

WHAT'S HAPPENED TO CONGRESS?

BY CARLISLE BARGERON

OUR present Congress, all of whose Representatives and one-third of whose Senators face a critical wartime election campaign, is a disturbed, disgruntled and somewhat bewildered body of men and women. It is suffering from an aggravated inferiority complex. As a result of its own mistakes and the machinations of its detractors, and the trend of these uneasy times, Congress has reached what may be an all-time low in official self-esteem. Its members feel uneasily that life is passing them by, that they are little more than spectators in the greatest crisis in our history.

Once the Senate was "the greatest deliberative body in the world" — a proper goal for a man's ambitions. Today, there are all too many Senators who feel that, conditions being what they are, service in the Senate is no longer a worthy career in itself; they are therefore using it as a stepping stone to a Federal judgeship. Representatives, too, are weary and labor under a feeling of futility.

This is a condition which can't be shrugged off with the cynical observation that Congress deserves no better fate. For Congress is you and me and the hundred and thirty million. Congress is the by-the-people branch of the Government, and when it loses prestige, the people lose prestige. No matter who you are, there is probably a man in Congress who thinks and talks as you do. There are men in this Congress who topped their classes at Harvard, and men who never went to school at all. Most of our sects, castes, 'races and political groups are represented. With its faults and its virtues, Congress is us.

In general, its feeling of inferiority, of being a political step-child, started long before we got into the war. And in general it works off that feeling in an all-embracing soreness. It is sore at the President and the bureaucrats who are running the war. It is sore at certain newspapers and magazines which have heaped coals of fire upon it. Congress is sore at us, the

constituents, for our tendency to boot Congressmen in their backsides when things get tough. And also, I think Congress is sore at itself for having surrendered so much of its power to the Administration.

Things are going badly for us as yet and, instinctively, we are demanding that Congress "do something." Congress is being deluged with letters criticizing it for Japs being in the Aleutians, for the African reverse, for the rubber mess, for gasoline rationing, for priority rulings, for the plight of small business, for price ceilings, and for the thousand domestic inconveniences that are coming along with the military reverses. But the plain truth is that Congress can't do much about it all, because it has delegated away most of its powers.

Billions in "blank check" funds have been voted to the President, who also has been given a free hand in the lend-lease expenditures. Jesse Jones and several other agencies have broad lending powers. The executive has been given control of basic farm crops and some farm prices. The Radio Commission enjoys immense authority over the whole radio industry. Under the Walsh-Healy Act, the Labor Department can virtually prescribe wages, hours and working standards

in most industries. The President's reciprocal tariff-making power has been one of his great leverages in foreign affairs. The Federal Reserve Board has been given complete power over the whole credit system. All such actions may have been right and necessary, but they have stripped Congress of power it once wielded. And Congress blames the people for its impotency, claiming that it relinquished its powers reluctantly and only in response to public pressure.

In this helpless state, Congress has gone almost hysterical in its efforts to protect itself and to strike back at its critics. Recently, Speaker of the House Sam Rayburn growled that he was getting "damned tired" of criticism. Other members think they discern the outlines of a plot to make Congress look like an outmoded agency in a revised American world. Senator Walter F. George, in an article entitled *Don't Blame Congress for Everything*, pointed out that Congress has little to do with the conduct of the war; that virtually dictatorial power is now lodged in the executive branch, both for the conduct of the war and for the regulation of domestic economy; and that about all Congress can do is to vote appropriations and make periodic investigations.

Criticism is always a serious matter to Congress, and particularly serious in a difficult election year like this one. The primaries thus far have indicated that the "ins" are going to catch hell. Some incumbents have already been defeated, while others have squeezed through the primaries only by the skin of their teeth.

It isn't difficult to find the reasons for this plight of Congress. The New Deal has simply by-passed and emasculated Congress. Since 1933, Congress has steadily retreated before the advances of the bureaucrats. Now Congress finds itself held in contempt by many of the very bureaucrats it helped to create. Once Congress held tightly onto the power of the purse. But within a space of eight years, our Congress has surrendered the purse strings to the executive. Bureaucrats can spend and lend billions any day without consulting Congress and Mr. Roosevelt has uncanceled billions in "blank checks" lying at hand.

II

There was a time when the President seldom appointed a Federal official in any state without the approval of the ranking members of his party in Congress from that

state. In the few instances where a President attempted to ignore this custom, the Senate would rise up and put him in his place. The Senate even turned down Cabinet appointees on occasion just to keep the President's feet on the ground. Members of the House controlled the lesser appointees, such as postmasters. These appointees were obligated to Senators and Representatives. Thus the President had to work with Congress. He had to take its leaders into his councils. They helped formulate policy.

