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Pension Issue Disturbs Lundine

By MANLEY J. ANDERSON

A few junketing congressmen are holding up resolution of major social security legislation that must be compromised by a Senate-House conference committee, Rep. Stanley N. Lundine (D-Jamestown) said today.

Lundine said that as a result of the junkets the committee has not even met yet. He explained that he voted against the House measure and feels the Senate version is worse.

The Democratic legislator acknowledged that the social security system has financial problems. He said he feels the best he can hope for in a compromise bill is that the House provisions for an equal share of the withholding tax from employer and employee is agreed to, along with the Senate's proposed contributions increase, which is smaller than the House version.

Lundine said he believes the proposed social security legislation was not innovative enough as working younger persons will be paying "very steep taxes" over a long period. He noted the proposed increases affect the large number of working persons to a greater extent than tax cuts already approved.

The congressman said he feels it is a regressive tax, noting the average worker pays more in social security taxes than in income taxes.

Lundine said indications are that many middle class persons will lose out on the benefit side of the legislation. He explained that maximum benefits under social security have been available to those earning up to \$16,000 but the level now is proposed to be raised to \$30,000—meaning that those earning between those two figures will not be able to realize maximum benefits.

The legislator said that for those per-

sons earning about \$10,000 a year, total taxes paid in support of social security will be increased significantly. He noted he views the proposed legislation as only an intermediate and not a long term solution.

Lundine said he believes it eventually will become necessary to "invade" general revenues to support social security and, although he finds the trust fund concept acceptable, feels it cannot cope with the growing demands on such a system.

The congressman noted he favors funding the social security program by contributions of one-third each from the employee, employer and general revenue for more equitable application.

Lundine said that if general revenues are not the answer, he would like to explore other financing approaches. He said he feels the program is a little too lax in defining disability and that a reasonable approach must be worked out to get into the system those persons not now covered by it.

On another matter, the legislator said he is "very distressed" at the inability of the New York State delegation to work together in Washington. He said the unit is divided by the partisanship and narrow interests of some of its members.

Lundine was especially critical of fellow Democrat Richard Ottinger of Westchester County for his introduction of an amendment to the energy bill without consultation. The measure called for equalizing the rates paid by utilities for public power in the state and would have increased upstate costs considerably.

The Jamestown congressman said the Ottinger proposal, which finally was removed from the House version, ignores the history of energy development, distribution and sales and he feels the national interest would not be served by

equalizing rates for power in individual states. Lundine said he believes Ottinger's proposal was aimed at driving private power systems out of business.

The 39th District legislator said he believes present costs reflect generating expenses and there is a need for a greater balance of public and private power nationally.

Lundine said he believes the type of energy bill eventually agreed on in Senate-House conferences will be a major factor in determining the degree of success of the present Congress. He explained he feels the success of the bill will be based on whether it creates a blueprint for America's future, although it is not known yet whether conservation and production conflicts can be resolved. Lundine said it also is not known yet whether the final version of the energy bill will be agreed to before or after Jan. 1.

On President Carter's popularity, Lundine said he feels support among Democratic members of Congress has been generally consistent. He noted that at the same time, there is a feeling that the administration is not very well organized and slip-ups have aggravated some congressmen.

Lundine said he personally believes the president is intelligent, hard working and committed but needs to have a better organization and be more decisive. He said Carter has created his own uncertainty by his announced intent to reorganize government, with bureaucrats reacting by determining how they best can remain in their present jobs.

The legislator said Congress recently passed a bill establishing grain reserves, improved price supports and an improved food stamp program, but he has become a skeptic, particularly regarding price support programs for farm products.