

PRESS RELEASE

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Thirteen political scientists today provided a preview of their proposals for sweeping changes to strengthen Congress' role in the development of the United States' democratic society.

The group of scholars is now nearing completion of a summer project, sponsored by the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, intended to stimulate new thought about the role of Congress in the Federal system. The work of the group is especially pertinent now because a 12-member Joint Committee on Organization of the Congress has been holding hearings on reorganization moves which would streamline and strengthen congressional operations.

Experts on the AEI panel suggest transformation of the annual budgetary process into "a continuous consideration of incremental changes to the existing base"; a Joint Committee on Legislative-Executive Relations to restore the balance of powers between the Congress and the President; the establishment of a Resident Agent of Congress in a number of districts throughout the country to insure that congressional directives are enforced; greatly increased access for Congress inside the Executive agencies; dispersion of the agenda for Congress, now in the hands of the Rules Committees, among other leadership elements; establishment of a central staff of Congress to help Members answer difficult queries from constituents; an automated information system to help Members of Congress learn quickly about issues and status of bills before them; and establishment of a Congressional Security Office to take over from Executive agencies the authority of clearance for congressmen and congressional staffs and to make impossible any future police-state actions by the Executive.

Dr. Alfred de Grazia, Professor of Government at New York University, and author of the new book, Republic in Crisis, is coordinator of the 14-part AEI study, to be published in book form later this year.

He and his colleagues find that most past proposals for a more effective Congress are "consciously or unconsciously aimed at reducing the role of Congress in government and expanding the role of the Executive Branch." He singles out recommendations of the American Assembly's Conference on "The Congress and America's Future," published earlier this year, as an example of a group friendly to Congress whose recommendations in the balance actually favored "executive centralism."

He mentioned in particular the Conference on Congress' recommendation that elections for Members of the House of Representatives be held every four years at the time of a Presidential election instead of every two years as at present provided by the Constitution.

"Tied-in elections go far to put the Congress at the political mercies of the President," Dr. de Grazia says. "Together with other recommendations to create greater 'party responsibility' in Congress, this would subject every congressman to the influence of political party, under Presidential domination. Only if by strengthening Congress is meant weakening it as an autonomous system can such proposals be credited with lending strength to the Legislative Branch." (Apart from the tie-in, the increased length of term has some features to recommend it, Dr. de Grazia believes.)

Dr. de Grazia, speaking on behalf of the other 12 political and behavioral scientists participating in the study, observes that "all is not well" in the efforts of the United States to adapt its governmental institutions "to take care of the changing forms of the eternal problems of men and society."

These problems he identifies as poverty, health and safety, civil rights, education, improvement of the physical and spiritual conditions of neighborhood life, and foreign relations.

In attempting to solve current problems, the United States is creating or enlarging three additional problems "beyond reason and necessity," Dr. de Grazia says. He identifies these problems as:

"First, the problem of bureaucracy, that is, the handling of problems by large-scale institutions of permanent civil servants not effectively tied in to the larger society.

"Second, a kind of creeping militarism that emerges through over-secrecy, overcontrol and overexcitement in the course of attempting to solve the problems of foreign affairs and their associated domestic aspects.

"Third, the increase of Presidential personalism, the exaltation of an office above the powers of the office and the capacities of the human incumbent. This introduces along with the other two problems a verifiable problem of dictatorship, or whatever one may wish to call the phenomenon of the overly great dependence of a people upon the magical qualities of a person occupying an outstandingly prominent office."

Dr. de Grazia provides this preview of recommendations by other participants in the study:

Dr. Aaron Wildavsky, author of The Politics of the Budgetary Process, and Professor of Political Science, University of California at Berkeley: The annual budgetary process should be abandoned and Congress should substitute a system under which activities are funded regularly on the existing base until changes are needed. Then appropriations can be increased or decreased as policies are made, and over such periods as are required by the nature of the policy. "The process should be taken as far as it will go and then should be corrected for its worst deficiencies."

