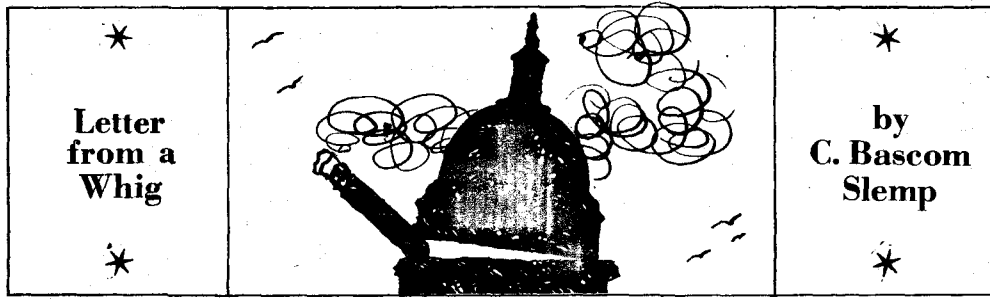


a letter from a constituent he knows to be dead. That should rattle his filibuster.

Activists should organize a Deceased Citizens' League, named, perhaps, The Dead Hand, to dramatize the political plight of the discontinued, to point out, for instance, such abuses as requiring job ap-

plicants to submit to a physical examination. Such tests are obviously discriminatory, catering as they do to the peculiar abilities of the living. Perhaps employers might be induced to accept an autopsy instead of the conventional physical. At any rate, pressure must be exerted on all employers to hire the inanimate.

This coordinated political activity should build to a crescendo, a cataclysmic climax of activism, specifically: the Dead Persons' March on Washington. Just think of it! Ten thousand posthumous patriots wading in the Reflecting Pool! Not even a federal marshal could bust George Washington or Robert Frost or General Grant. □



Congressional Reorganization

(WASHINGTON)—In a letter to his colleagues, a GOP congressman recently wrote: "There are some Democrats who are stating that the President has lost the confidence of the people and should resign. Quite clearly, if that is so, the congressional member himself should do likewise." This statement was prompted by two recent public opinion polls. In a Sindlinger Company poll Congress received a positive rating of only 25.7 percent (2.1 percent excellent, 23 percent good), as compared to a negative rating of 69 percent (47 percent fair, 22 percent poor, and 4.8 percent no opinion). Similarly, a poll by Louis Harris revealed a negative rating of 69 percent for Congress, as compared to a positive rating of 21 percent, and 10 percent not sure. When the public was asked to rate Congress in specific areas (including its handling of Watergate, impeachment, the economy, energy, and inspiring confidence in government) the results were even more negative, ranging from 72 to 88 percent.

The results of these polls serve to illustrate that if Watergate has eroded the stature of the Presidency, Congress' continuing inertia and unwillingness to assert itself has also threatened the Constitutional Trinity.

In 1946 Congress undertook its first major effort in reorganization. This resulted in the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946. Less than two decades later (1965), Congress found it necessary once again to initiate reform proceedings. And again, in 1970, a legislative reorganization was passed. But despite these various reorganizations Congress has still found itself incapable of dealing with some of its most basic tasks, including the raising and spending of the tax dollar and now the energy crisis. Thus, the question has once again arisen, what can Congress do? (Reorganize, of course!)

A special committee, known as the Select committee on Committees (under the chairmanship of Missouri Democrat, Richard Bolling), has recently come up with a proposal to structurally reorganize the present 21 standing and 125 subcommit-

tees of the House of Representatives. That some reorganization is needed is a point that finds no contention in Congress. Overlapping jurisdiction has consistently handicapped and delayed the passage of legislation. To illustrate the point. During the Ninety-second Congress over 350 bills and 30 resolutions covering the entire spectrum of fuels and energy-related issues were introduced, but no legislation came to the floor of the House for consideration. Thus far in the Ninety-third Congress, six Senate, six House, and a number of joint committees have conducted a wide variety of hearings on energy problems. But to date only fuel allocation and conservation measures (with the possible exception of the Alaskan pipeline bill) have been decided upon.

Illustrative of committee jurisdictional problems is legislation which would facilitate the construction of oil superports. Three House committees (Interior, Public Works, and Merchant Marine and Fisheries) held hearings on the subject of oil superports. Merchant Marine and Fisheries and Interior were able to come to agreement on a common bill, but Public Works would not compromise. As a result both committees passed bills, but the House Committee on Rules (unwilling to antagonize either committee) has refused to grant a rule for either committee's bill. The legislation can consequently not come before the House of Representatives for consideration.

