

THE DEMOCRATIC STEERING AND POLICY COMMITTEE
" AND THE SPEAKER

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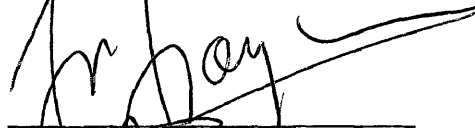


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Approved, December 1982



Barbara Norrander



George W. Grayson



William L. Morrow

DEDICATION

To my parents

from an appreciative son

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PREFACE

During my political infancy, I learned as an intern in the summer of 1977 from one of the masters of politics, Speaker Thomas P. O'Neill Jr. Under his aegis two summers later, I also worked directly for the Democratic Steering and Policy Committee; throughout, I appreciated the opportunities to view politics firsthand. But I left the Steering and Policy Committee with more questions than when I arrived. For example, did this organization really aid the Speaker? By writing this masters thesis, I found the answer.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would to express my sincere gratitude to Professor Barbara Norrander for her thoughtful suggestions and guidance throughout the conducting of this study. I am also indebted to Professor George W. Grayson and Professor William L. Morrow for their careful reading of this study. An additional note of thanks is extended to the many anonymous individuals on Capitol Hill who willingly bestowed their insights relative to the Steering and Policy Committee to me.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is concerned with the extent to which the Democratic Steering and Policy Committee, hereinafter referred to as the DSPC, in the House of Representatives has conformed, or failed to conform, to a key segment of party government theory. The specific focus is on the extent to which the DSPC has helped or hindered the Speaker in his quest for more effective policy leadership through the Democratic party between the Ninety-third and Ninety-seventh Congresses. The proposed hypothesis is that the ability of the Speaker to guide programs through the House has not been strengthened significantly by the DSPC.

After some explanations for weak Speakers are presented, the composition and activities of the DSPC from its rebirth in the Ninety-third Congress through the Ninety-seventh Congress is evaluated in terms of its power to assist the leadership. The findings appeared negative. That is to say, the temper of the caucus and the president, as well as the size of the conservative coalition, prevented the DSPC from increasing significantly the capability of the Speaker to shepherd programs through the House and to induce a more unified party.

THE DEMOCRATIC STEERING AND POLICY COMMITTEE
AND THE SPEAKER

INTRODUCTION

For several reasons, the splintered Democratic Party traditionally has lacked a strong Speaker able to shepherd programs through to completion.¹ First, leaders possessed few sanctions with which to force party discipline or few rewards to encourage party unity. Second, a norm of individualism reigned among congressmen, because the Speaker had no control over the original nomination or reelection of representatives. Also, members rejected the notion of a fortified Speaker since it indicated a diminished posture for themselves. Hence, the House stagnated.

In the 1970s, sentiments changed when President Nixon impounded funds; Congress thought its authority had been threatened.² Moreover the seniority system, which allowed unregulated power to the old southern committee chairmen,

¹See Mary P. Follett, The Speaker of the House of Representatives (New York: Longmans, 1902; reprint ed., New York: Burt Franklin, 1974), for a very good history of Speakers.

²Opponents of impoundments maintained:

". . . [T]his practice undermined congressional control over appropriations, provided the President with an unconstitutional item veto, and contributed to the excessive growth of Presidential power." (William G. Munselle, "Presidential Impoundment and Congressional Reform," in Legislative Reform: The Policy Impact, ed. Leroy N. Rieselbach (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1978), p. 173).

frustrated a dubious platoon of northern Democrats. Liberals believed that a stronger Speaker could compete with the executive branch and unify the party. Thus, they sought to transform the dormant Steering Committee into, what Carl Albert hoped, would serve as an "active and viable organization."³ Under a reconstituted name, the Steering and Policy Committee materialized.

In 1933, Speaker Henry Rainey formed the first Democratic Steering Committee from a variety of leaders: the Speaker, majority leader, caucus chairman, whip, and chairman of the Ways and Means, Appropriations, and Rules Committees. The fifteen zones into which the party had apportioned the country for legislative purposes elected one member apiece, usually the dean of the delegation.⁴ The entire Steering Committee chose from within its own ranks a chairman, vice chairman, and secretary.

As the executive body of the caucus, the old Steering Committee supposedly afforded all Democrats, via surrogates, a voice in shaping party policies. But the Speaker, majority leader, and whip dictated programs that the rest of the Steering Committee rubber stamped. During the early years, the group presented as its main function the facade of a unified front.

³Quoted in "House Reform: More Moves Towards Modernization," Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report 31 (February 24, 1973): 419.

⁴George B. Galloway, The Legislative Process in Congress (New York: Crowell, 1953), p. 335.

Charades ceased when Speaker Sam Rayburn, who held a personal dislike for the assembly, abolished the Steering Committee. Instead, he preferred proteges like Wilbur Mills to help guide the House.⁵ The last chairman of the organization tendered this reason: "Mr. Sam decides what will be done."⁶

The next Speaker, John W. McCormack, reinstated the Steering Committee, in 1962, because members demanded a broader voice in the management the House. A close associate of the leadership recalled that McCormack disliked members drawn from whip zones, a "bunch of nobodies" as the new Speaker labeled them.⁷ In order to counter doubts by McCormack, the Steering Committee added a bevy of ex officio members: the Speaker, majority leader, caucus chairman, caucus secretary, and congressional campaign committee chairman. What is more, Speaker McCormack believed that he should run the House. Hence the chairman of the Steering Committee, Ray J. Madden, acquiesced by conducting few meetings. Madden offered this explanation in public:

⁵Neil MacNeil, Forge of Democracy (New York: McKay, 1963), p. 107.

⁶Randall B. Ripley, Party Leaders in the House of Representatives (Washington, D.C.: Brooking Institution, 1967), p. 47.

⁷Confidential source.

"There just haven't been any issues that the members wanted to discuss.⁸

In 1965, the Steering Committee established a formal office. At the same time it hired John Barriere, a knowledgeable disciple of McCormack who had served with the Banking and Currency Committee for several years, to devise and implement policies for the divided Democratic party. Ultimately Barriere emerged, especially since the Steering Committee remained relatively inactive, as an ombudsman for Speakers McCormack and Albert.

Furthermore, at no point in time did the old Steering Committee perform an important role; under McCormack and Albert, it produced mainly memos. Not until the 1970s did the Steering Committee gain prominence, in the eyes of reformers, as a possible key to party government.

The Party Government Model

For a long time, political scientists have deliberated over how to achieve greater effectiveness from leadership groups within the framework of Jeffersonian (united) majorities.⁹ In September 1950, for instance, sixteen intellectuals directed by George B. Galloway released a

⁸Quoted in Daniel M. Berman, In Congress Assembled (New York: Macmillan, 1964), p. 239, cited by *ibid.*, pp. 47-8.

⁹See James MacGregor Burns, The Deadlock of Democracy (Englewood Cliff, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1963), Part II, for his analysis of Jeffersonian majorities.

seventy page proposal for renovating party organizations in Congress.¹⁰ The authors believed too many legislative assemblies held leadership responsibilities. Specifically, Democrats on the Ways and Means Committee still controlled committee assignments;¹¹ in the Senate, Democrats assigned this task to an informal group. Party leaders also blamed separate policy organizations for abandoned enterprises.¹²

Therefore, the political scientists prescribed revamped leadership congregations in both the House and the Senate. A truly consolidated hierarchy for each party would propose programs, as well as determine committee seats. Moreover, the caucus could remove rebellious members from leadership committees by a vote of confidence at the beginning of the next Congress. In addition, Galloway and company favored a binding rule for caucus decisions. If the rank and file still did not cooperate, they would be denied choice committee duties or patronage.¹³ The American

¹⁰American Political Science Association, "Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System: A Report of the Committee on Political Parties," American Political Science Review 44 (September 1950): supplement; see also Pendelton Herring, The Politics of Democracy (New York: Norton, 1940); and E.E. Shattschneider, Party Government (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1942).

¹¹Galloway reviewed well the precedents for this system. See History of the House of Representatives, 2nd ed. Revised by Sidney Wise. (New York: Crowell, 1976), Chap. 5.

¹²American Political Science Association, "Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System," p. 59.

¹³American Political Science Association, "Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System," p. 61.

Political Science Association report, despite criticisms as ill conceived, at least lodged explicit suggestions.¹⁴

Members would lose a degree of freedom with well disciplined parties. On the other hand, the leadership could introduce legislation with a greater chance of passage.¹⁵ Wilson baptized this model "perfected" party government;¹⁶ more common terminology has substituted the word responsible. In a comparison to the British Parliament, James MacGregor Burns alleged:

Party government in action . . . leaves the member . . . with what seems to some Americans a shocking lack of independence. . . . in this country the congressman blandly wonders back and forth across party lines. . . . here the Senator or Representative as policy-maker juggles party principles with alacrity, or often ignores them entirely, . . .¹⁷

At the turn of the century, party government prospered in the House. The Republican Speaker, Joseph G. Cannon, actively transferred members from committee to committee in order to achieve policy objectives. In the Sixtieth

¹⁴See criticisms by T. William Goodman, "How Much Party Centralization Do We Want?" Journal of Politics 13 (November 1951): 536-61; Austin Ranney, "Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System: A Commentary," American Political Science Review 45 (June 1951): 488-99; and Julius Turner, "Responsible Parties: A Dissent From the Floor," American Political Science Review 45 (March 1951): 143-52.

¹⁵American Political Science Association, "Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System," p. 26.

¹⁶Woodrow Wilson, Congressional Government (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1885, 1913), p. 117.

¹⁷James MacGregor Burns, Congress on Trial (New York: Gordian, 1966), pp. 36-7.

Congress, for example, Cannon removed James Tawney from the Ways and Means Committee, because Cannon mistrusted his stand on tariffs. In 1909, James R. Mann joined the Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee as its chairman to guard a railroad regulation bill for the Speaker.¹⁸

Furthermore, Cannon, as chairman of the Rules Committee, decided which bills the House would consider. In cases where Democrats refused to give the necessary two-thirds consent for passage, he decreed a simple majority permissible. Eventually, this action cleared the way for many bills.¹⁹ Special privileges also helped defeat undesired amendments. For instance, when Cannon once read the House roll three times, he delayed the vote until more of his supporters reached the House floor.²⁰ As to the aftereffects, George Rothwell Brown averred: "Organized leadership in the House prevented disintegration of opinion, and tended to check actions springing from imperfect comprehension, passion, selfishness, and personal idiosyncrasies. . . ." ²¹ Similarly, the Democrats realized the potential of a disciplined membership. To assist their leaders, the King Caucus adopted this somewhat binding rule:

¹⁸Richard Bolling, Power in the House: A History of the Leadership of the House of Representatives (New York: Dutton, 1968), p. 64.

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 63-4.

²⁰Ibid., p. 64.

²¹George Rothwell Brown, The Leadership of Congress (Indianapolis: Bobb-Merrill, 1922), p. 16.

In deciding upon action in the House involving policy of principle, a two thirds vote of those present and voting at a Caucus meeting shall bind all members of the Caucus, provided the said vote is a majority of the full Democratic membership of the House, and provided further, that no members shall be bound upon questions involving a construction of the Constitution of the United States or upon which he made contrary pledges or received contrary instructions from his nominating authority. . . .²²

Nevertheless, the binding rule fell apart when many of its originators were defeated. The omnipotent Speakership collapsed; in 1910, due to a revolt by members who stripped the office of extensive prerogatives. Since the mutiny, the leadership has exhibited a continued weakness.

This Study

This thesis is concerned with the extent to which the Democratic Steering and Policy Committee, hereinafter referred to as the DSPC, in the House of Representatives has conformed, or failed to conform, to a key segment of party government theory. The specific focus is on the extent to which the DSPC has helped or hindered the Speaker of the House in his quest for effective policy leadership through the Democratic Party between the Ninety-third and the Ninety-seventh Congresses. The following hypothesis is proposed: The DSPC has not significantly strengthened the Speaker. That is to say, the ability of a Speaker to guide

²²Cited by Randall B. Ripley, Majority Party Leadership in Congress (Boston: Little, Brown, 1969), p. 62.

programs through the House has not been substantially augmented. Whereas, the canons of the Democratic Party provided the DSPC with the following authority:

The Democratic Steering and Policy Committee shall serve as the Democratic Committee on Committees . . . and is herewith invested with authority to report resolutions regarding party policy, legislative priorities, scheduling of matters for House or Caucus action, and other matters as appropriate to further Democratic programs or policies.²³

Few scholars have scrutinized the DSPC; its role in committee assignments has even received little attention.²⁴ Charles O. Jones wrote about the Republican Policy Committee in the 1960s. An overall inspection of its Democratic counterpart has been overlooked.²⁵

Because the DSPC has received sparse attention, this thesis attempted to fill a gap in the literature. After some explanations for weak Speakers are reviewed, the composition and activities of the DSPC from its rebirth in the Ninety-third Congress through the Ninety-seventh Congress is evaluated in terms of its power to assist the leadership. For the sake of simplicity, functions are classified into

²³"Preamble and Rules Adopted By The Democratic Caucus," Ninety-seventh Congress, p. 6.

²⁴See Waldman (1980); also note Shepsle (1978) and Steven Smith of George Washington University (paper forthcoming).

