

Project Politist
Summary of Meeting
June 23, 1965

Alfred de Grazia, Director
Chairman

The members of Project Politist met on Wednesday, June 23, to discuss proposals for the improved organization of Congress based on a republican model. Since the project is to be presented as a series of papers on different aspects of Congress, the meeting was structured by a brief discussion of each topic to be treated with the hope of reaching a consensus on scope, methodology, bibliography, and orientation.

Discussion of "Congress and the Larger Public--What Kind it Has and What Kind it Needs".....Samuel Lubell

Mr. Alfred de Grazia indicated that Mr. Lubell was going to talk about parties in Congressional constituencies.

Mr. Dexter added that this topic should also include the relationship of these constituencies to the Executive public, especially where the "Presidential party" should dominate. He also speculated whether the term "Congressional party" made sense as a concept, and suggested that the idea of "Congressional clique" was more accurate.

Mr. Cotter asked if the term "clique" did not obscure the fact of shifting coalitions within and between parties since the term implied more coherence than exists.

Mr. Dexter pointed out that there are shifting coalitions between cliques also.

Mr. Eulau asked who was to handle the whip organizations of the states; Mr. Alfred de Grazia suggested that Mr. Robinson take that up in his topic, ~~the structure of power in Congress~~ "Congressional Decision-Making".

Mr. Dexter commented that decision-making cannot be separated from power structure, so that the title of the topic should be "Decision Making in Relation to Power Structure." Referring to Mr. Lubell's topic, Mr. Dexter felt that the distinction between kinds of publics was very important; although each Congressman creates his own public, there are ^{also} certain groups that traditionally pay attention to Congress. For example, Boston and some Southern districts have traditional Congressional publics, and these groups should be distinguished from the individual Congressman's personal nuclear public.

Mr. Eulau emphasized the distinction between an elite and an attentive public.

Mr. Dexter brought up the subject of "built in" publics,--such as the Merchant Marine Fisheries,--and said that these built in publics must also be treated as Congressional constituencies.

Mr. Cotter added that the distinction should be made between "public" and "electorate." He also asked to what extent political parties were to be treated.

Mr. Alfred de Grazia said that although there was to be no paper on parties explicitly, they would be dealt with as they pertained to each individual topic. He noted that Mr. Dexter's topic, "The Role of the Congressman in the Total Functions of Congress," would probably contain a great deal about how the Congressman views himself in relation to the state and national parties, as well as dealing with Executive-Congressional relationships.

Mr. Dexter agreed with Mr. de Grazia that party leadership is not the spearhead for Congressional reform, and hence should be avoided as a central topic. He felt that the party was most important in so far as it influenced how the individual Congressman looked at his job, and should be treated in this capacity. Towards this end one might ask the question, "To what extent do Congressmen look upon keeping their state party alive as their major job?"

Mr. Eulau felt that the question of to what extent a party organization was functional or dysfunctional should also be treated. He noted that the party plays different roles in different committees; it is functional in the Ways and Means Committee, probably dysfunctional in special legislation, and non-functional in other areas.

In concluding the discussion of Mr. Lubell's paper it was suggested that he consider the following bibliographical material:

- 1) The body of data from the University of Michigan
- 2) The research study done by the Dartmouth Group
- 3) The 1964 Election Study, to the extent that it is available
- 4) Cavanack's (Dartmouth) study on Congressional mail for use in identifying publics
- 5) Mr. Dexter's article on Congressional mail
- 6) Matthews' U.S. Senator's and their World and Cohen's The Press and Foreign Policy with respect to the press as an influential and influencing "public"

The following issues were also suggested for inclusion in Mr. Lubell's topic:

- 1) The proposed 4 year term for Congressmen (in that if Congressional elections tie in with Presidential elections the kind of public electing Congressmen will differ)
- 2) The use of the neighborhood press to improve a Congressman's mentor influence on his constituency
- 3) The "reversing" influence of the press on the Congressman, (to the extent that he reads the press reports of committee hearings rather than the hearings themselves)
- 4) The Congressman's use of his own polls (in creating his own constituency)