Dr. Lewis A. Dexter, co-author of American Business and Public Policy, and Visiting Professor of Political Science, University of South Florida: To restore the balance of powers between the Congress and the President, a "Joint

Committee on Legislative-Executive Relations" should be established. "The Congress must have its own experts, and use them for its own tasks and purposes."

Dr. Cornelius P. Cotter, author of Government and Private Enterprise, and Chairman, Department of Political Science, Wichita State University, Kansas: To ensure that congressional directives are carried out in the field, "a Resident Agent of Congress, suitably staffed and officed" should be established in a number of districts of the country.

Dr. Roger H. Davidson, author of The Depressed Areas Controversy, and Professor of Political Science, Dartmouth College, New Hampshire: Congressional task forces should be established to range widely in their subject matter areas, commissioning research, holding seminars, and making trips in the field where appropriate. "Such task forces might have their most immediate impact on present geographic interests which are inadequately served by the drawing of state and legislative district boundaries."

Dr. Heinz Eulau, co-author of The Legislative System, and Professor of Political Science, Stanford University, California: Congressional committees' research arms should be greatly strengthened and procedures for selecting committee chairmen should be modified "in keeping with their extraordinary powers."

Mr. Edward de Grazia, contributor to The University of Chicago Law Review, George Washington University Law Review, and other legal journals, and partner, de Grazia, Agger and Hydeman, attorneys, Washington, D. C.: Adequacy of congressional access to independent executive agencies should be examined, especially in those offices where congressional influence is reduced to a low point. He seeks to interpose a stronger congressional "counter-liaison" with independent Executive agencies to balance the "rapidly developing, integrated, Presidential liaison."

Dr. Charles Clapp, author of The Congressman, and Administrative Assistant to Senator Leverett Saltonstall of Massachusetts: Congressional staff assistance should be reinforced on three levels: more personal legislative assistants attached directly to congressmen; more integrated and coordinated committee staffs; and more outside expert assistance made available on a systematic basis to individual congressmen.

Dr. James A. Robinson, author of Congress and Foreign Policymaking, and Professor of Political Science at Ohio State University: Control of Congress' agenda, now in the hands of the Rules Committees, should be dispersed among other leadership elements in Congress. He would also restructure the research facilities of the Congress so that members could get extensive briefings and reports on both sides of controversial questions.

Mr. Kenneth G. Olson, contributor to Public Opinion Quarterly, Journal of Politics, and other journals and symposia, and consultant, Washington, D. C.: Congressmen should be provided help in dealing with individual queries from their constituents. This function, he says, is "a vital base for public support and administrative surveillance." He envisions creation of special expert staff facilities in a central office of Congress to help congressmen handle difficult cases of individual constituents.

Dr. Kenneth Janda, author of Data Processing and Political Science, and Professor of Political Science, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois. He describes the possibilities of an automated information system for Congress which does not interfere with the independence of the Member but permits him to save much time and gives him more controls. He could, for example, locate instantaneously bills before Congress and "delve into the recesses of administrative agencies."

Dr. Charles R. Dechert, editor of Georgetown University symposium volume, Cybernetics, and Professor of Political Science, Purdue University, Indiana: A Congressional Security Office should be established to take over

from Executive agencies the authority of clearance for congressmen and congressional staffs. This is considered one measure to establish the right of Congress to define security as a legislative right and "to make impossible any future police-state actions by the Executive against the Legislature."

Mr. Samuel Lubell, author of The Future of American Politics and writer on public affairs: Explores conditions under which the press and other media focus public concern and attention upon the President, "making it exceedingly difficult to create not only a favorable image but any stable image of Congress among the citizenry."

Dr. Alfred de Grazia, in a separate paper, recommends establishment of a staff of congressional tribunes recruited by a central office of Congress and assigned to congressional committees. The tribunes would be attached to individual agencies with instructions to report annually as "devil's advocates" in the discussions of agency activities and budgets.

Dr. de Grazia's introduction to the study is attached.