²⁵Charles O. Jones, Party and Policy-Making: The House Republican Policy Committee (Rutgers, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1964).

general categories: dealings within the legislative process and committee assignments.

For the recently completed Ninety-seventh Congress, the DSPC will be considered in detail. The author, who served with the group during the summer of 1979, traveled to Capitol Hill for a considerable amount of information. The present staff made some memorandums available on request. In addition, I conducted interviews off the record with individuals directly and indirectly associated, since the members gathered in closed session, for uninhibited conversations and not to get anyone in trouble. Participants repeated stories and similar impressions inadvertently, thereby providing some cross verification in the process.

CHAPTER I

WEAK SPEAKERS: SOME EXPLANATIONS

Introduction

Since the Eighty-fourth Congress (1955), the Democrats have remained the majority in the House. From John W. McCormack to Carl Albert to Thomas P. O'Neill Jr., Speakers have not easily led their members. Therefore, incidences involving wayward voting congressmen have been prevalent. In this section, several possible explanations are discussed including: the Speakers themselves, committee chairmen, new members, competing coteries, and decentralized government.

The Speakers

"No successor of Rayburn's," Nelson W. Polsby perceptively stated in 1964, "could have had the chance to build a personal following which through luck, time and his own peculiar genius made Rayburn a strong Speaker."¹ Indeed John W. McCormick and Carl Albert epitomized unforceful Speakers. Appropriately, Randall B. Ripley described them as operating with "mainly personal appeals."²

Above all, the Speaker bore few weapons to induce cooperative behavior. He did not oversee initial nominations to Congress, an important area where the leadership could collect political dues. One aspect leading to some control came in the form of the Speaker personally campaigning for members in their districts and helping them to raise money. Yet these routines generally failed to instill, among an independent assembly, long term party loyalty.

Neither did the Speaker exert much influence upon the career of representatives in the House. The fifteen Democrats on the Ways and Means Committee assigned committee seats. (This system excluded direct participation by the

¹Nelson W. Polsby, Congress and the Presidency (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1964), p. 51.

²Ripley, Party Leaders in the House of Representatives, p. 146.

Speaker until late in Albert's reign.)³ Therefore, the Speaker did not determine the membership of the crucial Rules Committee.⁴ In fact, he displayed limited command over its deliberations as well. More important, the Speaker did not authorize chairmanships because of the norm of seniority.

However the Speaker dominated the communications in the House, a network that supplied information to congressmen in exchange for support.⁵ Also, the Speaker could strategically use his power of recognition on the House floor to insure results favoring Democrats on the whole.⁶ Greater authority over the referral of bills, the task of committee assignments, and the Rules Committee later became prerogatives under Albert. In Chapters II and III, these topics will be considered at greater length.

Speakers relied on their powers of persuasion most of the time, but this required the willingness to follow. For instance, when a group of freshman organized what the press

³See Chap. II of this thesis.

⁴Sam Rayburn did expand the membership of the Rules Committee. See Milton C. Cummings and Robert L. Peabody, "The Decision to Enlarge the Committee on Rules: Analysis of the 1961 Vote," in New Perspectives on the House of Representatives, eds. Robert L. Peabody and Nelson W. Polsby (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1969), pp. 253-80.

⁵Randall B. Ripley considered this job one of the most important duties of whips. See "The Party Whip Organization in the United States House of Representatives," American Political Science Review 58 (September 1964): 561-76.

⁶The Speaker enjoys absolute power over recognition. A member denied floor privileges cannot question the ruling.

ticketed as a "confrontation" with Speaker Albert, the members complained of weak leadership.⁷ Apparently, the rank and file missed "arm twisting."⁸ Nonetheless, Albert remembered that thirty-five freshman Democrats assisted killing a gasoline tax sponsored by the Ways and Means Committee. While deviating from the party position, the same members later criticized the leadership as ineffectual. Thus, because Albert had few formal authorities, he fell victim to unwarranted opinion. Many other factors have hindered the Speaker: the unconstrained freedom of committee chairmen, insubordinate new members, rival groups, and the changes in the rules of the House in the 1970s have been a few of the roadblocks that prevented strong party leadership in the legislature. These circumstances will now be reviewed in detail.

Committee Chairmen

For most of this century, committee chairmen held the balance of power in the House. They selected the staff of committees, competent individuals who furthered the policy aims and influence of chairmen. By custom, committee chairmen decided the number and jurisdictions of subcommittees. Through enactments, they chose the subcommittee chairmen,

⁷James L. Sundquist, The Decline and Resurgence of Congress (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1981), p. 398.

⁸Ibid.

determined the membership composition, and set the agenda. Members also depended on committee chairmen to remove any impediments to "pet" bills.⁹ While managing floor debates, chairmen cleared away hurdles and extended their grasps. Finally, conferees appointed by chairmen shaped the final version of bills.

As time passed, committee chairmen seemed omnipotent. Occasionally members revolted, but they achieved success ardously because of the norm of seniority. An anonymous representative confessed:

The toughest kind of majority to put together is one to reform a committee in the face of opposition from the chairman. As you get closer to the top of the hierarchy, the pressures on people who normally would be counted on to aid reformers are enormous and even people who normally would be classified as among the "good guys" rather than the "bad guys" tended to chicken out. . . .¹⁰

Within the House, a norm of committee autonomy further complemented the powers of committee chairmen. Closed meetings enabled chairmen to mold legislation as they saw fit, free from outside pressures. In this milieu, members yielded to committee chairmen. On the House floor, chairmen continued their authority. If a congressman offered an unfavorable amendment, the chairman simply asked his colleagues not to vote. Senior members preached that

⁹Randall B. Ripley, Congress: Process and Policy (New York: Norton, 1975), p. 109.

¹⁰Charles L. Clapp, The Congressman: His Work as He Sees It (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1963), p. 223.

"[L]egislation should not be written on the House floor;"¹¹ and "The committee has exhaustively examined the matter and has brought its expertise to bear."¹² The floor would defer to the committee decision 90 percent of the time. Representatives usually granted requests by chairmen, since the public would not know.

In the words of Representative Richard Bolling, ". . . the standing committee system and the inviolable rule of seniority" established the power of these oligarchs.¹³ For instance, the chairman of the Armed Services Committee, Carl Vinson, ranked as probably the most influential House leader of the 1960s.¹⁴ Because he essentially doled out politically significant military installations, Vinson practically controlled his fellow members.

Moreover, the Speaker neither assigned nor removed committee chairmen. At the start of each Congress, the

¹¹Quoted by Norman J. Ornstein and David W. Rohde, "Political Parties and Congressional Reform," in Parties and Elections in an Anti-Party Age, ed. Jeff Fishel (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978); see also Richard F. Fenno, Jr., "The Distribution of Influence: The House," in The Congress and America's Future, ed. David B. Truman (Englewood Cliff, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1965), pp. 52-76.

¹²Quoted by Barbara Sinclair, "The Speaker's Task Force in the Post-Reform House of Representatives," American Political Science Review 75 (June 1981): 339.

¹³Richard Bolling, House Out of Order (New York: Dutton, 1965), p. 93; for an historical perspective see Nelson W. Polsby, Miriam Gallagher, and Barry Spencer Rundquist, "The Growth of the Seniority System in the U.S. House of Representatives," American Political Science Review 63 (September 1969): 787-807.

¹⁴MacNeil, Forge of Democracy, p. 107.

Committee on Committees compiled a slate of nominees for chairmanships based on the norm of seniority. Then the caucus voted with a single ballot; this procedure forced members to overturn the entire group before they could defeat a chairman.

New Members

The steep quantity and type of person that entered the House in the early 1970s exasperated the party leadership in the legislature. The seventy-five freshmen in the Watergate Class of 1974 encompassed slightly more than a quarter of the party. Such high turnover, which included forty-seven Democrats elected in 1976 and forty-two in 1978, firmly established a more junior institution with profound implications.

The basis for effective persuasion appeared thin. In 1979, Speaker O'Neill confirmed this trait. While applauding these congressmen as "highly sophisticated, intelligent, talented people," O'Neill bemoaned they "didn't come up through state legislatures," "never ran for city council or county office," "ran against the system," "don't know the art of politics, or understand the art of compromise," "have been hearing about cigar smoke in smoke-filled rooms," "didn't understand why compromise and consensus is so

important," and "didn't understand what our party was."¹⁵

Hitherto, John J. Rhodes, as minority leader, observed:

The average Congressman of yesteryear was congenial, polite and willing to work with his colleagues whenever possible. . . . Today, a large number of Congressmen are cynical, abrasive, frequently uncommunicative and ambitious to an inordinate degree.¹⁶

The membership was the antithesis of an earlier generation. That is to say, fewer freshman willingly followed the Speaker or passed through an apprentice stage. In years with particularly large changeover, many Democrats came from former Republican districts. Hence, the desire for reelection imposed immediate involvement; in the legislative process, this point translated into challenges to the power structure.

Competing Coteries

Within an atomized House, several informal groups rivaled the Speaker by providing voting cues. Organizations that often hampered the party leaders included state delegations.¹⁷ For example, Lewis A. Froman Jr. and Randall B. Ripley recalled the history of a \$10,000 congressional

¹⁵Quoted by Theodore H. White, America in Search of Itself: The Making of the President, 1956-80 (New York: Harper and Row, 1982), p. 212.

¹⁶John J. Rhodes, The Futile System: How to Unchain Congress and Make The System Work Again (McLean, Va.: EPM Publications, 1976), p.7.

¹⁷See Alan Fiellin, "The Functions of Informal Groups in Legislative Institutions," Journal of Politics 24 (February 1962): 72-91.

pay raise in 1964.¹⁸ After an initial defeat, the House reconsidered the bill two months later but with only a \$7,500 increase. Unanimously, the California delegation opposed the new measure and demanded that the original amount be retained. Indeed two factors, the size of the state and the failed first attempt at passage, combined successfully to persuade Speaker McCormack.¹⁹ When a number of congressmen voted against the leadership, a Speaker would not discipline them because he wanted to avoid a backlash. Moreover, the Democrats have not circumscribed an agreed set of philosophical principles.

Primarily southern members, known as the Boll Weevils and the Conservative Democratic Forum, also rebelled against the Speaker.²⁰ Since the end of World War II, southern Democrats have worked to defeat or to amend legislation

¹⁸Lewis A. Froman Jr. and Randall B. Ripley, "Conditions for Party Leadership: The Case of the House Democrats," American Political Science Review 59 (March 1965): 62.

¹⁹This finding confirmed research by David B. Truman who found that state delegations exerted considerable influence, especially with salient issues. The Congressional Party: A Study (New York: Wiley, 1959), p. 249.

²⁰John F. Manley noted this axiom:

"As congressional liberals gain power in the Democratic caucus, they run the risk of losing Democratic control of the House. As the southern Democrats have lost power in the Democratic caucus, they also voted more and more with the Republicans and won more and more of the votes." ("The Conservative Coalition," in Congress Reconsidered, eds. Lawrence C. Dodd and Bruce I. Oppenheimer (New York: Praeger, 1977), p. 93.

sponsored by the House leaders. While supporting Republican proposals, the Boll Weevils demonstrated strategic importance. In the Ninety-seventh Congress, for example, the assistance of conservative Democrats provided the critical margin of victory for President Reagan's economic program. A Boll Weevil viewed this action as one that emanated from "moderates that hold the country together."²¹

Decentralized Government

Speakers have been further weakened through several changes in the rules of the House. Rayburn used to circumvent obstacles through negotiations with committee chairmen. Now, even this avenue has been closed due to chairmen who lost power to their subordinates. Thus O'Neill has had to consider subcommittee chairmen in hopes of effecting legislation with all 139 of them (1979). With a more open House that experienced greater pressures from the outside, this job evolved into an even more difficult task.

As part of the Subcommittee Bill of Rights, passed in 1973, committee chairmen lost supervision over budgets and staffs. The majority members of each committee assumed this authority, as well as the choice of subcommittee chairs.²² In a move to further distribute power, the caucus restricted

²¹Confidential source.

²²For an extremely good elaboration see Norman J. Ornstein, "Causes and Consequences of Congressional Change: Subcommittee Reforms in the House of Representatives," in Congress in Change: Evolution & Reform, ed. Norman J. Ornstein (New York: Praeger, 1975), pp. 88-114.

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members to only one chairmanship. Consequently, subcommittee chairmen emerged generally less cognizant of their former mentors.

Because of the dispersal of power, these new autocrats provided greater direction in the daily operations of the House. During the 1970s, subcommittees conducted over 90 percent of committee hearings.²³ Without much disagreement, full committees usually ratified legislation.

Above all, subcommittee chairmen detected insufficient incentives to serve as assistants to the Speaker. With 8,487 personal and committee employees (1976), freedom abounded.²⁴ In an environment with decentralized resources, chairmen of standing committees lost much of their value as partners in the legislative process, staffs gathered and disseminated information, the rank and file depended less on party leaders, and exchanges of knowledge for party support diminished. Furthermore, subcommittees focused on fairly precise areas. Thus conflicting interests could not be

²³Lawrence C. Dodd and George C. Shipley, "Patterns of Committee Surveillance in the House of Representatives" (Paper delivered at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, San Francisco, California, September 2-5, 1975), cited by Lawrence C. Dodd and Bruce I. Oppenheimer, "The House in Transition," in Congress Reconsidered, 2nd ed., eds. Idem (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press, 1981), p. 42.

