

Behind the News

Reapportionment And 2 Americas

By LAWRENCE CAMERON

Two recent Supreme Court decisions have lifted the lid on a controversy which has been boiling at state and local levels ever since the 1960 presidential election. The problem, apportionment, is older than the Constitution, proving as it did to be the major issue at the convention of 1787.

Just as the cities elected President Kennedy, there is little doubt that rural elements control almost every state house in the nation. Rural school districts are often financed out of the city dweller's wallet, while urban food processors make profits on the farmer's produce.

Such is the bitterness of the city-country feud that President Kennedy, in the wake of the Baker v. Carr Tennessee reapportionment verdict, issued a solemn warning of the day when the United States may be "two Americas," divided in political impotency.

The Baker ruling held legislative districting to be subject to court review under the federal constitution. Apportionment among districts could be so "irrational" the court majority asserted, as to violate the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment.

Scholle's Suit

A Michigan suit, brought by August Scholle, AFL-CIO president, may determine what the court considers "irrational." Scholle challenged state senate districts ranging in constituents from 61,000 in one rural area to 530,000 in his own district. The case has been remanded to the state high court for review in the light of the Baker decision.

It is something of a legal curiosity that the Michigan plaintiffs are asking the court to rule that seating must be proportional in both state chambers, when constitutionally the reverse is true of Congress where senators represent whatever number happens to reside in their respective states.

And now a seeming paradox arises: the U.S. Senate, traditionally the conservative body, can today be counted on to pass a far higher proportion of liberal, pro-urban legislation than the House of Representatives. The catch is that senators must run as large in their state and that most states, although geographically rural, are demographically urban. Well over 50 per cent of U.S. citizens now live in "metropolitan" areas of over 50,000.

With these facts in mind, it becomes entirely proper to ask

why representation in state legislatures should be equalized.

An immediate answer is to be found in the 14th Amendment cited above, but material and philosophical issues beyond the Constitutional consideration are involved here.

Matter of Economics

There is a matter of economics; manufacturing contributes better than seven times as much to the gross national product as farming; taxpayer dollars have sustained farm income even since the last war, but it must be acknowledged that in the event of a depression, a farm could look mighty good to a hungry engineer.

Also deserving consideration is the possibility that the apportionment problem may solve itself as Americans of the future seek lebensraum — or "living room" — from wheatfield to suburb to urb.

This solution is not a happy one, nor one which is likely to occur within the lifetime of the Philadelphian who sees magnificent Centre County schools built with his money or several millions freely spent to make pigs fatter while medical research for humans must go a begging.

On the other hand, the farmer has little guarantee other than his disproportionate representation in government, that if the cities gained political ascendancy, they would be sympathetic to the special problems in economics, conservation and cultural isolation he must face.

In spite of his erudition, President Kennedy may not have perceived the rural-urban situation in an historical perspective. Politically, an equilibrium has always been achieved between the farmer and the manufacturer. An administration which favors one and not the other is buying trouble. City and country are two children which always bear watching; if you take your eyes off one too long, he will wander off and fall down the cellar stairs.

A Gradual Shift

The Baker decision can have no direct effect on rural political power for over a decade. It is vague and the suits that promise to clarify it will drag through the American legal maze for years. Thus we are not witnessing political or cultural mitosis, but only another shift — and a gradual one — in political balance, a shift reflecting the evolution of this country from an agrarian to an industrial nation.

Corps Training Program Ends

By NANCY McCORKLE

After preparing 500 Peace Corps volunteers for teacher's aide positions in the Philippine Islands, the University training staff has discontinued the program because it needs a vacation, Paul W. Bixby, program director, said yesterday.

The four Peace Corps groups that were trained here since June 1961 made up one-third of all the volunteers sent overseas in the first year of the Peace Corps project, Bixby said.

Peace Corps headquarters in Washington D.C., requested that the University train 300 teacher's aides this summer, Bixby said, but the staff here could not accommodate this number. Instead, the 300 volunteers will be trained at universities in California.

ANOTHER REASON that Bixby gave for the termination of the program was: "The Penn State training staff has been increasingly convinced that elementary school teacher's aides for the Philippines should have stronger interests in teaching as a career than were aparent in the trainees who were being sent to Penn State."

A year from now it is quite possible that professors will participate in another program at the University, Bixby said. However, the training staff members within the College of Education would like those groups to have some training in teaching, he said.

The most recently trained volunteers at the University completed their indoctrination in June, and 55 of the original group of 65 were selected to receive one month of further training at

the University of the Philippines, he said.

A lack of genuine, realistic interest and poor health of some Peace Corps volunteers caused the elimination of 10 persons, Bixby said.

The 55 people who were sent to the Philippines will assist Filipino teachers in educating children in English, the second language of the islands. They will receive a salary of \$75 per month and serve for two years, he said.

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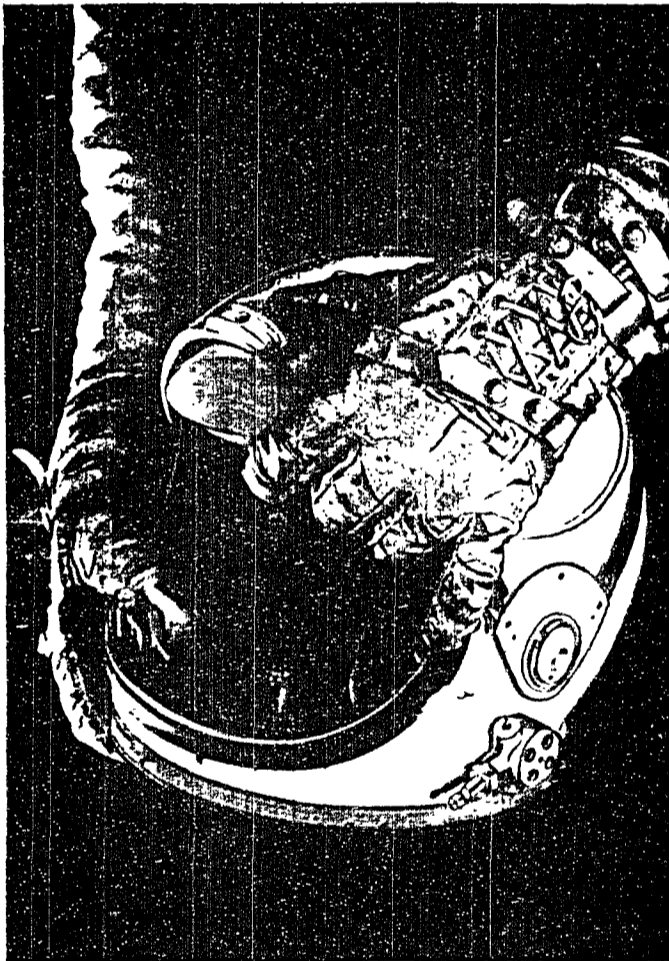
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