

Writer Discusses Congressional Leadership

Editor's Note: Is it true that President Kennedy has been plagued by weak party leadership in getting his New Frontier program through Congress? The Chief of the UPI staff in the House of Representatives answers this and kindred questions in the following exclusive dispatch.

By FRANK ELEAZER
United Press International

Washington — UPI — Democratic Congressional leaders, battered by adverse publicity about their legislative performance this year, pleaded guilty to nothing much worse than sorry public relations.

It appears they have indeed blown the publicity bit. But with some weeks to go and some big issues still to be set, the record at adjournment could show they have not done at all bad with management of a difficult second session of the 87th Congress.

It is true Congress has not bought a whole lot of what President Kennedy wanted to sell. It is a fact that administration forces took a drubbing on the President's farm bill. It is no joke that the government for a while looked like it might run out of money because two octogenarian Democratic committee chairmen could not agree where to meet or who would sit at the head of the conference table.

State of Inaction
And it is an embarrassing fact of Congressional life that

a few strong-minded members again have demonstrated how easy it is to talk the Senate into a state of temporary, total inaction.

Some people seem to conclude that this all adds up to undeclared war between the White House and Congress; that the government now functions by stalemate; and that this kind of thing never happened before, or at least not nearly so bad.

All of which is baloney. And some top Congressional Democrats now are pretty unhappy about their failure to say so in a way to be heard and believed.

No Congress ever rubbers stamps presidential requests. Presidents always ask for more than they can get. Sometimes — as in the case of Kennedy's Medicare bill — they ask it knowing very well they can't get it and counting their loss for use as an issue next time at the polls.

Other Presidents
Harry Truman plastered the Capitol with Fair Deal Bills predestined for nowhere. Dwight D. Eisenhower wanted school aid. Then as now, "Congress didn't."

Of course this still is Kennedy's first Congress, and he was elected on a promise to get America "moving again," and any reluctance by Democratic lawmakers to help him make good on that promise is fair game for Republican taunts.

Kennedy admittedly is not overjoyed at the overall Con-

gressional performance so far. Last year, his first in the White House, he got more results sooner. This was natural. Also, he put off until this year some of the hard ones.

Some people claim things would have gone better this year had the late great Speaker Sam Rayburn still been around. They say Rayburn and former Senate Leader Lyndon B. Johnson, now merely the Senate's presiding officer as Vice President, held a closer rein on Congress than Speaker John W. McCormack and Senate Leader Mike Mansfield. This is true, especially as to Johnson.

It is possibly true also that Rayburn would not have tolerated this year's long money deadlock in a protocol struggle between chairmen of House and Senate Appropriations committees. It is even possible that Johnson would have found a way to shut up the Telstar communications bill filibuster before it made the Senate begin to look silly.

Farm Bill

Some observers claim Rayburn would not have let Kennedy's farm bill go down the drain by a handful of votes in the House. Maybe so, maybe not. But farm bills have had a way of getting flicked in the House, with or without Mr. Sam on the rostrum.

Nobody could have steered through the House a foreign trade bill any more pleasing to Kennedy than the one McCormack pushed through and sent to the Senate. The foreign aid authorization Congress sent to the White House looked amazingly like what the White House requested.

In between the publicized bouts on the big ones, the little ones have been rolling through by the score, just as always. The Congressional Record recently tallied up 163 new public laws enacted this year, not counting private relief bills.

Most of them were routine, but one man's routine bill, given the proper public relations buildup, can be another's big issue. In some quieter days, even the House's recent gesture toward equal pay for equal work done by women might have been passed off as a legislative achievement.



CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS — Democratic Congressional leaders, (above) battered by adverse publicity about their legislative performance this year, pleaded guilty to nothing much worse than sorry public relations. Here House Speaker John W. McCormack (D-Mass., left) and Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield (D-Mont., right) meet the press along with Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson. By contrast with Republican House Leader Charles Halleck (R-Ind., left, below) and Senator Everett McKinley Dirksen (R-Ill.), party leaders in their respective houses of Congress never seem to be caught without something handy to say about lack of action in Congress, while Democrats regularly walk out to face the press with nothing succinct to report. (UPI)

A \$500 million emergency relief bill was one of the heralded accomplishments of the 73rd Congress during the first Roosevelt term. The 87th Congress this year cranked up a program almost that big (\$435 million) just to send unemployed workers to school.

As have other Congresses in recent years, it has authorized and appropriated for an array of public works projects that would have turned the late New Dealer Harry Hopkins an envious green.

