EVERYONE knows that the federal budget has grown rapidly since 1930. From 1930 to 1947, however, state budgets have grown even faster than the federal government's civil budget. The growth attests to the burgeoning of state government functions and the ever-increasing role of state legislatures.

Pennsylvania is a case in point. In the past sixty years appropriations by the legislature increased some sixtyfold. Total spending rose from $16.7 million at the turn of the century (12 months), to $80.8 million in 1931-1932 (12 months), to almost a billion dollars in 1961-1962 (13 months). Needless to say, state government in Pennsylvania is big business. During the same period of time the number of legislative enactments more than doubled. In the 1901-1903 biennium a total of 611 bills were duly processed and passed by the legislature, with the number rising to 801 in 1931-1933 and to 1,535 in 1961-1963. This fantastic growth, typical of many state governments, has led political scientists to focus increasing attention on state legislatures.

As is the case with any large "business enterprise," a board of directors or trustees is necessary to implement the desires of the stockholders—in this case the electorate—and to provide the revenues and regulations under which the officers of the enterprise—the governor and his appointees—may direct the corporation. As "the only voice through which the sovereign people can effectively express its will in the form of written law," the legislature fulfills the function of trustees in the business of government.

*Dr. Farmerie, formerly registrar of Lebanon Valley College, is assistant professor of education and psychology at Westminster College, New Wilmington.

1 Joseph P. Harris, "Modernizing the Legislatures," National Municipal Review, XXXVI (March, 1947), 142.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid., p. 814.
5 Ibid., p. 1154.
The study of state legislatures has taken two general approaches: (1) study of the legislative system as an institution and (2) study of the individual legislator as a person. This writer is of the school which believes that before an adequate understanding of the legislative process is possible, it is necessary to be knowledgeable about the kinds of men and women who comprise the membership of a legislature and the influence of a person's background upon his behavior. While no extensive discourse in defense of this thesis will be undertaken, the following might be cited in support of this stand. First, modern psychological and sociological research have substantiated the influence of a political decision-maker's personal life experiences on his behavior and decisions. Second, investigation of a legislator's social and economic background is of profound importance in an era like the present when the balance of social forces is undergoing extensive modification. Third, knowledge of a legislator's background could be helpful in understanding the predilections of political decision-makers.

A study of socio-economic characteristics of legislators could encompass either a few or an almost endless number of characteristics. As perhaps the most adequate determiner of social status, occupation should be an item included in such a study. The contention that age mellows a person and may tend to make him defensive rather than creative and conservative rather than progressive dictates the inclusion of age. In addition to age and occupation, education and legislative experience are included as major portions of this investigation. According to Samuel Orth, pioneer of such legislative studies, these facets of a person's background enable us to "roughly gauge a person's fitness for the ordinary duties of public life."

The balance of power in the General Assembly favors the "rural-small town" elements of Pennsylvania. Moreover, the existence of this condition in days gone by has been documented by other studies. In view of this fact, and the recent controversy

---

over the Supreme Court’s “one man, one vote” edict, some ques-
tion might be raised over the wisdom of excluding this segment
of the picture from the current investigation. However, this situa-
tion has resulted from constitutional prescript. The Pennsylvania
House of Representatives is not, strictly speaking, selected on
the basis of population, but rather is regarded as a chamber of
municipal representation.10

Under the Pennsylvania Constitution of 1776 membership in
the House of Representatives was based entirely upon incorporated
local units.11 Under the most recent Constitution, that of 1873,
the method of determining representation was not changed sig-
ificantly. “The members of the House of Representatives shall
be apportioned among the several counties . . . but each county
shall have at least one representative. . . . Every city containing
a population equal to a ratio shall elect separately its portion of
representatives.”12

The political affiliation of the legislators is omitted because the
Pennsylvania legislature has been almost completely dominated by
the Republican party during the span of time under consideration.
As of this writing (1965), twenty-seven of the thirty-three legis-
latures convening since 1900 were controlled by the Republicans,
one was controlled by the Democrats, and during five sessions
control was split with each party in control of one house. Penn-
sylvania has had only three Democratic Governors since 1900,
and during five of the six legislative bienniums in which these
Governors held office, the legislature was not controlled by their
party.

