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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
BUREAU OF
INTER-AMERICAN AFFAIRS
AUG 11 1968

FROM : AmEmbassy Office BRASILIA

RS/AN
ANALYSIS BRANCH

DATE: August 2, 1968

SUBJECT : Chamber of Deputies Attempts to Put Its House in Order

REF :

1. Congress' powers were curtailed by the 1967 Constitution. Although this is the primary cause for the Congress' failure to perform an active role as law-maker a contributing factor has been the inadequate and antiquated internal regulations and administrative structure of the Chamber of Deputies itself. During the first 1968 congressional session attempts were made by the Chamber to put its own house in order to enable it to better carry out its legislative function. In his speech of June 30 which closed the congressional session, José BONIFACIO (ARENA-Minas Gerais), President of the Chamber of Deputies, emphasized three areas where progress had been made: re-writing of the Chamber's internal regulations; work on new regulations for special investigative committees (CPIs); and modernizing the administrative structure of the Chamber.

2. Internal Regulations. The Chamber is still operating under the internal regulations (Regimento Interno) that were approved on January 22, 1964. These regulations bear little relation to the present two party composition of the Chamber or the Chamber's responsibilities as defined by the Constitution. New regulations have been written and are scheduled for presentation to the Chamber during the next session of Congress. Among other subjects, the new regulations will provide much needed discipline for the processing of legislation. Many more bills go into the hopper than are voted on by the Chamber -- 900 bills were introduced in the 1967 session and 90 approved; 595 were introduced in the first regular session of 1968 and 102 voted on. Since all legislation

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goes initially to the Constitution and Justice Committee a bill's fate often hinges on which committee member is named to be the bill's rapporteur. Several months ago Arlindo KUNSLER (ARENA-Rio Grande do Sul) submitted a bill -- which still languishes in the hands of its rapporteur -- designed to permit more effective use of funds allocated to the Ministry of Education. A month later Julia STEINBRUCH (MDB-State of Rio) submitted an almost identical bill which has already been reported out of the Constitution and Justice Committee and received favorable publicity. In discussing his bill with an Embassy officer Kunsler said that not only had a good deal of his own time and effort been cribbed by an opposition deputy but now the MDB will get the credit for an ARENA idea in the field of educational reform simply because of bureaucratic delays.

3. Regulation of Special Investigative Committees (CPI). As if to make up for its decreased legislative role the Chamber has increased its activity in investigating national problems by establishing special committees (CPIs) on a wide range of subjects -- an activity that has severely strained the limited resources of the Chamber. By late May the situation had reached the point where 17 CPIs were in operation, two more were awaiting installation, and another 15 had been formally requested and were pending the naming of members by the Chamber Directorate. The CPIs tend to focus on subjects with a high publicity quotient and while they generally are the source of press headlines they seldom produce results that are translated into legislation. Resources and time devoted to work on the CPIs could be more effectively utilized by the permanent committees that are the keys to the effective processing of legislation. A resolution to control the formation of CPIs has been prepared and hopefully will be approved in the next regular session of Congress.

4. Administrative Reform. During the last congressional session steps were taken to modernize the administrative structure of the Chamber of Deputies in collaboration with a team of technicians of the Getulio Vargas Foundation. The Chamber's present staff and procedures are woefully inadequate. Senator CARVALHO PINTO (ARENA-São Paulo) recently told Embassy officers that there was not one qualified economist on the technical staff of the entire Congress. The average deputy has neither office space nor secretarial assistance. The permanent committees are understaffed. (The Chamber's prestigious Foreign Relations Committee has one secretary and two staff assistants, and both the latter are students at the University of Brasília who work only part time.) As a result, the burden for writing reports on legislation falls squarely on the individual congressman designated as rapporteur. On technical legislation calling for detailed research this results in considerable delay -- the Geneva Conventions on the High Seas were received by the Congress in March 1967 but not reported out of the Chamber's Foreign Relations Committee until April 1968.

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