The Bolling Committee's recommendations are the culmination of one year of hearings and debate. The committee has proposed reducing the number of standing House committees by exactly one, although three committees would be abolished (Merchant Marine and Fisheries, Internal Security, and Post Office and Civil Service). Nevertheless, the committee's recommendations are significant.

The major revisions in committee jurisdictional assignments would be to curtail the all-powerful czarship of Ways and Means Committee Chairman, Wilbur

Mills. Mills has had almost total control over all economic-related legislation, including health insurance, foreign trade, and taxation. Under the Bolling proposal Ways and Means would lose its jurisdiction over foreign trade (which would go to the Foreign Affairs Committee) and health insurance (which would go to a new committee on Commerce and Health). The House Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs would be redesignated the Committee on Energy and Environment and it would assume the authority for most of the legislation in those two areas. Another change would be to divide the Education and Labor Committee into two committees. This has been one committee which has been dominated by liberal congressmen, but one which has also perennially failed to attract conservative members because of a "graveyard syndrome."

Other changes would include reorganizing the Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee and renaming it the Commerce and Health Committee. Again, this committee would assume the jurisdiction implied in the name and lose its energy, transportation, and environmental role. The Public Works Committee would be renamed the Public Works and Transportation Committee. In addition to its present responsibility for the Highway Trust Fund, the Public Works Committee would also assume responsibility for mass transit (currently with Banking and Currency), railway transportation, and civil aviation (currently with Commerce), as well as most of the responsibilities now held by Merchant Marine and Fisheries.

The Committee on Standards of Official Conduct (the newest of the twenty-one standing committees) would assume responsibility for elections and campaign finance. The areas for the committees on Agriculture, Foreign Affairs, and Government Operations would also be expanded. House members would like to see the House Foreign Affairs Committee raised to the prominence of its Senate counterpart and the reorganizational proposal represents an effort to accomplish that goal. The Government Operations Committee would also gain high visibility by incorporating the responsibilities now held by Post Office and Civil Service.

Needless to say, the curtailment of fiefdoms and empires produced an outcry from the chairmen who would be stripped of their all-powerful roles. Wilbur Mills argued that the separation of taxes from benefits would "lead to potentially disastrous consequences, both for the beneficiaries and for responsible fiscal policy." (Although there hasn't been much of the latter lately.) Mills also argued that much of the jurisdictional reshuffling could result

in Congress' inability to initiate certain kinds of legislation.

For many, in contrast, the structural reforms of the committees do not go far enough. These critics argue that the "supercommittees" (Ways and Means, Rules, and Appropriations) still retain far too much power. Others, however, believe that if the Bolling proposals are accepted by the House of Representatives (and that still remains questionable) an era of post-war congressional giants will come to an end.

Other perennial reform issues in Congress have been the seniority system and committee secrecy. The seniority system has already seen major modifications during the last two sessions of Congress. House Republicans, for example, select their ranking minority members by secret ballot on each nominee submitted by its committee on committees. The House Democrats also now permit the Party Caucus to consider separately each recommendation by their committee on committees. Theretofore it could only be done en bloc. A secret vote on any chairman can also be obtained at the request of ten members.

After the Reorganization Act of 1970, the House of Representatives authorized radio

and television coverage of House committee hearings. The Act also required the publication of all committee roll-call votes. It further provided that all committee hearings would be open to the public, "except when the committee by majority vote determines otherwise."

In March of 1973 secret committee meetings were further curtailed when Congress adopted H.R. 259. This resolution provided that all committee hearings be open to the public unless a majority of the members voted to close a session because of national security, or the possible defamation of character. Such a majority vote required that a quorum be present and that a roll-call vote would be taken. As a result of this legislation almost 80 percent of all committee hearings were held in public in 1973. But not all committees have abided by the resolution. The Appropriations Committee reported nineteen meetings, but only one was open to the public, and the House Ways and Means Committee held forty closed and twenty-four open meetings. The House Committee on Administration was apparently extensively involved in matters of national security and defamation of character because it held eighteen meetings, none of which were open to the public, and it took no votes to close its sessions. Structural reform in it-

self can consequently accomplish little. As a result Sidney Scheuer, the Chairman of the National Committee for an Effective Congress, has argued that institutional changes notwithstanding: "The answer to our political crisis depends on the quality of the individuals who make up the legislative branch."