Other factors, such as religion, military service, and member-
ship in fraternal and professional associations, were omitted be-
cause the data as supplied by the legislators was incomplete.

This study is an endeavor to describe the legislative personnel
of Pennsylvania over the past sixty years. The data was gleaned
from issues of the Pennsylvania Manual at ten-year intervals and
is presented in an attempt to illustrate historical trends as well as
to supply data that may (1) provide some notion of legislative
qualification, (2) be illustrative of overall social and economic

10 Charlesworth, “The Legislature of Pennsylvania.”
11 Constitution of 1776, Article II, Section 17.
12 Constitution of 1873, Article II, Section 17.
change since 1900, and (3) provide a clue as to whether the legislature is an instrument of social change or obstruction.

The Pennsylvania legislature, officially known as the General Assembly, consists of a 50-member Senate and a 210-member House of Representatives. The Representatives are elected for two-year terms and the Senators for four-year terms, the terms of the latter being staggered.

The reader should bear in mind that the data may be tainted at the source, since it was obtained from autobiographies which may somewhat exaggerate the legislator's status and position.

**Occupation**

As might be expected, "lawyers: the high priests of American politics" have since the turn of the century formed the largest single occupational group in the legislature. Although their numbers have waxed and waned throughout the period, barristers have continuously retained their numerical superiority. Donald R. Matthews has suggested that this situation is due to the high prestige of their calling and the accompanying training.\(^{14}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>1901</th>
<th>1911</th>
<th>1921</th>
<th>1931</th>
<th>1941</th>
<th>1951</th>
<th>1961</th>
<th>1963</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>25.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other professions</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merchant or proprietor</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real estate-insurance</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturer</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other semi-professional</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical and sales</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others and unknown</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>31.1</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>29.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>258</td>
<td>258</td>
<td>258</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While lawyers have held their own in the legislature, the number of merchants or proprietors and farmers has decreased

---


\(^{14}\) Ibid., pp. 30-31.
by about sixty-five percent (Table I). Meanwhile, a rising star on the legislative scene has been the insurance-real estate group, whose numbers have increased by almost eighty percent since 1901.

The fact that lawyers predominate in the Pennsylvania legislature is by no means a startling revelation, for the condition holds true in most other politically oriented legislative bodies. A more important question is, do lawyers really control the legislature? During the 1933-1934 session of the Pennsylvania General Assembly, twenty-five percent of the bills introduced by lawyers were enacted, in comparison with twenty-three percent of those introduced by other legislators. During the 1935-1936 session, the figure was fifteen per cent for both groups.15 If these two legislative sessions are typical, it might then be assumed that lawyers, by virtue of their numerical superiority, play an important role, but they do not appear to be the dominating force.

| TABLE II |
| **Legislators' Social Status, 1901-1963** |
| **(PERCENT)** |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>1901</th>
<th>1911</th>
<th>1921</th>
<th>1931</th>
<th>1941</th>
<th>1951</th>
<th>1961</th>
<th>1963</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Upper and middle class</td>
<td>77.9</td>
<td>79.0</td>
<td>75.5</td>
<td>68.2</td>
<td>66.5</td>
<td>63.4</td>
<td>72.4</td>
<td>71.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower middle</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>15.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper lower</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower lower</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housewife*</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Unranked socially and not included in Bergel's original classification.

Sociologists have demonstrated the existence of a hierarchy of occupations with respect to social status. Semi-skilled and unskilled occupations are at the bottom of the prestige scale, with professional and semi-professional occupations at the top. Egon Ernest Bergel, a general adherent of this theory, used the occupational classification system of the United States Bureau of the Census to devise a scheme of ranking occupational groups by social class.16 Table II illustrates the findings of this study when

his system of taxonomy is used. It may be readily observed that the "conservative" upper- and upper-middle-class occupational groups have held sway in the General Assembly since 1900. The upper-class domination of the legislature is similar to the power structure operating in society. It is these same groups that play the dominant role in our other social institutions. In spite of this upper-class control, it should be noted that the findings of one study showed Pennsylvania ranked high when compared with other states in the number of laborers elected to the legislature.\(^{37}\)