²⁴This total broke down to 1,548 committee and 6,939 personal staff employees. Harrison W. Fox Jr. and Susan Webb Hammond, Congressional Staffs: The Invisible Force in American Lawmaking (New York: Free Press, 1977), p. 171; see also Michael J. Malbin, Unelected Representatives: Congressional Staff and the Future of Representative Government (New York: Basic Books, 1980).

balanced off against one another, and weakened in the process. Henceforth a higher chance existed that members listened to clientele groups or constituents, instead of the Speaker.

Public inspection of the House unintentionally undermined the leadership. For example, recorded tellers decreased logrolling, the siding of members with the party against a certain interest. In addition, these votes stemmed from requests by just twenty-five members; wherefore many have been taken. In the Ninety-fifth Congress, for instance, 1,540 times recorded ballots took place. Realistically the Speaker did not expect to win everytime, despite his party's majority status.

Through sunshine legislation, formal meetings and the formulating of legislation became more visible. In turn, pressures from lobbyists mounted on representatives. Every congressman obviously did not fall into line. When a "perceived constituency" disagreed with a lobbyist, the member probably allied himself with the voters.²⁵ But over the past few years the number of interest groups grew dramatically. Moreover, lobbyists outmatched the Speaker in ability to provide money and to rally constituents. Then, for the most part, outside influences succeeded because members desired reelection.

²⁵Charles S. Bullock, III, "Congress in the Sunshine," in Rieselbach, ed., Legislative Reform . . ., pp. 217-8.

Still, the support of voters remained integral to service in the House. If a majority of constituents disagreed with the party leaders on a certain issue, the representative usually followed suit. Occasionally resistance to the Speaker fulfilled political expedience at election time. Ralph K. Huitt commented on pressures emanating from the district:

. . . one of the insuperable . . . obstacles to powerful central leadership in Congress: the member's relationship to his constituency is direct and paramount. This constituency has a virtually unqualified power to hire and fire. If the member pleases it, no party leader can fatally hurt him.²⁶

²⁶Ralph K. Huitt, "Studies of Congress and Congressional Committees," in Congress: Two Decades of Analysis, eds. Ralph K. Huitt and Robert L. Peabody (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), p. 140; see also Warren E. Miller and Donald E. Stokes, "Constituency Influence in Congress," American Political Science Review 42 (March 1963): 45-56.

Summary and Conclusions

The Speaker of the House has not completely controlled legislative events since 1910. The transformation of authority in the 1970s made the possibility for centralized leadership even less likely. Power flowed to subcommittee chairmen and increased the number of rivals to the Speaker. Junior members even demonstrated increased independence due to larger staffs as well as other information gathering resources. The leadership tried to adapt, but Speakers extracted not much more than a bare minimum of cooperation from most Democrats. In the fractionalized party, southern conservatives sided with Republicans against the majority. At same time, Democrats defected from the leadership because of pressures from constituencies, interest groups, activist presidents, or conflicting personal opinion. Finally, a new breed of congressman refused to heed constantly the commands of those in power. Accordingly, the number of issues that enjoyed a wide base of support remained limited. In the end, Speakers experienced understandable difficulty in achieving party unity from such a diverse assembly of ideologues.

CHAPTER II

THE DEMOCRATIC STEERING AND POLICY COMMITTEE IN THE NINETY-THIRD CONGRESS

Introduction

During the 1970s, liberals tried to consolidate power in the Speakership. First, the three top party officials joined the Committee on Committees. Second, the Speaker obtained greater referral options over bills. Third, the DSPC acquired the task of committee assignments. This section will review the alleged change of influence with special emphasis on the reorganized DSPC in the Ninety-third Congress.

Speaker Carl Albert espoused a complaisant form of politics; he would have never commandeered the House as a "Czar."¹ Moreover, the Democrats elected the leader of the chamber by a secret ballot. This fact supposedly restrained him from returning to Cannonism. A powerful Speaker, nonetheless, did not concern several important members. As Richard Bolling asserted, "It does not seem dangerous to me now, . . . to restore a modified grant of power to the Speaker."² Evidently, fellow Democrats in the House agreed. In January 1973, at the start of the Ninety-third Congress, the caucus bolstered the Speaker, majority leader, and caucus chairman by positioning them on the Committee on Committees. Also the Speaker oversaw subsequent meetings to determine chairmen and committee assignments.

The Ninety-third Congress

In February 1973, the caucus restructured the Steering Committee and changed its title. Initially, the membership of the new DSPC consisted of twenty-three congressmen. The caucus awarded the three top party officials automatic places. In addition, the rank and file decided that Ray J. Madden should be replaced as chairman. In the Ninety-third

¹James M. Naughton, "Mansfield and Albert: Key Men in Struggle with Nixon," New York Times, March 26, 1973, p. A33.

²Bolling, Power in the House . . ., p. 266.

Congress, he would lead the Rules Committee instead of William M. Colmer of Mississippi who had just retired. Apparently, Madden's colleagues thought that he would become too powerful supervising both organizations. Therefore, the Speaker, Albert, succeeded Madden as chairman of the DSPC. The majority leader and caucus chairman served as vice chairman and second vice chairman, further giving the semblance of a leadership group.

In addition, the Speaker played a major role in filling eight seats, none of which had any formal restrictions on the lengths of their terms. He directly appointed a representative from each of the women, black and freshmen members. The majority whip, chief and three deputy whips, all of whom owed their appointments to the Speaker and majority leader, secured spots on the DSPC at the behest of the caucus. In the beginning, the rank and file fashioned this structure so as to insure control by liberals. Still, many northern Democrats feared eight appointees allowed the Speaker too much power and urged that the number be reduced.³ Finally, twelve approximately equal Democratic regions elected one representative apiece. For these individuals, the caucus established guarantees for involvement

³Majorie Hunter, "House Democrats Set Up Unit to Map Policy," New York Times, February 23, 1973, p. A24.

by junior congressmen and a two consecutive term limitation.⁴

⁴A regional member with twelve years of completed seniority, or more, had to be replaced by someone with more junior status. This rule did not involve congressmen who had just completed one term on the DSPC and thus qualified to run for another.

TABLE 1

DSPC MEMBERSHIP, NINETY-THIRD CONGRESS

Officers

Speaker Carl Albert (Okla.)*

Majority Leader Thomas P. O'Neill Jr. (Mass.)*

Caucus Chairman Olin E. Teague (Tex.)*

Whips

Majority Whip John J. McFall (Calif.)*

Chief Deputy Whip John Brademas (Ind.)*

Deputy Whip Richard Fulton (Tex.)*

Deputy Whip Spark M. Matsunaga (Haw.)*

Deputy Whip James C. Wright Jr. (Tex.)

Appointed (By The Speaker)

Julia Butler Hansen (Wash.), represented women*

Parren J. Mitchell (Md.), represented blacks

Wayne Owens (Utah), represented freshmen

Elected (No. in Region)

1: Calif. (23) John E. Moss (Calif.)

2: Ariz., Col., Haw.,

Mont., N.M., Nev., Ore.,

Utah, Wash., Wyo. (19)

Brock Adams (Wash.)

3: Mich., Minn., Wis. (16)

Henry S. Reuss (Wis.)

4: Ill., Ind., Ky. (19)

Melvin Price (Ill.)*

5: Ark., Ia., Kans.,

Mo., Okla. (21)

Richard Bolling (Mo.)

TABLE 1--Continued

# 6:	Tex. (20)	Wright, Patman (Tex.)*
# 7:	Ala., Fla., La., Miss. (24)	Tom Bevill (Ala.)
# 8:	Ga., N.C., S.C., Tenn. (23)	Robert G. Stephens (Ga.)
# 9:	Md., N.J., Va., W.Va. (19)	Frank Thompson Jr. (N.J.)
#10:	Ohio, Pa. (20)	John H. Dent (Pa.)*
#11:	N.Y. (22)	Bertram L. Podell (N.Y.)*
#12:	Conn., D.C., Guam, Mass., P.I., R.I., V.I. (17)	Robert N. Giamo (Conn.)

Executive Director

John Barriere

*Members of the Steering Committee during the Ninety-second Congress.

In 1973, the DSPC assigned the Speaker greater powers in scheduling bills and in drafting Democratic policy positions. By this authority, he could call bills to the floor under suspension of the rules four days a month instead of the previous two.⁵ What is more, the leadership also could propose actions in the form of recommendations from the DSPC to the caucus. This mechanism would ideally free the rank and file from immersing itself in controversial debates. In April 1973, for example, the DSPC and then the full House approved an amendment to cease funding U.S. military involvement in Cambodia.

A year later, on a somewhat different note, a proposal to augment the staff of the DSPC circulated among the representatives. An analyst with the Congressional Research Service, Frederick H. Pauls, reasoned that the resurrection of the DSPC meant that the caucus advocated more active participation by the Speaker. A highly qualified staff associated with the restructured assembly would realize, in his opinion, an improvement in ". . . the role of the Speaker as the central party and policy leader."⁶

A month later two members of DSPC, Brock Adams and Henry S. Reuss, grasped the initiative by proposing, what

⁵The DSPC could also schedule bills in excess of 100 million dollars, which is normally forbidden under suspension of the rules.

⁶Frederick H. Pauls, "Argument in Support of Increasing the Staff and Activity of the House Democratic Steering and Policy Committee," Congressional Research Service, June 12, 1974, p. 3.

they considered, an economic program. On July 23, the DSPC accepted traditional Democratic components like expanded public employment and unemployment compensation programs, but rejected calls for an independent price monitoring agency and a cut in military spending. The following day, the Democratic Caucus unanimously followed suit. But, the encompassing nature of President Nixon's resignation in August suspended serious consideration of any plans for reform. Finally in September, the new President, Ford, released his own blueprint of budget cuts. By this time in the House, the Committees on Joint Economics and the Budget received most attention and credit for initiatives from the legislative branch. The DSPC had been left on the wayside.

Additional Reforms

A new plan, also unveiled in 1974, further increased the power of the Speakership. It authorized him to refer a bill to more than one committee, either simultaneously or sequentially. In addition, the Speaker could divide a bill and send portions of it to different committees. Yet, the greater flexibility that the Speaker received only provided him slightly more influence in daily legislative affairs. An important obstacle still remained in the Ninety-third Congress. The Ways and Means Committee constantly frustrated the leadership. Due to frequent nonappearances by Chairman Wilbur Mills, health insurance and tax reform,

areas high on the priority lists of many Democrats, failed to progress through the House.

Eventually, an explanation to these roadblocks gained public notoriety. On October 9, 1974, the Washington Metropolitan Police arrested Mills drunk at the Tidal Basin in the company of a local stripper. Still, this episode might have been forgotten had Mills not enlarged the problem. On November 30, he appeared on stage in Boston -- to the amazement of his colleagues -- with the stripper. Concisely, Representative Sam Gibbons summed up beliefs about Mills: "He's flipped."⁷

When confronted with the alcoholic behavior of Mills, reformers debated options as the Democratic Caucus convened prior to the Ninety-fourth Congress. In a motion by Donald M. Fraser, the members agreed in a relatively close vote (146-122) to shift the job of committee assignments from the Ways and Means Committee to the DSPC. Fraser claimed: "Now it (the DSPC) amounts to something."⁸ The chief counsel of the old Committee on Committees, John Martin, despairingly anticipated several pitfalls:

The Steering and Policy Committee has unstable membership and staff. Hell, in two or four years

⁷"New Congress Organizes; No Role for Mills," Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report 32 (December 7, 1974): 3247.

⁸"New Congress Organizes; No Role for Mills," Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report 32 (December 7, 1974): 3249. The caucus had already made the DSPC responsible for the nomination of Democrats to the new Budget Committee in order to preclude the old Committee on Committees from weighing the composition in favor of conservatives.

four-fifths of that committee could be different. And all the staff could be gone. They won't have any memory. They're all around the Speaker's Office. Even he could be different in two years and the whole group of staff will disappear. I don't even know if they're going to keep any records. The point is they won't have very long memories. . . .⁹

Regardless of initial doubts by subordinates, the power of committee assignments provided the Speaker a real mechanism to deal with recalcitrant members. Yet for the Ninety-fourth Congress, Albert did not fully employ this tool. Despite formal inclusion, the Speaker intervened relatively little in the actual system. As one participant remembered:

He leaves most of the decisions to us. He really doesn't play that much of a role. But we give him pretty much what he wants. When he speaks in favor of some guy, that guy's got it greased!¹⁰

Also, the actual switch came midway in the selection process. An individual then on the staff of the DSPC reminisced:

We got that thing (the committee assignment task) on a Wednesday or Thursday and the job had to be done the following week. We had no idea what to do or how to do it! I called the old (Committee on Committees) staff to get a little help. That's what I got--a little help. . . . It was basically the nobility looking at the son who got it while expressing their disdain for the rebel mob.¹¹

⁹Kenneth A. Shepsle, The Giant Jigsaw Puzzle: Democratic Committee Assignments in the Modern House (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 307n.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 306n.