With respect to the general question of to what extent past proposals for Congressional reform should be treated, it was agreed that instead of doing a survey of past proposals, the major focus should be on those issues of interest to the Committee on Organization. The relevance of the Project can be maximized by keeping a check on those reforms being considered by the Committee, especially those which will be on the agenda in January. In addition, those "standard propositions" having hidden effects should be exposed. It was also suggested that those reforms that are referred to but not analysed should be catalogued as to type (i.e. those fitting into an Executive-centered model, an efficiency model, etc) in an Appendix.

Mr. Cotter asked to what extent lobbying was to be dealt with.

Mr. Alfred de Grazia stated that there was no specific topic on lobbying planned, in that the issue varied from subject to subject.

Mr. Eulau presented the query that perhaps Congress itself should restrict lobbyists.

Mr. Dexter pointed out that some Congressmen regarded themselves as spokesmen for the lobbyist, and in that sense lobbying would be treated under the subject of "Congressional Publics."

Mr. Davidson added that he also would deal with lobbyists to some extent in that they were contestants in "Competition to Represent the People."

Mr. Dexter was interested in change in Congressional practices as well as Congressional structure in dealing with the multi-lateral claims of "representation." He brought up the state practice of getting all the lobbyists and Committeemen together over dinner so that all sides of the question at hand could be discussed, and speculated that if this were done on a National level, more attention would be paid to the minor interests, if only in making sure they were included in the dinner list.

Mr. Janda stated that this emphasized the "negotiating" aspects of government.

Mr. Robinson ^{work in the} cited Mr. Fenno's ranking of Committees in representing specialized interests ~~for~~ Mr. Davidson's attention.

Mr. Davidson said that he wanted to consider personnel and recruitment patterns in Congress in contrast to those of the Executive, and to examine the role ~~of~~ self-perceptions in determining the "representative functions" of administrators and legislators. He also wondered to what degree interest groups were influenced by "arenas" in the legislature in contrast to how they are influenced by analogous groups in the Executive (this refers to Huntington's concepts in The Common Defense).

Mr. Dexter suggested that Mr. Davidson also include the claims of the President to be the "true representative of the people." This subject would fit well with Mr. de Grazia's new book, ~~as it would point out~~ that the Congressman suffers from public acceptance of the President's argument that he represents "the people," and that the argument is not necessarily valid.

Mr. Alfred de Grazia recommended a careful analysis of what "representing the people" means, with a view towards evolving an adequate philosophy of representation.

Mr. Cotter suggested that the attitude of the "bureaucrat" in thinking that he is the representative of the public interest also be treated. Mr. de Grazia commented that the Warner and von Riper study had some of this kind of material.

Mr. Eulau warned against getting too metaphysical in treating the subject of representation; Mr. Dexter agreed, but pointed out that some philosophical treatment was necessary in order to establish a practical basis for examining attitudes of representation.

Mr. Janda suggested that the principles underlying Executive representation also be discussed by Mr. Davidson.

Mr. Dechert pointed ^{out} that the self-image of Congressmen, as Mr. Davidson had implied, was certainly critical in a discussion of representation.

Mr. Alfred de Grazia raised the issue of the susceptibility of Congressmen to panic under pressures from the Executive or from other sources, and suggested that this influenced the "representative" functions of Congressmen.

Mr. Dexter speculated that perhaps this tendency could be minimized by making sure that every Congressman had served in a strong state legislature before entering Congress, so that he would have a strongly entrenched ~~image~~ ^{image} of himself as primary representative. He also pointed out that the Congressman competes with the chairman of the local party organization or with the lobbyist for his committee as "representative of the people." For example, there are cases where the chairman of the local party takes a stand that the Congressman does not take, and the chairman then claims to be the "true representative." Mr. Dexter suggested that the question of whether the large lobbying organizations, such as the civil rights lobby for example, represent the people more than their Congressman, also be considered.

