

Agenda for a GOP House

The house of Representatives very likely will be gavelled to order next January by Republican Speaker Jerry Ford of Michigan. If that happens, House Republicans will take power better prepared to use it than ever before in history.

To some, I suppose, it may seem odd that the best hope for innovation and effective problem-solving lies with the GOP; but that happens to be where most good ideas reside these days. To others who blindly accept the stereotyped image of Congressional Republicans as "obstructionists," it will seem odder still for me to claim that the best chance for enactment of innovative programs lies in a Republican Congress. But that happens to be what all the activity in the House of Representatives during the past three years has been about.

Under our Conference structure, we have held seminars and study groups ranging from balance of payments to the negative income tax. We have created task forces and issued papers, studied legislation and sometimes succeeded in restructuring it. An unmistakable Republican stamp is on such programs as the Comprehensive Health Act (which consolidated sixteen project and formula grants into a single bloc grant) and the anti-crime legislation that passed the House last year (another bloc grant).

These programs and others like them set forth for all who care to notice the shape and style of what a Republican Congress will set out to do next January.

Obviously, the specifics can only be outlined in the briefest of terms here but a much fuller discussion will shortly be available in book form. As the Editor and one of the 29 contributors to *Republican Papers* (Doubleday and Co., Summer, 1968), I would of course recommend it highly to the readers of the Ripon FORUM.

In barest outline, the agenda for a GOP House as I see it would include three broad categories: reorganization; redirection; and innovation.

Reorganization—Here I'm talking about the Congress itself. The reorganization bill passed by the Senate has been bottled up by the Democratic majority for more than a year. A Republican House would shake it loose. We would seek to make Congress more than a bill factory and try to restructure its internal makeup to allow for much greater oversight and review of existing programs. Congress' neglect of its oversight function validates to some extent charges that Congress must bear a substantial part of the blame for domestic ills and inadequate programs.

Redirection — One of the greatest needs is to organize more logically some of the major programs administered by the Executive Branch. Many programs have outlived their original purpose; others actively compound the problems they were designed to relieve; still others are loosely administered and very wasteful. A Republican Congress would seek to squeeze as much effectiveness as they will yield from the ill-conceived and hastily enacted programs that are on the books until such time as many of them can be consolidated into functional grants, transferred to more proper lo-

cations, or replaced.

Examples would include transferring community health centers from OEO to the Public Health Service and merging Head Start now administered by OEO with the preschool program in the Office of Education. Another fertile area because of its direct cause-effect relationship to civil rights problems and the crisis in our cities would be the manpower programs. They now overlap and duplicate each other in such different departments as Labor, Defense, HEW, and the Poverty Program and should all be consolidated under a single administrative department.

In short, a Republican House would work to compress the hundreds of existing programs into a smaller, more sensible array of functional programs. This would not necessarily reduce the number of federal dollars expended; it might even increase it. But the potential of getting a much greater return on every dollar spent would be greatly enhanced.

Innovation — The most hopeful area — and the most promising—is the innovative. Clearly, our present array of programs with their reliance on the categorical technique, are not working. If we are going to meet the problems of the cities and the depressed rural areas, the problems of jobs and crime, the need for better education and housing, and the need for greater opportunities for all Americans, we clearly must strike out in new and different directions.

It has been said that it takes a Democrat to conceive a new and bold program but that it takes a Republican to run it properly. If that was ever true, I don't believe it is today. Republicans have always been better managers, certainly. But today at least we seem also to have a corner on the bold new programs. The more exciting concepts being bandied about today are mostly Republican-inspired—revenue-sharing, human investment, tax incentive programs, and the proper harnessing of the private sector, to mention a few.

In the field of welfare, I think we should give serious study to such programs as the Negative Income Tax. But the major first step of a Republican Congress, I would hope, would be to pave the way for the earliest possible enactment of a broad system of revenue-sharing. My own legislative package (H.R. 5450), which was followed in its major elements by the latest Coordinating Committee statement, contains the two crucial ingredients of tax rebates coupled with tax credits. We need both a return of a portion of federal income taxes to the states with no strings attached and tax credits for the costs of education and for state and local taxes paid.

I wish space permitted a fuller discussion of these proposals. Based on our record and our efforts in the past three years but especially in the last Session, I am fully convinced that a Republican House would follow the general pattern outlined here. I am convinced of this because my colleagues in the House and Republicans throughout the nation know both generally and specifically that Republicans have better ways for Americans to do things as we move into the last third of the 20th century.