Louisiana has not redistricted since 1912, even though today its largest Congressional district has almost twice the population of its smallest. California, on the other hand, redistricted in 1952 because it had to arrange to elect 7 additional Representatives. But did California apportion its new districts according to respective numbers? Not at all! Its smallest district has less than half the population of its largest (See Table Page 6).

Years ago the English coined the term "rotten borough" to identify an area which contained few voters but retained the privilege of sending a member to Parliament.

Today, in the United States, our so-called system of representative government is riddled with rotten boroughs. Almost all of the states are dominated by legislators who come from rotten borough districts; they subject the majority in the states to decisions imposed by representatives of the minority. When these state legislators in turn set up the Federal Congressional districts within their own states, it is no wonder that they feel no moral responsibility to establish them on the basis of "respective numbers."

Even in the House of Representatives of the United States, the minority can outvote the majority of the American people.

In the 82nd Congress, for example, the House cut $145 million from the recommended appropriation for foreign military aid by a vote of 172 to 167. But if each Congressman had cast his vote in proportion to the population in his district, this action would have been defeated. Those favoring the cut represented 62½ million persons; those opposing it, over 65 million.

The system of rotten borough districts brings other evils too. Suspicion and distrust are engendered and may ultimately undermine respect for Government when over-privileged representation is given to minority groups at the expense of a majority which remains under-represented.

The Constitutional Compromise

Unlike the United States Senate—where the Constitution provides that each state shall have equal voice and vote regardless of population—representation in the House was planned to reflect the popular will.

This arrangement was a compromise which followed one of the nation's most bitter political debates.

The act of forming a new federal government required that each of the original 13 states relinquish some of its "sovereign" powers to the new government of the United States. Because of this loss of sovereignty, the view prevailed that each state should be represented as an equal in one of the two chambers of the new Federal Congress.

When our Constitution was drafted, however, this "compromise" seemed far more reasonable than it does today. In 1790 the first national Census revealed a nation of less than 4 million, mostly engaged in agriculture. Philadelphia was the largest city with 42,000 inhabitants; 95 percent of the people lived in the countryside, only 5 percent in cities and towns of over 2,500 persons. . . . The difference in population between the largest and smallest states—Virginia and Delaware—was only 14 to 1.

But today the situation is reversed. In 1950 nearly two-thirds of the population (64 percent) lived in urban areas. Half of all Americans were found in cities of over 10,000. In only 18 states, mostly in the south and west, were there more rural citizens than city folks.

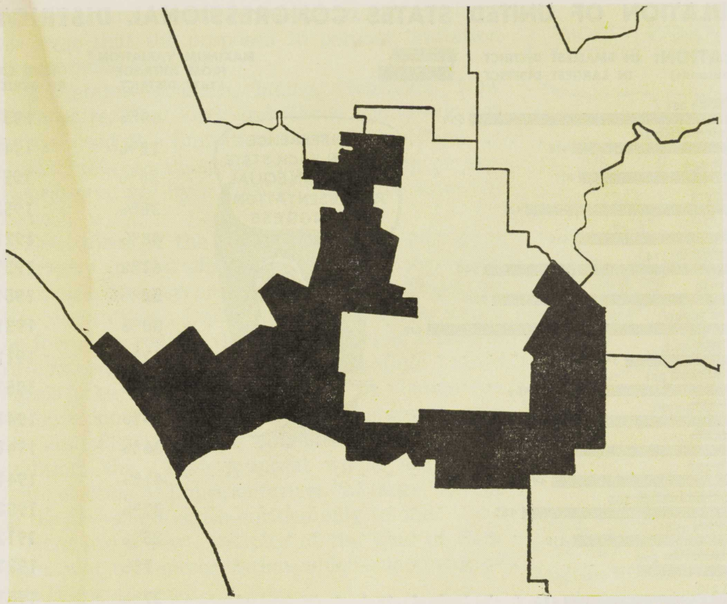
In 1950 our most populous state (New York with almost 15 million persons), contained 92 times more people than our smallest state (Nevada with 160,000). As a consequence the vote of 92 citizens of New York, as expressed through Senators Ives and Lehman, is equal to the vote of one citizen of Nevada, as expressed by Senators McCarran and Malone. (Surely it can't be argued that Nevada is entitled to such outrageous over-representation because it sacrificed its "sovereignty" to become a state. Like most of the 48 states, it lost no sovereign rights when statehood was conferred upon it.)