Mr. Janda proposed that Mr. Alfred de Grazia treat this subject in his discussion of the key institutions of representative government; a delineation of the crisscrossing of "representatives" would give fair treatment to alternative propositions.

Mr. Dechert expressed concern that the papers deal with alternative models in some way, especially in order to clarify our own orientation and to contrast it with the basic assumptions underlying other propositions. He suggested that sketches of alternative models be set up by "clusters" of proposals which would conform to them. By explaining why one or another proposition would be consistent with an Executive-centered model rather than a Congressional-centered model, for example, one provides intellectual validity to one's argument and indicates cognizance of alternatives.

Mr. Alfred de Grazia pointed out that some of this was done by James MacGregor Burns in Deadlock of Democracy.

Mr. Dexter reported that Arthur D. Little, Inc. had written a book on the organization of Congress in connection with their research for the Huntley Brinkley show on Congress, and that this book might prove useful for reference to members of Project Politist. He stated that this book might prove especially useful in yielding examples of proposals having implications that contradict their intended purpose; for example, ADL approves of the efficiency of electrical roll-call voting, and does not realize that this will prevent a Congressman from changing his mind, therefore reducing his bargaining position, and ultimately attenuating the position of Congress vis-a-vis the Executive.

Mr. Janda suggested that Project Politist be presented explicitly as an alternative to an Executive force model. Since the Executive model is the most common alternative, the distinctions between it and the Republican model should be made very clear. He also commented on the problems of getting recommendations accepted, and discussed several ideas which might facilitate the process: a) A survey of the literature on Congressional

reform might be made with the purpose of exposing undesirable proposals; b) Those proposals which fit neither into the Executive Force Model nor the intended Republican Model should be identified as random suggestions lacking in overall scope.

Mr. Robinson stated that Project Politist should serve as the legislative view of administrative theory in the same way that Heinneman's study serves as the Executive Force view.

Mr. Alfred de Grazia suggested that perhaps an analysis of the Executive Force Model could be included as an appendix rather than as a running commentary throughout the Project, and that perhaps Mrs. Farkas should set up an Executive Force Model as her thesis topic.

DISCUSSION OF "THE SERVICE FUNCTION--CASEWORK, PRIVATE BILLS, FAVORS, ETC."

Kenneth Olson

Mr. Dexter commented that Kenneth Gray has a good article in the American Political Science Review on this topic.

Mr. Robinson suggested that the subject of increased travel funds to enable Congressmen to visit their constituencies more often was important in connection with the service function of Congressmen.

Mr. Dexter added that intra-governmental "favors" were also an issue in expanding a Congressman's influence, and that perhaps all travel on Defense Dept. planes should be forbidden in the interests of equity.

Mr. Dechert said that he believed that Canadian legislators get free train travel, and that perhaps an arrangement could be made with the airlines (in as much as they're Government subsidized anyway) for all Congressmen to have complimentary air travel cards.

Mr. Dexter felt that favors done for the Congressman and his family should also be treated in Mr. Olson's paper.

Mr. Robinson pointed out that much Congressional travel is financed by "counter-part" funds, and that these are administered by the Executive; Congress itself should have a fund. This would give Congress greater control of its own affairs; furthermore, if Congress were to be accountable to itself in this area it might be more economical.

Mr. Dexter expanded on this idea to include foreign travel, the arrangements for which are usually made through the local embassies. He pointed out that this situation also is Executive oriented, and that consistent with the Congressional Model, "Congress should have its own procurer's."

Mr. Dechert added that although the easiest way for Congressmen abroad to get money is by getting "counterpart" from the embassy, a fixed allowance coming directly from Congress would be better.

Mr. Robinson agreed, and felt that such an arrangement would be useful in countering the image of "junketeering," especially since the funds would probably have to be carefully accounted for.

Mr. Eulau advocated the principle that all travel should have a specific purpose and task to be accomplished.

