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The Personnel of the House of Representatives In The Eighty-Fourth Congress, 1955-1957 *

E. K. WILLIAMS

This presentation is designed to study the factors of age, party distribution, prior legislative experience, length of service, and occupations of the members of the House of Representatives in the Eighty-Fourth Congress. It is also designed to discover the relationship between the members of both houses of Congress apropos of these factors.

The basic data with respect to the personnel of the "House" ** were obtained from three sources.¹ The data relative to the members of the Senate were gathered from a previous study made by the author.² Generally, the writer was able to find sufficient data to complete this study. Nevertheless, the paucity of information on the lives of several members of the "House" imposes some limitation on this presentation.

AGE OF REPRESENTATIVES

The factor of age is a significant one in shaping the many facets of American life. This is particularly true with regards to the men and women who are expected to legislate nationally and wisely for the people. In this context, Table I gives an analysis of the age of the legislators of the lower house who share the legislative responsibility of the government.

TABLE I
Age of Representatives In the Eighty-Fourth Congress

<i>Age-Decade</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent</i>
1	2	3
80-89	4	00.94
70-79	28	06.4
60-69	83	19
50-59	145	33.3
40-49	121	27.8
30-39	54	12.4
Total	435	99.84

*This presentation involves a study of the members of the House of Representatives as indicated in the *Congressional Directory, 84th Congress, 1st Session*, March, 1955 and in the *Quarterly Almanac*, XI, 1955.

**The word, "House" as referred to above and subsequently is used to designate the House of Representatives as distinct from the Senate.

¹Biographical Director of American Congress, 1774-1949 (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1955); *Congressional Quarterly Almanac* (Henrietta and Nelson Poynter, Editors) XI, 1955, pp. 24-25; and *Congressional Directory, 84th Congress, 1st Session* (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1955).

²E. K. Williams, "A Study of the Personnel of the Senate in the Eighty-Fourth Congress, 1955-1956," Faculty Research Edition of the *Savannah State College Bulletin*, XI, No. 2, 65-71.

Columns two and three indicate that: (1) one-third of the members of the "House" fall in the age-group from fifty to fifty-nine; (2) approximately forty per cent of the members are under fifty years of age; and, (3) approximately sixty per cent are fifty years old or older. McKinney's findings relative to the age of the members of the "House" in the Seventy-seventh Congress compare favorably with those in this presentation. McKinney maintained that the average age of the personnel of the "House" in the Seventy-seventh Congress was fifty-two, and that fifty per cent of the members were fifty years old or older.³

A comparative study of the age of the representatives and senators of the Eighty-fourth Congress shows that senators are little older than representatives. Williams found that the median age of senators in the Eighty-fourth Congress was 57.25 years.⁴ The median age of representatives in this study is 52.94.

Evidence seems to indicate that the members in both houses are older than men and women who hold responsible positions in non-governmental service. This raises a question as to the validity and rationale that permit a society to elect older men for public service and appoint or select younger men for both governmental and non-governmental services.

PARTY DISTRIBUTION

Geography and partisan politics have been historically associated in American culture from 1787 until now. The ability of Congress to implement its essential policies and functions with regards to both domestic and international problems may well be accelerated or retarded in the geography of politics.

TABLE II
Party Distribution of Representatives by Region and by States

<i>Region</i>	<i>Democrats</i>	<i>Republicans</i>	<i>Total</i>
East North Central.....	30	57	87
Illinois.....	12	13	25
Indiana.....	2	9	11
Michigan.....	7	11	18
Ohio.....	6	17	23
Wisconsin.....	3	7	10
East South Central.....	28	4	32
Alabama.....	9	0	9
Kentucky.....	6	2	8
Mississippi.....	6	0	6
Tennessee.....	7	2	9
Middle Atlantic.....	37	50	87
New Jersey.....	6	8	14
New York.....	17	26	43
Pennsylvania.....	14	16	30

³Madge M. McKinney, "The Personnel of the Seventy-seventh Congress," *American Political Science Review*, XXXVI, 1942, p. 67.

