

Assassination committee kept alive

By ELIZABETH KURNETZ
Area congressmen were 41 in favor of the U.S. House vote March 30 to continue its special assassination committee.

The full house vote of 230-181 means the controversial committee will be funded for the rest of the current house term. It will investigate the assassinations of President John F. Kennedy and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

The only area congressman opposing the move was Rep. William D. Ford (D-Taylor), whose 15th district includes Garden City, Westland and Canton Township. Ford could not be reached for comment.

Rep. William Broomfield (R-Bloomfield) did not vote.

Rep. William Brodhead (D-Detroit), who voted in favor of the committee, said, "The main factor in my thinking was that a recent national poll showed 80 per cent of the American people believe the full truth about the assassinations has not been told."

"If we have doubts, then an additional investigation is warranted," said Brodhead, whose 17th district includes Redford, Farmington and Southfield.

Said Rep. Carl Pursell (R-Plymouth), "Initially in January when there was a renewal motion, the committee asked for \$13 million for two years and to use unlimited bug devices. I voted against that because I felt the money was unwarranted and the use of bug devices would be unconstitutional."

"However, I voted in favor of the second request for an extension because they came back to earth and are now asking for a \$2.8 million budget per year, and no electronic surveillance or wire tapping is allowed," he said.

Pursell, whose 2nd district includes Livonia and Plymouth, also said he changed his vote because the committee has recently been restructured and they had gotten rid of what he called "disruptive influences."

Pursell referred to the disruptive spat between the committee's chief counsel, Richard Sprague, and the first committee chairman, Rep. Henry Gonzalez, (D-Tex.).

Sprague resigned March 29, apparently agreeing with committee members who felt extension approval by the full house hinged on Sprague's removal.

Sprague had been involved in a power struggle with Gonzalez, who resigned during the fight. The new committee chairman is Louis Stokes, D-Ohio.

Rep. David Bonior (D-Mt. Clemens), whose 12th District includes eastern Rochester, also voted for extending the committee's life.

"I didn't feel they had a chance to get started because of the internal problems," Bonior explained. "Since Sprague and Gonzalez both resigned and the budget has been trimmed over 100 percent, I feel we ought to give the committee a chance to perform."

"There is some evidence surfacing with respect to the King and Kennedy assassinations that I think should be pursued further. If we don't pursue it, it will signal a whitewash by congress to the American people," he said.

"I SINCERELY believe the previous investigations of the two assassinations were not complete. I think we ought to have a more thorough investigation," said Rep. James Blanchard (D-18th Ferndale), whose 18th District includes Troy.

"When you have people in congress who are willing to spend two years pursuing a thorough review and investigation, the least I can do is support them," he said.

But even though these four area congressmen felt the committee should be extended, they still doubt whether the investigation will unearth any new facts.

"I don't think there is a likelihood that the committee will be successful, but I couldn't bring myself to close the door on them," said Rep. Brodhead. "I hope they're successful," he added.

"I'm concerned at this late date that it will be far more difficult to obtain competent evidence than in the early '60s," said Rep. Blanchard.

Along the same lines, Rep. Pursell said he also had some reservations about obtaining good witnesses after 13 years. "It seems difficult but the prosecutors feel that can be done properly," he said.

"I'm not completely confident the committee will come up with anything startling but because certain of its members believe there are additional bits of information and leads and witnesses that ought to be questioned, I think it ought to be pursued," said Rep. Bonior.

Rep. Pursell, who recently was sent to Washington by 2nd District voters, agreed with recent Washington speculation that the committee might turn up evidence of involvement by Cuban Premier Fidel Castro in the Kennedy assassination.

Rep. Brodhead also sees a Cuba link. "I don't know if there is any merit to that theory or not, but it is clear that Lee Harvey Oswald had connections with Cuba and had traveled to Cuba," he said.

"It is a question that ought to be looked at and the committee is looking into the matter."

Rep. Blanchard said he tended to discount the Castro speculations while Rep. Bonior said he was not familiar with a theory involving Castro.

Water board bills revived in Lansing

A suburban state legislator has revived two bills aimed at reforms in the Detroit water and sewer department and its governing board, from which nearly 100 suburbs purchase services.

Rep. John Bennett (D-Redford) got both bills passed in the Michigan House of Representatives last year, but both died in the senate. But he's confident they will be moved in 1977.

"There's no problem in the house," said Bennett, "but the senate may hold them up to bargain for others they want."

Bennett said his bills may be reported out of the house city government committee as early as this week or next.

One bill would require the water board to hold a public hearing 120 days before any rate increase could go into effect. It would also require an annual audit to be performed by a

certified public accountant appointed by the state. At present, Detroit audits its own books.

The other would allow an "assembly" of customer governments to name four members to the nine-member board. Currently, the mayor of Detroit appoints all members, including the suburban minority, and may fire them at will.

The political flap over how the water department is run came in 1975 when the board voted a 29 per cent rate increase and Detroit Mayor Coleman Young fired Livonia Mayor Edward McNamara from the board for his criticism of department operations.

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