Educational TV

It has approved federal grants totalling \$50 million to help start educational TV stations. It has increased federal payment for relief of the blind, disabled and aged. It has expanded the President's Peace Corps. It has committed the country to sending a man to the moon, if possible before Russia does it.

Naturally it is not up to Republican leaders to explain all this to the voters. Their job is to point out Democratic shortcomings, and nobody has accused Rep. Charles A. Halleck and Sen. Everett M. Dirksen of falling down on the job.

The Ev and Charlie show is possibly a little less known on TV than the Huntley-Brinkley Report. Despite the fact that Ev and Charlie speak for a party that controls neither White House nor Congress, their weekly press conferences — recorded for later broadcast — get better airing than the White House meetings of McCormack and Mansfield with President Kennedy.

One big reason is that Ev and Charlie do their public relations homework. McCormack and Mansfield frequently don't.

Something Handy
The two Republican leaders would as soon be caught at a Democratic fund raising rally as walk into the TV floodlights without a little something handy to say about the lack of action in Congress and how it would be better all around if the lawmakers closed up shop and went home.

By contrast, McCormack and Mansfield, after their Tuesday breakfasts with Kennedy, regularly walk out to face the press with nothing succinct to report. This does not mean they have devoted the breakfast hour solely to

hot biscuits and sausage. It does mean they have not packaged their thoughts to make headlines or fit the evening news slots on TV.

McCormack holds a daily press conference just before the House meets at noon. Following the example of the late Speaker Rayburn he puts most of his remarks off the record.

The Lesser Democratic lights, Rep. Carl Albert and Hale Boggs and Sen. Hubert Humphrey, are better suited by nature, age and background for this publicity struggle than McCormack and Mansfield. However, they are part of the team, not its captains.

"I don't know what we can do about it," said one highly-placed Democrat who conceded the problem. "I don't even know whether we ought to do anything. We Democrats never have been a match for Republicans at the P.R. game. But you might conclude from the Congressional election results for the past 30 years that in the end we aren't usually hurt too much by this at the polls."

FAMILY COUNCIL

Adele F. — I want to nip our remodeling job right now and go no further.

Newton F. — I admit it's dragging on, but it will be worth the mess.

Adele F. — I know Newton waited a long time to have our basement remodeled and I was as happy as he when work was begun in June. We knew the children would be away at camp, we wouldn't be doing any entertaining, and we'd be away from the house ourselves for part of the time.

But things have dragged on and the work is barely begun. Meanwhile the pathways and doorways are piled up with brick, pipes, wire and other mess. There's a big hole in one wall of the house which the inspector says can't be closed up until the electrical work has been okayed. And the kids are back, school's about to start, with no end of this confusion in view.

If Newton and the builder can't hurry things and give me a definite date for finishing, I'm in favor of patching things back and dropping the whole change.

Newton F. — Adele should realize that a big renovation like this doesn't proceed exactly on schedule like a railroad train. We started off fine. We got the floor leveled off and the walls knocked down. But then it was one delay after another — all for good reasons. The painter's brother died, the plumber couldn't get a part. Deliveries of lumber were held up by a local strike. Certain key mechanics were on vacation. In fact, our insulation can't be installed for another month for that reason.

Sometimes I feel as hopeless as Adele does about this whole undertaking. Here winter is around the corner and what if we still have that gaping hole in our wall? The setbacks are unbelievable and discouraging. But I think the worst part is behind us. Now that our plans are approved and we have the permit and all, there's no turning back.

The Council: Anybody who sits around waiting for the perfect time to do a complex job will just sit around waiting. "Carpe diem," said Horace, the poet. "Seize the day."

reasoning was their confidence that things would pro- rather than trust tomorrow." So Newton and Adele settled upon June as the season most likely to succeed in seeing them through a remodeling project which they'd dreamed of and, no doubt, delayed for years and years.

The only fallacy in their creed evenly. They forgot that there were not only mechanical factors to be checked off, but also human ones — and there's no predicting those. So

the experienced home renovator knows that when an installation comes off exactly on schedule, it's both an exception and a miracle.

Adele is upset because her best-laid plans — to have the mess cleared away before fall — have "gang agley." Her error was to have placed too much faith in those plans, which are better left fluid and flexible. No matter when the first axe descended, there'd have been delays. While other seasons might mean faster de-

liveries and more available hands, they also bring snow- and colds and other hitches in the smooth flow of construction.

Evidently patience must be the watchword around the F. home, gaping hole and all. If this couple had been carefully briefed on the "whole story" of what remodeling entails, they might have abandoned the whole idea and moved, or else been better prepared for this will-it-never-end stage.

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