

## Congress: Question of Reform Of Procedures Becomes an Issue

As the new Congress convened last week in an atmosphere tinged with early-session lassitude over legislation, fights on rules in both the Senate and the House of Representatives drew attention to efforts to reform the procedures and organization of Congress.

The House on opening day was the scene of a quick victory for the majority leadership and the administration in their campaign to maintain membership in the House Committee on Rules at 15 and, thereby, to keep the committee which regulates the flow of legislation to the floor friendly—by a marginal 8 to 7 vote—to measures proposed by the administration.

On the other side of Capitol Hill, Senate liberals were preparing yet another attempt to tame the filibuster by liberalizing the Senate rule which defines the conditions under which debate may be cut off and a bill brought to a vote.

The "reform" forces in both contests argued that a principal issue at stake was the right of the majority to rule by getting an opportunity to vote on important legislation, but few partisans would claim that winning either test would change that basic situation in Congress any more than a little light pruning affects a mighty oak.

This is not to belittle the stake of the administration and the Democratic leadership in the rules fight in the House, where the balance between pro-administration and anti-administration coalitions is much nearer even on most legislation than it is in the Senate. Both prestige and the prospects for a number of the proposals which the President put forward in his State of the Union Message Monday would have been diminished by a defeat. But the House Rules Committee is a symptom which should not be taken for a cause of the imperfections in Congress of what the political scientists call "party government"—that is, the ability of the majority leadership to get legislation advanced by its national

party reported favorably out of the committee and brought to the floor for action.

The alpha and omega of the Congressional system are committee rule and the principle of seniority. Legislation must follow a pathway that can be likened to a freight yard in which committee chairmen control the signals and switches. The pattern of power can perhaps be seen most clearly in the House of Representatives, where sectional differences and the fortunes of politics have resulted in the ascendancy of chairmen and senior members of key committees who are out of sympathy with many Administration proposals and uninhibited about blocking them.

### No Major Changes

Though only the test of roll call votes on controversial bills will tell, there is no real sign that the status quo in the House has been seriously changed by the Republican gain of two seats in the November election or by the arrival of 65 newcomers to the House, 35 Democrats and 30 Republicans. The new Congress, the 88th, appears to resemble the 87th closely, and if the new Congress follows the pattern of its predecessor it will be most agreeable about approving defense, space, and science budgets and appropriations for conventional public works and least willing to approve welfare and education legislation.

In the sidetracking of education legislation in the House, the Rules Committee has taken a prominent part in the past, and the action last week does not seem to have significantly reduced the committee's power to do so again in the future. The vote last Wednesday simply kept the membership of the committee at 15, to which it was increased in 1961 in the late Speaker Sam Rayburn's last great fight, rather than allowing it to revert to a 12-member committee which would have had an anti-administration major-

ity on many bills. Untouched were the committee's power to determine if and when a measure shall go to the floor and under what conditions and its power over bills sent to joint House and Senate conferences. Rules Committee Chairman Howard Smith of Virginia, who is known in the House by the Southern honorific "Judge," which is peculiarly appropriate in his case, has a special escape device at his disposal, for the Rules Committee's reputation as the place where education measures go to die is supported by the fact that of 22 bills held in the Rules Committee at the end of the last session, 16 had been reported out of the Education and Labor Committee and half were education bills. Among the stymied bills was one to provide \$75 million a year for 10 years for matching grants for medical and dental school construction, loans to medical and dental students, and an extension of an existing program for construction of research facilities. A measure to improve the quality of teaching in elementary and secondary schools through stipends for study to teachers and grants for institutes and special projects was also locked up.

Critics of the Rules Committee complain that delaying tactics are often as decisive as the practice of burying bills alive. In the 1962 session, for example, a bill to aid institutions of higher education through a program of matching grants and loans for construction was passed by the House and then was held in the Rules Committee for 3 months before it was sent to conference. A sizable group of Representatives opposed scholarship aid to college students and feared that the Senate would add a scholarship program in conference. The Rules Committee set conditions that would give the House an opportunity to vote separately on scholarship proposals, but by the time the bill went to conference, a controversy over aid to private schools had made the issue too hot to handle, and no final version reached the floor even though both the House and Senate had passed college aid bills.

