

Committee reported a budget control bill on 28 January, and, in an unusual effort, a task force composed of staff members from major Senate committees is now attempting to resolve remaining differences and provide the Senate Rules Committee with a bill likely to prosper when it reaches the floor. House and Senate versions would then have to be reconciled before a final vote is taken.

The House bill provides that the House and Senate each should have a Committee on the Budget with the main task of fashioning a "congressional budget" by setting total budget outlays and "an appropriate level of

new budget authority." The start of the fiscal year would be shifted from 1 July to 1 October, which would conform more realistically with the congressional cycle, and a series of deadlines would be set for various steps in the budgeting process. The bill provides for creation of a Legislative Budget Office, which would be a sort of mirror image of the Office of Management and Budget. The measure specifically confers the power to obtain data from all government agencies, the lack of which has frustrated Congress in the past.

Some storm signals raised recently seem to threaten the congressional

budget. Senate Majority Whip Robert C. Byrd (D-W.Va.) was quoted early this month as taking the position that "it is very difficult if not impossible" to devise a workable budget system for Congress. Byrd seems to think it wisest to "move gradually, step by step in the direction of budget reform, so that over the next two or three years, Congress may achieve the kind of system" the reformers are advocating. In the House there is still some sentiment for a sketchier "leadership budget" that would set general limits on spending. Current odds, however, seem to favor passage of a measure along the lines of the House bill.

Reporters vs. Reporters: Who Should Sit in the Gallery

Earlier this month, when Richard L. Strout of the *Christian Science Monitor* had his membership in the House and Senate press galleries revoked by an organization of fellow reporters, the result was a sizable tempest in Washington press circles. To many of the 75-year-old Strout's friends and admirers, it was a clear case of following logic out the window. After all, in a half-century of political reporting that spanned from the Teapot Dome to Watergate, Strout had earned an unchallenged reputation for integrity. Tossing him out of the newspaper correspondents' association for an apparent conflict of interest—accepting government money (\$240 in 1973) for moderating a series of Voice of America programs—seemed a bit like banishing the Venerable Bede for a minor civil infraction.

Strout's eviction is the most celebrated controversy over press gallery membership in recent years, but it's not the only one.

There are three other gallery organizations that accredit reporters covering the Congress—one each for radio-TV, photographers, and periodicals. The last of the three galleries, which is supervised by the 630-member Periodical Correspondents' Association (PCA), is currently locked in a fight over membership rules the association says were intended to keep out lobbyists and other "advocates of special interests" who might pose as journalists; the dispute, which escalated this month to the U.S. Supreme Court, presents the odd spectacle of reporters accusing other reporters of trampling on the freedom of the press.

The PCA's 6-member governing committee—in enforcing a rule approved by the House Speaker and the Senate Rules and Administration Committee—has traditionally withheld press credentials from nonprofit publications, a category which happens to include not only the propaganda organs of lobbying groups but also many of the nation's scientific and educational journals (*Science* among them), as well as public-interest magazines such as *Consumer Reports*.

Last July, *Consumer Reports* sued to overturn the PCA's ban on nonprofit publications. The magazine won

a federal district court judgment declaring the ban to be an unconstitutional abridgment of the first and fifth amendments. Now the magazine has gone to the Supreme Court for an injunction to set the rule aside while an appeal by the correspondents' association works its way through the courts. In an added twist of irony, the reporters' association, claiming congressional privilege, is relying on the Justice Department to defend it.

In the meantime, the PCA has turned down applications for credentials submitted by *Science News* and *The Chronicle of Higher Education* on the ground that both are published by nonprofit organizations. The gallery association also has denied a request for temporary accreditation from Luther J. Carter, a member of the *Science* news staff since 1965; Carter began negotiating for full accreditation last summer.

Other science news organizations have been denied press credentials in the past on the same ground. Richard L. Kenyon, the American Chemical Society's communications director, says the PCA has rejected applications from *Chemical and Engineering News* at least three times in the past 15 years. "We finally gave up," Kenyon says. "It's an inconvenience to us, makes our job a little harder, but we think we manage pretty well anyway."

Indeed, for both sides the issue is mostly one of principle, though some useful perquisites of accreditation are at stake. Gallery membership admits a reporter to the Capitol's cramped pressrooms equipped with telephones, typewriters, and some overstuffed chairs and sofas convenient for snoozing.

More important, membership provides access to press galleries overlooking the House and Senate floor; to special lobbies where pages will summon a senator or congressman from the floor for an interview; and to the press tables in hearing rooms. Without credentials, a reporter is obliged to compete with the general public and may not be admitted at all to crowded hearings.

Congressional press galleries were first set up in 1857, partly to move reporters off the crowded House floor and mostly to shield congressmen and senators from

The House also leads the Senate in its effort to reconstruct its committee machinery. A 10-member Special Committee on Committees appointed by House Speaker Carl Albert (D-Okla.) and chaired by Representative Richard W. Bolling (D-Mo.) has worked for a year to complete a full-scale study of the House committee system and has proposed extensive changes in both structure and procedures.

