

Generation gap

Freshman congressman tells of new kind of split

Ask the man on the street which two parties are represented in Congress and he'll answer, "Republican and Democrat."

Ask U.S. Rep. Carl Pursell, a freshman Republican from Plymouth, and he'll say, "Old and young."

"A new breed of 40 congressmen was elected in 1974 and amplified in '78. They're challenging the committee chairmen and leaders," Pursell told a recent convention of the Michigan Community Colleges Association in Traverse City.

"The YOUNG people are having an opportunity to speak up against the old-timers, who are used to controlling everything, to having their hands on everything," Pursell said.

"(Speaker) Tip O'Neill is having a frustrating time with the mavericks.

The group of 40 is challenging the leadership daily. Some are on the labor and education committee," said Pursell, who has that committee assignment himself.

Pursell blistered one committee chairman practice of getting proxies from absent members. When 13 members were absent from one meeting, the chairman pulled 13 proxies out of his coat pocket and voted all of them "yes" on his bill.

"That ought to be challenged in court," Pursell said.

While most of the new breed are Democrats because they have a better than 2-1 majority in Congress, Pursell said both parties are represented. "It's rare to see votes that are unanimous in one party any more. I personally am delighted with it."

SINCE THE WATERGATE scandal which toppled the Nixon Administration, Congress has achieved "a new independence from the White House," he observed.

"Traditionally, the executive has always presented the budget, and Congress has reacted. We've been in a defensive position.

"Today, any subject offered by the president is immediately in full debate, and alternatives are offered. You see this every day. Frankly, that's very refreshing.

"Some of the old guard members can't accept that.

"In the next 10 to 15 years, the legislative branch will emerge as dominant."

Pursell served two years on the

Wayne County Board of Commissioners and six in the Michigan Senate before winning the 2d Congressional District seat in 1976 by a cliff-hanging 330 votes.

This year he is virtually assured of reelection because a lone Democratic challenger failed to get enough signatures on his nominating petitions.

A WEAK Congress, however, still reacts to crises and presidential proposals. Pursell had an idea on how to correct that:

"The leadership should set aside a block of time to discuss a total problem and make a national policy."

"I would even support a four-year term (for house members) so that we could concentrate on problems."

More grants seen for junior colleges

There's no pot of gold - in Washington for community colleges, but there is one great opportunity for public service and funds, said John E. Tirrell, former president of Oakland Community College.

"Community colleges can be a delivery system for federal research and development information," Tirrell told a recent convention of the Michigan Community Colleges Association.

Since 1973 Tirrell has been vice-president for governmental affairs for the

American Association of Community and Junior Colleges. That makes him chief lobbyist for the two-year colleges and part of a group of seven educational interests that meets twice a week to look after their interests in Congress and the bureaucracy.

"OUR TAX money is used for about \$20 billion in research and development," Tirrell said. "Most of that has gone into space travel and how to blow up more Vietnamese at higher cost."

Increasingly, however, R&D money is going into such urban civilian needs as purifying water and cleaning the air.

Tirrell predicted the next Congress will tackle the problem of how to spread the results of that research to the general public. He suggested that community colleges—not as numerous as high schools but more widespread than four-year colleges?—and universities—as an ideal system.

The Southeast Michigan League of

Community Colleges last year got a start in that service area by setting up an information retrieval service on energy conservation. Business and industry can consult a librarian at member colleges for a printout on all available research in a particular area.

Schoolcraft and Wayne County community colleges are members of that league. Ironically, Tirrell's former bailiwick, OCC, is not.

IN GENERAL, however, Tirrell was less than bullish on the idea of community colleges obtaining vast funds of federal dollars.

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