

WASHINGTON REPORT

Congressman Edwin D. Eshleman

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Anyone who ever took civics course in school probably studied a good deal about the equal branches of the Federal Government. We were taught that Congress makes the law. Each branch, we were told, has its own duties, and the combination of those duties gives us a balanced system for governing. While, in principal, those civics lessons do define the way in which our national government is structured, the years have

changed the actual way in which things work in Washington. The very fact that the government has grown so large in modern times has led to significant new relationships among its three principle branches. Some of these changes are merely indications of progress, but others, I believe, represent disturbing trends.

One of the most disturbing of the modern changes directly in- dicates the Congress. Congress has

been rapidly relinquishing its role as a co-equal partner in government. While its primary function should be to originate law, it has most recently functioned primarily as a "lady in waiting" for administrative policies. We have almost reached the point where Congress sits on its hands unless there is a White House proposal which demands attention.

yet, within the corridors of Congress were heard cries that the Nixon Administration's first 100 days were "unproductive."

It is interesting that some of the first critics of President Nixon's early program of generalized guidelines were the same members of the Congressional leadership who are stymied when asked to assume some responsibility. If their evaluation is in reality an admission that they are unable to act without specific direction, I believe the American people should carefully analyze the situation. The Congress has a right to expect the Congress to seize an opportunity to do its job of bringing the voice of the people into national policy.

Senator Mansfield, the Democratic Floor leader in the U. S. Senate, is one who recognizes the Congressional responsibilities. He saw fit to write a book to make it plain to his colleagues that they should be doing some work themselves rather than sitting around and waiting for the Administration to come up with all the legislative ideas. I wish that the House Democratic leadership would heed Senator Mansfield's words, for on one side of the Capitol it can be readily observed that the chief legislative process has become one of follow the leader. Unless the House leadership is provided with precise directions, the law-making business grinds to a halt. Of course, there are some notable exceptions. Wilbur Mills, the Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, is one who believes in origination of legislation and, in fact, often pushes an Administration to act on fiscal matters. We need many more men like Congressman Mills who are truly legislators.

The modern role of the House and Senate should be as a co-equal partner in government so that the people have a real opportunity to make themselves heard. President Nixon seems to recognize that fact and I think it is important for the Congressional leadership to do the same.

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The 91st Congress has a chance to be a real law-making body. I sincerely believe that President Nixon has provided Congress with a unique opportunity to reassert itself as a forceful factor in national policy. In his first 100 days the President outlined for the Congress and for the American people some excellent general guidelines for national progress. He basically left it up to the Congress, in its capacity as representatives of the public at large, to add substance to these Presidential recommendations.

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