

its own reform. Somehow, it has escaped their notice that the way the House conducts its affairs is as much their business as any other issue and has great long-range impact on their lives. This is the real failure of the press.

What is required for public understanding is that coverage honor the truism set forth by Honoré de Balzac when he observed: "Men are so made

that they can resist sound argument, and yet yield to a glance."

It should be the daily job of the press to record not only the bills that are moved and the votes that are cast but the glances that are exchanged and the human motivations that are behind them. Only then will the art of governmental reporting imitate life as it is with all its potential for change. ■

The Machine Democrats

by Norman C. Miller

At five minutes before noon every working day, a peculiar ritual takes place in the Capitol. A half-dozen or more reporters are admitted to the ornate office of Speaker John McCormack. The newsmen rarely have anything meaningful to ask the Speaker, and the 78-year-old Bostonian almost never has anything noteworthy to say. When the desultory banter is interrupted by an occasional question of substance, a McCormack aide usually rescues the Speaker from the necessity of answering. "It's time, Mr. Speaker," he sings out, signaling the end of the press conference. Then House Doorkeeper William (Fishbait) Miller steps up to brush the dandruff off the white-haired Speaker's lean shoulders, before escorting him across the hall to convene the House precisely at noon.

On the floor, McCormack can easily find old cronies to join in reminiscing about old New Deal days. Philip Philbin and Harold Donohue of Massachusetts are always on hand, nodding side by side in seats directly in front of the Speaker's rostrum. Back in the cloakrooms, Baltimore's trio of inept committee chairmen—Edward Garmatz, George

Fallon, and Samuel Friedel—are generally ready to while away an afternoon. On warm spring days, amiable William Barrett of Philadelphia, chairman of the important housing subcommittee, may be found sunning himself on the balcony off the House lobby. Another Congressional veteran, jovial John Kluczynski of Chicago, will surely have time for a chat, unless he's running an errand for tough-talking Dan Rostenkowski, Mayor Daley's Congressman in charge of the machine's House delegation. McCormack and the other elders are certain to give a respectful greeting if the 42-year-old Rostenkowski happens by. His appointment as chairman of the party caucus testifies to the young Daley deputy's preeminence among machine-type Northern Democrats. And at all costs, McCormack and his cronies avoid offending anyone with influence on the faceless collection of organization men who account for fully a third of the House's 245-man Democratic membership.

The machine-type Democrats hold the balance of power in the struggle currently shaking the party in the House. Pitting the party's liberals against the Southern conservatives entrenched in

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committee power positions, the battle is being waged on two related fronts. One involves control of the Speakership. The other centers on the sacred seniority system which allots enormous power to the Southerners whose one-party districts give them lifetime tenure. The simultaneous campaigns to depose McCormack and change the seniority system won't climax until a new Congress is organized next January, when election of leaders and adoption of rules will be the first order of business. But the outcome will depend greatly on maneuvering that's now underway.

The insurgents' essential problem is to blast the Northern machine-types out of their cozy organizational alliance with the Southerners. This will be extremely difficult because the Northern hacks, just as much as the Dixie conservatives, have a vital stake in the status quo. The inflexible seniority custom keeps in power the inept Northerner as well as the anti-party Southerner. Moreover, a weak Speaker leaves the committee satraps free to do as they please. Among House chairmen, the Southern conservatives attract the most public attention because of their strong-willed control of important committees. Everyone who follows politics knows that Wilbur Mills of Ways and Means, Mendel Rivers of Armed Services, and George Mahon of Appropriations rank among the most powerful men in Washington. Less discussed are the Northern chairmen who have allowed other committees to atrophy. But their do-nothing attitude also is a heavy influence in the House.

One reason that the House seems incredibly insensitive to the war is that the Foreign Affairs Committee, under the indifferent leadership of Thomas Morgan of Pennsylvania, has ignored for five years the repeated requests of junior members for public hearings on Vietnam. Similarly, the "watchdog" Government Operations Committee has virtually ceased to function, let alone watch anything, under 83-year-old William Dawson of Chicago, who's finally retiring this year. The Post Office

Committee has managed to snarl important postal-reform legislation for a year under the clumsy direction of Buffalo's tongue-tied Thaddeus Dulski, who was heard to grumble during the postal strike that the Administration "don't confront with me about nothin'."

