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PLANS TO REWRITE THE U.S. CONSTITUTION

An amazing group of prominent and powerful persons is waiting in the wings to bring about a radical restructuring of our American Constitution. Just to call the roll of the big names is enough to reveal what enormous power in business, finance, the media, politics, and academia is behind this plan.

The co-chairmen of this group are C. Douglas Dillon, former Secretary of the Treasury and a powerful Wall Street figure, and Lloyd N. Cutler, former counsel to President Jimmy Carter. Others participating in working panels include former Defense Secretary Robert McNamara, former Senator J. William Fulbright, Congressman Henry Reuss, and representatives from the Brookings Institution, the Rockefeller Foundation, the Woodrow Wilson Center, the Sloan Foundation, and the University of Chicago Law School.

It would be premature to say that the following are final recommendations, but the "Summary" of the "Report of Third Meeting, September 9-10, 1983," held at the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington, D.C., and only recently released, shows that a consensus of this elite group is building for the following objectives.

1. Allow or require the President to appoint members of Congress to some or all Cabinet positions.

2. Increase the terms of U.S. House members from two to four years, with all elections held in Presidential election years.

3. Force the American people to cast a single vote for a package slate consisting of the President, Vice President, and the voter's own House and perhaps Senate candidates.

4. Eliminate the present prohibition against members of Congress serving as Presidential electors.

5. Change a large number of U.S. House seats from election by district to election "at large" in order to increase the possibility that the political party which wins the White House will also control the Congress, and that the "at large" members would be more likely to take a "nationwide view" of the issues.

6. Devise a "more realistic, feasible" method of Presidential removal by an extraordinary majority in both Houses of Congress.

7. Permit the President to dissolve Congress (when he thinks Congress is "intractable") and call for new Congressional elections.

8. Reduce the two-thirds requirement for Senate ratification of treaties to a simple majority only.

9. Give the President an item veto over the budget.

10. Give the President the power of the legislative veto.

11. Eliminate the 22nd Amendment which limits Presidents to two terms.

12. Eliminate the Electoral College and allocate each state's electoral votes directly.

13. If no candidate receives a majority of the electoral college vote, then elect the President and Vice President at a joint session of both Houses of Congress, with each member having one vote (instead of the present system of one vote per state).

14. Eliminate the requirement that appropriation bills must originate in the U.S. House.

15. Overturn the Buckley v. Valeo Supreme Court decision which upheld the right of individuals to contribute to political campaigns.

16. Force the taxpayers to finance Congressional election campaigns so that political expenditures by the candidate and by PACs can be limited or prohibited.

17. Reduce the cost of Presidential and Congressional elections by holding them at irregular intervals so that the date would not be known very far in advance.

18. Give the Federal Government -- instead of the state governments -- the power to regulate and supervise cities. And there is much, much more.

Meanwhile, other groups of people who want a Balanced Budget Amendment have gotten 32 state legislatures to ask Congress to call a Constitutional Convention. Our present Constitution provides that, if 34 states pass such a resolution, Congress "shall call" such a convention.

And all ready to take advantage of this unique opportunity to achieve their goals is that small elite group of powerful men who want to junk the American constitutional republic, with our traditional separation of powers, in favor of a European system which they can more easily control.