

**SENATOR
SAM ERVIN
★ SAYS ★**



One of the major trends nowadays is to concentrate more and more power in the Federal Government. A recent effort in this direction came in the form of a bill to establish a nationwide system of voter registration by mail for Federal elections.

The idea was to get every citizen eligible to vote on the

registration books simply by having the Bureau of the Census mail him a post card which the individual could then sign and transmit to his precinct registrar. No one can quarrel with the idea that every eligible citizen ought to register and vote, but the question arises as to how far the government itself should go in assisting voter participation. Undoubtedly, many citizens would like to minimize their efforts in the electoral process. But it should be recognized that when the literacy test was abolished and when citizens have the opportunity to register prior to every election, the difficulties are no longer immense if one will but take a few minutes time to insure that he can exercise the franchise. It is far more difficult and time-consuming to take care of many other chores which we do without much

grumbling.

I opposed S. 2574, the voter-registration-by-mail bill, when it was before the Senate last month because, in my judgment, this legislation clearly demonstrates that one should not judge a proposal by its title or its stated purpose. I concluded after much study that this measure was highly dangerous, contained many flaws, and in the hands of unscrupulous individuals would have permitted the stealing of the Presidency of the United States.

The bill removed virtually all safeguards which have up to now insured that only qualified individuals shall be permitted to register to vote. Under S. 2574, all that an individual had to do to qualify to vote was to mail in a post card to the local registrar, and this automatically entitled him to be registered to vote. Anyone familiar with politics knows that such a system opens wide the possibility of voter frauds.

For under the bill, the only thing that the registrar could do if he suspected that the individual was not eighteen years of age, or was not a resident of the precinct, or was even double-registered in another precinct, was to pass that information on to an Administrator in the Bureau of Census in Washington. If the registrar found that an organized effort was under way to steal an election through massive illegal registrations, all he could do was to pass that information on to the Attorney General in Washington. Thus, the matter of control over fraudulent or illegal registrations would have been taken away from local and state officials, and vested in Federal bureaucrats not responsible to anybody.

The entire tenor of this bill is somewhat ironic when one considers that the Senate was considering his bill only days before the effective date of the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971, which was intended to clean up questionable practices in the financing of political campaigns.

Moreover, everyone that has had any experience with politics knows that a few individuals who would not think of stealing anything else will steal votes. So from a practical standpoint, if for no other reason, it is well that we keep the registration of voters under the jurisdiction of local officials. This system has not prevented all voter frauds, but it has prevented a wholesale national scandal that we might well incur by the passage of a bill with little or no safeguards such as that rejected by the Senate.

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