

At twelve o'clock noon on January 3, 1945, the 78th Congress passed into the history of what had been and the members of that Congress who for one reason or another did not find a place in the 79th Congress also passed into legislative history. One of these was Martin Dies of Texas, chairman of the committee on Un-American Activities which was to become known throughout the land as the Dies Committee. The life of the Dies Committee automatically expired at noon on January 3, 1945 but the ghost of that Committee was to make the transition from 78th to the 79th Congress and be re-energized into new and permanent life. It came about when an amendment was offered to the Rules of the House to create a new standing committee on Un-American Activities and since the House is complete master of its own rule-making power, the Dies Committee was clothed in the garment of permanency or until the House should by its own action otherwise decree.

ILLOGICAL OR NOT.

There seems to be something singularly illogical about such a proceeding. One of the last acts of the 78th Congress was to enact Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 23 introduced by Senator Maloney of Connecticut to create a Joint Committee of 12 Senators and Representatives to study and make recommendations looking toward the simplification and strengthening of the operations and structure of Congress and its committees. That there is a crying need for such reorganization is so very manifest from the fact that so much of the prestige which Congress once enjoyed in public esteem is noticeably absent. It is also noticeable in the overlapping jurisdiction of standing Committees which deal with the same general subject matter. One need but examine the procedure relating to claims and pensions generally to get the full significance of that observation.

A POINTED EXAMPLE.

A pension claim arising out of service in the Indian Wars (and there are as of today 4082 such pensions in force) would under existing rules go to the Committee on Invalid Pensions. If it was a pension claim arising out of service in the Spanish American War (and there are 130,016 veterans and 69,653 dependents drawing these pensions today) it would go to the Committee on Pensions. If it was a claim of a commercial nature arising out of World War I, it would go to the War Claims Committee, if it was a claim in the nature of disability or death compensation or a claim of a widow or orphan arising out of World War I, it would go to the Committee on World War Veterans Legislation. If it was a general claim such as a disability or damage demand resulting from the negligence of a mail truck driver, it would go to the Claims Committee. Here is an example of lack of coordination and administration of claims on the Federal government which needs improvement. If this type of work were consolidated and properly staffed, it would result in speedier and more effective action on all types of claims. One might also observe that while most legislation dealing with Banking, currency and monetary matters is handled by the Committee on Banking and Currency, legislation on fractional coinage is handled by the Committee on Coinage Weights and Measures. Similarly, nearly all matters relating to the Judiciary are referred to the Judiciary Committee while the mechanical and supervisory work of revising and codifying the laws is handled by a Committee on Revision of the Laws. These are but a few of the examples which have persuaded students of the legislative branch of the government that overhauling of the structure is imperative.

The author of the FRONT has been designated as one of the 6 members of the House of Representatives to serve on that Reorganization Committee and shares the belief of men like former Senator Byrnes (now the Economic Mobilizer), the American Political Science Association, and many members of the House and Senate, that reorganization is a job long overdue. There are many who entertain the conviction that through consolidation and modification, the number of Committees of the House and Senate can be drastically reduced. It seems illogical, therefore, that on the first day of the 79th Congress, another standing committee should have been added to the list instead of placing this problem in the lap of the Reorganization Committee which is still in effect so far as the Senate is concerned and which will be re-created by the present Congress