**Experience**

Reports of nationwide studies\(^{38}\) have revealed that the typical legislature consists of mostly re-elected members. This also has been true in Pennsylvania. For the years depicted, new members have not been in the majority since 1911 (Table III).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chamber</th>
<th>1901</th>
<th>1911</th>
<th>1921</th>
<th>1931</th>
<th>1941</th>
<th>1951</th>
<th>1961</th>
<th>1963</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Senate</td>
<td>58.0</td>
<td>42.0</td>
<td>42.0</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>46.0</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>26.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House</td>
<td>54.7</td>
<td>54.1</td>
<td>46.6</td>
<td>27.4</td>
<td>38.9</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>18.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined</td>
<td>55.4</td>
<td>51.8</td>
<td>45.5</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>41.1</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>18.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 1901 the typical Pennsylvania legislator could have been classified as a rank amateur because of his inexperience in both state and local government. At that time some fifty percent were serving their first elected term, whereas by 1963 only about twenty percent were serving their first elected term. As is the case with other facets of this investigation, the plateaus occurred when an election resulted in a change in the political balance of power.


PENNSYLVANIA LEGISLATORS, 1901-1963

TABLE IV
MEDIAN YEARS OF SERVICE, 1901-1963

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chamber</th>
<th>1901</th>
<th>1911</th>
<th>1921</th>
<th>1931</th>
<th>1941</th>
<th>1951</th>
<th>1961</th>
<th>1963</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Senate</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The decrease in the number of first-term legislators is reflected in the five-year increase in median years of legislative service (Table IV) and in the increasing age of the legislators. In 1901 the average member of both the House and the Senate had not completed two full terms of service, while in 1963 the typical member of the House was serving his fourth term and his colleague in the Senate was serving his third term.

This increase in legislative experience corresponds with the transition that has been occurring over the past seventy years in the House of Representatives of the United States Congress. T. Richard Witmer reports that during the 53rd and 54th Congresses (1893-1897) the ratio of members elected for their first or second term to those elected for their tenth term and beyond was 26 to 1. At the end of the period, the 87th and 88th Congresses (1961-1965), the ratio had declined to 1.6 to 1. In this seventy-year span of time the average length of service for the Representatives increased from 2.7 terms (53rd Congress) to 5.7 terms (88th Congress). The consequences of this trend, as listed by Witmer, which seem appropriate to the current discourse are as follows: (1) the rise of a new profession, the professional legislator (a calling above and beyond that of a professional politician); (2) the focusing of power in the hands of a group of very senior legislators; (3) the reinforcing effect of the trend on the seniority system; and, (4) the increase in prestige and power of the legislative branch in relation to the executive.¹⁹

State Senators have consistently been more experienced in legislative procedures than their colleagues in the House. This is due to at least two factors: (1) the longer term of Senators and (2) the likelihood that the Senator served for a period in the House of Representatives.

Writing in 1938, William T. R. Fox observed that members of both houses of the Pennsylvania legislature were becoming more ancient and that almost all the legislators had been between the ages of twenty-five and seventy. Moreover, he noted that none had acknowledged being over seventy-five during the period included in his investigation, 1890-1935. An examination of similar data for the past quarter century reveals that the first of his observations still held validity in 1963 (Table V). Except for a decline in 1941, the aging trend among legislators has continued on an upward spiral. The second observation is also substantially valid, for about ninety-five percent remain between the ages of twenty-five and seventy. Most of the legislators have been in the prime of life, having benefited from forty to sixty years of living experience, but since the appearance of Fox’s study the number of older persons in the legislature has been increasing. During each of the legislative sessions since 1940 that are included in this investigation, there have been about ten persons over the age of seventy holding a seat in the General Assembly. More recently, a number of eighty-year-olds have held office, including one august Senator of eighty-seven.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chamber</th>
<th>1901</th>
<th>1911</th>
<th>1921</th>
<th>1931</th>
<th>1941</th>
<th>1951</th>
<th>1961</th>
<th>1963</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Senate</td>
<td>49.3</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>52.3</td>
<td>53.9</td>
<td>51.0</td>
<td>53.5</td>
<td>54.4</td>
<td>54.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House</td>
<td>45.3</td>
<td>46.5</td>
<td>46.6</td>
<td>51.1</td>
<td>46.7</td>
<td>50.1</td>
<td>51.4</td>
<td>50.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined</td>
<td>46.0</td>
<td>47.1</td>
<td>47.7</td>
<td>51.6</td>
<td>47.5</td>
<td>50.9</td>
<td>52.0</td>
<td>51.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the average, the age of those serving in the legislature has increased by five years since the turn of the century. The plateaus in the aging trend were in 1941, when the control of the House of Representatives reverted to the Democrats while the Republican Governor Arthur James was in office, and in 1963 when the Republicans under a relatively new face on the political scene, William W. Scranton, recaptured both houses of the General Assembly and the Governor’s chair. Throughout the period the

