

■ Our privileged citizens — the Senators and representatives.

CONGRESS: AN ANALYSIS

The sad story of the nation's political, and consequently social and economic evolution is laid bare in unexpurgated form in the legislature. After all, here indeed are the representatives of the people. If the public has become the victim of oppressive legislation it is because the citizenry has not cast a discerning eye on the legislature. By this we mean an intelligent scrutiny of the Upper and Lower House, the temperament and character of the two bodies, the quality and motivation of legislation, and the shape and moral integrity of this branch of government. For one thing it is apparent that in the Senate a large number are multi-millionaires; no crime in itself we hasten to add, but this is indicative of the relation between wealth and office. For another it becomes quite obvious that while legislation has been presumably for the whole nation without discrimi-

ination, there has been extensive and clear discriminatory shadings in the amendments and final shape of bills passed. Moreover, the legislators have generally fallen into a privileged class, usually exempted from the effects of the law in question, as in the case for example of persons who run for public office having to give up the current post, which does not apply to congressmen and senators.

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The more one looks into various problems of the nation, the more one finds himself looking at the legislature. Here, much more than the executive and the judiciary, pulses the root-cause of much of our national problems. Legislators are the first not to respect the law so that they either exempt themselves, ignore the law, or amend and circumvent it. The bureaucracy in the government is overloaded and inefficient

largely because of the legislators. Senators are not above fighting with cabinetmen over filling up a position for janitor. Legislators have been involved in much of the graft and corruption, from reparations to smuggling.



This is not a brief against Congressmen and Senators. We wish to point out the need for an academic, non-punitive, objective analysis of the legislature, with a view towards assessing the present situation and possible directions. To our mind, it is the legislature that is bringing about the rise of a two class society, with the politicians as a ruling class. The quality of legislation is in dire need of study too, because not only are bills be-

ing smuggled and towns cut up and created, not only are franchises, land, and concessions treated like spoils to be apportioned, but the character and spirit of legislation all betray a "citizens be damned" attitude. Thus we citizens have to fill-up census forms which can be used to harass us, all in the name of catching tax evaders, when we all know who the biggest evaders are. Thus also, we have to buy an extra stamp during anti-TB months while the legislators enjoy a franking privilege. Our democracy is being reshaped in the legislature. Since national political leadership, (including the president) emerges, from the legislature, we should stop, look, and think about the shape and character of the legislature. — *By Alfredo R. Roces in Manila Times.*