Mr. Robinson advised that the problem in getting through the proposed increase in Congressional travel funds is the affect it might be thought to have on the opposing candidates. However, the contention that the incumbent would gain an advantage over his adversary by being further enabled to travel can be rebutted by the argument that the incumbent is is kept in Washington more, and hence does not have as much time for contacts as does his adversary.

Mr Dexter recommended that a distinction be made in all papers between those reforms which a current Congress might pass and those which for practical and political reasons would never get through until way in the future. For example, ways in which Congressmen's opponents might be helped in their campaigns would probably be an unacceptable subject of consideration for the present Congress. Practical proposals should be given priority.

Mr Robinson agreed, but indicated that the far-reaching effect of a given change can be determined, and used as an argument emphasizing the benefits of the proposed change even if that effect is a by-product of the reform rather than its direct intent. For example, if Congressmen are helped to travel from government funds, it would relieve some of the financial pressures on the campaign committees which could then go to the opponents. In addition, if the government pays for the home trips of incumbent Congressmen, money given for this purpose by the state parties or by local labor groups would be made more available to their opponents.

Mr Eulau approved of reforms advantageous to both the 'ins' and the 'outs' that served to maximize the arena of competition.

Mr. Alfred de Grazia suggested that Congressional opponents could register within a given time limit and be helped too.

Mr Robinson presented a compromise proposal ; once a challenger has been elected, he should then be eligible for travel funds.

Mr Olson felt that the odds should be in favor of the incumbent. Congressmen are more valuable doing their committee work than traveling home to deal with petty adversaries; the continuous necessity to do this weakens Congress.

DISCUSSION OF "PRESSURES OF GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES" -----Edward de Grazia

Mr Robinson suggested that it would be useful to look at the chief legislative liason for several departments, and to see how the State and Defense Department liasons ~~are~~ from other substantive departments.

Mr Dexter mentioned that Mr. Abe Holtzman of 2522 Midway, Raleigh, N.C., has written a book called 'Legislative Liason Relationships' that might be of interest to Mr. de Grazia.

asked

Mr Edward de Grazia if he was to exclude the independent agencies such as the ICC, the FCC, etc , since they present different problems.

Mr Dexter stated that the distinction between the different types of ^{agencies} did not matter that much, but that Mr. de Grazia should give his reasons if he chose not to deal with the independent agencies.

Mr Robinson pointed out that the original concept of the independent agencies was that they were to be "arms of Congress", as opposed to the agencies of the State Department, for example, which are purely executive. In this sense the independent agencies are especially interesting.

Mr Dexter presented the hypothesis that if the President has good relationships with the independent agencies, he can use them to enhance his own power. However, if he does not, this does not enhance the power of Congress.

Mr Robinson wondered whether the executive agencies were not more susceptible to Congressional influence than ^{are} the independent agencies.

Mr Edward de Grazia asked if the roles of the President and of Congress in the appointment of top officials were to be included in his topic.

Mr Alfred de Grazia commented that the subject was too complicated, ~~especially~~ especially since it would require setting up a system of rules indicating when Congress can intervene in appointments.

Mr Dexter felt that Mr de Grazia should also question to what extent some agencies are independent of everyone. He recommended that the bibliography on Congressional oversight of agencies by Arthur Maas be looked into.

Mr Edward de Grazia inquired if he should also deal with pressures by Congressmen or agencies on behalf of individuals or groups.

DISCUSSION OF "THE SCOPE AND JURISDICTION OF COMMITTEES" -----Heinz Eulau

In discussing his topic, Mr Eulau commented that he thinks that the committees make decisions for Congress rather than merely making recommendations to Congress, and that the ideal model should suggest that this be reformed. He argued against Mr Alfred de Grazia's contention that the committees are representative.

Mr Robinson felt that it is impossible for Congress as Congress to speak; if the committee system is weakened, Congress will be weakened.

Mr Alfred de Grazia stated that it was unfair to say that one committee determines the product; there are many shifting scenes, and all different profiles of serial representation. The history of most ordinary bills shows that all interests are represented in the voting.

