P.S. to the NEWS
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RELEASE: SEPT. 12, 1980

## THE PROBLEMS OF CONGRESSMEN

Getting elected to the U.S. Senate or House requires an incredible amount of energy, travel, time and money. Many who have made it find, after one or two terms, that it isn't worth the price to stay there.

This year, 40 Senators and Representatives -- almost half of them under age 55 -- are not running for reelection. In 1978, the number of voluntary departures was 58.

Many of those leaving sound disillusioned with the office that once had such glamour and allure. Among their complaints are some problems which are genuine, and others which are artificial.

High on the list of real problems is the stress and strain which puts a normal family life somewhere between difficult and impossible. Many Congressional wives find it hard to cope with the loneliness caused by having a spouse away from the hearth on so many nights and weekends, combined with the "left out" feeling caused by having a spouse who is on stage in the limelight most of the time.

It's almost like being married to a man who works intern's hours but has the ego syndrome of a movie star. The past few years have seen a depressing list of marriages go on the rocks where the "other woman" was a jealous mistress called politics.

High on the list of synthetic problems is the complaint that the job is made unpleasant by the proliferation of single-issue lobbies which makes it sure that some groups will be alienated no matter how the Conressman votes. However, a Senator or Congressman is elected to represent his constituents, and they have a right to express their displeasure when he votes wrong. That's what self-government is all about.

A Congressman who can't take criticism and controversy about his roll-call votes is like a doctor who can't stand the sight of blood -- he's in the wrong profession. As Harry Truman said, "If you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen."

Another complaint is that the workload of Congressmen has increased enormously. It has; but that doesn't mean that the added workload is either necessary or desirable.

It's just the proof of Parkinson's law that work expands to use up all the available

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time, space and resources. Anytime the Senate or House builds a monstrous new office building, additional staff will quickly fill it and require more appropriations.

Some people believe that the single factor which did more to ruin America by charting us on a tobogganing course of "tax and tax, spend and spend, elect and elect" was air conditioning. Before air conditioning, Congress adjourned in June because Washington, D.C., was intolerable in the summer. In the era of air conditioning, Congress stays in session all year and gets into more and more expensive federal mischief.

Another complaint made by the members of Congress who are voluntary retirees is that the $60,663 annual salary (even plus perks) is insufficient to live in the style to which they feel they are entitled, especially when they usually must maintain two homes. It is hard to work up much sympathy for them when we realize that Congress is principally to blame for the inflation which prevents $60,663 from buying more than it does.

In the post-Watergate era, the trend has been to demand "full-time" Congressmen, raise their pay (to keep up with the inflation they caused), severely restrict their "outside" income, and make campaign fund-raising exceedingly difficult through unreasonable limits and disclosure requirements. These trends all go in the wrong direction. They do nothing to produce better government or wiser or more responsible lawmakers.

Our goal should <u>not</u> be to produce full-time legislators who "earn" their pay by living all year round in Washington, D.C. (an ideologically cloistered environment) and by passing more and more legislation. When a Congressman becomes wholly dependent on his government pay and perks, it is too easy to make him a pawn of the bureaucracy which can grant or withhold federal spending in his district.

We would be much better off with part-time legislators who stay in their districts at least half the year and who do not receive more than half their income from the taxpayers. We would be better off to cut the salaries of Congressmen and allow them to earn all the other income they can so the taxpayers don't have to provide it.

The best way to produce better and more responsible Senators and Congressmen is by publicizing their roll-call votes throughout their districts, and by making it politically and financially advantageous to live and work in their districts as much of the year as possible. The good judgment of the voters will take care of irresponsible legislators in the elections every two years.

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