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WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCES

The best thing that could come out of last month's White House Conference on the Aging is a hope that it will be the last "White House Conference" for any Special Interest Group. The real purpose of such conferences is for federal employees and social service professionals to have a tax-funded national planning session to devise ways and means of expanding their access to the taxpayers' money.

The American Founding Fathers, in their inspired wisdom, gave us a constitutional republic in which all legislative decisions are supposed to be made by duly-elected representatives, subject only to certain constitutional restraints. The liberals are dissatisfied with that system and have been trying to transform us into a government by national planning conferences, public opinion polls, and the media.

Why would they want to do that? Because it is so much easier for professionals to manipulate those forums and control their results than it is to obtain majority votes in a national election.

The media gave a great deal of coverage to charges that the Reagan Administration had stacked the White House Conference on the Aging by appointing pro-Reagan delegates; estimates of the number range from 130 to 400. The conference was already stacked with 1,800 Carter-type delegates named before the November 1980 election, and the Reagan Administration really had a duty to provide some kind of balance.

It was no more "unfair" for the Reagan Administration to appoint pro-Reagan delegates than it was for the Carter Administration to appoint pro-Carter delegates. What is the most unfair of all is the system of delegate-selection that inevitably produces a majority (even an overwhelming majority) of social service professionals (known as "providers") whose salaries come ultimately out of tax funds.

These "providers" already participate in a steady succession of seminars and conferences for the mutual exchange of ideas and development of their professional expertise. Nobody is objecting to that.

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But a "White House Conference" is quite different. The very term "White House" has a certain mystique and provides a platform for media exposure available to no other type of conference. Secondly, a "White House Conference" has an aura of national authenticity; it presents itself to the public as though it were grassroots America assembled for national action. And that is the deceit of it all.

Honest elections depend on adequate notification of the election, certification of voters to avoid duplicate voting, and supervision of the voting and the counting of the ballots by judges from opposing sides. The delegate-selection process of White House Conferences is fraudulent by every criteria of honest elections ever developed in a free country. The principal defect is the pre-selection of either (a) the delegates themselves, or (b) those who can vote for delegates, or (c) those who can be candidates for delegate, or all of the above.

Any election can be easily controlled by a group which is permitted to pre-select either the voters or the candidates. In all the White House Conferences, such control has been ruthlessly exercised either by the government or by the special-interest professionals. The hard-pressed American taxpayers and the hard-working citizens who are not looking for a government handout are systematically excluded from the process.

The 1980 White House Conference on Families was designed by the Carter Administration to utilize all these techniques of controlled delegate selection in order to produce a $3 million media event supporting the Carter spending proposals. Pro-family groups, which had battled the same one-sided process in the 1977 Conference on International Women's Year, tried valiantly to get credentialed and recognized at the 1980 Conference.

The Carter Administration made it impossible for pro-family types to elect a majority to either of those two conferences because at least 2/3rds of the delegates were appointed, not elected, and most of the elections were subject to the defects mentioned above. The pro-family delegates, however, did such a good job of articulating their positions that both those conferences were discredited with the public and with Congress.

The whole idea of White House Conferences is an extravagant exercise in futility at best, and a fraud on the public at worst. No more tax funds should be given out to special-interest groups to masquerade with the prestige of the "White House" or under the dishonest pretext of representing grassroots America.

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