"Fox, "Legislative Personnel in Pennsylvania," p. 34."
average Senator has been slightly older than his counterpart in the House.

Among the factors that account for the general increase in the age of the legislators are (1) the longer period of education or training necessary to equip one to compete successfully in the modern business and social world, (2) the increasing tendency of the electorate to re-elect the same legislators, as illustrated by the decreasing proportion of legislators being elected for the first time (see Table III), (3) the increase in the average years of service (see Table IV), and (4) the increase in man’s life expectancy.

**Education**

The level of formal education for state legislators is superior to that of the general population of the state. With emphasis on higher learning at an all-time high, census figures show that only 14.8 percent of the state’s population over twenty-five years of age has attended or graduated from a higher institution. In comparison, 58.6 percent of the membership of the 1963 legislature had attended college, and 32.5 percent at the turn of the century. Granted, a large proportion of the “higher” institutions operating in America around 1900 that identified themselves as colleges or universities were really concerned with secondary education; nevertheless, even an education in those institutions were markedly superior to that of the average elector of the same period.

**TABLE VI**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chamber</th>
<th>1901</th>
<th>1911</th>
<th>1921</th>
<th>1931</th>
<th>1941</th>
<th>1951</th>
<th>1961</th>
<th>1963</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Senate</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>42.0</td>
<td>54.0</td>
<td>58.0</td>
<td>66.0</td>
<td>70.0</td>
<td>78.0</td>
<td>78.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>44.9</td>
<td>42.3</td>
<td>54.8</td>
<td>47.1</td>
<td>49.0</td>
<td>53.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined</td>
<td>32.5</td>
<td>31.5</td>
<td>46.7</td>
<td>45.3</td>
<td>57.0</td>
<td>51.6</td>
<td>54.6</td>
<td>58.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Examination of the data presented in Table VI shows an almost unbroken pattern of increase in the proportion of legislators hav-

---

ing attended college. Also to be noted is the fact that, for each of the ten-year periods illustrated, the proportion of Senators who had the experience of college attendance exceeded the proportion of Representatives.

**Women in the Legislature**

According to recent census figures, women outnumber men in Pennsylvania. Women also control more than half the wealth in this country. They have been emigrating from their homes in ever-increasing numbers to play important roles in the life of the nation.

In spite of these factors, women have not played an important role as legislative architects in Pennsylvania or, for that matter, anywhere in the United States. From 1900 to 1962 only one of the 448 persons (0.002 percent) who served in the Senate was of the distaff side. Women have fared somewhat better in the House of Representatives, where 36 of the 2,977 persons (0.01 percent) were females. In the 1963-1964 session of the General Assembly none of the Senators and only twelve of the members of the House were females. The number in the House may be an omen of things to come, however, for during this single session the number of women in the legislature equalled one-third of the total for the preceding sixty years.

The picture presented for Pennsylvania is typical of legislatures throughout the nation. United States Senator Maurine Neuberger found that of the 7,234 state legislators serving in 1950, only 235 (three percent) were women. A similar analysis for 1963 revealed that the pattern had undergone only a slight change. There were a total of 7,833 state legislators, but only 313 (four percent) were women. This pattern of over-representation of men was also present in the 88th Congress, where only 2.4 percent of the members were women.
DISCUSSION

The typical Pennsylvania legislator (1963) might be described as: a college educated male, 51.4 years of age, who represents the "rural-small town" ethos of the state; a person whose gainful employment is in the business or professional fields; and a Republican who has served in the legislature 8.2 years. The typical Senator is four years older, has served in the legislature three years longer though for one less term, and is more likely to have attended college than his counterpart in the House.

