

Speeches and messages: 1973-1974: Speech before the National Association of Credit Managers

Senator Daniel K. Inouye Papers

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news from

Senator DANIEL K. INOUE

topic: Speech before the National Association of Credit Managers

date: May 17, 1974

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Each crisis--real or imagined--has spawned a new demand for executive authority. All too frequently, the legislature has been a willing handmaiden in that transfer of authority to the hands of the strong executive.

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And so the Executive office evolved into an institution which I do not believe our Founding Fathers envisioned. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., has aptly described this new institution of the 20th century as the "Imperial Presidency." Although this institution has been long in development, very few voices were raised against it. With the publicity of Watergate, Americans now have the opportunity to take some action. The time is ripe for such action. If the evolution of executive dominance is permitted to progress unchecked, the result may be a benevolent dictatorship--dressed with democratic frills such as elections. Please note that elections are held in the Soviet Union, Greece, Korea, Formosa, etc.

We have sought to limit the authority of the Chief Executive through enactment of the Budget Reform Act and we have sought to establish in the Congress the capability for over-all budget review. We remain pitifully weak, however, as Congress continues to operate with 19th-century habits and technology that are at least a quarter of a century behind the times--while the executive has a battery of experts and a battery of computers at its instant call.

As a member of the Appropriations Committee, I chair the Foreign Operations Subcommittee, supervising an annual budget of some \$7 billion. For that purpose, I have the services of a single staff man, wh

serves as my sole investigator to oversee those worldwide expenditures. Likewise, the minority also has one man.

To oversee appropriations for the Department of Defense, the Senate Appropriations Committee has some seven staff members trying to scrutinize an \$87 billion appropriation.

Sitting opposite from us at any Appropriations Committee hearing is a battery of experts armed with the latest in sophisticated computer capability. It is an unequal contest at best. Meantime, the Senate has but one computer. It is, of course, used to compute the Senate payroll and to maintain the Senators' mailing lists.

This is a problem which the Congress has recognized and tried to do something about.

Our major effort was the recently-enacted War Powers Act, which was passed despite a Presidential veto. While I voted in favor of that Act it is my belief that it did not solve our basic problem. In granting the President the power to intervene with American troops for 60 days--which can then be extended for another 30 upon his certification of danger to our troops should they seek to withdraw--we have given Congressional approval to a presidential authority exceeding by far that envisioned by our Founding Fathers.

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We may have started this year, spurred by the growing realization of the needs to redress the imbalance of power between the executive and legislative branches. But it is, at best, an unequal battle. I frankly do not believe that the Congress, as presently constituted, even with the spur of Watergate, will be able to achieve the necessary goal ~~of a~~.

As we approach the two hundredth anniversary of our birth as a free nation, it is certainly an appropriate time to reflect, in depth, on the works of Jefferson, Madison, Adams, Franklin, and others. It may be time to consider once again going to the people. It may be time to reconvene a constitutional convention in order to consider again the proper allocation of powers to the government. Our freedom and our nation's future may depend on it.