

TRUE Representation

BY MICHAEL PHILLIPS

If you were on trial for your life, would you want your jurors to be ELECTED?

On both the local and federal levels of government I have become distressed at our governmental structure. On the local level I did two high quality surveys (scientific sample-thorough interviewing) of San Franciscan's opinions and found that on important issues the citizens differed significantly from their so-called governmental "representatives." The citizens of San Francisco (since the first survey in 1973) have been in favor of legal prostitution, open access to pornography for adults and complete freedom for homosexual relations between adults. The ratio has been 3 to 1 for the majority and yet the city government and its enforcement agents proceed merrily in the opposite direction. This reminded me that on the federal level the same prevails in many areas: on gun control, those favoring strong gun control was 789 to 22 in 1964 and still appears to be at that level, however, nothing has been done.

Then it struck me that I have a concept of REPRESENTATIVE that is distinctly different than the one built into our government. My view is the statistical one that a "representative" sample reflects all of the properties of population in certain stable mathematical proportions, and the "best" sample is a random sample where each member of the population has an equal chance of being selected.

This absolutely does not correspond with the U.S. Congress which is almost entirely white males who are old, mainly lawyers, fairly well educated, and have the distinct personal characteristics of "politicians." Most "politicians" I know have personal ambition, general insensitivity to human relations, a lack of tenderness and many other negative qualities not common in the general population. Of course, statistical theory of "representativeness" is only thirty years old, while the concept of representation built into the government was codified in a Constitution two hundred years ago with the prevailing ideas of that time.

I would like to suggest that a scientifically random selection of legislators would be a significantly better system of government. In accordance with some previously determined eligibility criteria, citizens would be enumerated (people in prison or under indictment, in mental institutions, or under some age level might not be included). From this enumerated population there would be periodic selections of samples to be the legislators. This is of course the concept behind juries and grand juries, but not the practice. There would be no exclusions from the sample once it was drawn. If someone were selected and paid at the current rate of legislators but didn't wish to serve he or she would still be paid and therefore serving in a statistical concept. Of course, the legislation would be "representative" under this plan because it would include drunks, lawyers, geniuses, blacks, women, homosexuals and prostitutes in proportion to their occurrence in the total population.

Robert Gnaizda has suggested that to make this politically acceptable part of the current Congressional structure be kept; the Senate would be elected as it is currently and the House would be selected randomly. Using the Senate this way would appear to maintain States' powers, but over time the power of the House would become apparent and its ability to generate new leaders so obvious that it would replace the Senate entirely. ■