

A few mavericks in the Senate, however, heeded the dissenters, and a bill to block the project was introduced. The hearings on this bill were the first and only held on the east front extension. At one session, on February 17, 1958, the Capitol Architect informed his critics that plans for the extension "do not belong to the public" and "are not for publication." Douglas Haskell, editor of Architectural Forum, said he was perhaps naive but he always thought the Capitol "belonged to the people of the United States." No secrecy was involved, Mr. Stewart maintained, "It is the way things are done on the Hill."

A piquant example of the "way things are done" came the following May 27, when Mr. Rayburn made his first appearance as a speaker at the National Press Club in 21 years, expressly to defend his project. The Speaker said that bids would be let on the project "as soon as the noise settles down on the Hill." He contended that the extension had already been authorized and "I don't see any use to chew that old cud again." Even if the Senate tried to halt the project Mr. Sam added, "I am going to hold we have already passed it."

Speaker Rayburn's prescience was uncanny. The noise settled; the Senate defeated the delaying bill; and on August 20, 1958, the Safeway Steel Scaffold Co. of Bladensburg, Md., placed the low bid for the preliminary surgery on the Capitol. The new east front, a shiny marble replica of the old, will be ready for the next inaugural, just as Mr. Rayburn promised.

ARCHAIC JOHNSON-CHAVEZ: THE NEW SOB

While Speaker Rayburn was making his stand on the east front, the Senate was already busy with its own building campaign. Under the aegis of Majority Leader Johnson and the Senate Office Building Commission, ground was broken on January 26, 1955, for the structure that later became known as the Great White Goof on Capitol Hill.

In what became a familiar pattern, Capitol Architect Stewart returned again and again for additional funds. This provoked Senator Allen J. Ellender of Louisiana to say at one point, "I have served here for 22 years, and have never seen an architect who found more things to do than Mr. Stewart. It is unending."

Mr. Stewart, startled, asked, "Is that in the way of a commendation?" The Senator drawled back, "You can take it that way if you want to. Whether it is right or wrong I don't know, but we are spending by the millions."

First there was the \$2.8 million needed for the new Senate subway system, then there was a request for \$9.5 million to remodel the old SOB (as the office is known), next came a \$1 million bill for new furniture for the new SOB, then came \$965,000 to buy adjoining property to provide parking space for 285 cars, and then \$625,000 to buy up remaining space near the new building. All requests were approved except the \$9.5 million which was whittled to a pin-money \$250,000 for remodeling old SOB suites.

However, costs have a way of rising, and as work went along it was necessary to return to the coffers for more than another million. As a final fillip \$5,000 was spent on two monster bronze plaques to immortalize the officials responsible for the new SOB.

When the new building made its debut in January 1959, it proved to be an excellent example of what \$26 million can buy. The exterior is chaste white Vermont marble, but within there is an uneasy coexistence of some 20 varieties of stone, ranging from Ozark Rouge to Radio Black. Colors like peacock green, rosy pink, and tangerine dance from the walls of the suites, committee rooms, TV studios, and ladies' lounges, and in each suite as a *tache de couleur* there is one cherry-red armchair amid sofas in nutty brown. Besides an auditorium for 500 and twin cafeterias seating 350 apiece, the building contains 36 public restrooms, 46 marble drinking fountains, 19 shower stalls, 32 service sinks, 129 public washbasins, and 205 senatorial washbasins—it has, one newspaperman observed, "more pipes than a Chinese opium joint."

But no sooner had the Senators moved in than oaths began to blacken the air. Nothing seemed to work—except the things that worked too well. Clocks halted, stuck at 9:45 because the hands were too heavy. Ghostly wails issued from what appeared to be loudspeakers. Mail chutes sucked letters from the sender's hand and sent them plummeting at such speed that they caromed off the fancy mail conveyors in the basement. Elevators were as capricious as constituents; ramps on the underground garage had to be rebuilt because 1959 king-sized cars scraped their chassis. Because one contractor evidently forgot to leave a hole for the