⁴Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

TABLE II—continued

<i>Region</i>	<i>Democrats</i>	<i>Republicans</i>	<i>Total</i>
Mountain.....	6	9	15
Arizona.....	1	1	2
Colorado.....	2	2	4
Idaho.....	1	1	2
Montana.....	1	1	2
New Mexico.....	1	1	2
Nevada.....	0	1	1
Utah.....	0	1	1
Wyoming.....	0	1	1
New England.....	10	19	29
Connecticut.....	1	6	7
Maine.....	0	3	3
Massachusetts.....	7	7	14
New Hampshire.....	0	2	2
Rhode Island.....	2	0	2
Vermont.....	0	1	1
Pacific.....	13	28	41
California.....	11	19	30
Oregon.....	1	3	4
Washington.....	1	6	7
South Atlantic.....	53	7	60
Delaware.....	1	0	1
Florida.....	7	1	8
Georgia.....	10	0	10
Maryland.....	4	3	7
North Carolina.....	11	1	12
South Carolina.....	6	0	6
Virginia.....	8	2	10
West Virginia.....	6	0	6
West North Central.....	14	28	42
Iowa.....	0	8	8
Kansas.....	0	6	6
Minnesota.....	5	4	9
Missouri.....	9	2	11
Nebraska.....	0	4	4
North Dakota.....	0	2	2
South Dakota.....	0	2	2
West South Central.....	40	2	42
Arkansas.....	6	0	6
Louisiana.....	8	0	8
Oklahoma.....	5	1	6
Texas.....	21	1	22
Total (U. S.).....	231	204	435

Table II shows that the two major parties have national representatives from each of the nine regions. The Republican Party has a majority of members in the "House" from six of these regions, and the Democratic Party from three. In the six regions which the Republican party has a majority, there are 191 Republican representatives and 111 Democratic representatives, while in the three regions which the Democratic Party has a majority, there are 121 Democratic representatives and 13 Republicans.

This study further reveals that there are seven states which have five or more representatives each and have no Republican members of the "House," and two states which have five or more representatives each and have no Democratic members. The Democratic Party has a majority of representatives from four of the largest urban centers, while the Republican Party has a majority from only one of the largest urban centers.

With respect to the party distribution of the senators by regions and states in the Eighty-fourth Congress, Williams writes: ". . . In two regions, East South Central and West South Central, the Democrats have complete control. The Republicans do not exercise complete control over any of these regions. Only the border states of Delaware and Maryland, of the South Atlantic region, elected Republican senators to the Eighty-fourth Congress while the state of New York elected one Democratic senator from the Middle Atlantic region."⁵ He further comments: ". . . If the assumption that the two-party system promotes democracy is valid, then there is an indispensable obligation for Americans to make the two-party system theory a genuine instrument for furthering in those states where virtually one party exists."⁶

EDUCATION

The formal education of the representatives in the Eighty-fourth Congress is similar in many respects to that of their fellow-legislators in the upper house of this Congress.⁷ First, the education of the members of the "House" significantly surpasses that of the general public. Secondly, approximately half of the members have been legally trained. Thirdly, nearly all of them have attended or have graduated from college, university, or a professional school.

Specifically, the data available on 413 members* indicate that only forty-four or approximately nine per cent of that number have not attended some form of higher education beyond the high school. Approximately fifty per cent had graduated or attended law school as compared with approximately sixty of the senators in the same Congress.⁸

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 68.

⁶*Loc. cit.*

⁷See *Ibid.*, pp. 68-69.

*No information was available on twenty-two members.

