of the protocol did not clearly include them. The White House has not yet replied to the Committee's request.

However, some observers in the Senate speculate that one reason the President submitted the protocol with the two "interpretations" was because herbicides and riot control agents were being used in Vietnam. From a diplomatic standpoint, the United States could not very well be using certain weapons and advocating their ban at once.

One Senate source states that the Vietnam peace agreement may simplify the Senate-White House debate on the protocol; "We can take a fresh look now . . . without the war being an issue." The cease-fire in Vietnam "might" increase the chances that the Administration will withdraw the two interpretations, he said.

Other factors that may influence Administration thinking on the protocol are two military reports said to be resting with the National Security Council. One evaluated the military effectiveness of herbicides in Vietnam; it was leaked last year and shown to present only a weak case favoring them. The other study is of the military effectiveness of riot control agents; its contents have not been divulged.—D.S.