

committee assignments. This wellspring of congressional authority was put under control of a revived Steering and Policy Committee in which the regular Democratic leadership is heavily represented. The caucus action provided the occasion for and certainly contributed to the de facto deposing of Wilbur D. Mills (D-Ark.) from the chairmanship of Ways and Means. Mills' public embarrassments peaked at about the time the caucus met, but forces had been gathering against him for several years and he was, at least in symbolic terms, the rear guard of the House old guard.

The process of reform in the House, in fact, has been much less like a sudden thaw than the waning of an ice age. The current cycle of reform can be traced back at least to 1959, when the 1958 congressional elections produced an incoming group of freshmen—a kind of congressional proletariat—almost as large as the present crop. The House Speaker in those days was Sam Rayburn, himself an institution. He mediated between the liberals and the coalition and in some cases invoked his ineffable prestige in favor of liberal legislation. But he was essentially committed to the status quo in Congress. After Rayburn's death in 1961, the speakership was inherited by John W. McCormack of Massachusetts, whose role, as the 1960's progressed, seemed to grow progressively more ceremonial while the majority grew more disorganized. In 1970, when Carl Albert of Oklahoma became Speaker, he generally backed House reformers but failed to establish a forceful leadership style before Watergate embroiled Congress.

Reform in the House, it should be noted, is directly attributable only in part to the reformers. The impact in the early 1960's of the Supreme Court's one-man-one-vote decision, the effects of civil-rights-voter-registration drives, the growth of the proportion of young people in the electorate, and the political fallout from the reaction to the Vietnam war altered the climate in the House and in the Senate, which in the 1960's was generally more liberal politically and fiscally than the House.

Throughout the decade, however, the reformers on the House side kept up steady pressure for procedural and organizational change. In the middle 1960's, for example, the big Democratic House majority returned in the Goldwater-Johnson presidential election broke the lock of the conservative coalition on the Appropriations and Ways

and Means committees membership. In 1973 the Democratic Caucus made threateningly explicit its power to grant or withhold approval of the appointment of committee chairmen at the beginning of each Congress and voted a "subcommittee bill of rights" which broke the grip of the chairmen on subcommittee assignments (*Science*, 2 March 1973). The House Democrats' ardor for reform last year, however, was not intense enough to carry recommendations for extensive changes in committee jurisdictions proposed by a committee headed by Richard Bolling (D-Mo.) (*Science*, 25 October 1974). A much milder compromise measure was voted by a coalition including a number of reformers who, in this case, found the old ways more comfortable.

During the long campaign for change, the rallying point for reformers in the House has been the Democratic Study Group (DSG), established by frustrated younger members in the late 1950's. A small staff supported by the DSG members conducted research on issues, and the organization provided a forum in which the liberal wing of the Democratic party in the House could develop policy. Junior members saw it as an alternative to the caucus, which was dominated by the elders. But in the early years, the DSG seemed to have only marginal influence on legislation. The DSG's influence grew throughout the decade and certainly, in alliance with independent operators like Bolling, it became the primary source of reform ideas and initiatives.

This year, Philip Burton (D-Calif.), an influential figure in the DSG in recent years, handily won election as chairman of the caucus and by so doing became a force to be reckoned with in House affairs. Burton is one of the few congressmen recently to ascend to prominence outside the traditional leadership-seniority structure of both parties. And there is a certain symbolic symmetry in the rise of Burton and the fall of Wilbur Mills. It is far from clear, nevertheless, how the House will replace Mills and lesser members of the old guard in carrying out its daily business. The committee chairmen, by their exercise of the jurisdictional imperative over the years, have insured that Congress would take a piecemeal approach to national problems. This relieved the leadership of the necessity of leading and members of voting on many complex and controversial issues. Old habits are hard to break, but congressional leaders now

have pledged to fashion comprehensive measures to fight recession and inflation and to formulate a national energy policy if President Ford fails to take what they regard as adequate steps.

Up to now, Congress has lacked both the expertise to make comprehensive policies and the party discipline to carry them out legislatively. The size of staffs on Capitol Hill has been increasing steadily. And in the past year Congress has established its own Office of Technology Assessment and passed a budget control act designed to overcome the old criticism that Congress has neither a will nor a way to coordinate federal spending and revenues. In a move designed to give the majority a policy blueprint, the Democratic Steering and Policy Committee has created a task force to devise an "action agenda" which is to include specific recommendations for dealing with major problems, including the economy and energy. The new initiatives reflect changed congressional attitudes, but the timing of them, unfortunately, suggests someone learning to fly when the plane is in a spin.

The reforms so far would appear to have redistributed power and made the House more responsive to the rank and file and to those who elected them. The next 2 years should show whether these reforms will make the House a more effective legislative body.

—JOHN WALSH

RECENT DEATHS

Stephen C. Cappannari, 57; head, human behavior division, School of Medicine, Vanderbilt University; 16 August.

Charlotte Elliott, 91; retired plant pathologist, U.S. Department of Agriculture; 7 August.

John E. Fenton, 75; former president, Suffolk University; 14 August.

Philipp Gross, 74; retired director, Fulmer Research Institute, England; 20 May.

James P. Heath, 59; professor of biology, San Jose State University; 6 June.

Paul L. O'Connor, 65; former president, Xavier University; 10 September.

Godfrey Vassallo, 81; professor emeritus of physics, University of Portland; 5 September.

George Zyskind, 44; professor of statistics, Iowa State University; 9 September.