⁸*Loc. cit.*

College training is almost indispensable for leaders in a highly complexed society of this day. Nevertheless, a college education, per se, may not prepare one adequately for the specific task of a legislator. Legal training involves a highly disciplined mind as well as a vast knowledge of man's social progress and nature but it is not the whole prerequisite for law-making. Robert Bruce asserts that: "Lawyers are liable to be poor law-makers because their mental habit is backward looking. Their whole training has taught them ever to rely on precedents. They worship the past. This has its advantages, but among them is not the facility for meeting needs and anticipating tomorrow."⁹

PRIOR LEGISLATIVE EXPERIENCE

Legislative experience in the lower echelon of government appears not to be the gateway to membership in the House of Representatives. Conversely, a majority of the personnel are elected to Congress for the first time without any legislative experience. In McKinney's study of the Seventy-seventh Congress, it was found that only 123 members had served previously in the state legislature.¹⁰

In this study, the data reveal that 108 or 24.87 of the personnel have served in one or more branches of their respective state legislature and eighteen or 04.13 have served as members of the city council. Generally, approximately seventy per cent of members of the "House" in the Eighty-fourth Congress has had no legislative experience prior to their initial election to this body. This compares unfavorably to the members of the Senate in this Congress in that forty or approximately forty per cent had legislative experience in the House of Representatives.¹¹

LENGTH OF SERVICE

The entire personnel of the "House" is elected to serve for two years only. Consequently the length of service of the members is conditioned by the brevity of the term. Table III shows that 57 or 13.10 of the membership began their service in the Eighty-fourth Congress. This compares with 9.37 freshman senators of the same Congress.¹² Moreover, approximately fifty per cent of the "House" have had less than seven years of service in that body. This raises a question as to the wisdom and validity of two-year terms for membership in the lower house of Congress. Young states that: "The two-year terms for the House of Representatives may also have a disruptive effect on the legislative process by making the members continually conscious of the pending elections. . . ."¹³

⁹McKinney, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 71.

¹¹Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

¹²*Ibid.*, p. 70.

¹³Roland Young, *The American Congress* (Harper and Brothers) 1958, p. 40.

TABLE III
LENGTH OF SERVICE

<i>Terms* Served Prior to Eighty-fourth Congress</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent</i>
<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>
0	57	13.10
1	69	15.86
2	55	12.64
3	48	11.03
4	44	10.11
5	24	05.51
6	38	08.73
7	15	03.44
8	25	05.74
9	16	03.67
10	12	02.71
11	11	02.50
11	0	00.00
12	4	00.90
13	2	00.45
14	5	01.14
15	3	00.68
16	4	00.90
17	0	00.00
18	1	00.22
19	0	00.00
20	0	00.00
21	1	00.22
22	1	00.22
Total	435	98.87

PRIOR OCCUPATIONS

Many occupational segments are represented in the experience of the members of the "House." However, this study with respect to prior occupations shows definitely no inclination toward any form of occupational or professional equilibrium. One or two major economic interests appear to be overrepresented, many underrepresented, and one or two major occupations with hardly any significant representation. Accordingly, lawyers have the largest single group, the farmers and factory workers have just the opposite.

Table IV shows the occupational interest and experience of the members of the "House." In this respect, politics, law, and business lead.

*A term is equivalent to two years.

TABLE IV
PRIOR OCCUPATIONS OF REPRESENTATIVES*

<i>Occupations</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent</i>
<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>
Agriculture	51	11.72
Business/Banking	127	29.17
Civic Service/Politics	409	94.00
Journalism	33	07.60
Law	245	56.33
Teaching	47	10.80
D(ent), E(ng), M(ed)	10	02.29
Veteran	261	60.00

McKinney's study of the personnel of the Seventy-seventh Congress gives a comparable picture. In this study of occupations, McKinney found among other things: 252 lawyers; 71 teachers; 30 newspaper men; 46 farmers; 17 publishers; 57 various types of business men; 6 authors and 9 physicians and dentists.¹⁴

Our present method of apportioning the members of the "House" rests solely on a numerical basis. Economic and social interests have no legal basis. Yet, they are significant aspects of the fabric of political life. This raises a question as to the adequacy of the numerical method of apportionment of the personnel of the lower "House." Perhaps there is a need for a more equitable method of apportionment which would account for the divergent economic and social interest of the people. Such a realistic approach may be one of the most direct paths that lead to genuine democracy.

*This table shows the number of persons who have had experience listed in Column 1. See *Congressional Almanac*, XI, (1955) p. 24.

¹⁴McKinney, *op. cit.*, p. 72.