

Disputes overwhelm session

By Ken Stack
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HARTFORD — A dissension-torn environment committee had no trouble meeting its deadline for reporting bills yesterday, but bitter disputes between members existed when the session ended.

During the day, the joint committee split into its separate House and Senate contingents when Sen. Harold Hansen, D-Sherman, insisted on scheduling a vote, on a bill to ban nonreturnable bottles in the state — an issue the committee failed to approve for floor debate in a tie vote two weeks ago. Still surrounded by controversy, the bill was eventually sent to the Senate by a disputed 3-1 vote, but it is given little chance for enactment this year.

Rep. Clarice Osiecki, R-Danbury, the ranking minority member of the committee, charged that an 11-10 vote to kill a bill establishing a farmlands preservation program showed the committee's lack of commitment to the concept. Hansen vigorously denied the charge saying a substitute bill he offered to continue studies on the proposal was the best the legislature could be expected to approve this year.

To top off the deadline session, Rep. Francis Ciampi, D-Waterbury, House chairman, abruptly adjourned the meeting at 3:30 p.m., an hour and a half before the deadline. His announcement set off an uproar from several

committee members and an animal welfare lobbyist who were waiting for a committee vote on a bill to ban use of decompression chambers to kill unwanted dogs.

Because of strenuous objections, Ciampi eventually agreed to take a vote on the attempt to adjourn and the vote was recorded as a 9-9 tie. A new vote, with Rep. John Anderson, D-Newtown, switching to join Hansen and Mrs. Osiecki in support of the chairman's adjournment call was recorded as 11-4 in favor of ending the session and members left without discussion of the decompression chamber bill.

When last seen, women lobbying for passage of the bill on humane grounds were uttering threats of political retaliation particularly at Ciampi. "He (Ciampi) killed the bill and he's going right out of office," one woman was angrily telling sympathetic committee members.

Hansen, Mrs. Osiecki and Anderson said later they supported the call for adjournment because a vote on the measure would have been futile since it did not have the support for passage and would merely have served to further inflame committee tempers.

About the closest thing to unanimity came as committee members joined together to attack Gov. Ella Grasso for her handling of amendments to the Connecticut Environmental Protection Act and then went on to reject the proposal by a vote of 15-3.

Ciampi began the attack on the governor before her personal representative, aide Jeffrey Daniels, even had a chance to attempt to explain the new proposal designed to set up a procedure for handling environmental impact statements for state projects.

Committee members still were obviously angry over a last-minute proposal last year to delay implementation of the bill which the governor persuaded the House to adopt only to see Hansen lead a successful effort in the Senate to kill the attempt on the last day of the session.

Committee members, particularly Democratic House members who felt they had been burned in the maneuvering over the bill last year, were obviously in no mood to consider the issue again this year as they insisted that the current law should be given a chance to operate before any attempts at changes are made.

Daniels insisted that the administration needs the revised version to assure adequate regulations are devised to execute the legislative intent of the act and to establish an agency to oversee it, but committee

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members said a requirement for regulations would mean a hidden delay in implementation. Daniels said without the revisions some projects may get away without environmental scrutiny while others which don't need it could be delayed.

The committee resoundingly rejected his arguments on behalf of the governor after Hansen said he thoroughly reviewed the bill and found several features objectionable.

Although the attempt was defeated by the committee, no one was ready to rule out the possibility that the governor's insistence on a revision might lead to an attempt to secure her goal through an amendment offered on the floor as she attempted last year.

The day was a mixed success for organizations which had been lobbying for animal welfare bills this year. Before adjourning without considering the decompression chamber measure, the committee approved a one-year extension of the time to implement a pilot program to demonstrate use of spraying and netting clinics in the state, but failed to take any action on a proposal to restrict use of steel-jaw leg hold traps.

The committee had consistently refused to honor requests to consider legislation banning use of the leg-hold traps, but had agreed to take up a proposal which would have licensed use of the traps and established new restrictions on their use. However, when the time to discuss the proposal arrived, committee members were informed there were problems with the bill and it would not be considered this year.

During its day-long deliberations, the committee approved for floor debate measures to allow falconry in the state, to extend the hours for snowmobiling on state land, to require the annual motor vehicle pollution inspections and to give legislative backing to an attempt to deny the request by public utilities to gain environmental protection department authority to exceed the current limit of .05 per cent sulfur in the oil they burn.

Under the inspection system, which would take effect by 1979, any gasoline-powered vehicle made after 1967 would have to pass an annual pollution inspection before it could be registered.

Inspections would be made at official stations run by a private contractor selected by competitive bidding. An inspection fee of not more than \$10 would fund the program.

The committee also amended and then approved a revised version of a bill designed to ban the use, manufacture or

sale of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB) in the state. In recent months increasing attention has been given to high concentrations of PCB which has been linked to various illnesses and is considered a possible cancer-causing agent in riverbeds and fish.

Although a flat ban on PCB's in the state beginning Jan. 1, 1980 was initially proposed, the amended version includes an exemption similar to one granted by the federal government for closed circuit electrical systems. However, the state bill will require cautionary labelling identifying products which include PCB and will regulate disposal methods for the products.

Details of disposal requirements are still not ironed out, but the bill will definitely ban landfill dumping of products with PCB. The compound is virtually indestructible and does not break down into its components and can eventually leach out of landfill operations into waterways.

The committee approved and sent to the appropriations committee a bill to appropriate funding for algae control on state lakes — a program eliminated from the governor's recommended budget — and sent to the finance committee to raise the milk dealers' license fee from \$5 to \$15.

Defeated during the day were proposals to allow access to state lands from private lands for snowmobilers now required to use check-in points, require the posting of agricultural lands due to be sprayed with pesticides, allow municipalities to charge fees for dumping at solid waste disposal sites and to establish a state program of coastal zone management.