

Majority In House Could Be Problem In Picking President

By **JESSE LAVENTHOL**
North American Newspaper Alliance
WASHINGTON — The party line-up of the U.S. House of Representatives in the new 91st Congress is crucial because that body may be called upon to choose the President if, in a predicted close contest, the electoral college fails to produce a majority winner.

Whether the Democrats retain control or whether it will pass to Republican hands for the first time since 1952 — only the third time in 36 years — will be unknown until after the November 5 general election. In the present expiring House, the count is 248 to 187 in favor of the Democrats. Thus the G.O.P. needs a minimum net gain of 31 seats to prevail by a majority (218) of one.

But even attainment of a majority would not thereby necessarily assure either a winning party of election of its presidential nominee, particularly if its margin is small. For the constitution requires that the stand-off in the elec-

toral college must be resolved in the House on the basis of one vote for each state.

This means that a state's vote will be cast for the candidate of the party which has a majority within its total delegation. Thus states whose representatives are equally divided between the two parties will have no vote.

In the current 90th Congress, the Democrats are in the majority in 31 of the state delegations, the Republicans in 16, and in three states — Illinois, Oregon and Montana — they are evenly divided. This would appear to be a big handicap for the Republicans to overcome, since 26 votes are necessary to elect a president.

But the fact is that the division of party strength today is so close in 18 other states that the shift in November's election of only a single seat to the opposition in any one of them would create a tie in that state.

Of those 18 that narrow edge is now held by the Democrats in 11 states. They are: Ala-

bama, 5 to 3; Arkansas, 3 to 1; Colorado, 3 to 1; Maryland, 5 to 3; Maine 2 to 0; Massachusetts, 7 to 5; New Mexico, 2 to 0; Oklahoma, 4 to 3; Pennsylvania, 14 to 13; Rhode Island, 2 to 0; and Virginia, 4 to 2.

The other seven states held by the Republicans, where loss of a single seat would tie the delegations are: New Hampshire, Idaho, South Dakota and Utah, each 2 to 0; Indiana, 6 to 5; and Minnesota, 5 to 3.

So it is apparent that the more states that are disqualified from voting by reason of ties, the more difficult it will become for either party to garner the required majority of 26 votes. This assumes, of course, that there is no break in party lines within the state delegations.

This year in addition, there are several other factors contributing to the complications and uncertainties that make it almost impossible to accurately predict the party character of the House, and the shades of viewpoint within each party.

1 — The voter has become more discriminating, according to his lights, in choosing servants for high public office. He has learned to cut across party lines and to make up his mind, if not always on issues, then certainly on the candidate he conceives to be "the best man for the job."

2 — Since the U.S. Supreme

Court "one-man, one-vote" decisions the boundaries of congressional districts have been reshuffled — usually favorable to the party in power in the respective state legislatures — thus removing the possibility for comparison with recent past elections.

This year alone 17 states have been redistricted for the 91st Congress, including such states with large delegations as California, New York, New Jersey, Ohio, and Texas.

This shattering of long-standing geographic voting patterns, together with the

coming of age of 11 million young new voters in 1968, the upsurge of independent voting, the mobility of the population, and the deep splits among both major parties as evidenced in their conventions — all of these becloud the outcome.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ Agnew Withdraws Soft On Reds Charge

ROCHESTER, N.Y. (AP) — Gov. Spiro T. Agnew has withdrawn his charge that Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey is soft on communism.

"Had I ever realized the effect that this expression would have, I would have shunned it like the plague," the Republican vice presidential nominee said at a news conference Thursday.

"I would frankly call the use of that particular phrase on my part an error," the Maryland governor said.

Agnew said he was not aware when he made the remark in a Washington news conference this week that it would be interpreted against the political background of the late Sen. Joseph R. McCarthy, whose charges of communism in government led to countercharges of witchhunts.

Agnew said that had he known his remark criticizing the Democratic presidential nominee "would in some way cast me as the Joe McCarthy of 1968, I would have turned five somersaults to avoid saying it."

The soft-on-communism remark led some political observers to believe that Agnew had been designated the hard-line campaigner and that GOP presidential nominee Richard M. Nixon would take a loftier position on issues.

Agnew said, however, that he wanted to get off the low road of politics.

Before he retracted the phrase, the Republican congressional leaders, Sen. Everett M. Dirksen and Rep. Gerald R. Ford, expressed disapproval of the remark at a Washington news conference.

Agnew said he had not been contacted by Nixon or any Nixon aides but said he spoke with Dirksen shortly after his arrival in Rochester.

"It would seem to me that there's been too much attention to the line they call the wormy side of the campaign. I said squishy-soft and I am not proud of it," Agnew said.

"So we are going to try to get off these catch phrases—as far as I am concerned we are going to get off of them—and move to

Labor Order Appealed By Chatham

ELKIN, N. C. (AP) — Chatham Manufacturing Co. is appealing a National Labor Relations Board ruling which ordered the reinstatement of 18 employees allegedly fired for their connection with union activities.

W. P. Sandridge of Winston-Salem, the company attorney, said Thursday the company filed a request for a review with the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals at Richmond, Va., after receiving the order Wednesday night.

The NLRB ruling upheld a September 1967 recommendation by one of the board's trial examiners.

The board found the company guilty of unfair labor practices and ruled that 13 workers fired during a two-day strike in 1966 and five fired later allegedly for union activities, must be reinstated with back pay and interest.

All of the workers were employees of the company's Elkin plant which employs some 2,400 people.

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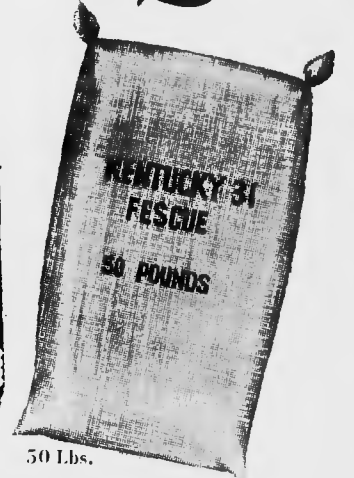


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