Today the 13 least populated states have less than half of the population of New York. Yet, in the United States Senate, they have 26 votes, compared to two from New York.

When the founding fathers wrote the Constitution, they could not anticipate that their compromise, which gave two Senate seats to every state, would ultimately result in the gross inequality in representation which exists today. But when they wrote the rules, setting up the House of Representatives, it was clear that they intended to establish equal representation based upon respective numbers. While the language of the Constitution itself has been responsible for the emergence of so many rotten borough senatorial seats, neither the language nor the spirit of the Constitution sanctions the rotten borough system in the House.

Why then do the state legislatures establish Federal Congressional Districts which over-represent the few in so many cases, and penalize the many in others?

The answer is not to be found by identifying only one of the two major parties as the sinner. Rotten borough districts exist alike in Republican



Economic Outlook, CIO.

IN BLACK ON THE ABOVE MAP is the outline of the new 26th Congressional district in Los Angeles, the most heavily populated in California. This district has been carved out to produce an overwhelming Democratic district. By this process a Republican victory in a majority of the 12 Congressional districts in Los Angeles was made more secure.

Michigan and South Dakota and Democratic Texas and Georgia.

Underlying this evil is the fear of change. Present Representatives fear that fairer redistricting may undermine their "safe" Congressional seats. Political parties fear that changes in the size of districts may undermine the party majority. Vested interests and pressure groups fear that new and "uncontrollable" people may win office, if the population of the districts is more equally divided.

Enemies of representative government even seek to stir up farmer-labor discord on this subject. Admitting that city people are generally under-represented by the rotten borough system, they propagandize that any change will lead to city dominance over government and the neglect of rural interests.

This dangerous doctrine of representation based on "class" has no place in the American system. Members of Congress are elected to represent *all the people* and to write laws affecting the entire nation.

The record clearly shows that many members of the House of Representatives from large city areas regularly support measures to advance the welfare of rural Americans. The record also shows that certain other Representatives, from both urban and rural districts, often join together to oppose the interests of both the city and the countryside.

This issue is no personal or party matter. It cannot properly be viewed as a conflict between any individuals or groups. It is a moral and patriotic issue; it challenges the sincerity of our belief in the principles of the Constitution of the United States.

The Celler Amendment —A Partial Answer

How then may unrepresentative Congressional districting be ended?

Part of the answer can be found in the Constitution itself! Article I, Section 4 as written more than 175 years ago says:

"The times, places and manner of holding elections for Senators and Representatives shall be prescribed in each state by the legislature thereof; *but the Congress may at any time by law make or alter such regulations,* except as to the places of choosing Senators."

This Constitutional language gives Congress itself an opportunity to act. Furthermore the widespread failure of the states to district on the basis of "respective numbers" creates an obligation for Congressional action in accord with the spirit and language of the Constitution.

Congressman Celler of New York has introduced a bill in the present Congress (H. R. 6428) which offers a practical solution to the problem.

Here is what the Celler proposal would do: It provides that Congress shall rule that the population of *no* Congressional district shall vary more than 15 percent above or below the average which would exist if the population of all Congressional districts in the state were divided equally. Representatives elected from districts exceeding the 15 percent limitation would not be seated.

Today 36 states elect one or more Representatives from districts that exceed the proposed maximum 15 percent population variation. Of the 371 Representatives elected by these states,