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Congressional Influence On Foreign Policy Discussed by Rep. Stratton

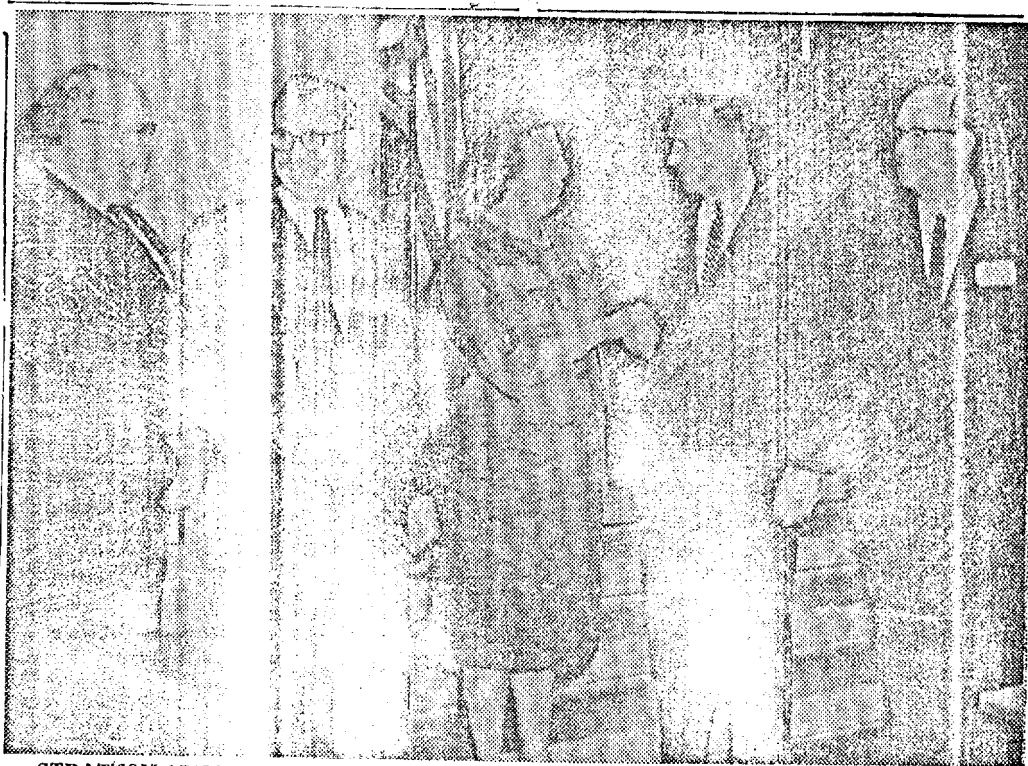
SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHERS HEAR CONGRESSMAN

By BILL SMITH

U. S. foreign policy, although supposedly the prerogative of the executive branch of our government, is very definitely subject to powerful Congressional influence, stated a member of that Congress here Saturday. Speaking before the Ninth Annual Conference of Social Studies Teachers at Cortland College, Congressman Samuel S. Stratton, 35th District representative, added that its influence is not always for the good.

"... For all the great help which Congress can give and has given towards the development of a constructive foreign policy, especially in terms of heavy appropriations for military and economic assistance abroad, Congress is always under strong temptation to do things or say things that could seriously jeopardize effective foreign policy actions," he said.

Quick answers and "pat" solutions to world crisis, as sometimes offered from that Congress, just don't exist, he continued. "All major world problems, when you get up close and get all the facts, turn out to be a whole lot more complex than they sometimes seem to be in the newspapers—whether in Berlin, Cuba, Viet Nam or Latin America. The solution that gets the biggest headlines or the loudest after-dinner applause, may also create risks or hazards that are totally unacceptable."



