

# Revise Congress

By Merlo Pusey

From his column in the Washington Post

**T**HE session in which it was hoped Congress would redeem itself began with a filibuster. Instead of inspiring new confidence in Congress as our national policymaking body, the performance in the Senate sent a wave of disgust over the nation. Millions of plain people saw in it not so much a revolt against an unwise piece of legislation as an indication that Congress is failing to meet its responsibility as a legislative body.

There is not much point in trying to apportion the blame for this foolish gabfest. Certainly the filibusters must be severely condemned for using such an undemocratic weapon. But sponsors of the F.E.P.C. bill are also open to criticism for injecting so controversial an issue into the emergency now confronting Congress. Most serious of all, Congress itself is open to censure for its failure to replace its out-worn legislative machinery which reduces law-making to a hit-or-miss process.

Actually, of course, filibustering is one of the minor evils by which Congress is afflicted. It arouses a great deal of hostility because it is spectacular—a public demonstration of disorderly and undemocratic procedure. But in practice it is less important than the waste of congressional time on trivia, the inefficiency of the present committee system and

the lack of leadership in working out a legislative program.

The big question about Congress is whether it will devote itself whole-heartedly to overcoming these major handicaps. Last year it summoned the courage to order a searching examination of its structure and method of working. That study has now been completed. An excellent report has been prepared and is being considered by the La Follette-Monroney Committee before submission to the entire Congress.

Contents of the report have not been released, but there is sufficient agreement on the nature of the problem to justify the assumption that it will urge strengthening Congress in the following manner:

1. Create policy committees in both the House and Senate. This is probably the most important single move that can be made to strengthen our democratic system. To be effective, of course, these policy committees would have to work with the President as a sort of legislative cabinet. It would be their job to outline, in collaboration with the President, a legislative program for every session. The President's message on the state of the union would not then go to a skeptical Congress as advice from afar. Rather, it would reflect the best judgment of the President and his congressional

advisers—the program of a united administration. The result would inevitably be a lessening of the friction that usually arises when the policymaking functions of the President and Congress are exercised in wholly separate spheres.

2. Sharply reduce the number of congressional committees. Legislative responsibility is now haphazardly disbursed among 33 standing committees in the Senate and 48 in the House, plus about 20 special committees. Each tends to become a tight little presidium in its own field, with **wasteful overlapping** of work performed. Such loose organization discourages any comprehensive policymaking and tends to narrow legislative vision to pin-point problems.

If it is true that the La Follette-Monroney Committee proposes to consolidate all these heterogeneous bodies into 16 major committees in each house, there will be howls of indignation from those who feel the chairs of authority slipping from under them. But the public will loudly applaud. And if there is general appreciation of the crisis that democracy faces, the clamor will force the changes through.

3. Relieve Congress of trivial duties for which it has no time. This will involve creation of a local government for the District of

Columbia and some machinery for handling the innumerable claims now submitted to Congress in the form of special bills. It will involve also better staffing of Congressional committees and strengthening of the Legislative Reference Service.

Uninformed critics often assume more work by Congressmen is all that is necessary. Slight acquaintances with Capitol Hill would show them that Congressmen are among the most over-worked groups in America. One essential of any reform plan is to relieve them of minor duties so that they may concentrate on the basic task of shaping our national policy.

The question is whether Congress will have the foresight and statesmanship to prepare itself for the larger role it must play to keep democracy virile and responsive to the will of the people. Will it let fixed habits of doing things and little vested interests of a few individual members stand in the way of modernizing our legislative system? Or will it strike out boldly for adjustment of its machinery to the age in which we are living, as did the founding fathers 159 years ago? The answer that Congress gives may be expected in the long run to overshadow any action taken on the emergency bills now commanding the limelight.

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### DEMANDING HIS RIGHTS

•Two perspiring men in Oakland, California, walked off the streets into a tavern. One of them ordered a beer. While the bartender rang up the 10-cent sale, they pulled guns and robbed the till of \$200.

As they turned to leave, the one who ordered the beer stopped to gulp it down. His companion admonished him to get along. "What's your hurry?" snapped the drinker. "I paid for it, didn't I?"

## Blueprint—Labor Peace

By H. I. Phillips

From his column "The Once Over" in the Rochester Democrat and Chronicle

**T**HIS is the Elmer Twitchell Plan for Better Understandings Between Labor and Management:

1.—Fundamentally all the trouble is due to the fact neither side completely understands the other. There can be no peace until some system is adopted, so that each side can experience all the headaches of the other.

2.—Workers do not get enough golf. Employers do not get enough life without golf. Let the workingman have the golf clubs six months a year and provide him with a set of clubs. After a few weeks of worrying over backswings and the right grip, all other problems will seem relatively unimportant. And the boss, six months away from golf and not giving a darn about the pivot or knee action would find himself a different person. Positively.

3.—Let the workers split with the bosses the routine of going through the mail, answering the necessary letters, correcting Miss Abernathy's spelling, trying to find the memoranda which was put where it couldn't be mislaid, wading through those long lunches at the Business Men's Club.

(And make the employers eat some of those sandwiches put into a worker's lunch box).

4.—Alternate months let the workers prepare banquet speeches,

sit through dull operas, get into stiff shirts and tuxedos for dinner, use three types of fork and worry about stomach ulcers. And make the boss go to those smokers, stop for a beer at Hennessy's, have a quickie of corned beef and cabbage and endure all those double features.

5.—For part of every month make the workers serve on new relief campaigns, worry over dinner speeches, explain to stockholders, wade through the questionnaires, fill out the required federal forms and always keep their pants pressed; while the bosses shake their own drinks, help mind the baby, listen to the radio in their stocking feet and tend the furnace.

6.—Let the workingman have three homes, two cars, an outdoor swimming pool, a yacht and those week-end house parties. That should help make him realize what the boss has to stand up under. And make the employer live in the little bungalow, raise tropical fish, get along with the undersized medicine cabinet, use the family tub, fix his own plumbing, eat in his shirt sleeves and help eight kids with the homework. Brother, there will be closer understandings after that.

(Copies of the above plan may be had by sending in a barrel of potatoes, a priority on a new Ford and eight lumps of sugar).