¹¹Confidential source.

A week later, power became further relocated through a change in caucus ordinances spearheaded by Richard Bolling, a former Rayburn lieutenant. The Speaker had informally named Democrats to the Rules Committee with the majority leader. Now he claimed sole control over these appointments. Even though Albert spoke against the proposal, the motion passed by a resounding margin (106-65).¹² The Speaker theoretically would have to reappoint incumbent Democrats to the Rules Committee with each new Congress. He could also replace members should he be dissatisfied with their demeanor.

¹²John Pierson, "Shaking Up the House: Will It Help," Wall Street Journal, December 2, 1974, p. A20; also cited by Sundquist, The Decline and Resurgence of Congress, p. 389.

Summary and Conclusions

With his appointment to the Committee on Committees, the Speaker regained some influence originally lost in the revolt against Joseph G. Cannon. The new DSPC contained similar potential. At least the organization allowed Speakers a vehicle through which influence might be exerted. A knowledgeable staff on the DSPC that did not emphasize patronage could also assist considerably. Furthermore, many reformers thought the small number of personnel that worked with the group in the early years as inadequate. Chapter V of this thesis will touch upon problems that the Speaker still faced with numerous and supposedly proficient employees.

Meanwhile, Albert saw his DSPC compile a set of proposals in the Ninety-third Congress. But measures such as anti-war resolutions did not necessarily mean that the Speakership had become more powerful. Moreover, he found it another feat to lead programs into law. Democratic policies in 1974 fell short because of several possible reasons, not just bad timing. First, the executive branch, which was controlled by Republicans, still held the momentum in the introduction of legislation. Second, the general public viewed the ideas as not viable. Third, the Speaker could not generate continued support from within his own party.

While trying to unify the Democrats, the caucus fortified the Speakership. Greater referral powers and added control over the Rules Committee overcame some longstanding

weaknesses. After Mills fell into bizarre behavior, the members also provided the Speaker formalized authority over chairmen and committee assignments. Within this more centralized system, the Speaker could theoretically insist on greater party loyalty.

The DSPC in the Ninety-third Congress did contain representatives from all factions of the party. Consequently, members kept the Speaker abreast of prevailing opinions, and not that of a vocal few. On the one end, Adams and Mitchell embraced the most liberal disposition. At the other extreme, Teague, Patman, and Stephens possessed more conservative leanings. Yet a balance of Democratic philosophy on the DSPC also included drawbacks. I will return to this point in Chapter V.

CHAPTER III

THE DEMOCRATIC STEERING AND POLICY COMMITTEE IN THE NINETY-FOURTH THROUGH NINETY-SIXTH CONGRESSES

Introduction

The election of 1974, which came almost immediately after the renaissance of the DSPC, brought into the House a large number of brash Democrats due to a Watergate backlash. At once, they significantly altered the composition and character of the chamber. No one knew if this new element would follow the Speaker. The results weakened the conservative coalition, one of the early reasons for the DSPC, because of the presence of fewer Republicans with which southern Democrats could align. Despite this clear advantage, Speaker Albert and the DSPC still experienced problems in the Ninety-fourth Congress. The caucus rejected several of its nominees for committee chairmanships. Members of the DSPC composed the Task Force on the Economy and Energy, in addition to ethics reform legislation, but the measures encountered several obstacles in the House. These events in the Ninety-fourth Congress will be the first topic of this chapter. Then the DSPC will be examined in the Ninety-fifth and Ninety-sixth Congresses under a Democratic president, and new Speaker.

The Disposal of Committee Chairmen

The DSPC, which assumed the responsibility for chairmen and committee assignments in 1974, gathered on January 15, 1975 to nominate chairmen for the Ninety-fourth Congress. Yet, the Democratic Caucus still had ultimate authority over these choices through a majority vote. This fact let the rank and file change the party and make history.

O'Neill, then majority leader, moved to accept all representatives due chairmanships according to seniority. But Jonathan Bingham and many other participants disagreed. After he saw the initial opposition, Speaker Albert administered a voice vote on the proposed chairmen. When no firm conclusion was reached, the Committee on Committees resorted to secret ballots. The first three appointments, which had no formal opposition, received endorsements: W.R. Poage for chairman of the Agriculture Committee (the vote was still 14-10), George Mahon for chairman of the Appropriations Committee (18-6), and F. Edward Hebert for chairman of the Armed Services Committee (14-10). Wright Patman confronted a declared challenger, Henry S. Reuss, for chairmanship of the Banking and Currency Committee. (Both individuals faced each other in the same room as members of the DSPC.) The vote that ensued displaced Patman by a narrow margin (11-13). The two Democrats next in seniority, William A. Barrett and Leonar K. Sullivan, failed by identical numbers (11-13). The Committee on Committees then sanctioned Reuss

(15-9), who had accumulated the next highest amount of seniority.

The balloting on Wayne Hays for chairman of the House Administration Committee generated consecutive ties, somewhat expectedly.¹ As soon as all the other chairmen were decided, a fourth attempt on Hays unearthed a changed vote against him (11-13). Thereupon the members chose the individual who followed Hays, Frank Thompson Jr. (15-9), a representative also on the DSPC.²

Nevertheless, the Democratic Caucus rejected Thompson, Reuss, as well as Poage and Hebert. This event forced the Speaker and the Committee on Committees to regroup. On the 17th, they designated the second echelon: Thomas S. Foley for Agriculture and Melvin Price for Armed Services (another congressman on the DSPC).³ Soon afterwards, the rank and file gave their blessing. Furthermore, the caucus retained Hays in an election that let members vote for one or the other, something that had not been done the first time around.

¹Threats by Hays to use his power and a feared alliance between he and Burton by the leadership apparently fueled opinion against him. Hays later accused Albert and O'Neill of orchestrating the vote in the DSPC. Of course, O'Neill disclaimed this allegation.

²Michael J. Malbin, "Congress Report/House Democrats Oust Senior Members From Power," National Journal 7 (January 25, 1975): 130-1.

³Due to insisting by a considerable number of aspirant freshmen, the DSPC enlarged the Agriculture Committee to permit for sixteen new Democrats (and seven new Republicans). Because of retirees, however, the total size only increased by seven (36 to 43).

TABLE 2--Continued

# 5: Ark., Ia., Kans., Mo., Okla. (23)	Edward Mezvinsky (Ia.)
# 6: Tex. (21)	Wright Patman (Tex.)
# 7: Ala., Fla., La., Miss. (23)	F. Edward Hebert (La.)
# 8: Ga., N.C., S.C., Tenn. (29)	M. Dawsin Mathis (Ga.)
# 9: Md., N.J., Va., W.Va. (26)	Frank Thompson Jr. (N.J.)
#10: Ohio, Pa. (22)	John V. Stanton (Ohio)
#11: N.Y. (27)	Jonathan B. Bingham (N.Y.)
#12: Conn., D.C., Guam, Mass., N.H., P.I., R.I., V.I. (21)	Norman E. D'Amours (N.H.)

Executive Director

John Barriere

TABLE 3

DSPC NEW PARTICIPANTS, NINETY-FOURTH CONGRESS

<u>Replacements</u>	<u>Previous Participants</u>	<u>Reason for Leaving (If Any)</u>
Burton	Teague	Completed two term limitation as caucus chairman
Metcalf	Mitchell	--
Jordan	Hansen	Retired
Brodhead	Owens	New freshman representative
Davis	--	New second and third termers representative ^a
Obey	Reuss	Became chairman of the Banking and Currency Committee
Udall	Adams	Became chairman of the Budget Committee
Bingham	Podell	Defeated for reelection to the House
Hebert	Bevill	--
Mezvinisky	Bolling	--
D'Amours	Giamo	--
Stanton	Dent	--
Mathis	Stephens	--

^aThe addition of a second and third term representative increased the size of the DSPC to twenty-four.

The Task Force on the Economy and Energy

Five weeks before President Ford delivered the 1975 State of the Union Address, Speaker Albert organized a task force composed of members mostly from the DSPC to devise an alternative program to the course outlined by the Ford administration.⁴ Shortly before the President's evening speech on January 13, Albert released the plan of the Task Force on the Economy and Energy in an event staged for the media.⁵ He also impeded the chairman of the Appropriations Committee, Mahon, to expedite the public service jobs segment of the plan. Mahon cooperated, even though he questioned the profitability of the program. An aversion to instruction by members of the DSPC, as well as the recent expulsion of the three committee chairmen, overcame his doubts.⁶ Therefore, Albert never introduced the decree that he had written.

A jobs program bill of \$5.5 billion, which emanated from the Democratic plan, passed the House. But President Ford vetoed the measure as too expensive. Thereby, the

⁴These members of the DSPC, besides James C. Wright as chairman, participated: Tom Bevill, Jonathan B. Bingham, John Brademas, Richard Fulton, Phillip Burton, Barbara C. Jordan, Melvin Price, Henry S. Reuss, and Morris K. Udall.

⁵Joel Havemann, "Congress Report/Ford House Democrats Outline Programs for 1975," National Journal 7 (January 18, 1975): 101.

⁶Sidney Waldman, "Majority Leadership in the House of Representatives," Political Science Quarterly 95 (Fall 1980): 380.

demonstrated support of an override in a resolution (17-0).⁷ Yet the count on the House floor fell short by five votes. One member of the DSPC clarified the reasons for defeat:

The members of the committee did not and do not go out and convince the members of their region to vote for bills. I don't get together with the members of my region as I should and could. There are just too many demands on my time. Of course, I do speak with some of the members of my region on the floor, but not systematically and not comprehensively. The members of my region do not come to me as their representative on the committee and I do not keep in touch with them as I should.⁸

Another component of the Task Force embraced gas taxes, among other unpopular ideas with regard to energy. Congressmen did not willingly claim credit for politically costly alternatives. Still, the DSPC and the Senate (Democratic) Policy Committee united, by the end of February, on a strategy. Moreover, President Ford expressed a willingness to work with the congressional leadership.⁹

Stumbling blocks existed, however, in the form of Representatives John Dingell, chairman of the Energy and Power Subcommittee of the Commerce Committee, and Al Ullman, chairman of the Ways and Means Committee. Control of oil overlapped between the two. Dingell ruled on the price of

⁷Idem, untitled manuscript, 1977, p. 2-9.

⁸Idem, "Leadership in the House of Representatives: The 94th and 95th Congresses" (Paper delivered at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Washington, D.C., September 1-4, 1977), pp. 28-9.

⁹John G. Stewart, "Central Policy Organs in Congress," in Congress Against the President, ed. Harvey C. Mansfield Sr. (New York: Praeger, 1975), p. 22.

energy and Ullman on how much to tax the companies that produced it. While trying to facilitate cooperation, Speaker Albert included the chairmen in numerous DSPC sessions. Dingell and Ullman, who resented placement under this purview, absolutely rejected any suggestions from the Speaker for the direction of legislation. Since the two remained intractable, a combined policy failed to result. That is to say, the norm of committee autonomy appeared insurmountable. A leadership strategist further explained:

Why call a meeting of the Steering Committee and vote 12 to 9 for deregulation of gas prices. The Commerce Committee could then call a meeting and vote 12 to 9 the other way. That just shows the opinions of the particular committees. . . .¹⁰

Ethics Reform

Beginning in June 1976, a task force set up by Albert collected information on ethics reform with the intent to introduce legislation. David R. Obey as chairman, with the help of DSPC members Lloyd Meeds and Norman E. D'Amours, completed a report just prior to the Democratic National Convention. Primarily, the document listed suggestions to avoid the misallocation of funds. As one precaution, the representatives proposed that the Speaker directly appoint Democrats to the House Administration Committee; greater accountability might then result.

¹⁰Waldman, "Majority Leadership in the House of Representatives," p. 382.

But other members of the DSPC objected immediately. In particular, Phillip Burton did not want to create a powerful Speaker similar to Jesse Unruh, under whom Burton served in the California legislature.¹¹ Nevertheless, Albert and the rest of the DSPC approved all the recommendations, in addition to a resolution that directed the House Administration and Rules Committees to implement the package. When the Democratic Caucus reviewed the proposals on June 23, however, a fierce debate ensued. O'Neill, soon to become Speaker, withdrew the plan for the leader of the chamber to assume indirectly control of the House Administration Committee.¹² When he saw the extent of the opposition, O'Neill realized this move as prudent.

The Composition of the DSPC

Roughly a year later, liberals reexamined the makeup of the DSPC. They believed that nine appointees by the Speaker permitted him too much power and that President Carter would now lead the party, not O'Neill. Alternatively, some congressmen argued that the caucus should elect more seats on this organization. A plan distributed by the Democratic Study Group called for the three officers and twelve regionally elected members to remain intact, but the number of appointees by the Speaker would be cut to just

¹¹Allan J. Katz, "The Politics of Congressional Ethics," in The House at Work ed. Joseph Cooper and G. Calvin Mackenzie (Austin: University of Texas, 1981), p. 101.

¹²Ibid., p. 102.

four. The Caucus Committee on Organization, Study and Review preferred a slightly different format. Its chairman, Representative Neil Smith, wanted nine regional zones that elected two participants apiece, in addition to Speaker, majority leader, and caucus chairman.