What trends are evident in the composition of the legislature, and have there been similar changes in society? Based on the data presented it would appear that the changes which have occurred among the occupants of the halls of the General Assembly were consistent with the changes in the character of the state's population.

Since the turn of the century there has been a decrease of some six percent in the number of legislators classified by occupation as upper status. Most of this decline is the result of a decrease in the number of farm owners or managers and the number of merchants and proprietors in the legislature. This change seems to be consistent with changes among the populace. There has been a constant decline in the farm population resulting from the advance of farm technology and urbanization. The number of proprietors and merchants in the legislature declined from 1901 to 1921, remained relatively stable through 1951, then dropped to an all-time low by 1963. Perhaps the decline during the last period is reflective of the sharp increase in business failures throughout the nation. In this twelve-year period the rate of failure almost doubled, rising from 31 to 56 failures per 10,000 business concerns.28

The typical legislator has aged 5.4 years since 1901. Generally, this follows the pattern for the state's population. In 1900 the median age for the state was about twenty-three,29 and in 1960 it was about thirty-two,30 an increase of some nine years.

It is generally assumed that occupation is the most accurate guide to social status. If this be the case, we might be forced to conclude that the legislature has been controlled by the "conservative" upper-class elements of our society, for it has been dominated by the business and professional groups.

The educational attainment of the legislators has increased at a rate similar to that of the state's population over twenty-five years of age. In 1940 (the first year the Bureau of the Census compiled data on years of school attendance) only 8.1 percent of all Pennsylvanians in this age group had attended a collegiate institution.\(^{21}\) In two decades the figure rose to 14.8 percent.\(^{22}\) Meanwhile the change among the legislators was from 32.5 percent to 58.6 percent.

Educational attainment does not have universal acceptance as an index of class status: however, the fact remains that the typical recent legislator in this study would have received his college training during the Great Depression, a period when college attendance was most assuredly a rich man's luxury. This lends some credibility to the contention that educational attainment is a measure of social status. Attention should also be directed to the fact that the legislature has been almost continually dominated by the Republican party, a party often alleged to be the party of the "conservative" upper-class elements in our society.

These as well as certain other factors might lead to the inference that the legislature has been a tool of the "conservative" upper classes to control society, maintain their exalted positions, and nurture their vested interests. However, such a conclusion is not necessarily valid. In the past many of those seeking public office were motivated by the same altruistic impulses which cause Peace Corps volunteers, social workers, educators, and similar practitioners to serve mankind for other than pecuniary reasons. However, because of an enactment by the 1965 session of the legislature this factor may soon have less weight. Commencing with the 1967 session of the General Assembly, Pennsylvania legislators will be among the highest paid in the nation.


They will draw an annual salary of $7,200 in addition to a yearly expense account of $4,800.

Control of the General Assembly by business and professional people, college-educated persons, Republicans, and males may or may not be justifiable. According to a study by Julian L. Woodward and Elmo Roper these classes of people are more active in politics than farmers or laborers, persons of sub-collegiate background, Democrats, or women. Perhaps this is ample justification for the existing composition of the legislature. But by the same token it may also be that the social structure of our society has influenced the opportunity for political activity and that the prevailing legislative structure is unsatisfactory.

Careful analysis would probably show that farmers, laborers, professionals, and other groups do not all vote to protect the vested interests of their own groups. Although the legislators’ voting habits may not always be in tune with the pulse beat of the populace, there is some evidence to indicate that they conscientiously represent their constituents without regard to their own concept of the relative merit of various legislative proposals.

It is evident that the legislature does not consist of a proportional number of all the diverse elements of the society it serves. But then it is not the function of a legislator to be an emissary of all the various conflicting elements within his constituency, but rather, it is his function to foster the welfare of his district within the larger context of the state as a whole.

The existing socio-economic structure may be one of the flaws in an admittedly imperfect political system, but the alternatives to our legislative system are infinitely worse. With all its inadequacies, the state legislature “offers a better opportunity for minority opinion, and more closely approximates a cross section of the state’s population which is capable of being represented than does any other agency of state government.”

---