Similarly, political commentator Elizabeth Drew has charged that regardless of how Congress may talk in its orotund fashion, it has lacked the seriousness of intent necessary to assert its constitutional responsibilities: "Congressional oversight of the executive is a function that is clearly within the grasp of Congress. It does not call for collective action. It does not require heroism. It does not even demand determined nibbling at a dragon. It does demand an interest in doing the job, and in making the appropriate arrangements. But the Congress has a curious disinclination to do so."

If public whim is to be the barometer for determining the course of political action, if we are to go the course of Fourth Republic France with Mr. Nixon, then the Congress (controlled by the Democrats as it is) must set the same standard for itself. And if that is to be the case, come election time there can be only one course of action, and that is to throw the "buggers" out. □

Stephen R. Maloney

Streaking: A Revisionist View

THE TWENTY-TWO thousand students at the University of Georgia are basically a conservative group. The few resident radicals occasionally agonize that UGA students fall below national norms in such essential aspects of the collegiate *Zeitgeist* as: organizing civil rights marches; shouting down conservative speakers; favoring abortion on demand; disbelieving in God; advocating amnesty for all; participating in group sex; and voting for George McGovern. The strongest and best organized group on campus, in fact, is not Gay Liberation but Campus Crusade for Christ.

So, you might ask, how on God's green earth did the University of Georgia become the Streaking Capital of the Western World? (In the popular mind, of course, Georgia is not number one in anything, save the number of obese deputy sheriffs and the production of moonshine whiskey.) But all that is "changed, changed utterly," as Yeats said in "Easter 1916," his poem about the great transformation brought about in the Irish people by the Easter Rebellion.

On Thursday, March 7, 1974, Georgia earned a paragraph (well, maybe a footnote) in the Handbook of College Madness. Blessed with a balmy climate, this state often witnesses an early advent of what William F. Buckley, Jr. calls the "silly season"—spring. Warm weather and the reports of the decriminalization of exhibitionism in other places had brought out local streakers. Almost exclusively males, they gathered in groups of two or three,

donned their ski masks (every such object in this snowless state has now been sold; my informants claim), raced around, and titillated the locals. But Thursday was something else.

After some nasty incidents on previous days (tear gas and mace used by the Athens police on spectators, rocks and beer bottles used by spectators on the police), the university administration capitulated. For one day (March 7) the campus would serve as a sanctuary for streakers. (Our administrators have learned the essential lesson of survival: talk tough and then give up.) Excitement rose on the campus. Posters went up all over town encouraging students to break the national record, which was assessed rather arbitrarily as 500 streakers—the number that had cavorted earlier in the week at the University of South Carolina.

Now Athens is a nice, sleepy Southern university town. George F. Babbitt would love it here; he would probably be elected mayor. The present mayor did not approve of streaking, although he has managed to suffer the existence of several locally famous brothels for decades. (They, like the illegal liquor establishments that flourished before the city went wet, are good for business.) Well, the mayor issued various public statements, the essence of which was, "Oh woe is us." Classical and Christian society was doomed, he indicated. Other opponents of the Big Streak came out. James "Sloppy" Floyd, a Georgia state legislator, spoke in the great tradition of

Senator Claghorn: "Even if we have to expell a thousand students at the University of Georgia to get rid of this, we should do it." And then he added the immortal words: "We're just sitting idly by and letting this ridiculous thing go on. Somebody needs to bring us back to our senses and stop this cock-eyed thing." Oh Freud, wouldst thou were living now and still compiling thy catalogues.

After another big University of South Carolina "streak," their president showed that he could use words as sloppily as Representative Floyd: "It is time for the exhibitionist students and their cheering supporters of thousands to lay aside this flaunting of modesty and return to acceptable values." Presumably these acceptable values do not include a proper reverence for the English language. Hughes Rudd of CBS news chided streakers, albeit more literately, predicting that thumb-sucking would be big in 1976. The Black Student Union at Georgia, which had been doing its own things, like disrupting a speech by Nobel Prize winner William Schockley, found streakers to be bad nudes. One leader of the BSU pronounced streaking a "conspiracy" to distract people from the grievances of blacks.

About this time I decided there must be something essentially healthy about streaking. After all, with all the boobs against it, the phenomenon could not be all bad. The final step in my conversion came when a dear, hard-working lady at the university spoke to me confidentially. She