As strange as it may seem, the politics of the race to succeed O'Neill as majority leader entered into the discussion. It was revealed that members backed a reconstituted DSPC in order to weaken the power of O'Neill as Speaker, and to augment the influence of Burton as his second in command.¹³ When this scheme was discovered, the caucus dropped any plans to restructure the DSPC. Instead, the rank and file reinforced the Speakership by taking away from the Appropriations and Ways and Means Committees the ability of each to select five members of the Budget Committee. The Committee on Committees instead, with O'Neill soon at the helm, would nominate these Democrats.

¹³"Washington Update," National Journal 8 (December 25, 1976): 1834.

TABLE 4

DSPC MEMBERSHIP, NINETY-FIFTH CONGRESS

Officers

Speaker Thomas P. O'Neill Jr. (Mass.)

Majority Leader James C. Wright Jr. (Tex.)

Caucus Chairman Thomas S. Foley (Wash.)

Whips

Majority Whip John Brademas (Ind.)

Chief Deputy Whip Dan Rostenkowski (Ill.)

Deputy Whip William V. Alexander (Ark.)

Deputy Whip George E. Danielson (Calif.)

Deputy Whip Benjamin S. Rosenthal (N.Y.)

Appointed (By The Speaker)

Peter H. Kostmayer (Pa.), represented freshmen

Barbara C. Jordon (Tex.), represented women

Ralph H. Metcalfe (Ill.), represented blacks

Charles G. Rose (N.C.), represented second and third termers

Elected (No. in Region)

1: Calif. (29) Henry A. Waxman (Calif.)

2: Ariz., Col., Haw.,

Mont., Neb., Nev., N.M.,

Ore., Utah, Wash.,

Wyo. (22) Lloyd Meeds (Wash.)

3: Mich., Minn., Wis. (22) David R. Obey (Wis.)

4: Ill., Ind., Ky. (25) Morgan F. Murphy (Ill.)

TABLE 4--Continued

# 5:	Ark., Ia., Kans., Mo., Okla. (22)	Richard Bolling (Mo.)
# 6:	Tex. (22)	Eligio de la Garza (Tex.)
# 7:	Ala., Fla., La., Miss. (23)	Walter Flowers (Ala.)
# 8:	Ga., N.C., S.C., Tenn. (28)	M. Dawsin Mathis (Ga.)
# 9:	Md., N.J., Va., W.Va. (24)	Robert A. Roe (N.J.)
#10:	Ohio, Pa. (27)	Jonathan H. Dent (Pa.)
#11:	N.Y. (27)	Jonathan B. Bingham (N.Y.)
#12:	Conn., D.C., Guam, Mass., N.H., P.I., R.I., V.I. (20)	Norman E. D'Amours (N.H.)

Executive Director

Irvine Sprague

TABLE 5

DSPC NEW PARTICIPANTS, NINETY-FIFTH CONGRESS

<u>Replacements</u>	<u>Previous</u> <u>Participants</u>	<u>Reason for Leaving</u> <u>(If Any)</u>
Foley	Burton	Lost race for majority leader
Brademas*	McFall	Lost race for majority leader
Alexander	Fulton	Resigned from the House
Danielson	Matsunaga	Elected to the Senate
Rosenthal	Wright	--
Kostmayer	Brodhead	New freshman representative
de la Garza	Patman	Died
Flowers	Hebert	Retired from the House
Bolling	Mezvinsky	Defeated for reelection to the House
Dent	Stanton	Ran for the Senate
Sprague	Barriere	Became senior advisor to the DSPC

*Member of the DSPC also during the Ninety-four Congress.

The Ninety-fifth Congress

In 1977, the DSPC met frequently. By the end of the year, thirty-two sessions had taken place.¹⁴ Due to the Carter Presidency, the new Speaker, O'Neill, focused most meetings on the agenda of the Democratic Party. Furthermore, O'Neill wanted to emerge as an active, forceful leader who cooperated with his party's president in order to pass Democratic programs.

Nevertheless, because of the early incompetence demonstrated by the Carter Presidency, the Speaker first transformed DSPC gatherings into forums where members could air discontent about the new administration. For example, on February 8, the DSPC complained to Vice President Mondale and White House Congressional Liaison Frank Moore that the administration did not provide their intentions on policy programs enough in advance to legislators.¹⁵ On June 15, Moore returned with Hamilton Jordan and James King, who was responsible for the allocation of the president's patronage. The DSPC resented the almost total blindness of the White House to their patronage needs. Also the representatives bemoaned the lack of possibilities to claim credit since the executive branch consistently failed to inform congressmen

¹⁴The DSPC met thirteen times in 1973 and then fifteen times in 1974.

¹⁵Edward Walsh, "President Hopeful of Good Relations with the Hill," Washington Post, February 9, 1977, pp. A1 and A8, cited by Waldman, "Leadership in the House of Representatives . . .," p. 71.

of appointments in their districts. Speaker O'Neill indicated that Democrats in the House unwillingly adhered to the party positions without enough of these incentives.¹⁶

Second, the Speaker directed the DSPC to give official approval to bills that he viewed as salient. One representative involved downplayed these moves because O'Neill concerned himself with only "motherhood" issues, which presumably referred to matters like social security, jobs programs, etc.¹⁷ Then, the Speaker and the DSPC unintentionally diminished their own credibility when these types of bills that already had Democratic support were endorsed.

Finally, O'Neill brought the DSPC on the scene only after standing committees had reported out the bills. In 1977, he refused to transform this group into an "early warning system."¹⁸ Yet, the Speaker reversed himself somewhat at the beginning of 1978.¹⁹ O'Neill established task forces, composed of staff and chosen members not necessarily

¹⁶O'Neill prefaced this meeting with "I want you to understand that everything that is said will be leaked immediately." "House Democrats Say Carter's Patronage Policy Saps Party Discipline," New York Times, June 15, 1977, p. A15; also cited by *ibid.*

¹⁷Michael J. Malbin, "Congress Report/House Democrats Playing With a Strong Leadership Lineup," National Journal 9 (June 18, 1977): 940.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 946.

¹⁹O'Neill passed the bulk of Carter's energy program largely because of two reasons: the new Speaker still had many credits out and O'Neill formed an Ad Hoc Committee on Energy.

on the DSPC in order to bolster the whip organization. This development did not surprise many since Irvine Sprague, then executive director, possessed first hand knowledge of the whip system from his service as administrative assistant to John McFall, the former majority whip. Furthermore, O'Neill had conspicuously avoided dealing with amendments through the DSPC. The introduction and continuation of task forces, on the other hand, rectified this deliberate oversight to a significant degree.²⁰

²⁰Fact sheets have been an added product by the staff of the DSPC. These concise summaries, also known as bullets, have been usually written prior to floor action on bills. They have also been dictated and copied off in an Appropriations Committee room near the House floor on unexpected amendments.

TABLE 6

DSPC MEMBERSHIP, NINETY-SIXTH CONGRESS

Officers

Speaker Thomas P. O'Neill Jr. (Mass.)

Majority Leader James C. Wright Jr. (Tex.)

Caucus Chairman Thomas S. Foley (Wash.)

Whips

Majority Whip John Brademas (Ind.)

Chief Deputy Whip Dan Rostenkowski (Ill.)

Deputy Whip William V. Alexander (Ark.)

Deputy Whip George E. Danielson (Calif.)

Deputy Whip Benjamin S. Rosenthal (N.Y.)

Appointed (By The Speaker)

William H. Grey (Pa.), represented freshmen

Gladys N. Spellman (Md.), represented women

Charles B. Rangel (N.Y.), represented blacks

Charles G. Rose (N.C.), represented second and third termers

Elected (No. in Region)

# 1: Calif. (25)	Henry A. Waxman (Calif.)
# 2: Ariz., Col., Haw., Mont., Neb., Nev., N.M., Ore., Utah, Wash., Wyo. (22)	Robert B. Duncan (Ore.)
# 3: Mich., Minn., Wis. (22)	William D. Ford (Mich.)
# 4: Ill., Ind., Ky. (22)	Morgan F. Murphy (Ill.)

TABLE 6 Continued

# 5: Ark., Ia., Kans., Mo., Okla. (20)	Richard Bolling (Mo.)
# 6: Tex. (20)	Eligio de la Garza (Tex.)
# 7: Ala., Fla., La., Miss. (24)	John B. Breaux (La.)
# 8: Ga., N.C., S.C., Tenn. (29)	W.G. (Bill Hefner (N.C.))
# 9: Md., N.J., Va., W.Va. (24)	Robert A. Roe (N.J.)
#10: Ohio, Pa. (25)	John F. Sieberling (Ohio)
#11: N.Y. (26)	Mario Biaggi (N.Y.)
#12: Conn., D.C., Guam, Mass., N.H., P.I., R.I., V.I. (21)	Fernand J. St Germain (R.I.)

Executive Director

S. Ariel Weiss

TABLE 7

DSPC NEW PARTICIPANTS, NINETY-SIXTH CONGRESS

<u>Replacements</u>	<u>Previous Participants</u>	<u>Reason for Leaving (If Any)</u>
Rangel	Metcalfe	Died
Spellman	Jordan	Retired
Gray	Kostmayer	New freshman representative
Duncan	Meeds	Retired
Breaux	Flowers	Ran for the Senate
Hefner	Mathis	Met two term limit (and retired)
Ford	Obey	Met two term limit
Biaggi	Bingham	Met two term limit
St Germain	D'Amours	Met two term limit
Sieberling	Dent	Retired
Weiss	Sprague	Went to FDIC

The Ninety-sixth Congress

Speaker O'Neill seemingly established even greater control of the DSPC in the Ninety-sixth Congress. He named one of his legislative assistants, then twenty-five-year-old S. Ariel Weiss, as the executive director. O'Neill also tried to place loyal Democrats in openings on the Ways and Means Committee at the same time.²¹

From January 16 through 18, 1979, the Committee on Committees shaped the working units of the House. The members first nominated Cecil Heftel and James Shannon for seats on the Ways and Means Committee.²² Thereupon, haggling commenced for the three remaining positions. Finally, in addition to Heftel and Shannon, the Speaker sent the names of Thomas J. Downey, Sam B. Hall Jr., and Frank Guartini to the caucus. When the rank and file assembled on January 23, three congressmen, Wyche Fowler, Ronnie G. Flippo, and James L. Oberstar, challenged these decisions. Many members in fact expected Oberstar to be one of the designees. Nonetheless, one representative on the DSPC divulged that: "He didn't campaign vigorously with the committee members. Its like campaigning for office. . . . Most of us know he has a good record, but it is always nice

²¹Two of the openings were due to retirements by James H. Burke and Omar Burleson.

²²Shannon wrote his senior thesis at Johns Hopkins on the rise of O'Neill to the Speakership.

to be asked."²³ Of the three who objected, only Fowler attained a seat by eliminating Hall, even though the latter had the support of Majority Leader Wright. However, Fowler did comment on why he had won: "It beats the hell out of me."²⁴

Yet another case of opposition soon emerged. James R. Jones, a midwestern moderate, desired joint membership on the Ways and Means and the Budget Committees. The Speaker and the Committee on Committees had not selected him for this dual role. Nevertheless, when Jones voiced his intentions within the caucus, the rank and file voted to eliminate the most conservative candidate, Joseph L. Fisher, and alternatively to accept Jones.²⁵

More important, Speaker O'Neill put his prestige on the line as he verbally rescued Congressman Jamie L. Whitten who had been slated for the chairmanship of the Appropriations Committee. O'Neill argued that Whitten, even though his record of party support was mixed, deserved the promotion for his honesty.²⁶ The rank and file apparently

²³Quoted to Richard E. Cohen, "The Mysterious Way Congress Makes Committee Assignments," National Journal 11 (February 3, 1979): 83.

²⁴Quoted by *ibid.*, p. 85.

²⁵The caucus chose two other members during the Ninety-sixth Congress for this double service: William Brodhead and Richard A. Gephardt.

²⁶Ann Cooper, "Committee Assignments Finished, Chairmen Picked, Congress is Ready to Work," Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report 37 (January 27, 1979): 152.

listened to their titular leader since Whitten prevailed by a wide margin (157-88).

The caucus also lifted the Speaker out of a predicament when it waived the rule that limited members to just two seats. Members then filled places on such minor committees as District of Columbia and International Relations without losing assignments to prestigious posts. Thus, Speaker O'Neill learned that he could no longer assume the cooperation of members nor promise coveted assignments for their support. Furthermore, one could logically assume that the DSPC in the Ninety-sixth Congress performed some action with regard to legislation, but it received no public credit for it.

Summary and Conclusions

The evolution of the DSPC in the Ninety-fourth, Ninety-fifth, and Ninety-sixth Congresses depended largely on who controlled the group and somewhat less to who sat in the White House. It had to deal with first a Republican and then a Democratic president. Both individuals indicated a desire to work with the DSPC. Nevertheless, Ford failed to achieve accommodation largely because of philosophical differences. Carter fell short because of sheer oversights. The party affiliation of the chief executive thus had little effect on the DSPC.