Mr Janda suggested that the experience of state legislatures would be instructive in examining the question of whether the Congress as a whole or the committees make the decisions. He pointed out that no state legislature has as strong committees as Congress, and asked who makes the decisions on the state level. He agreed that it would be desirable for the committees to have a different kind of role, but doubted that it could work that way.

Mr Dechert discussed the extent to which the committee system helps the individual Congressman to avoid taking a position, and mentioned the Education Bill as an example.

Mr Eulau emphasized the great variety of fields structuring committee activity, and felt that this precluded any generalized statement.

Mr Robinson proposed that committees be directly organized as counterparts to executive agencies; Mr Dechert said that this would lead to collusion. Mr Dexter agreed with Mr Dechert and pointed out the danger of having the same people going back and forth between the Executive agency and its Congressional counterpart.

Mr Robinson argued that it would be possible to get committees which could not

not be in cahoots with the agencies. This could be accomplished by giving higher pay for long term service, and by a prohibition against working on the Executive staff. In addition, ex-committee members could have a consultative position with the committee itself rather than being tempted into going over into the Executive.

Mr Davidson felt that the variable/affecting committee behavior should be cataloged, and suggested that one important variable might be the structure of the agency with which the committee deals.

Mr Alfred de Grazia suggested that Mr Eulau attempt to answer the question of what is the best course for a bill to follow .

Mr Dexter added that Mr Eulau should also deal with the problem of badly run committee hearings.

Mr Olson emphasized that the proliferation of subcommittees had important implications for Mr Eulau's subject, and stated that this proliferation increased the access of the executive agencies to Congress.

DISCUSSION OF " DECISION MAKING IN RELATION TO POWER STRUCTURE"

James Robinson

Mr Robinson outlined his topic in the following manner: a) An expansion, with reference to the scholarship available, of the statements made to the Committee on Organization about the objectives for Congress as an initiating rather than a reacting political body b) A review of the historical trends in this direction and a discussion of the difficulties involved in becoming more of a policy making body c) Ways to strengthen Congress d) Discussion of Joint Hearings, Distinction between Hearings on a bill and hearings on a topic e) Biennial vs annual budgets f) Party leaders, whips, implications of electric voting

Mr Dechert speculated that perhaps the personality characteristics of initiating types would be inconsistent with the personality characteristics needed to get elected to Congress, and that if this were true it would be difficult for Congress to become more of an initiating body.

Mr Dexter stated that the word "initiating" must be broadly defined. Congress does not have to initiate by originating. but can broadcast.

Mr Dechert felt that the issue was how to get Congress to put across its own innovations rather than having innovations originating in Congress picked up by the Executive, as was the case with the Peace Corps and the Herder-Clayton Bill.

Mr Robinson agreed that what was needed was a mechanism by which idea men ~~could~~ translate their ideas into policy without their going through the Executive.

Mr Dexter expressed doubt that Congress could become a body of dynamic initiators in that Congressmen regarded themselves as legislators rather than as social reformers.

Mr Olson recommended that Mr Robinson investigate the extra-Congressional groups (such as the Wednesday Club) as possible centers of creativity.

Mr Robinson discussed the hypothesis that a two year budget would enhance Congressional influence in that it would give more time for item by item consideration and for gathering information relevant to agency requests.

Mr Dexter felt that the biennial budget was appropriate only for some things, but not as a general rule. He suggested that the "subject matter" committee join the Appropriations Committee in budgetary decision making.

Referring again to the problem of making the Congress a more innovating and participating body, Mr Dechert suggested that a formal forum and press be set up through which innovations could come forward. He mentioned the Herder- Clayton Act as a good example of Congressional originating.

Mr Dexter pointed out that this Act came from Herder, who is not known as an originator, and that things ran more smoothly that way (i.e. when the innovator is above suspicion of being a radical or an innovator).

Mr Olson named Hubert Humphreys and Lyndon Johnson as "real innovators"; but despaired about the haphazard and "behind the scenes" way they had to operate. Johnson's method was to plant "experts" all over; Humphrey made suggestions, but did not follow through and therefore made no enemies that might have stopped him.