STRATTON SPEAKS—Rep. Samuel S. Stratton is greeted by Dr. Margaret T. Halligan, professor of European history at Cortland College and chairman of the Ninth Annual Conference for Social Studies Teachers held at the college Saturday. Addressing a group

of more than 100 teachers from around the state, Stratton spoke on "The Impact of Congress on Our Foreign Policy." Left to right are Dr. Ralph Brown, professor of American history and dinner chairman, Prof. Thomas Davis, guest speaker on Latin America, Dr. Halligan, Rep. Stratton,

and Prof. C. Vincent Confer, guest speaker on France. Seated at the head table in addition were Dr. Joseph Mack, Dr. George McDermott, Dr. Donald Stewart, Dr. Gilbert Cahill, Dr. Victor Bahou, (field representative for Stratton), and Dr. Robert Clark. (Cortland Photo Service)

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Send the Marines

Aiming a barb at one such "solution", Stratton commented, "Sending in the Marines to turn on the water at Guantanamo may sound good when the man who makes that proposal bears no responsibility for the consequences of following it through. But sending in an admiral instead of turning the water off may turn out to be a whole lot more simple and more sensible."

Basic U. S. foreign policy has not changed much since the start of the second World War, continued Stratton, and has been characterized by strong bi-partisan support.

"With few isolated exceptions, we have had a basically bi-partisan foreign policy ever since 1941, made possible because of broad bi-partisan Congressional support that believed in consulting Congressional leaders of both parties not just on the crash landings but at the take-offs as well."

He compared the current situation with Woodrow Wilson's failure to gain Senate ratification of the League of Nations

following World War I, and credited today's bi-partisanship in foreign policy to the late Secretary of War in World War II, Henry L. Stimson, the late Senator Arthur S. Vandenburg of Michigan, and President Lyndon B. Johnson during the eight years he served as Senate majority leader under President Eisenhower.

"It is one of those strange ironies of history," Stratton told his audience of teachers, "that the man who best symbolizes this bi-partisanship today, Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr., the Republican who is in charge of our policy in the politically supercharged area of Viet Nam, is the grandson of the man of the same name whose bitter opposition led to the defeat of Wilson's 1919 dream."

Diverse Policy

Although today's foreign policy is much more diverse, the broad objectives are still much the same as then, and have been largely influenced by the "close connection" between foreign policy and military policy, it noted Stratton.

"Since '41, our foreign policy has been very largely determined by our military commitments around the world," he further declared, "You cannot understand foreign policy without understanding these military commitments."

Citing as an example the current situation in Vietnam, Stratton noted that "the real deciding decisions, other than those made by the President, are being made by Secretary McNamara," and he added that the National Security Council, is coordinating the military and diplomatic segments, and the CIA have strong influences on foreign policy.

Consequently, there has been a tendency on the part of Congress to "duck" the ultimate responsibility by leaving the decisions up to the President, said Stratton.

Foreign policy also suffers because of the attitude toward foreign aid both in the Congress and "back home", said the speaker.

Foreign Aid

He termed as a "misapprehension" the idea that foreign aid is one area where you can "cut" without hurting the economy. He emphasized that much of the money spent on foreign aid is used by the receiving nation to buy American-made goods.

"This is a fact which is still not realized by people," declared Stratton, and he cited the Auburn, N. Y., American Locomotive Company's predominately foreign sales record as an example close to home.

He also called the view that foreign aid can now be stopped "unrealistic".

Stratton predicted that "unless we want to give the communists a free hand in strategic areas all around the globe, economic and military foreign aid is going to be with us for a long, long time. We are in a 'long twilight struggle' as President Kennedy put it."

"There are no easy solutions," he reminded his audience. In Latin America we have run into a situation where we are accused of interfering in those countries' internal affairs; we have tried to put the "strings" on their aid, but "it has not turned out to be as simple as we thought."

In Vietnam, too, "we see a difficult situation which cannot be solved quickly."

"... Though victory will not come swiftly or easily, we are still making slow progress, Stratton contended. "Take the Cuban missile crisis of October, 1962. I am sure this will prove to be, once the history books are written, one of the great turning points of history, the high water mark, so to speak, of the cold war."

Cooling Tensions

"Once the Russians knew we meant to use our superior nuclear power, not just talk about it, they backed down fast. And ever since that time, in case you haven't happened to notice, it, we have been slowly, gradually cooling off some of the tensions of the cold war."

"... Just remember all the fuss that was kicked up by some people eager for newspaper headlines a little more than a year ago over the question of how many thousands of Russian troops were in Cuba. Isn't it just a bit amusing to realize that today what we are worrying most about is not that more Russians are moving into Cuba, but that the last Russian soldiers are on the point of moving out and leaving those anti-aircraft missiles in the hands of trigger-happy Cubans!"

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