The divergent styles of Speakers made a considerable difference on the DSPC. Speaker Albert, who avoided pressuring individuals, exhibited an obliging nature. O'Neill relied on more personal and frequent communication with his fellow liberals in the House. As the DSPC adapted to the different mannerisms, it became chaotic.

The rejection of the seniority system by the Committee on Committees in the Ninety-fourth Congress did not necessarily prove helpful. At least strong committee chairmen could have theoretically helped the Speaker guide programs through the House. Of course, Albert might have orchestrated the removal of Poage, Hebert, and Patman if he perceived them as threats. More likely, he favored their retention because chairmen could serve as partners in the legislative process. Nonetheless, opposing views in both the Committee on Committees and the caucus forced the

disposal of the three committee chairmen. Hence, the modification of voting procedures destroyed a great deal of authority that the DSPC would find difficult to replace.

The lack of followership became especially true in the Ninety-sixth Congress. Speaker O'Neill chose a new executive director for the DSPC, but he could not place a party loyalist on the Ways and Means Committee. Votes by the caucus, which overturned several nominations by the Committee on Committees in this period, limited the power of the Speaker. He could not realistically promise influential positions in return for support on the House floor.

The DSPC seemingly contributed to the maiden passage of a jobs program bill when it pressured Mahon to report the legislation. Nevertheless, considerable consensus within the party also surrounded the issue. In addition, this thesis highlighted the fact that members of the DSPC saw their role as limited. That is to say, the representatives generally did not lobby for programs.

The DSPC did provide a forum for Democrats in the House to work out their differences. Yet O'Neill could not initially strike a bargain on the energy issue. He had to call in many political markers to pull Carter's energy proposals through the ad hoc committee, not the DSPC. Also the controversial nature of the ethics reform legislation constrained the DSPC. Its resolution to provide the Speaker greater control over the House Administration Committee

failed in the caucus. The DSPC could not reconcile the egos of members as well as the trait of protecting one's turf.

The caucus apparently wanted strong leadership since efforts to weaken the influence of the Speaker over the composition of the DSPC did not prosper. The opposite seemed to occur when the Committee on Committees gained control of all Democratic nominations to the Budget Committee. Despite greater potential on the surface, this move held only marginal value because the rank and file maintained veto power over the designees.

In addition, some observers could question the degree to which O'Neill molded the DSPC between the Ninety-fifth and Ninety-sixth Congresses into a tool for the passage of legislation. The grievance sessions with individuals from the White House simply enabled members on the DSPC to consider themselves far more important than they actually were. Younger members must have enjoyed serving as part of the leadership. Those critics with a discerning eye should ask if this development made any difference to the Speaker.

Task forces on salient bills provided O'Neill somewhat more flexibility in his daily functions. But two points should be remembered. First, most members refused to support these operations on a regular basis. Second, except for the Speaker, representatives on the DSPC have not necessarily been involved in the task forces. Therefore, the chance of building followership through repeated service has been limited.

CHAPTER IV

THE DEMOCRATIC STEERING AND POLICY COMMITTEE IN THE NINETY-SEVENTH CONGRESS

Introduction

This thesis has heretofore highlighted the DSPC. Instead the following chapter will treat its dynamics in detail during the Ninety-seventh Congress. First, the rules and the new membership will be considered. Then, the functions of the DSPC over this two year period will be assessed. Laconically, committee assignments will be cited. More important, the activities of the group with regard to the budget will be appraised. Ideological passions within the DSPC, in lieu of substantive discussions, also will be mentioned.

The First Session

The 1980 election of a Republican to the White House could have propelled Speaker O'Neill and the DSPC into an active, independent legislative role. But, the large number of conservative Republicans brought into the House on Reagan's coattails changed the composition of the chamber. Furthermore, the Democratic Caucus altered the makeup of the DSPC.

Even though Richard Bolling already served four years as a regional representative, O'Neill wanted his old friend and confidant to stay on the DSPC for yet another term. Dan Rostenkowski fell into a similar predicament. He did not want to leave upon becoming chairman of the Ways and Means Committee. In order to avoid conflict with the two consecutive term limitation rule, the Speaker asked the caucus to include the chairmen of the Ways and Means, Rules (where Bolling assumed control), Appropriations, and Budget Committees on the DSPC. By making allowances for influential committee chairmen, as well as the head of the Congressional Campaign Committee, Speaker O'Neill convinced the rank and file that he could maneuver legislation through the House more easily.¹

In addition, the rules of the DSPC restricted the length of service by deputy whips. The caucus did not

¹The size of the DSPC increased to twenty-nine with these five additions.

alter this limitation that ran out in the Ninety-seventh Congress. While a separate whip organization functioned, the rank and file believed it a useless undertaking to load the DSPC with them. The caucus did provide the chief deputy whip a seat with non-voting status as a compromise. Yet Speaker O'Neill insisted that more whips be included. Thus, he appointed a deputy whip, J. Joseph Moakley, and several at large whips on the DSPC in order to communicate better with members.²

The procedures of the DSPC established a framework (See Table 10); they disclosed little about the performance of the group. Committee assignments, which surfaced as the first major task in the Ninety-seventh Congress, revealed more about the rationale behind decisions of Speaker O'Neill as well as the dynamics of the DSPC. For example, one southern representatative believed too few conservative Democrats held important seats and maintained: "On some crucial committees, which involved tobacco and things like that, we may feel that the membership is a bit one sided, the other way."³ Another member truly enjoyed his service on the DSPC and indicated:

Anyone can say that I nominated you (during the Committee on Committees), but to try to deal

²Region #5 elected another deputy whip, Richard A. Gephardt. Also during the Ninety-seventh Congress, the following members of the DSPC doubled as at large whips: Tony Coehlo, Patricia Schroeder, Tom Bevill, Norman Y. Mineta, and John P. Murtha.

³Confidential source.

TABLE 8

DSPC MEMBERSHIP, NINETY-SIXTH CONGRESS

Officers

Speaker Thomas P. O'Neill Jr. (Mass.)

Majority Leader James C. Wright Jr. (Tex.)

Caucus Chairman Gillis W. Long (La.)

Members

Majority Whip Thomas S. Foley (Wash.)

Secy. to the Caucus Geraldine A. Ferraro (N.Y.)

Appropriations Committee Chairman Jamie L. Whitten (Miss.)

Rules Committee Chairman Richard Bolling (Mo.)

Ways and Means Committee Chairman Dan Rostenkowski (Ill.)

Budget Committee Chairman James R. Jones (Okla.)

Non-voting members

Chief Deputy Whip William V. Alexander (Ark.)

Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee Chairman

Tony Coelho (Calif.)

Appointed (By The Speaker)

Patricia Schroeder (Col.) represented women

Charles B. Rangel (N.Y.), represented blacks

W.J. (Billy) Tauzin (La.) represented freshmen

Wyche Fowler (Ga.), represented second and third termers

Tom Bevill (Ala.)

Wes Watkins (Okla.)

J. Joseph Moakley (Mass.)

Norman Y. Mineta (Calif.)

TABLE 8 ContinuedElected (No. in Region)

# 1: Calif. (22)	Phillip Burton (Calif.)
# 2: Amer. Soma, Ariz., Col., Guam, Haw., Mont., Nev., Ore., Wash. (20)	Timothy E. Wirth (Col.)
# 3: Mich., Minn., Wis. (20)	William D. Ford (Mich.)
# 4: Ill., Ind., Ky. (17)	Adam Benjamin Jr. (Ind.)
# 5: Ark., Ia., Kan., Mo., N.D., Okla. S.D. (19)	Richard A. Gephardt (Mo.)
# 6: Tex. (19)	Charles Wilson (Tex.)
# 7: Ala., Fla., La., Miss. (23)	John B. Breaux (La.)
# 8: Ga., N.C., S.C., Tenn. (23)	W.G. (Bill) Hefner (N.C.)
# 9: Md., N.J., Va., W.Va. (17)	William J. Hughes (N.J.)
#10: Ohio, Pa. (23)	John P. Murtha (Pa.)
#11: N.Y. (22)	Mario Biaggi (N.Y.)
#12: Conn., D.C., Mass., N.H., P.I., R.I., V.I. (19)	Fernand J. St Germain (R.I.)

TABLE 9

DSPC NEW PARTICIPANTS, NINETY-SEVENTH CONGRESS

<u>Replacements</u>	<u>Previous Participants</u>	<u>Reason for Leaving (If Any)</u>
Long	Foley	Met two term limit
Foley*	Brademas	Defeated for reelection to the House
Bolling*	--	--
Rostenkowski*	--	--
Whitten	--	--
Jones	--	--
Ferraro ^a	--	--
Alexander*	Rostenkowski	--
Coehlo	--	--
Moakley	--	--
Schroeder	Spellman	Did not recover from heart attack
Bevill	--	--
Mineta	--	--

*Members of the DSPC also during the Ninety-sixth Congress.

^aFerraro persuaded her colleagues that the DSPC underrepresented women. Through this argument, she gained a seat for herself.

TABLE 9 Continued

<u>Replacements</u>	<u>Previous Participants</u>	<u>Reason for Leaving (If Any)</u>
Fowler ^b	Ginn	Candidate for governor of Ga.
Benjamin	Murphy	Retired from the House
Tauzin ^c	Grey	New freshman representative
Watkins ^d	--	--
Burton	Waxman	Met two term limit
Wirth	Duncan	Met two term limit
Hughes	Roe	Met two term limit

^bFowler actually replaced Ronald (Bo) Ginn in January 1982. After Ginn announced his candidacy for governor of Georgia, Speaker O'Neill asked Ginn to relinquish his position on the DSPC before the end of the Ninety-seventh Congress.

^cEven though Tauzin joined the House through a special (May 1980) election, six months before the normal date, he represented freshmen on the DSPC.

^dWatkins successfully lobbied for a place on the DSPC in order to ensure a seat on the Appropriations Committee for himself.

TABLE 10

DSPC PROCEDURES, NINETY-SEVENTH CONGRESS

Rule 1. Meeting Dates

a. The Committee shall meet on call of the Chairman, at least twice a month.

b. The Chairman shall also call additional meetings if requested to do so in writing by four or more members of the Committee.

c. Meetings shall be presided over by the Chairman, and in the absence of the Chairman by the Vice Chairman, and in the absence of both by the Second Vice Chairman.

d. The Chairman may cancel any meeting for cause.

RULE 2. Agenda

The Chairman shall be responsible for the preparation of the agenda. In addition to matters he designates as agenda time, other items may be placed on the agenda by any member of the Committee by notifying the Chairman in writing at least 48 hours before the meeting.

RULE 3. Quorum

A majority of the members of the Committee shall constitute a quorum.

RULE 4. Journal

The Committee shall keep a journal of its proceedings.

RULE 5. Attendance

No persons, except Democratic members of the House of Representatives and staff of the Committee, shall be admitted to meetings of the Committee without express permission of the Chairman.

TABLE 10--ContinuedRULE 6. Ad Hoc Committees

The Chairman may appoint ad hoc committees from among the entire membership of the Democratic Caucus to conduct special studies and investigation. The Committee may also authorize the use of Committee staff to assist the ad hoc committees.^a

^aRules adopted by the Democratic Caucus, December 9, 1980.

with someone from California or somebody with a different philosophy other than your own, to get your man elected over his, to come up with the right number of votes within the right number of ballots, it is truly a political insight on how Congress operates.⁴

Both comments conspicuously avoided mention of any direct involvement by O'Neill; yet he moved behind the scenes. The Speaker correctly saw the Ways and Means Committee as an initial testing ground for the new president. Hence the Committee on Committees shaped the seats in a two-to-one ratio of Democrats to Republicans even through the 1980 election returned a House with a two party proportion of five-to-four. S. Ariel Weiss, the executive director of the DSPC, justified this incongruence as historical precedence. When the Republicans held the majority, he indicated that their leaders were found "guilty" of the same gambit.⁵

As a gesture of compromise representatives who did not customarily applaud the Speaker received influential positions.⁶ For example, the caucus approved the nomination of Phil Gramm, a former economics professor from Texas, to the

⁴Confidential source.

⁵Quoted to David S. Broder, "Republicans Will Disrupt House, Angry Elder Vows," Washington Post, January 3, 1981, p. A6.

⁶Two Conservative Democratic Forum congressmen, Ronald (Bo) Ginn and Tom Bevill, held Appropriations subcommittee chairmanships. Ginn oversaw Military Construction and Bevill directed Energy and Water. Both members also served on the DSPC.

Budget Committee.⁷ His actions with regard to the budget, as a matter of fact, evolved into a major preoccupation of the Speaker and the DSPC. Later in the session, they would question whether or not Gramm and those like him should remain on prestigious committees.

The Budget and the DSPC

On February 18, 1981, President Reagan promised before a joint session of Congress cuts of \$41.1 billion in the 1982 fiscal spending and reductions in personal and business taxes of \$53.9 billion. Speaker O'Neill and members of the DSPC the next day listened to Alice Rivlin, the director of the Congressional Budget Office, and Joseph Peckman, an economist from the Brookings Institution, explain the tight monetary policy of the Federal Reserve Board.¹¹ On March 5, economists Robert Hartman and Otto Eckstein reviewed traditional Keynesian philosophy. Bowman Cutter, a former associate director of the Office of Management and Budget, economist Henry Aaron, of Brookings, and pollster Peter Hart discussed the same topic with the Speaker and the DSPC soon afterwards. Walter Heller, the chairman of the Council of

⁷Gramm joined other Conservative Democratic Forum members, Beryl Anthony Jr., W.G. (Bill) Hefner, and William Nelson on the Budget Committee.

