

# REVIEWS

CONGRESS AT THE CROSSROADS. By George B. Galloway. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1946. Pp. 374. \$3.50

EVENTS of recent years have brought sharply into focus the role of Congress in the structure and functioning of our government. In all modern industrial nations the press of technological and social change has completely revolutionized the processes of government. The sweeping range of state intervention required to maintain some sort of balance and order in society, the extreme complexity of formulating and administering that necessary regulation, the need for constant adjustment and refinement of the controls undertaken, have combined to raise the problems of modern government to a new and unprecedented magnitude.

Nor has the change been less profound in this country because we have continued to operate within the framework of free enterprise. On the contrary, the attempt to control a complex economic and social system by somewhat indirect and remote methods often poses more intricate questions than direct state operation of economic enterprise under a system of nationalization or socialization. Thus the effective regulation of privately owned utilities, by administrative and judicial rate fixing, demands a more delicate piece of governmental machinery than the blunt establishment of rates by a state owned and operated bureau.

By and large, the changes forced by this shift from a laissez-faire to a service state have taken place exclusively in the executive branch of our government. The main flow of new state activity has burgeoned forth in a vast expansion of our bureaucracy—a tremendous increase in size, an unprecedented shift in form and function. Our other political institutions—the legislature, the judiciary, the political party—have so far resisted the impact. Neither in organization, procedure, nor size of staff have they altered materially in the last hundred years.

*Congress at the Crossroads* is a study in the failure of Congress to adapt itself to this new situation. Mr. Galloway was staff director of the Joint Committee on the Organization of Congress—the LaFollette-Monroney Committee—whose well-handled hearings and report led to the passage last summer of the Legislative Reorganization Act.<sup>1</sup> The picture he gives us is brightened by this inside point of view. Mr. Galloway has obviously hob-nobbed with enough congressmen in the course of his work to obtain the flavor of congressional operations.

As Mr. Galloway makes clear, Congress has fallen down sadly in the performance of its three main functions—law making, supervising the bureaucracy, and representing and informing the public. The simple facts are that

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1. Pub. L. No. 601, 79th Cong., 2d Sess., (Aug. 2, 1946).

the initiative in law making has shifted to the President, who formulates the legislative program and presses for its enactment; that the actual drafting of most important measures is done by the bureaucracy or by private groups; and that the role of Congress is largely one of registering approval or disapproval, or approval with minor modifications. So far as supervision of executive agencies is concerned, the efforts of Congress are haphazard and disconnected, often ineffective, and frequently needlessly oppressive. As to the representation of public opinion, there is good reason for feeling that Congress is usually behind the public and that it is far more likely to be representing the conservative organs of public opinion than the real interests of its constituents.

There has been a public tendency, Mr. Galloway notes, to write Congress off as incompetent or useless, or both. Obviously nothing could be more dangerous. The role of Congress has certainly changed; it must, for instance, turn to the administrative agencies for considerable guidance in framing legislation. But the very growth of the administrative process, cut off from direct responsibility to the electorate, reinforces the critical position of Congress as the most significant bastion in our democratic institutions. It becomes of utmost importance, therefore, to reappraise the functions of Congress in the modern era and to take the steps necessary to convert it into an effective and forceful instrument.

Mr. Galloway attributes the shortcomings of Congress primarily to inertia in failing to revise its antiquated machinery of operation, and he suggests a number of reforms, many of them rather detailed in character. While the book is curiously lacking in emphasis upon the relative significance of the numerous proposals for change, it does contain suggestions for relieving the Congressman of the overwhelming but petty burdens which now largely occupy his time, for furnishing members and committees with a more adequate staff, for abolishing the seniority system as the basis for selection of committee chairmen, and for encouraging a more cooperative relationship with the executive branch through creation of a Joint Executive-Legislative Council. Apparently Mr. Galloway also favors curtailment of the powers of the House Rules Committee and limitation of the Senate filibuster.