Mr Eulau was optimistic about the possibilities of institutionalizing Congressional creativity, and wished to find a good way of channeling Congressional ideas into the National Platform.

Mr Dexter felt that this could be done mainly if the individual Congressman had good relations with the Party leader.

DISCUSSION OF "THE OVERSIGHT OF ADMINISTRATION"-----Cornelius Cotter

Mr Cotter questioned whether a republican model of Congress necessarily implied a weak Executive, or whether the terms "weak" and "Strong" were really inappropriate. He speculated about having a strong President and a strong Congress, with weak agencies.

Mr Robinson replied that both the President and Congress have become more participating in terms of public policy, but that the President has far surpassed the Congress in increase of initiative. It is this gap that should be closed.

Mr Cotter asked if legislative clearance was consistent with a republican model; Mr Alfred de Grazia felt that it was not, because so many bills were deserted when they failed to get Executive support from the legislative clearance machine of the Budget Bureau.

Mr Eulau proposed the location of a "legislative clearance" within Congress itself; Mr Dexter, commenting on Mr Eulau's suggestion, stated that Mass. had what is in essence a clearance within the legislature in that a bill goes to the Ways and Means Committee before it goes to the floor.

Mr Alfred de Grazia requested that attention be given to the idea of attaching Congressional Tribunes to each agency who would "report to the Congress each year on reasons for closing down or diminishing the function of their agencies and practical means of doing so."

Mr Dexter identified this idea as an "adversary procedure." Mr Dechert said that in essence, it would be an extension of the GAO.

Mr Alfred de Grazia explained that the function of the Tribune was to be that of negative politics; he would serve as a kind of devil's advocate in ferreting out adverse policies, but would not present new policies himself.

Mr Robinson extended the concept of the Tribune to include an appraisal function of Congressional laws; the Tribunes could investigate the effect of legislation 3 or 4 years after its passage to see if it is working like Congress expected it to.

Mr Dexter preferred the strictly negative function for the Tribunes since it "got the foot in the door" as well as giving creative attention to things usually taken for granted (i.e., that things that could be better done by a non-governmental agency would be dropped by the agency in question.) He felt that the gathering of information about the realizing of Congressional intentions was important, but not the *raison d'etre* for the Tribunes. The abolition of governmental functions needs to become institutionalized.

Mr Janda warned that the idea of Tribunes should be presented to Congress on a very small scale, since it would probably be rejected if proposed to the whole Congress at once.

Mr Cotter suggested that Tribunes be appointed on a regional basis so that there could be a resident Congressional agent in each major city.

Mr Davidson pointed to the fundamental problem of educating Congressmen to be "oversight minded" in addition to being legislative minded; he suggested an investigative subcommittee for oversight to be part of each substantive committee.

Mr Alfred de Grazia approved of Mr Janda's suggestion that the Tribune idea be presented on an experimental basis because it was more likely to be accepted. He recommended that Mr Cotter incorporate the Tribunes into his paper as a proposal for a Rand Corp. study. This would be an easy way to introduce the concept slowly so as not to seem too radical. On the other hand it should be recognized that some situations call for radical change, and this fact should be brought to the attention of Congress.

Mr Eulau agreed, and added that even in view of this, extreme ideals must be sacrificed for possibility; he suggested that distinctions be made not only between the existing and the ideal model of Congress, but also between the ideal and the possible suggestions.

Mr Dechert stated that proposals must be made consistent with the real model because overly radical recommendations would be dysfunctional with Congressional organization and would therefore be rejected.

Mr Dexter brought up the point that even most conservative organizations ask for more than they really expect to get.