But the New Deal scuttled this arrangement. With the billions voted to it for relief, work projects, farm subsidies, homestead and housing experiments, CCC and NYA, it went directly to the mayors and governors and their political organizations, which naturally were larger than the organizations controlled by Senators and Representatives.

The Senate still has the power of confirmation, but the number of appointees subject to it is now negligible compared to the thousands of newly-created jobs, paying from five to fifteen thousand dollars a year, which are controlled exclusively by the executive machine.

Only recently, the Senate sought to bring some of Leon Henderson's

appointees to the Office of Price Administration, those receiving \$4500 a year and more, under its confirmatory power; but it received no support in any section of the press. Nor did either the House or the Senate get any appreciable backing in its determination to hold down Mr. Henderson's budget.

Congress, almost to a man, keenly resents the manner in which it is being kept ignorant of the conduct of the war. Its members must come to the working press men for information on war plans and war developments. To keep up the amenities, the President invites Congressional leaders to the White House on occasion, but he neither confides in them nor asks their counsel. When he wants advice or aid, he turns to men like Harry Hopkins, who have no contact with the voters.

The plight of the once proud and powerful Senate Foreign Relations Committee is almost pitiful. In the midst of a war, with all the attendant negotiations and understandings with other nations, one would think that this would be the busiest committee on Capitol Hill. Yet Chairman Tom Connally seldom finds cause to call it into session. When the President went to meet Churchill to formulate the

Atlantic Charter — supposedly the most far-reaching commitment in the country's history — he did not invite a member of the committee to accompany him, nor did he inform the committee of the proceedings.

As a result, our whole conduct of the war, our chart of the future, and the entire program of the Four Freedoms for Peace, are based on little more than a verbal understanding between two men, either or both of whom may pass from the scene by death or defeat before the war is over.

More recently, we have entered into a broad "agreement" with Russia concerning both the conduct of the war and plans after the war. Only Mr. Roosevelt and Mr. Hopkins, on our side, know what this "agreement" is, since our Senate Foreign Relations Committee, which, under the Constitution, must consider all treaties and international pacts, knows only what it reads in the newspapers. In Britain, we may note in passing, Churchill's negotiations with other nations have been under constant examination by Commons, but in America today we do it differently.

The unhappy position of Congress is, therefore, apparent. It is caught helplessly between a restive people on the one hand and the

proliferating executive bureaus on the other. When a plant closes down, a Congressman hears about it — *and plenty*. Yet the bureau head won't talk to him on the telephone. With the temperature up to one hundred in a crowded Washington, your Congressman can't ponder big things like the Four Freedoms; he is kept busy worrying about the little things like gas rationing and priorities back in Podunk.

III

This is no attempt to whitewash the present Congress, or to present it as an efficient body of statesmen that's been done wrong. It is only an attempt to explain what Congress is and how its position has changed in Washington. Congress's failures are our failures.

Perhaps we make a mistake when we try to pretend that Congress is a nobler body than it is. Congress can't be "efficient." It was never intended to be. It was intended to be, and it is, "representative." It's a conglomerate aggregation of Americans. There are rich men, poor men, beggar men, but no downright thieves. There is a plenitude of lawyers; there are farmers, doctors, bankers, businessmen, newspapermen and labor

leaders. There is a former railroad brakeman. Senator Styles Bridges is a former county farm agent. There is a former baseball pitcher. Representative Woodrum plays the piano lustily for House singing. There are Protestants, Catholics, Jews, and one Negro member. There are nine women. Representative Marcantonio, of New York, sits as a member of the American Labor Party but is generally looked upon as a communist.

There are brave men in Congress. A year or so ago, a crazy man brandished a pistol in the House gallery. Most of the members fell to the floor or ran for the cloak-rooms. But Representative Melvin Maas, overseas veteran of the first World War, walked calmly to a position below the man and ordered him to toss the pistol to him. The man complied.

It's a mistake to believe that Congressmen have easy financial sailing on their salaries. What with campaign expenses, entertaining their constituents, and Washington living expenses, most of them are hard put to get by. Washington bankers have trouble with their checks and Washington merchants have trouble with their accounts. Senator Park Trammell, of Florida, used to sleep in his office to save money; and one Georgia Con-

gressman shared a room in a rooming house with a railroad brakeman, each having it for twelve hours a day.

Ninety-five per cent of the members die poor. Congress buries them and gives their wives a year's salary, which, quite often, is all the widows have. The widow of Senator Joe Robinson, for all his long career, had to get a job as post-mistress after his death. Old Jim Watson, a colorful leader in Hoover's time, is eking out a meagre living by practicing law in Washington. The scholarly Henry F. Ashurst, who represented Arizona in the Senate from its admission into the union until his unexpected defeat in 1940, is now working at a subordinate Government job paying around five thousand dollars.