The House harbors many more machine-type Democrats like Dulski, Dawson, and Morgan. The organization Democrats have largely escaped notice because, until recently, liberal opinion judged Congressmen only by their voting records. On this score, most of the organization men were in an unassailable position: year after year they won "liberal" ratings of up to 100 per cent from Americans for Democratic Action. Yet, in terms of "democratic action," they produced little or nothing. By voting right, they satisfied liberal opinion at home; by doing nothing effective, they satisfied their Southern allies in the House.

Their behavior in the House grew naturally out of their political background. The typical organization Democrat—John McCormack himself is the best example—is the product of a one-party, machine-controlled, urban district. He came up in politics through fidelity to the organization; issues did not matter in his rise, nor in his possible fall, for it was the organization, not the opposition party, that could oust him from his comfortable seat. He found a home in the House, which as an institution—well geared for distributing favors to the faithful, unconcerned with social policy—resembles nothing so much as the city machine that sent him to Washington.

Now, however, that comfortable existence is threatened from two directions. Back home, the old machine has fallen apart, with a few exceptions like Daley's Chicago, and many of the organization men are being challenged by middle-class reformers within their own party. For example, two of Baltimore's three committee chairmen, Fallon and Friedel, are facing strong primary opposition, and Leonard Farbstein of Manhattan,

after narrow victories in the last two elections, is up against another reformer in this month's primary. To a greater or lesser degree, the primary challenges to the machine Democrats are also challenges to their loyalty to the House as its now functions. Within the House itself, of course, the challenge comes from the new reformers who—as Gerald Pomper pointed out in this magazine last month—are typically from suburban districts where organizational loyalties are less important than issues.

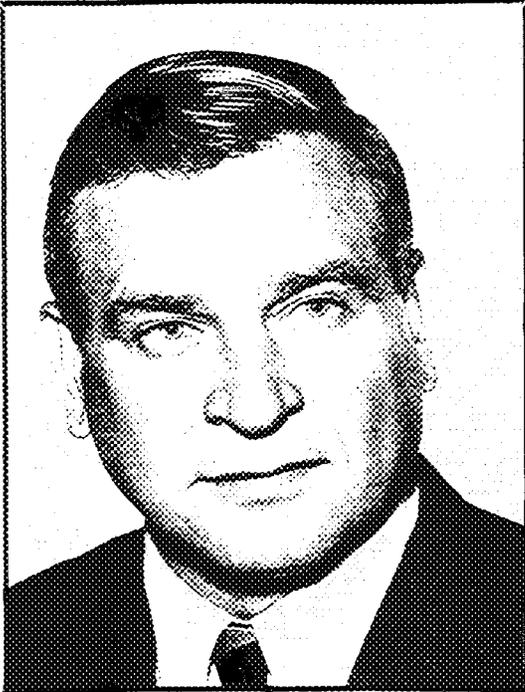
Central to the reformers' strategy is an effort to mobilize grass-roots groups to pressure House Democratic incumbents and hopefuls to pledge they'll back reform. The crucial issue is reform of the seniority system which shields the entrenched hacks and Southerners from the public. The effort to build up pressure is already in progress. For example, liberal activists in the New Democratic Coalition from several states were urged at a recent Chicago meeting to exact reform pledges from House candidates as a condition of giving them support. "Put them on the spot in meetings, primaries, the press, any way you can," urged Richard Conlon, staff director of the Democratic Study Group. The more militant reformers are even ready to abandon party loyalty if the leadership refuses reform. Nineteen junior House Democrats said they might try to throw control of the House to the Republicans if the seniority issue was shelved until January. The group's leaders—Representatives Allard Lowenstein of New York, Jerome Waldie and Thomas Rees of California, and Brock Adams of Washington state—said the dissidents might vote for a Republican as Speaker. Or, said the group's spokesmen, the rebels might nominate a reform candidate for Speaker or simply abstain from voting. In any case, such action could conceivably give Republicans control of the House.

The liberal rebels' public pressure on the organization Democrats is matched by counter-pressure from the conservative side, less open but no less serious.