Mr Edward de Grazia suggested that radical situations be investigated by private research groups. ~~He said that the existing institutional approach is better than the agency approach.~~ He cited the American Law Institute as an example of a group that was able to have some state laws abolished as a result of their research. He further suggested that the Tribunes proposed be attached primarily to an institution rather than to the individual agencies because of the problems of disloyalty. The "Tribune" must be institutionalized because he is to serve a destructive purpose, and therefore must

not be an integral part of the agency if he is to be effective. Charles DISCUSSION OF "ACCESS TO INFORMATION FROM THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH"-- Dechert Mr Dechert expressed concern about the lack of information available to Congress on the long term planning and budgetary needs of Executive agencies even in cases where the agency in question has made long term projections. He pointed out that ~~the~~ although NASA knew last July what it was going to ask for in April, these plans were not made known to Congress. Moreover, the long term plans that are presented are very much over-simplified so that there is a tendency to lose sight of the substantive points covered. The result is that Congress has very little information about the uses to which the appropriation will be put. To correct this situation Mr Dechert suggested a kind of "legislative Rand Corp." to investigate Executive activities, future plans, and the actual functioning of the system. He urged that Congress develop its own system of intelligence capable of doing independent analysis and cost-effectiveness studies.

Mr Edward de Grazia acknowledged the importance of Congressional intent in analyzing legislation or governmental functions that are possibly superfluous. He pointed out that the Supreme Court goes back to the intent of Congress when the constitutionality of a law is challenged, ~~and with~~ ~~sometimes~~ because sometimes the administration of the law determines its effect rather than the purpose for which it was passed. In that the administrative agencies frequently alter legislation by their interpretation of it, Congress ought to have some kind of operation to investigate whether the administration of a law is inconsistent with the original intent--- (in other words a kind of "judicial review" for delegated legislation) This is another device which would add to the fund of information on which Congress makes its decisions.

Mr Dechert added that Congress also needs a translating service for information that is available, but in practically unusable form. The amount and availability of information must be maximized to order to enable Congress to generate political alternatives. The bias and the completeness of information from the Executive must be investigated, and the problem of classified material dealt with. Mr Dechert indicated that he would also treat the role of long term planning information on Congressional decisions in his paper.

Mr Dexter felt that the problems of how to digest information are more pressing than those of gathering it; frequently there is too much information than can be analysed during the time available. He suggested that Mr Dechert make explicit what kinds of information is usable, and that he recommend effective ways to think about the information available.

Mr Robinson pointed out that one of the advantages that the Executive has over Congress is its mode of processing information, and that Congress needs an integrative mechanism to pull together information about and from specialized fields. Mr Dexter put the problem in terms of the need for more "digestors" of information.

Mr Janda agreed that Congress needs a quick and effective way of getting at information, and stated that at present there was no information retrieval system adequate for this purpose. He emphasized that the preparation of input for information retrieval systems was as problematical as the retrieval of the information.

DISCUSSION OF "AUTOMATION AS AN AID TO CONGRESS"-----Kenneth Janda

Mr Alfred de Grazia suggested that this paper be renamed because the word "automation" has come to have alienating effects.

Mr Janda presented two possible approaches to his topic: 1) A discussion of the methods and equipment of automation or 2) A discussion of what should be retrievable. The first method would be more of a "nuts and bolts" type paper, whereas the second would deal with the access to political information (such as the socio-economic composition of a Congressman's district), the retrieval of information relevant to legislative and oversight activity, etc.

Mr Alfred de Grazia indicated that the title of the topic was intended to ask the question of how to automate to help Congress make choices. For example, how can automation in information aid the Congressman in conducting propaganda activities (for themselves as well as for issues)? Time consuming difficulties in getting books from libraries, using poor public transportation, etc. should be discussed in relation to automation.

Mr Dexter suggested that the unreadability of Hearings and Committee reports also be discussed, and that reforms of the Government Printing Office might be in order in connection with this. For example, abstracts of testimony should be made, and headings and a synopsis of previous legislation should be included on title pages. (Mr Robinson)

Mr Dechert pointed out that the possibilities of computer use for indexing, etc would be a good subject for investigation by a foundation. Mr Janda speculated about whether the present state of technology was advanced enough to meet Congressional needs in automating as far as computers were concerned.

