

BILL HOBBS

# President's Role—A National Voice

Thank God for dear old David Lawrence! Without his editorials on the last page of every issue, U.S. News and World Report would be such a frightfully dull, factual magazine. But as it is you can always turn to that back page for good, wholesome comic relief.

After plowing through all the graphs, economic tables and long verbatim interviews in the front of the magazine one really needs a little escape from reality, a flight into fantasy, a nice disorganized set of pot-shots from the Grand Old Man of the conservative columnists. And David Lawrence almost always comes through. It's wonderful, sometimes even better than Little Orphan Annie.

His latest editorial (in the August 6 issue) is really tops. It is as if he had been trying hard all these many years and finally produced a real, permanent tribute to the amazing irrationality of the conservative position.

His editorial is all about the defeat of President Kennedy's Medicare proposal in the Senate and the President's subsequent decision to take his case to the people this fall in an attempt to build his support in Congress.

Mr. Lawrence explains, with a perfectly straight face, that the President should not, repeat not, campaign to get congressmen favorable to his position elected—because this would upset the traditional balance between the executive and legislative branches of the government! Honest! He really does! He comes right out and says it. It's tremendous, much better than Bob Hope or Mort Sahl could ever be.

We would still be laughing except that it hurts so much.

And it's not just the conclusion of the editorial that is so amazing. The points leading up to the conclusion are almost equally funny.

Look, for instance, at this statement in the eleventh paragraph: "President Kennedy has virtually a two-thirds majority in both houses of Congress."

Wheee!  
Here we go skipping happily, Off the path from reality.

If Mr. Lawrence had bothered to read his own magazine he would have seen that the President has a three-fifths majority, not a two-thirds majority. There is a considerable difference, especially when important legislation such as the Medicare bill fails for a lack of two votes.

And even this count doesn't consider the many Southern Democrats who consistently vote against the administration. If "President Kennedy has virtually a two-thirds majority in both houses of Congress," as Mr. Lawrence claims, we would like to know why the farm bill, the medicare bill, the urban affairs cabinet position bill and the numerous other Kennedy administration bills have failed to pass the Congress.

Quite obviously Mr. Lawrence's statement is completely devoid of any factual basis.

But let us not linger too long on the body of the editorial, for its inconsistencies, misconceptions and factual errors are just minor when compared with the conclusion. Besides, reading too much of that sort of thing might permanently damage one's mind.

Mr. Lawrence's main argument is a constitutional one. He contends that Mr. Kennedy, by campaigning for the election of Congressmen who support his pro-

grams, will upset the traditional balance of power between the branches of government.

He says, "There is no sanction in the Constitution for a dictatorship or for the use of presidential power to influence congressional elections. It would be better in the long run if the President left it to rival candidates in the Democratic primaries or to the party nominees for Congress to fight their own battles. The people don't like to see their Representatives or Senators beholden, politically or otherwise, to a President."

In short, he believes that by going out to campaign this fall President Kennedy will be overstepping his constitutional bounds and moving the executive branch of government into a field which rightfully belongs to the legislators alone.

This is patently absurd.

When President Kennedy sets out on the campaign trail this fall he will be exercising a perfectly legitimate function of the executive office. This is the all-important function of presenting his program to the people, of arguing his case, of putting his position to the basic test of all positions in a democracy—the test of the vote, the test that is answered by the people on an election day. If the President did not do this he would be avoiding a basic responsibility which our system has placed upon him.

President Kennedy, then, is do-

ing this: He is going out to campaign; he is going to tell the people, "I am your President; you have elected me to lead you; I have certain programs, and I believe these are the best programs for the country for the following reasons; I am asking you to elect persons who support my programs." There is absolutely nothing wrong with this.

Quite the contrary, it is exactly what the President should do; in fact, it is a shame he has waited so long to do so.

Why must the President do this?

Mr. Lawrence approaches the answer to this question when he says, "The American people want their Senators and Representatives to represent them first and the interests of other States or districts second." That is the heart of the matter, although Mr. Lawrence seems unable to see it even when he himself writes it.

Essentially he is saying that the Congress is local and regional in nature. This is only natural. A senator is elected from a single state; he is responsible to the people of that state and he must represent their interests. A representative is elected from an even smaller geographic district and must represent an even smaller number of people, an even more restricted set of economic interests.

And yet these men do not just vote on matters which affect their home states or districts.

They must vote on matters which affect the whole country, although they are actually responsible to only a very small proportion of the country.

The President, on the other hand, is responsible to the whole country. He must see the problems of the nation from the broader point of view; he cannot look at just one district but must look at how a program will affect the country as a whole. And he is responsible to all the voters, not just a few of them in one geographic area.

That is the heart of the difficulty between President Kennedy and the Congress, and that is why the President must take his program to the people this fall.

His task is to convince the people to vote as Americans, not as North Carolinians or Californians or New Yorkers. He has to convince them that his program is best for the country as a whole and that they should therefore elect representatives who favor his program.

He understands that if his program is to succeed, he must have a Congress which can transcend the traditional sectional and local nature of Congress and look at the good of the entire country.

And this is apparently what upsets Mr. Lawrence. Quite rightly he sees the traditional, constitutional role of the Congress to represent the local and state interests in the Federal government and the role of the President to represent the interest of the

country as a whole. He thinks that by taking a national point of view into the Congressional elections the President is going to overturn this traditional balance of interests.

But is that not just what the President is expected to do?

Of course!

That is precisely why we have a President. We could have a government at which was run completely by a Congress of men elected from small areas. We could, but thank God we don't. If we did, we would soon find this Congress dissolved into little bickering groups of men who would spend all of their time talking of tiny sectional issues and accomplish nothing. It is for this reason that we must have a President, a man who is elected by all of the people and who can see the country in a total viewpoint and can thus provide some purpose and direction for all of the country, not just a part of it.

And the most important place for the President to give national leadership is at the polls. In elections at a time this crucial in the country's history it is important that there be a national voice in even the local elections, a voice asking us to vote as Americans, not as little men of a single limited area. The President's duty as the executive of the whole country is to provide this voice in these elections.

But Mr. Lawrence speaks of "dictatorship" and the unconstitutional use of "Presidential power." These words have no pertinence and no significance to the matter at hand. Mr. Lawrence put it very well himself when he said, "The people themselves must be the judges of what legislation is best for them."

In order to make this decision, the people must be well-informed; they must hear a national as well as a local point of view. The President is giving them this view.

And the decision is still in their hands.

## 'What's Wrong With Leading A Double Life?'



### Reflections

Lou Brown pleaded guilty in Durham Monday to a part in the conspiracy to fix college basketball games a year-and-a-half ago. Sentencing was postponed until next week.

Brown now lives in Durham and works in Raleigh. He was married Saturday. He apparently is well on the way to rehabilitating himself. Hopefully, society will not try to speed the job with a jail sentence. The stigma he carries is enough for any man.

We hope "justice" lets well enough alone.

The Women's Council met Monday night. One defendant asked about having an open trial. The chairman expressed hostility to the idea. She apparently preferred that the wheels of justice grind quietly in this case. In the rackets, it is called "hushing it up."

The fire department, the police department and the sheriff's boys all converged on South Building Friday after a fire alarm. Unfortunately, the "fire" was nothing but the burning insulation on an electric appliance cord which had been shorted.

Donations to buy a used coffee-maker for Central Records may be sent to the UNC News.