### An Issue Emerges

The rise of the church-state issue as the paramount factor in the politics of federal aid to education, in fact, occurred in 1961 while the Rules Committee was considering a bill reported out of the Education and Labor Com-

(Continued on page 274)

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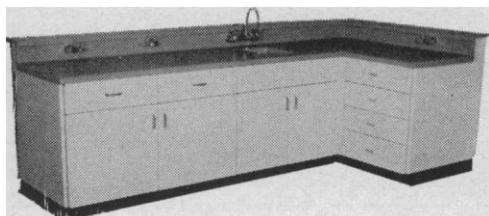
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## NEWS AND COMMENT

(Continued from page 201)

mittee which would have provided grants of \$2.5 billion over 5 years for grants to the states to use as they saw fit for construction or raising teacher pay in the public schools. The Roman Catholic hierarchy opposed a school-aid bill which did not include loans for private schools. Rep. John McCormack, then Majority Leader and now Speaker, took the same view. Two northern liberal members of the Rules Committee, Representatives O'Neil and Delaney, sided with Republican and Southern Democratic members of the committee in a series of actions which finally led to the tabling of bills for school aid, college aid, and the extension of the National Defense Education Act.

It would be unrealistic, however, to deduce that the Rules Committee has an independent, life-or-death sway over legislation. The power of the Rules Committee and its chairman to delay or derail legislation is greatest when controversial legislation is involved and a significant number of members are not anxious to stand up and be counted.

In the case of many types of education legislation, there is a solid bloc of opposition to federal aid composed mainly of Republicans from less industrialized states and Southern Democrats. For the proponents of federal aid—the Northern liberal Democrats and a few Republicans from urban areas—the church-state issue creates political problems which none of the current formulas on federal aid appear to resolve. When race, religion, or "welfare" is involved, the administration majority in the Rules Committee is likeliest to falter, just as is the administration majority in the House itself.

It must be remembered that a good many Congressmen cherish the Rules Committee as a guarantor of Congress's separate powers. Conservatives of both parties regard the operation of the committee as a permanent battle of Thermopylae against reckless legislation and ruinous spending. Many Republicans see it as a bulwark of minority rights.

Conservatives and liberals alike are conscious that the Rules Committee sometimes saves them the necessity of voting aye or nay on measures which they may regard as bad legislation, but

on which there may be heavy pressures from lobbyists or constituents. The knowledge that reform can cut more than one way may be one reason that proposals to effect basic changes in the Rules Committee's own rules of operation were not pressed during the fight last week on the size of the committee.

Chances for root and branch reform of Congress, however, seem better this year than for a long time. The intramural squabble between Senate and House appropriations committees last year and misgivings about the ability of Congress to deal with the problems of the Cold War and space age with its present machinery, staffing, and folkways have created a disposition to consider reform.

The likeliest route to reform is along the path followed by the LaFollette-Monroney Committee in 1946 when reform legislation followed a study by a committee made up of Senators and Representatives. Sen. Clark and Reps. Reuss and Lindsay have taken the initiative in rallying bipartisan support for such a committee and Sen. Case has put forward a similar, but somewhat more detailed, proposal.

The Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946 resulted primarily in a streamlining of committees but did not touch the bedrock of the committee system, and the reformers now face the same hard fact that the power of change in Congress is largely in the hands of those whose status depends on the status quo.—JOHN WALSH

## Announcements

The National Institutes of Health this month opened a Tokyo branch of its Office of International Research. This will be the Pacific office. The unit is headed by Heinz Specht, formerly in the physical biology laboratory, National Institute of Arthritis and Metabolic Diseases.

Correspondence for the Pacific branch should be addressed to the American Embassy, APO 94, San Francisco, Calif.

The Thomas Alva Edison Foundation has presented its 1962 awards for children's books. The recipients included:

Heinz Haber's *Stars, Men, and Atoms* (Golden Press, 1962; 188 pp., illus., \$3.99), acclaimed as the "best children's science book," covers early conceptions of the earth to modern theories of an expanding universe.

*Knowledge and Wonder*, by Victor Weisskopf (Doubleday, 1962; 222 pp., illus. \$4.95), received the award of "best science book for youth," for its presentation of the "essence of all that man has discovered about himself and his environment."

The Edison Foundation awards are presented annually "for the highest achievements" in children's books, films, television, and radio.

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### Grants, Fellowships, and Awards

The Daniel and Florence Guggenheim Foundation has made available 14 graduate fellowships for study in **jet propulsion and flight structures development**. Candidates must be residents of the U.S. or Canada, and intend to make a career in astronautics, flight structures, or related scientific disciplines. Tuition and up to \$2400 stipends are provided.

Participating in the program are Princeton University, California Institute of Technology (for jet propulsion fellowships), and Columbia University (for flight structures). Deadline for filing credentials: *1 March*. (Dean of Graduate Studies of each institution)

The University of Miami Marine Laboratory has a continuing fellowship program for postdoctoral work with **marine organisms**. The 1-year fellowships are available to those trained