¹¹On the evening of February 19, the vice chairman of the DSPC, James C. Wright Jr., appeared in a televised address with Senators Hart and Chiles to attack Republican economic proposals as unsound.

Economic Advisors during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, appeared before members on March 31.

Speaker O'Neill introduced a statement after the briefings for the DSPC to consider. But another caucus group, the Committee on Party Effectiveness, composed the "Democratic Economic Principles," the paper that the members reviewed. Immediately a Boll Weevil attacked the document as "communistic."¹² Despite the hostile reception, O'Neill oversaw an affirmative vote of the precepts. In association with these pages, which were sheer rhetoric, Budget Committee Chairman Jones, released detailed proposals also sanctioned by the Speaker on the same day.

Later in April, the Speaker kept the DSPC out the budget negotiations between the president and the House leadership.¹³ O'Neill could make such a decision, but it indicated an admission. He conceded that the presence of the organization would not have helped forge an acceptable budget agreeable to all.

The Speaker did try to establish the DSPC as a leadership assembly with the Business Roundtable. He still could not reach agreement between the general philosophical opposites of business executives and the Democratic leaders,

¹²Confidential source.

¹³Weiss also participated in these talks; O'Neill said at the beginning of April "I've been one of the big spenders of all time." Quoted by Margot Hornblower, "O'Neill Thinks Democrats' Timing on Budget May be Off," Washington Post, April 8, 1981, p. A4.

especially since he had competitors on the DSPC. For instance, Dan Rostenkowski hinted that Speaker O'Neill was stubborn in utterances like "Tip stands there like an oak because he's got basically a liberal chemistry. . . ."14 James R. Jones basked in attention from the rank and file because he controlled the influential Budget Committee. One knowledgeable individual on the staff of the leadership admitted that due to the office that Jones occupied, "members kissed his ass and not the Speaker's."16 Furthermore, ranking members of the DSPC such as James C. Wright and Thomas S. Foley contributed to the confusion by positioning themselves early to become the next Speaker.

In this disorderly environment, O'Neill assembled the DSPC to plan strategy before the budget reconciliation, Reagan's proposal to cut programs by \$35 billion. When the vote occurred, however, this group provided no help. Moreover, three members of the DSPC, Tauzin, Breaux, and Wilson, included themselves among those who sided with the president.

Breaux credited his stand with constituents who solidly believed in the administration and its policies "to bring back fiscal sanity."16 On the other hand Wilson

¹⁴Quoted by Martin Schram, "Leading the Democrats," Washington Post, June 8, 1981, p. A1.

¹⁶Confidential source.

¹⁶Quoted by Margot Hornblower and T.R. Reid, "After Two Decades, The Boll Weevils Are Back Whistling Dixie," Washington Post, April 26, 1981, P. A10.

expressed some remorse for his actions. After the reconciliation vote. He offered to leave the DSPC, but the Speaker did not accept Wilson's resignation. O'Neill would not (and could not at this time) really punish Phil Gramm, a ringleader of the revolt. Thus, no reason existed for the Speaker to chastise Wilson, a member who supported Democratic leaders most of the time but united with Gramm on this one issue.¹⁷ Embarrassment also lessened any chance for revenge. First, Wilson and Wright worked diligently to get Gramm nominated to the Budget Committee. Second, Wilson sat with the DSPC largely because of the efforts of Wright. Finally, on the House floor, members remembered Wilson's nominating address of Wright for the position of majority leader. Lest one not forget, Wright won that post by a single vote.

Therefore, factors outside the control of the Speaker restrained the ability of O'Neill to use the DSPC in the first part of 1981. He then withdrew the group into official hibernation for the August recess. This hiatus ended in September when O'Neill summoned the DSPC to authorize waivers on three pending bills; Honorary U.S. citizenship for Raoul Wallenberg, the Swedish diplomat who diverted Hungarian Jews from Nazi concentration camps; the U.S. tour of the Springboks (the National Rugby Team of South Africa); and Reauthorization for the Office of Environmental Quality.

¹⁷Wilson later opposed the Reagan tax cut.

At this juncture, the Speaker attempted to reach beyond mere administrative functions. He tacitly granted absolution to Democrats who earlier had renounced party positions on the budget and the tax votes. Furthermore, O'Neill notified conservatives in his party that the DSPC would only sanction occasional defections in the future, not frequent desertions. Ideologues hoped that the Speaker would relegate Boll Weevils to minor committees. O'Neill instead agreed to reward congressmen who champion his views with prestigious assignments.

Soon afterwards, the death of Representative William R. Cotter instituted the aforementioned plan. Three members, Michael Lowry, Geraldine Ferraro, and Beryl Anthony Jr. competed for the seat Cotter vacated on the Ways and Means Committee. Anthony voted with the president on the first Reagan budget. The Committee on Committees still selected him for the position with the promise that he strongly support the Speaker hereafter.¹⁸ Yet such

¹⁸Anthony had not been a frequent deserter from Democratic programs. He registered a party unity score for the Ninety-sixth Congress of 63.5 per cent, just two points lower than the party average. Congressional Quarterly Almanac 1979; pp. 32-3, 1980, pp. 33-4c. One administrative assistant, who forgot about Anthony's appointment, stated naively to me:

"The Steering and Policy Committee is a powerful tool of the leadership. If a guy goes against a Rostenkowski tax bill and then says 'Do you think this kills my chance of getting on the Ways and Means Committee?' What do you think? . . . Service, just like the Speaker did, is part of paying your dues!" (Confidential source.)

prerequisites did not affect Gramm. He would still do as he wished, which included planning with President Reagan against Speaker O'Neill.

TABLE 11

DSPC MEETINGS, FIRST SESSION (1981)

January 6	First meeting on the Committee on Committees
January 7	Second meeting on the Committee on Committees
January 28	To fill remaining committee vacancies
February 5	Committee vacancies
February 19	Alice Rivlan Joseph Peckman
March 5	Robert Hartman Otto Eckstein
March 19	Bowman Cutter Henry Aaron Peter Hart
March 31	Fill vacancies and Walter Heller as guest
April 7	Fill vacancies and consider proposed Democratic Economic Principles
May 20	Business Roundtable
June 4	Brief meeting for committee vacancies
June 22	Budget Reconciliation
September 16	Fill vacancies, discuss the budget and waivers on suspension bills
September 23	Fill vacancies
October 6	Fill vacancies
November 19	Committee assignment for Wayne Dowdy (Miss.) and Agriculture vacancy

The Second Session

By 1982, even some close friends of the DSPC saw it as increasingly ineffective. O'Neill attempted to oppose the Reagan administration with resolutions calling Democratic unity, but he was unsuccessful. Thus, the Speaker entrusted this assembly with mere administrative tasks.

When conducting research during the second session, I learned from several staff members on the DSPC that 1981 and 1982 had been frustrating. At this point, O'Neill seldom asked for meetings. One individual summed up the predicament as follows:

What is the point of meeting to endorse legislation which the House, much less the Congress, isn't going to pass? We would look foolish passing a bunch of resolutions saying that the Congress should do this or that all Democrats should vote this way. We would march out to the (House) floor and be trampled by our own troops.¹⁸

When the Speaker wanted to confer with the DSPC, some representatives did not attend on a regular basis. The congressmen who did arrive clashed in ideological warfare. "Just getting mad at people is not what the leadership needs," confessed one observer.¹⁹ Another legislative strategist lamented his daily routine:

It is not very exciting. I go over and I sit through a hearing. . . . I find out how people are behaving on a particular bill . . . and how we are going to get it to the floor in the shape

¹⁸Confidential source.

¹⁹Confidential source.

that will be politically useful in the next election. . . . It's not interesting and nothing may come of it. Ninety percent of our time is spent doing this kind of stuff (not committee assignments).²⁰

Hence, O'Neill gave the group even less responsibility. In February, the DSPC performed the dubious function of selecting congressional delegates for the Mid-Term Convention, a Democratic forum held in late June to address relevant issues. Nonetheless, Speaker O'Neill did use one meeting to review the work of various task forces in the House. In the end, he assigned Richard Bolling the disputable honor of coordinating their activities.

The Speaker then just arranged for spokesmen to address the DSPC in the remainder of the session. Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr. of California discussed the prospects for "New Federalism." O'Neill also included a few more lecturers in economics: Felix Rohaytn, a senior partner of Lazard Frere investment banking firm, and Michael Blumenthal, the former Secretary of the Treasury. Throughout the year, in addition, the Speaker and the Committee on Committees filled committee vacancies as needed.

²⁰Confidential source.

TABLE 12

DSPC MEETINGS, SECOND SESSION (as of 7/15/82)

February 1	Committee assignments and discuss delegates for Mid-Term Conference
February 10	Policy Task Force meeting
February 23	Governor Brown
March 9	Felix Rohaytn Michael Blumenthal
May 18	George W. Crocket Jr., (Mich.) resignation

Summary and Conclusions

Conclusions have already been included in the last few pages, but let us again review the facts. First, the membership of the DSPC became more southern in its composition. Two Boll Weevils, Breaux and Hefner, already served with the group. Speaker O'Neill appointed some more conservative Democrats, Bevill, Tauzin, Watkins, and Fowler in an effort to paper over differences within the party. Yet, the Speaker could not erase the divisions. Boll Weevils still tried to draw O'Neill away from extreme liberal viewpoints. Similarly, O'Neill attempted to use these individuals as conduits to moderates in the party. Both segments found it impossible to reach an accommodation.

Second, many whips returned to the DSPC even though the caucus officially removed them. Apparently Speaker O'Neill considered participation by whips as beneficial, a means to communicate further with members. It was also believed that they also counted and mobilized legislative support.

Third, the Speaker realized that particularly important chairmen with the DSPC might enable him to coordinate better legislation. On the other hand, O'Neill also had to confront a considerably larger and more diverse group. That is to say, cohesion weakened. Democratic lieutenants exposed themselves as rivals; Wright, Rostenkowski, and Jones tried to steal the limelight. Furthermore, political maneuvering only served to fuel dissension within Democratic

ranks. Several members of the DSPC actually joined the president during the budget battle. This fact must have reinforced in the mind of the Speaker the supreme commitment of representative to constituent. Thus, O'Neill's attempt to use an ideologically diverse DSPC as an aid in consensus building and communications basically backfired.

Finally, in the policy area, the DSPC encountered formidable opposition from other committees. The budget remained the number one topic in the Ninety-seventh Congress. Subsequently, the Committee on the Budget deemed itself a more legitimate leadership organization than the DSPC. Moreover, the Committee on Party Effectiveness tried to assume the role of policy initiator for the caucus.

To put it kindly, the DSPC performed as a jack-of-all-trades during the past two years; others could say that it aimlessly searched for a suitable role. The DSPC served as a club where members sarcastically refined their debating skills. As part of the majority, the group also fulfilled clerical duties like scheduling bills under suspension. Yet the House Administration Committee could have executed this task. In some instances, Speaker O'Neill used the DSPC as a sounding board, and hoped that new ideas would coincide with his own. He brought many guest speakers to Capitol Hill in an effort to educate congressmen. But did briefings help O'Neill pass legislation? Of course, the gatherings might have been interesting -- to college interns.

Despite misgivings, credit should be given. The staff of the DSPC kept O'Neill abreast of the work of committees while groping toward a unified Democratic approach. Behind the scenes, the qualified among these employees often doubled as the eyes and ears of the Speaker.

In the future, the DSPC as the Committee on Committees might not reassign Gramm to the Budget Committee. If the group made him a sacrificial lamb, a more unified party would not necessarily result. The punishment of Gramm would serve as just an extreme example. The Speaker also knows that taking on the whole southern tier with the Democratic majority in the Ninety-seventh Congress would translate into his immediate dismissal. A considerable number of northern, liberal Democrats elected to the next Congress would upset this balance.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The Democratic Party in the House has been weak for decades. Speakers John W. McCormack and Carl Albert did not inherit Rayburn's gift for leadership. O'Neill came into office with a desire to serve as a forceful leader like Rayburn, but the post-reform House resisted strong leadership. As a result of changes, a multitude of subcommittee chairmen held power instead of a few committee chairmen. Since influence was dispersed a Democratic Caucus also vied with the Speaker for the role of party leader. The list of additional command centers encompassed almost every congressional group. Therein lay the problem; reforms had decentralized power in the House to the extreme. The question remained whether if anyone could pick up the pieces. It is my conclusion that the Speaker has been unable to consolidate the fragmented power structure in the House.

According to a popular conception, the Speaker ostensibly led his party. Yet the House, unlike the executive branch, did not religiously implement his orders. Speakers, at least recent ones, have not been rulers. They served at the will of the membership that elected them. Furthermore, the Speaker did not always dramatically influence legislation. Possibly he did not want to jeopardize his

prestige. The issue perhaps could have simply not warranted the extra effort. Quite feasibly, the Speaker trusted the ability of democratic process to produce the best kind of result.