Any significant change in the seniority system would be bound to weaken Southern power. Thus, just as some liberals threaten to bolt if reforms aren't made, some Dixie conservatives warn privately that they might jump to the Republican side if the seniority system is altered by the Democrats. Indeed, a bolt by conservatives is perhaps more likely than desertion of the party by liberals. If the Republicans come close to gaining control of the House, say within 10 seats or so, a number of Southern Democrats would be strongly tempted to join the GOP in organizing the House. Such a move toward formal coalition could occur in the House even if seniority isn't changed by the Democrats. But a significant change certainly would increase chances of a Southern bolt.

The spectacle of frustrated Democrats threatening to throw themselves out of power has delighted the House Republicans. While privately encouraging Southern Democrats to consider switching, the GOP also has moved rapidly to exploit the reform issue. House Republican leader Gerald Ford has appointed a group to examine whether the party should change its adherence to the seniority custom. There is a strong probability that the group, under third-term Barber Conable of New York, will recommend a departure from strict seniority. Conable, a leader among younger House Republicans, suggests such possibilities as having Republican members of each committee elect the ranking member, or the chairman if the party takes control of the House. Conable promises the group will make its recommendations before Congress adjourns for the election campaign. Republican elders may well resist any proposals for change, but, on the whole, their party is more inclined toward reform than are the Democrats. The reason is basic: almost half the Republican members have served three terms or less and thus have not acquired a vested interest in seniority. "We had a lot of deadwood

Rep. Rostenkowski



Rep. Kluczynski

Rep. Philbin

pruned out in the 1964 Goldwater debacle," says Conable. "And we don't have the hang-ups the Democrats have in considering change, because we don't have to worry about offending a region [the South] as they do."

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Hardly anyone thinks the House Democrats would simply junk the seniority system, even if they dump McCormack as Speaker. Many who are urging change would oppose giving the Speaker—even a new one—the potentially dictatorial power of naming committee chairmen. Nor do they want to risk chaotic electioneering by throwing the chairmanships up for grabs. The thrust of all the major reform proposals is to give the party caucus effective power over the committees, regardless of the method of selecting chairmen. Indeed, some leading liberals would be willing to settle for continuation of the seniority custom if the caucus adopted a policy clearly stating the obligation of chairmen to be "responsive" to the party majority. The implicit threat of removal of unresponsive chairmen by the caucus would be calculated to make them toe the line. In this way, says James O'Hara of Michigan, "it might be possible to eliminate the vices of the seniority system without eliminating the system." Given the ingenuity of politicians, it may well be possible for the Democrats to revamp their power structure in a way that allows all concerned to save face. And new party leadership may also be elected without a bloodletting fight. But such changes would not necessarily guarantee productive results. The real test for the Democrats is their ability to take action to revitalize the House. They have only themselves to blame for the deterioration of the institution. It remains to be seen whether they can rouse themselves to rebuild it. And that depends in large measure on whether the grey organization men can be driven to act against the values that have guided their political lives. ■

Memo of the Month

THE EARLIEST POSSIBLE MOMENT

TO Mr. J.P. Lynes, Director FROM Curtis Bybee, Chief
St. Louis City Welfare Office Bureau of Finance

SUBJECT Supplemental Payroll Checks DATE Oct. 3 19 69

We have made a careful examination of our procedures in order to place the supplemental checks in the hands of employees at the earliest possible moment; we find that we cannot set a definite date as to when they will receive the checks, but it will be around the 21st day of the subsequent month.

The time allotment for procedures must be as follows:

- 3 work days--to St. Louis City for preparing time sheets and mailing to Jefferson City.
- 2 work days--Division of Welfare personnel
- 1 work day--Bureau of Finance audit
- 1 work day--Key Punch section
- 1 work day--Tabulating Section for preparation of checks
- 3 work days--Missouri Comptroller
- 1 work day--Missouri State Treasurer
- 2 work days--Missouri Personnel Department (Merit Office)
- 1 work day--Mail to St. Louis
- 7 days for weekends and holidays

This totals 22 calendar days. Occasionally we are able to secure the payrolls back from the Merit Office on the afternoon of the second day in time to start processing in the Comptroller's Office thus allowing us to pick up one day, in which case we are able to get the checks in the hands of the payee on the 21st day of the month.

We recognize that much time is consumed in handling these routine operations; however, all of above procedures are necessary if we are to conform to State laws.

cc: Mr. Folk
Mr. Schubert