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## Book Review

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# Gramm-Rudman: culmination of 100 years of institutional subversion

by Susan Kokinda

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### **Constitutional Reform and Effective Government**

James L. Sundquist  
Brookings Institution, 1986  
262 pp., paperbound.

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"It is desirable to point out the great possibilities that are embraced in a system under which action upon the floor of the legislative chamber may be determined by an outside organization which has no legal status and which is subject to no control other than that which it is willing to impose on itself."—*Principles of Legislative Organization*, William F. Willoughby, 1934, Brookings Institution.

To anyone who believes that the passage of the Gramm-Rudman legislation came about as the result of some fiscal imperative of the mid-1980s, the preceding quote should suggest that its motivations are somewhat older. The author of the quote, Willoughby, and his sponsor, the Brookings Institution, are outlets for a tradition which includes Woodrow Wilson, John Stuart Mill, and Jeremy Bentham, and whose purpose is the destruction of the representative, republican forms of American government. Since no later than 1885, when Prof. Woodrow Wilson penned *Congressional Government*,—one of the first articulated demands to revise the U.S. constitution along British parliamentary lines—the international financial oligarchy has been engaged in an open and explicit campaign to eliminate the spending powers of the Congress and the presidency, and with that elimination, to nullify the Constitution and its mandate to provide for the general welfare and the national defense. In most recent years, the Trilateral Commission and the Council on Foreign Relations have written studies decrying the inefficiencies of our democratic republic.

Now, some 52 years after Willoughby's *Principles* was

published, the Brookings Institution is back in the act. In January 1986, it brought forth *Constitutional Reform and Effective Government* by James L. Sundquist. The book should be seen as the operating manual of the Eastern Liberal Establishment's newest organization of constitution-wreckers—the Committee on the Constitutional System (CCS). Sundquist himself, is a member of it, as are former Treasury Secretary Douglas Dillon and former Carter White House lawyer Lloyd Cutler. Cutler is infamous for his 1981 *Foreign Affairs* article calling for junking the U.S. Constitution. The CCS has succeeded in placing Lloyd Cutler in the position of legal counsel for the U.S. Comptroller General, the man charged with implementing Gramm-Rudman. The immediate tactical objective of the CCS is to direct the Gramm-Rudman madness into a full-blown constitutional crisis. As the director of CCS recently boasted, "Gramm-Rudman will cause such a political and constitutional crisis, it will force people to see the need for constitutional reform."

Sundquist's book is to give direction to that effort. The theme of *Constitutional Reform and Effective Government* is that the American constitutional system, especially the doctrine of separation of powers, produces deadlock and disaster. In his concluding chapter, Sundquist warns of the danger "that the division of power among the President, the Senate and the House . . . will render it impossible to achieve what Budget Director David Stockman [or the International Monetary Fund—SJK] called 'fiscal sanity.'" Douglas Dillon casts it similarly in an earlier chapter where he is quoted saying, "Our governmental problems do not lie with the quality or character of our elected representatives [sic]. Rather they lie with a system which promotes divisiveness and makes it difficult, if not impossible, to develop truly national policies." The careful reader should substitute the words "supranational policies" for "national policies" in that sentence, and he will have an adequate summary of Sundquist's point. In short, the American system is not very good at delivering International Monetary Fund-dictated austerity to its citizens.

Our founding fathers were wise enough to construct a system which would resist, however imperfectly, the imposition of alien policies, injurious to the republic. The American system was developed to foster agro-industrial growth and technological progress. Even today, with the many fools, traitors, and cowards holding elected office, the institutions of our republic still balk at becoming the agencies for supranationally delivered demands for austerity. So, today, the President resists Congress's demands to emasculate the defense budget. And the institution of Congress, if not individual congressmen, has raggedly resisted the level of domestic cuts which will murder its constituents. Gramm-Rudman is the first step to killing that constitutional resistance. Willoughby would be quite approving of Gramm-Rudman as the application of his "system under which action upon the floor of the legislative chamber may be determined by an outside organization"—an IMF-programmed computer in the Office of Management and Budget.