Much is made of it when a Congressman is paid for a lecture. Yet the headlines in the executive branch get as much as one thousand dollars a speech, and no mention of it is ever made in the newspapers. Members of Congress put their relatives on the payroll and rightly expect to have the fact flung at them at every turn. Yet members of the executive branch are far more successful at this practice and they enjoy immunity from publicity.

A perpetual problem for Con-

gressmen is not to let their constituents think they have gone high-hat. Most of them are afraid to own a formal suit, and when the President gives his annual reception, they have to rent suits. When the British Embassy threw a party for the King and Queen on their visit to Washington, almost every Senator sent an announcement back home that he wasn't going to put on any dog or wear formal clothes. Representative Dirksen, of Illinois, one of the ablest men in the House, once told his constituents that he was always embarrassed when asked to the White House because he didn't have any evening clothes. A sympathetic widow sent him the suit of her dead husband. Campaigning for re-election, the late Senator Pat Harrison, of Mississippi, had to deny a "charge" that he played golf.

The "pension grab" was the most unfortunate error made by this Congress. And, significantly or not, it was the President himself who precipitated the outburst about the "grab." The subject had been discussed, off and on, for several years. Most members of Congress figured that since Congress and the Administration had been so generous with pensions for almost everybody else, there would be little objection to Congressmen being

allowed to purchase the same sort of security. The day the bill was passed, reporters joked about it and gave it not more than two or three paragraphs in their dispatches. There was no outburst. Fully a week later, the President, at his press conference, volunteered the information that under the bill, which he could have vetoed, he could retire on \$37,000 a year for the rest of his life. This threw the matter on the front pages and provoked a storm during which the actual provisions of the bill were forgotten.

Most Congressmen believe that the X-card tumult was deliberately provoked by the bureau boys. The truth is that less than two hundred out of 531 members of Congress got X-cards and it is still a debatable question whether they were not urged by the issuing authority to take them. The fact that hundreds of bureau boys, who do not have to run errands for the folks back home, got

X-cards was completely overlooked.

As one who has spent many years watching the Washington scene, I can't report that this Congress looks any better or any worse than previous Congresses. There are all sorts of men in it and the average is not a lofty intellectual who can debate with Walter Lippmann. But this Congress, as well as some of the men who observe it from the press gallery, is concerned about the chain of circumstances which is causing many Americans to distrust and despise their own Congress.

I think it would be wise for us to remember this: If we don't like Congress, we can change the entire House and a third of the Senate every two years. But we can't get our hands on the boys who've got the bureau jobs. And the men who built America thought it was awfully important for an "inefficient" Congress to retain some of the powers which our Congress has surrendered.

Totalitarianism Is a Sacrilege

BEING peculiarly God's own, that is, truly free, we are consequently to be subjected to him alone, and cannot, without the greatest sacrilege imaginable, be reduced into a condition of slavery to any man. — JOHN MILTON

WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT CANCER

BY WILLIAM SEAMAN BAINBRIDGE, M.D.

THE first truth to be learned about cancer is that, unlike many other diseases, it is no respecter of persons, places, or things. Cancer has been found among the most primitive tribes as well as the most highly civilized peoples; among the lowly as well as the high born; in the deepest jungles and in our most cosmopolitan cities. It has been found in animals, fish, fowl and reptiles as well as in the human race.

Cancer is universal. It is also one of the oldest of known diseases, recognized by the ancients at least two thousand years ago. They felt that there was a similarity between the tumor with its "roots" and the crab with its claws, and therefore called the disease cancer or "crab." Our early forbears believed that the tumor arose from the "roots" in the body, but today we know that the tumor is the local starting point and that the so-called roots are the offshoots. In the centuries since the first mention of tumors and cancer, we have traveled far, but the essential cause

of the disease is still an unsolved mystery. Opinions with regard to this have been exceedingly diversified, while treatments suggested and tried have been numerous and fantastic.

What is called cancer today is not the cancer of the ancients. In those days, the general term included a variety of diseases which have come gradually to be identified as separate entities and treated as such and it is likely that further differentiation may take place. Why, then, it is natural to ask, does one hear everywhere that cancer is on the increase?

Cancer is not materially on the increase, but there appears to be a greater number of cases due, in part, to more refinement of diagnosis, more carefully kept records, finding the condition ordinarily unsuspected until operation or autopsy, and greater longevity, which brings more people into the age brackets where cancer is more likely to develop.

Millions of dollars are spent annually to solve the cancer prob-