The importance of these reforms would be difficult to overestimate. Mr. Galloway gives a graphic description, for example, of how a Congressman spends his time in Washington and how he uses the pitifully small staff allotted to him; a glimpse can be caught in the quotation from Congressman Luther Patrick of Alabama:

"A Congressman has become an expanded messenger boy, an employment agency, getter-out of the Navy, Army, marines, ward heeler, wound healer, trouble shooter, law explainer, bill finder, issue translator, resolution interpreter, controversy oil pourer, gladhand extender, business promotor, convention goer, civic ills skirmisher, veterans' affairs adjuster, ex-serviceman's champion, watchdog for the under dog, sympathizer with the upper dog, namer and kisser of babies, recoverer of lost baggage, soberer of dele-

gates, adjuster for traffic violators, voters straying into Washington and into toils of the law, binder up of broken hearts, financial wet nurse, good samaritan, contributor to good causes—there are so many good causes—cornerstone layer, public building and bridge dedicator, ship christener—to be sure he does get in a little flag waving—and a little constitutional hoisting and spread-eagle work, but it is getting harder every day to find time to properly study legislation—the very business we are primarily here to discharge, and that must be done above all things.”<sup>2</sup>

It is not surprising, under such working conditions, that so few of our legislators even grasp the nature of the job that Congress ought to be working on now.

Or take the equally elementary matter of staffing. This is an age of experts. The basic strength of the bureaucracy, in relation to the other institutions of government, resides to a very large degree in the sheer force of numbers. There are hundreds of thousands of employees in the executive branch studying the problems of the country, assembling data, learning from experience. Prior to the Legislative Reorganization Act the top salary paid to committee clerks (with very few exceptions), was \$3900 in the Senate and \$3300 in the House; committee staffs, including stenographic force, ranged from one to ten people; the Legislative Reference Service had a professional staff of 58 to handle congressional demands running at a rate of 15,000 per year; the Senate and House drafting services together embraced only eight lawyers, two law assistants and four clerks. Some improvement has been made by the Act but even now a Senator is allowed only \$13,920 and a Representative only \$9,500 for a staff that spends most its time running minor errands for constituents or answering mail. It is scarcely surprising that Congress finds most current activity of government taking place outside the scope of its control, and that it largely fails to understand what is going on, much less to establish basic policies for guidance or supervision.

Some of the changes Mr. Galloway recommends have, as indicated, been incorporated in the Legislative Reorganization Act. But that Act is at best a feeble first step in the reconstruction of Congressional machinery. A real revival of the legislative institution, moreover, depends upon more than changes in machinery. In fact, the sheer mechanical improvement in congressional efficiency might well operate to hamper the over-all operation of government unless Congress can be geared into a functioning whole designed to meet the issues of the day. This reorientation depends upon factors basic to our political structure. Mr. Galloway's book, unfortunately, throws little light on some of these more fundamental issues.

One matter on which we should have more information, for instance, is the interesting question of what kind of men actually compose Congress as it exists today. Mr. Galloway does summarize some of the facts with regard to

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2. P. 61.

the age, education, occupation and geographical representation of the members. He makes no effort, however, to go beyond the readily available data. But certainly a more complete insight into the manner of men who form the Congress—their economic and social background, their personal predilections, their tenderness to various pressures—is essential to any understanding of the capacity of the legislature to deal with the problems of the modern world, or to obtaining for service in the legislature the men best qualified to carry on its functions.

Linked with this question of personnel is the problem of representation. It would be important to have a careful study, which Mr. Galloway's book does not attempt, of the reasons for the consistent failure of Congress over the past several decades to represent the real needs of the electorate in a period of growing crisis. Undoubtedly the answer lies partly in various restrictions upon suffrage, such as the poll tax, but there are other factors going to the basic political health of the American people.

This leads to a third, and perhaps the most significant, aspect of the problems of Congress—the party system. The weaknesses of Congress reflect our weak, schizophrenic parties, undisciplined and unable to agree on a program. This situation has prevailed in America since, more than a century ago, the Whig party abandoned the rugged honesty of conservative Federalism and began to affect a spurious color of liberalism. It is only through realignment of party forces and reinvigoration of the party system that we are likely to find the basis for a Congress alive to the problems of today, representative of the real interests of the electorate, and prepared to cooperate with the executive in a coordinated, affirmative program.

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ECONOMIC POLICY AND FULL EMPLOYMENT. By Alvin H. Hansen. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1947. Pp. 340. \$4.00

WRITTEN both for students of economics and for readers who are not professional economists, this book consists partly of essays in persuasion and partly of new contributions to economics. While Professor Hansen is primarily concerned in the present study with showing how the current recommendations for maintaining full employment are related to economic analysis, he occasionally goes beyond his role of advocate to investigate new developments in economic theory.

The principal emphasis throughout the book is on ways of avoiding unemployment and poverty without sacrificing individual freedom. Although Professor Hansen regards a general shortage of demand as the most likely situation for the United States after the post-war boom has worked itself off,

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