When I questioned key Democrats, many could not answer a why the caucus reorganized the DSPC. From the records, one could conclude that this organization should have induced a more cohesive party. An increase in Democratic unity took place from the Ninety-second Congress, the pre-DSPC era, to subsequent Congresses. But just because one event occurred after another, it did not necessarily mean that the first caused the second. Too many other possible explanations existed for the change in voting behavior such as a trend independent of the DSPC.

If one wanted to find the beginnings of greater party responsibility, the DSPC would not serve as the place to look. During the last two Congresses, representatives on the DSPC averaged almost exactly equal to their peers in party unity scores (see Table 13). In fact, members on the DSPC voted significantly higher than the Democratic norm for only two out of the five last Congresses. One could attribute lower party scores among congressmen on the DSPC to its unstable composition. Over half of the representatives, thirteen in the Ninety-fourth Congress, had no previous experience. In the next two Congresses, this number decreased to nine and then ten new members. Finally, the total returned to thirteen for the Ninety-seventh Congress.

TABLE 13

PARTY UNITY SCORES

	<u>DSPC</u>	<u>Democratic</u> <u>Party</u>
Ninety-first Congress ^a	--	59.5%
Ninety-second Congress ^a	--	59.5
Ninety-third Congress ^b	66%	65.5
Ninety-fourth Congress ^c	73	68
Ninety-fifth Congress ^d	72	67.5
Ninety-sixth Congress ^e	64.5	65.5
Ninety-seventh Congress ^f	66%	66%

Source: Congressional Quarterly Almanac; (a) 1975, p. 984; (b) 1973, pp. 960-1. Scores based on the Ninety-second Congress with Speaker Albert and freshman Owens omitted (c) 1975, pp. 984-5. Scores based on the Ninety-third Congress with Speaker Albert and freshmen Brodhead and D'Amours omitted; (d) 1976, pp. 1000-1. Scores based on the Ninety-fourth Congress with Speaker O'Neill and freshman Kostmayer omitted; (e) 1978, pp. 32-3c. Scores based on Ninety-fifth Congress with Speaker O'Neill and freshman Grey omitted; (f) 1979, p. 32-3c, 1980 pp. 33-4c. Scores based on the Ninety-sixth Congress with Speaker O'Neill and freshman Tauzin omitted.

Therefore, one could assume that the inconsistent and often temperamental membership hurt the chances for the DSPC to fashion a coherent organizational strategy and to instill greater party responsibility.

Several state delegations and the congressional black caucus consistently also obtained through appointment and automatic seats greater representation than originally allotted them. Despite elaborate procedures for participation, the DSPC then exhibited a distorted geographic harmony. Subsequently, coalitions formed that detracted from and restrained Speakers Albert and O'Neill.

Breakdown In the Legislative Process

On issues like social security the leadership could not afford a defeat because of the link to Democratic core constituencies. The DSPC thus attempted to marshal support on salient bills for the Speaker. Nevertheless, most observers and participants thought that resolutions from the DSPC, which tried to enforce the significance of certain programs, had little effect on the House floor. A majority of liberals complained that policy statements were too watered down. An entirely different problem surfaced particularly under a Democratic president. O'Neill considered too many bills crucial party votes; eventually, members grew selectively deaf to his pleas. Quite the opposite situation occurred in the Ninety-seventh Congress. The Speaker deliberately kept controversial issues away from the DSPC.

Perhaps he finally realized that enunciations from them made only a marginal difference. The staff of the DSPC instead kept bills that O'Neill found desirable reasonably well on track.

The DSPC formed legislation in its early years. Under the aegis of Speaker Albert, this work could take place with committee chairmen. A dearth of true prerogatives and the number of influential subcommittee chairmen handcuffed Speaker O'Neill. In their quest to distribute power in the House, liberals chastised the seniority system, but they evidently failed to think of viable alternatives.

The DSPC tried to recapture some influence for the Speaker. Naturally, standing committees fought to maintain the role of policy initiators. For example, the Budget Committee revealed itself as a rival to the DSPC. In addition, the Committee on Party Effectiveness adopted the Democratic proposals based on the recent House task force reports as its own. Then the caucus chairman claimed the credit, not the Speaker.

Committee Assignments

Still, the House has generally not been able to enact many of its own programs. When restructured in 1973, the DSPC could have broken this condrundrum since new individuals gathered with the Speaker. But no obligation existed to go along. Above all, the Speaker controlled no real reward for the party faithful until the caucus solidified

the Committee on Committees in his hands. After this acquisition, Albert and later O'Neill seemingly held a tangible means to build favors with respect to future legislation.

Nonetheless, authority over committee assignments did not significantly increase the power of Speaker. First, Albert and O'Neill chose not to use this tool extensively. The same comment could not be made of the remaining members of the DSPC. Not surprisingly, congressmen expressed a desire to join the group long before the organizational caucus. They obviously wanted to dole out seats and to collect political support. In particular, Majority Leader Wright furthered his candidacy to serve as the next Speaker through service on the DSPC. Representatives from Texas traditionally received coveted seats largely through the efforts of James C. Wright Jr.; probably they would repay him in the eventual election to succeed O'Neill. Members other than the Speaker have thus benefited from service on the Committee on Committees.

Second, any utility derived from committee nominations has been limited because to the caucus managed the last word on designees. Hence the Speaker could not guarantee seats as "plums." The rank and file have held this dividend ever since the upheaval instigated predominately by the Freshmen Class of 1974. Finally, one could argue reasonably well that activities in the district have been more lucrative at the polls than most committee assignments. In this case, the

Speaker could not have profited from control of the Committee on Committees even if he used it more.

This structure did open up the major committees to greater potential influence by the Speaker. Yet democratic ideologues wanted to take the advance one step further. They insisted that party members receiving prestigious assignments doggedly pursue Democratic policies or else the key seats would be allotted to loyalists.

The Speaker could not realistically grant this dream. To begin with, O'Neill and the Committee on Committees have regularly deprived precious few representatives of chosen seats, especially those who accumulated any relative degree of seniority. Moreover, the Speaker avoided seeking revenge on individuals for desertions on the House floor because he did not want to alienate them further. Thus, Phil Gramm acted as a fulcrum for conservative elements but remained on the Budget Committee. He argued that voting the wishes of his district were more important than Democratic unity. Ultimately, this reasoning could weaken any amount of party devotion.

The number of strong supporters of the Speaker on certain committees actually might have decreased since 1975. From observing a dwindling camp of northerners on the Commerce Committee, one could still not deduce that the Speaker failed to make his intentions known on the Committee on Committees. Such a conclusion would be ridiculously biased and totally unwarranted due to Albert and O'Neill's

strategic use of the caucus to name the few truly enthusiastic party loyalists to carefully designed committees. But a question posed an extremely difficult test: did the proteges remain steadfast to their mentors? One would need the following information in order to find the answer: the legislation of each committee, the stand of the Speaker, and who he believed would help or hurt. Various staff of Speaker O'Neill swore without making exact calculations that Democratic loyalty increased on the whole since the transfer of the committee assignment task. I would probably agree, even though no one could be sure how much of a change has taken place.

Recently, committee nominations have survived as the main role of the DSPC. Speaker O'Neill ignored the production of resolutions and extensive policy making, earlier occupations, for substantially the same reason - - frustration. Despite these setbacks, the Speaker slightly expanded the province of the DSPC. For the Carter administration, O'Neill introduced what basically appeared as "rap" sessions. Under President Reagan, he sought advice from Democrats out of power.

Possibly, Speaker O'Neill did not recognize an effective route for the DSPC to take. The organization often ran this way: O'Neill would call five meetings within the span of just twelve days, filling up the calendars of members. Then all of a sudden, the Speaker did not schedule a conference for almost two months. When O'Neill thought that

the DSPC could make a contribution, he consulted the representatives. Nevertheless, such irregularity did not allow effectiveness to be acquired or reciprocity to be established with other committees.

Hope for of the DSPC as a type of grounding system may have overlooked a sober fact: nearly every Democrat considered himself sole possessor of worthwhile knowledge. The Speaker evaluated and sometimes consumed outside points of view because of the DSPC. But the group failed to quench completely a desire by the rank and file to be constantly consulted. By parleying in a committee normally denied to other members, certain congressmen gave themselves a false sense of aggrandizement. That is to say, the DSPC simply assured a handful of not necessarily distinguished congressmen a forum where they could vent angers.

The DSPC naturally heard various opinions en route to the lofty objective of consensus. Communication has been its foundation. In addition, creative programs could have resulted from these discussions had the two term service limitation not forced such high turnover. A lack of permanence induced many participants not to provide the DSPC with undivided attention. Then, the restriction did not satisfy the needs of congressmen's egos. Moreover, reserved seats did not appease minorities. On controversial issues like the budget, blacks as well as southern Democrats still voted against the Speaker.

The format of the DSPC maintained a steady rotation of conservative and liberal members, inherent factions within the party. This interchange guarded against the establishment of one ideological position. But the consequence, rather than producing a compromise position all would agree to, instead displeased both factions. Boll Weevils deplored the positions adopted as too radical while left wing representatives complained that the measures did not go far enough. Nevertheless, liberals just achieved party sanctions for wayward voting congressmen. Speaker O'Neill realized that the DSPC could not logically crack the whip because the Democratic party included almost the whole spectrum of political philosophy. Thus, O'Neill would not punish conservative Democrats. Of course, a large number of liberals in the Ninety-eighth Congress could instruct and the Committee on Committees did not renominate some Boll Weevils.

A Stronger DSPC, Speaker, and Party?

Undoubtedly, Speaker O'Neill would have preferred an active DSPC. Because its director, S. Ariel Weiss, also served as the chief man on issues for the Speaker, the organization could have been better coordinated into overall legislative strategy. Yet by entering the DSPC in select fights, O'Neill rather chose to escape many defeats. While this dodged occurred, Democrats have had no real center to rally around.

A wide base of inclusion made anyone wing of the party a defacto minority. Furthermore, the Democrats have resided in power so long that the idea of working together became ingrained even though no such tradition has been inherited. The party could have increased the chance of function as a unit through several options. First, the leadership could order Boll Weevils to vote the party line. This move would nonetheless backfire and force the membership as a whole into the minority. Obviously, Speakers regarded this move as impudent. Second, the leadership could name more appointees, rather than elected members, to the DSPC. This change would give the Speaker more control over its composition; he could then better adapt the DSPC to party purposes.

Third, the Democratic Caucus could surrender its veto power over committee assignments. At the expense of democratization, the Speaker would gain greater control over the party. Fourth, an informal group chosen by the Speaker could fill committee seats. Instead of the present Committee on Committees, a cliquish formation would take away from state delegations and other groups the ability to cut deals; in turn, O'Neill would receive greater potential influence.

Actually, the membership of a truly executive body for the caucus should have consisted of the three top party officials and all the committee chairmen. If the Speaker regained the power over the appointment of chairmen, all the better for him. In the present decentralized House, one

could never seriously consider this change. Nonetheless, a revamped DSPC would become a more suitable arbitration and planning board for the rank and file. The recent structure contained too many politically insignificant personalities.

Finally, the Speaker could retain only the most qualified staff from the DSPC. By working with just efficient employees, he would preside more effectively. At least, quarters for the DSPC in the Capitol building would provide it with greater status. Anyone not associated with behind-the-scenes politics on the Hill might find this suggestion ridiculous. Unfortunately, it has been a true phenomenon. A DSPC situated nearer the House floor would painlessly gain greater prestige.

After O'Neill retires, the DSPC could become dormant once again. The next Speaker could also abolish the group. If the point is not obvious by now, the DSPC does not have a bright future since it failed to substantially strengthen Speaker O'Neill or Speaker Albert. Reforms in the 1970s lodged control with members themselves. They enjoyed authority and would not readily return it to the Speaker. O'Neill did exhibit some power, but not that of a broker. That is to say, influence dispersed has not been regained through the this assembly.

A number of explanations persisted. For instance, the DSPC neither provided enough internal rewards to go along nor did it alter the relationship between constituent and

member. The temper of the Democratic caucus and the president, as well as the size of the conservative coalition, the DSPC could influence little these and other variables that effected the ability of a Speaker to shepherd programs through the House. Any thoughts of consistent solidarity directed through the Speaker and these representatives just grasped at thin air.

The DSPC perhaps unknowingly attempted to abide by party government. It has not been the key due to members who would not inordinately relinquish their freedom in order to pass more programs. No one argued for the imposition of a binding rule or the return to an autocratic Speaker. But greater flexibility in the scheduling of bills, the development of party positions, and even power over committee assignments could not overcome the lack of party responsibility in the House. Regardless of comparisons to the British model, an important aspect party government theory possibly has been misdirected since the DSPC could not nullify political realities just outlined. Unquestionably the assembly has done more than some congressmen anticipated, but less than some political scientists might have expected.

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VITA

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Born in Leominster, Massachusetts, July 25, 1959. Graduated from Milton Academy in Milton, Massachusetts, June 1974, B.A. University of Rochester, May 1981. M.A. candidate, College of William and Mary, 1981-82. The course requirements for this degree have been completed, and the thesis: The Democratic Steering and Policy Committee and the Speaker is herewith presented.