Bolling's chairmanship marks a kind of return from the House equivalent of the British Commons back benches. As Speaker Sam Rayburn's lieutenant in the late 1950's, Bolling played an unusually active role for a young con-

gressman in the House leadership. When Rayburn died, Bolling briefly opposed John W. McCormack for the Speakership, and, when McCormack won the post, Bolling was shouldered to the sidelines. During a somewhat disgruntled decade, Bolling distilled his knowledge of the House (he sits on the redoubtable Rules Committee) into two books advocating reform of the House. In 1971 Albert succeeded McCormack as Speaker. Albert and Bolling see eye to eye, and last year Albert made it clear he thought Bolling was just the man to head the study of committees. Bolling, who is acknowledged as an astute tactician as

well as theoretician, is said to be back in top form, if a bit mellower than a decade ago.

So far, the committee has attracted most attention for its "jurisdictional plan." Realignment of the committee jurisdictions would appear to be overdue, since the existing committee structure dates back more than two decades, and responsibility for dealing with newly emerging problems in areas such as energy and the environment has often been assigned in an illogical or conflicting pattern.

Territorial imperatives are, of course, very strong in the House, and practically any proposal for change in the

Is the Question in an Odd Congressional Fight

bothersome "claims agents" posing as journalists. Over the years, elected committees of reporters evolved to supervise the galleries and to help Congress phrase the rules of admission. Today, each of the four galleries requires that its members be "bona fide" reporters and prohibits them from "prosecuting claims" pending before the government.

The galleries' main purpose is still to protect Congress from lobbyists in disguise (though an impostor has ample opportunity to buttonhole legislators as it is) but only three of the four gallery associations explicitly prohibit "lobbying activities" by their members. For reasons that remain obscure, the periodical gallery is less direct. Its rule, which *Consumer Reports* is contesting, limits members to those which: "published for profit and supported chiefly by advertising, and owned and operated independently of any industry, business, association, or institution."

This language has led to a number of apparent inconsistencies. For one, no other gallery uses ownership or the profit motive as a criterion of eligibility. Thus, *Science News* publisher E. G. Sherburne, Jr., says his magazine was accredited for "at least 30 years" in the daily press gallery by virtue of a syndication service it ran for newspapers. When the service was phased out last year, *Science News* applied for membership in the periodical gallery, only to be declared ineligible.

Among the periodicals that are eligible, and do enjoy accreditation, are *Modern Tire Dealer*, *Oil and Gas Journal*, *Baking Industry Magazine*, *Public Utilities Fortnightly*, and a large number of other periodicals catering to special interests.

There would seem to be other inconsistencies as well. The interests of Time, Inc., for example, extend beyond the immediate concerns of turning out a news magazine and include such things as book publishing, ownership of radio and TV stations, and large land holdings in Texas. This, and the fact that Time, Inc. retains the professional lobbying services of Charles E. Walker Associates, Inc. to represent the company's views in postal rate matters, suggest that the parent company of Time

may be as much or more an "advocate of special interests" as some of the organizations barred by the PCA—whose executive committee traditionally includes a reporter from *Time*.

Taking note of these anomalies, federal district judge Gerhard A. Gesell accused the correspondents' association last October of an attempt to "censor" publications on the basis of ownership or the ideas they expressed. "There should be no glossing over what this record discloses," Gesell wrote in a sharply worded opinion. "Authority has been given to certain newsmen to prevent other newsmen from having access to news of vital consequences to the public. . . ."

The gallery association, for its part, felt unfairly handled by Gesell's charge of censorship. Among others, Roy L. McGhee, the superintendent of the Senate periodical press gallery, insists this was never the group's intention. "We look at ownership, not editorial content," McGhee says. "We don't care what a publication writes."

The association, moreover, sees a legitimate distinction between the special-interest magazines it admits and many, if not all, of those it bars. Thus, Samuel Shaffer, a *Newsweek* reporter on the PCA's governing committee, says a privately owned magazine catering, for instance, to the auto industry, would feel free to criticize the industry whereas a publication put out by the industry, or one manufacturer, might not. (It can also be argued that magazines living on special-interest advertising are most unlikely to bite the hands that feed them.)

Shaffer acknowledges that present rules for press accreditation may be "less than perfect," but he says the PCA hasn't been able to come up with anything better—and that even if it did, responsibility for changing the rules rests with the Congress, not the reporters. "It's a hellish problem, one we've been batting around for a year now," Shaffer says. "How do you separate the white hats from the black hats?"

The problem comes down to one of deciding what is journalism and what is not. Some of the most prominent journalists in Washington seem to be having a hard time making up their minds.—ROBERT GILLETTE