

## If You Don't Like Congress, Look In The Mirror, Says Olive Ewing Clapper

If you wish Congress would do something about the problems which beset us, take another look at the mirror instead of putting all the blame on Congress. Learn to know your Congressman and follow the principal that what is good for your country is good for you, (is the advice of Olive Ewing Clapper, Washington author and observer, in McCall's for September.

"We do not have a government by supermen. The voters of the country send a fair cross section of the nation to the Capitol. We are apt to pick men who are a lot like ourselves. That does not necessarily mean glamorous or brilliant personalities — it means mostly just folks. They are men and women who went to the same schools we attended, they grew up in identical environments, they share our prejudices and superstitions. They do not consider themselves great; their job requires them to be as alert as the grocer or the streetcar conductor to please customers and employers.

"How much do you know about the Senator from your state and can you name the Representative from your Congressman District? One of the ablest Congressmen on Capitol Hill recently complained that although he had been working hard in Congress for the past 10 years, he doubted if 10 percent of the voters in his district could call his name.

"The November election this year are of the utmost importance because of the national issues involved — the labor — management dispute, inflation or deflation, fair employment practice, universal military training, extension of social security, national health service full employment, housing, aid to the starving of the world, the peace treaties and myriad problems of cooperation with other nations. One observing newspaperman says that candidates find it almost impossible to hold any political meeting because people simply will not attend. He believes that we are undergoing a postwar escapism, that our refusal to take part in political activities is a part of our desire to retreat from the realities of today.

"Congress itself has become increasingly conscious of its own shortcomings in the past few years. Men like Senator Robert LaFollette Republican of Wisconsin, and Congressman Mike Monroney of Oklahoma have spearheaded the movement to streamline the machinery of Congress. They realize that if Congress is impotent, democracy cannot work that the business at hand can no longer be done with the antiquated tools of a hundred years ago.

"Today 80 percent of every Congressman's time is taken up in a glorified lobbyist or a Chamber of Commerce representative for his home community. He is constantly dashing to the myriad executive office to take up inquiries and complaints about OPA, Army and Navy appointments, jobs of every kind and description, arrangement for passports, from abstracts, the price of butter or oranges or popcorn, old age pensions, the construction of a bridge or dam — and many thousand of details directly affecting the voters within his district.

"One radical suggestion for handling this new volume of work was made by Congressman Robert Mamspeck in his testimony before

the joint Committee on the Reorganization of Congress. He believes that the elected representatives of the people should go back to the job the Constitution gave them. He urges the adoption of a Constitutional amendment which would prohibit a member of Congress from contacting the executive branch of the government except in regard to legislation. He suggested that the House of Representatives be reduced by half and that provision be made for the election by the people of a Representative who could take on this lobbying work before the executive branch of the government.

"There remains in the Congress an overwhelming majority of mediocre men. Any competent newspaper reporter covering Capitol Hill in Washington cannot name for you more than 50 men out of the 531 men who compose the Congress who could be called brilliant leaders. In the past 50 years we had many individual giants to whom everyone rushed to listen when their significant voices were raised in speech. Such were William E. Borah of Idaho, George Norris of Nebraska, James A. Reed of Missouri, the elder Robert LaFollette of Wisconsin, Tom Walsh, Henry Cabot Lodge of Massachusetts, Carter Glass of Virginia and others. There were also many colorful figures with individualistic, trade-mark personalities like Fiorello LaGuardia, Nicholas Longworth, Maury Maverick, J. Ham Lewis. These prima donnas also had to do their share of errands for the folks back home.

"The changes in the world outmode the exciting individualists of the past. Today Congress boasts none such and doubtless it is healthier for the nation that this is true. We do not need prima

donnas. We need students of government, men who will study and work to make democratic government function, men who can work in unison, who know how to use the techniques of conference, the advantage of research.

"Locking down from the galleries today upon the Senate, you might remark how much the Senators look like businessmen. A new type of man is beginning to predominate there. The old are dying out; the young are as yet unproved. This makes for conflict in a new world aborning. You can feel encouragement that it is possible to find men who can work for the people's best interests.

"The time has passed when we can afford to vote for a Congressman simply because he sends us a brightly colored post card on our birthday, or because he belongs to the Loyal Order of the Moose, or anything else. Today a Congressman occasionally hits upon the idea of talking to the

people about the real issues. In the past this was not considered a very bright thing to do. We should hope that it will become the only real way of getting elected.

"If you don't like what you read in the morning papers, if you wish Congress would do something about the problems of today, go take another look in the mirror instead of putting all the blame on Congress. If you don't like what you see, blame yourself. You can send abler men by the simple

expedient of getting out and voting them in to improve the image of democracy. After they are in, encourage their best programs. Know them and let them know you. Stop thinking about what you personally get out of Congress. What is good for your country and your Congress will, in the long run, be good for you and your district. It is that simple."

T. O. Wilson was a business visitor in Norfolk one day last week.

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