Mr Robinson stated that even such non-technical automation as accumulating Federal statutes and practices in a way which would make reference easier would be a welcomed advance.

Mr Alfred de Grazia proposed an internal closed circuit TV system in all rooms so that Congressmen in their offices can have access to the proceedings in the different committees.

Mr Janda, referring to the possibilities of an automated information retrieval system for Congress, stated that such a system would have to be organized on the committee level rather than on the individual level because the individuals could not cope with the input problems. Moreover, an individual-centered system would mean approximately 535 terminals, which is technologically impossible at present. However, another possibility would be to have the Congress as a whole as the center of the system and have the chamber leadership as monitors.

Mr Robinson made the suggestion that a Congressman's correspondence could perhaps be ~~not~~ stored in an automated information retrieval system; this would leave office files available for other kinds of information storage.

Mr Janda observed that it would not be necessary to store ~~actual~~ ^{all} information in a computer; what is needed is something that can automatically scan clusters of information, ~~and~~ retain only the important facts, and then put together the information on one subject (an information sorting system).

Mr Dechert mentioned that although present day computers would be inadequate for storage of actual information for Congressional purposes, it would be possible to have access numbers to information on the tape, with clerks to do the actual retrieving.

Mr Robinson proposed the installation of teletypes between Congressional

and Executive agencies. Mr Dexter said that this would reduce the influence of the liaison people, and that although this might be good, but it would mean less personal contact. He also suggested that Mr Janda consider the possible uses of modern information systems for the press. More informed reporting on the part of the press would enhance the prestige of Congress.

Mr Janda expressed concern that Congressmen could become captives of too sophisticated an information retrieval system. Mr Dechert also felt that this was a possible danger, and also pointed out that a really sharp operator who knew how to command such a system could probably perpetuate himself in office on the basis of his access to information (barring popular caprice and disaster due to natural causes).

Mr Robinson favored the approach to automating that would ferret out the long term consequences of the various possible systems, and then on that basis, question whether or not it should be used.

Mr Dexter warned that if Congress did not use automated information systems it contend with the Executive expertise in having mastered their use.

Mr Alfred de Grazia pointed out that although suggestions for mechanization usually called forth objections to "de-humanization", Project Politist must deal with them because they are very much at issue. He agreed that automation must be handled "humanistically", and said that this kind of an approach would be more desirable than having someone else do the job badly.

Mr Janda suggested that the term "humanation" could be used instead of "automation."

Mr Robinson wanted to explore the possibilities of having an automatic transcription of committee and floor debates by a combination of tapes and automatic typewriters. Mr Janda added that machines could also be used for translation as long as the translation was then edited to compensate for the inadequacies of translating machines.

Mr Dexter stated that many Congressmen may disapprove of machines because they could not blame "mistakes" on their secretaries. He also suggested to Mr Janda that his proposals include recommendations ~~include~~ to foundations for research, to people at large as well as to Congress.

Mr Robinson proposed that the image and the understanding of Congress might be enhanced by the creation of operating models of the legislative process for the public.

Mr Janda requested the opinions of the project members on electrical voting. Mr. Dexter felt that it would be a trivial change, but that Mr Janda should explain why. Mr Robinson commented that Senator Long of Louisiana had voting machines connected to a switchboard in his office so that he would know how people were voting and could try to influence them in the future. Mr Janda disagreed that the issue was trivial. He pointed out that in some states provision was made for vote-changing even with the machines by having a clerk there to open them. Moreover, machines make roll call voting easier, so that there would probably be more of them. Congressmen would not even have to be present, but could vote from a transistorized key.

Mr Dexter observed that electrical voting would make it easier to have more amendments in substantive matter. Mr Dechert responded that there would then be a danger of "sentence by sentence" voting, and that this might destroy the consistency of legislation.

Mr Janda concluded that electrical voting had no clear implication for the model to be used because the results were as yet unknown; therefore it is not really necessary to deal with it.

The meeting adjourned at 6 P.M.

Suzanne Farkas
June 28, 1965