But Gramm-Rudman is to be only the first stage, and a chaotic one, at that. Out of the chaos, the CCS hopes for more orderly "reform." Sundquist urges wholesale constitutional changes which will completely eliminate the defense mechanisms built into our current system. He proposes a series of changes which would transform the United States into a parliamentary system, ruled by party government and party-based policies. His reforms include:

- a "team ticket," in which voters would not vote for individuals but for a national party slate;
- special elections to reconstitute a failed government, in which a government could be brought down by an episodic whim of a media-manipulated electorate;
- the ability for congressmen to hold Cabinet positions, thus reducing tension between the two branches;
- changes in various party rules and congressional procedures to facilitate party government and cooperation between the branches.

These changes would have several, related, effects. They would sever the immediate, concrete relationship between the voter and his representatives, and would establish a voter-to-party relationship instead. This would thereby create elected officials more dependent on party-dictate from above, than on constituency pressure from below. Once the International Monetary Fund and the Trilateral Commission got control of party institutions, as they now have in both the Democratic and Republican parties, they could efficiently control national policy on behalf of supranational policy.

As timely as Sundquist's book is, however, it breaks no new ground. This territory was covered quite nicely by Woodrow Wilson in 1885, in his ode to the British parliamentary government, entitled *Congressional Government: A Study in American Politics*. Wilson argued that "the federal government lacks strength because its powers are divided . . . lacks efficiency because its responsibility is indistinct and its action without competent direction."

Unlike Sundquist, however, who veils his complaints

behind vague notions of fiscal sanity and efficiency, Wilson is direct about what he is trying to destroy—the American system of economics. He is particularly exercised about the creation of a congressional Committee on Rivers and Harbors and other congressional committees which insist on satisfying their constituents' demands for economic progress. After detailing the process of nation-building, which was being funded by the Congress, Wilson finally rails, "They [the Congress] have thus culminated with the culmination of the protective tariff; and the so-called 'American System' of protective tariffs and internal improvements has thus at last attained to its perfect work."

Anticipating Willoughby, Wilson then suggests that these untoward proclivities toward economic growth can be checked by the creation of a commission, outside of the legislature to prepare its policies. Citing an idea put forth by British imperial agent, hedonist, and arch-enemy of the American republic, John Stuart Mill, Wilson declares that the Congress should confine itself "to what is for a numerous assembly manifestly the much more useful and proper function of debating and revising plans prepared beforehand for its consideration by a commission of skilled men, old in political practice and in legislative habit, whose official life is apart from its own."

Beside his extra-constitutional "council of old men," which bears some resemblance to the Venetian Council of Ten, Wilson devotes a large part of his book to the efficiencies of a parliamentary system of party government.

Barely 30 years later, Wilson was able to, briefly, put some of his theories into effect. During his first year as President, Wilson, and his Wall Street allies, were able to convince the Democrats in the Congress to accept a parliamentary-style form of party discipline, known as King Caucus. In other words, once the Democratic Party voted to support or oppose an issue, *all* Democrats were bound to vote the party line, no matter what the feelings of their constituents. It was because of this party discipline, and only because of it, that the Federal Reserve Act of 1913, was rammed through the Congress! Numbers of southern and western Democratic senators would have voted against the bill and defeated it, had it not been for party discipline. Reacting to the creation of the Federal Reserve system, one senator stated that party discipline was "the most unfortunate feature of legislation under this administration." Were it not for that, he continued "Neither would Congress have bowed the knee and surrendered to monied interests of the country the ownership and control of the reserve banks with enormous power that goes with them."

Congress has again "bowed the knee and surrendered to monied interests of the country" in the passage of the Gramm-Rudman amendment, which places debt payment to those interests above and before the nation's defense and well-being. But Sundquist, and before him, Willoughby, Wilson, and John Stuart Mill, have given fair warning—the total destruction of the American constitution and the American system is the ultimate goal.