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ENTITLED PERSONALITY AND POWER IN THE SPEAKERSHIP

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PERSONALITY AND POWER IN THE SPEAKERSHIP

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The purpose of this thesis is to demonstrate that the office of the Speaker of the House of Representatives has not been constant throughout time. The Speakership has evolved with changes in society, in government, and in history. At times this evolution has created a more powerful Speakership, while at other instances the Speaker's power has been reduced. In either case, the influence and importance of the office has depended upon the strength and personality of the man who occupied the Chair of the House of Representatives.

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INTRODUCTION

"If men were angels, no government would be necessary." James Madison authored these everlasting words and today, as in years gone by, government is what keeps our democracy intact. The Congress, in particular, has become the engine of that democracy. It has become a place where ordinary mortals go about the business of compromise and remains a reminder that people of a republic are supposed to do their own business.¹

Capitol Hill lies one mile east of the Potomac River in Washington, D.C. and it is the working ground for the United States Congress. Over ten thousand men and women have served there and have created millions of pages worth of conflict and compromise. In fact, it is because of the people that have demonstrated their views and efforts on Capitol Hill that it is now considered the closest thing to a national temple. Thomas Jefferson mirrored this idea when he declared Capitol Hill "the great commanding theater of this nation ... the place where laws are made."

Inside the walls of that great structure, commonly referred to as the "Hill", the Congress is divided into the Senate and the House of Representatives. The Senate has always been the smaller of the two and throughout time has acquired the image of being the more elite branch. The House of Representatives, on the other hand, has been the branch with the greater number of members and has often been used as a stepping stone on the way to the Senate. The House, however, has been the more

interesting of the two branches, for that is where the tenacious battles over policy and leadership have taken place.

Whether or not the Founding Fathers predicted the struggles that were to take place in the House of Representatives is unknown. Fortunately, they did create an office of leadership to preside over the large body of legislators. They called this office the Speakership and gave the man who held that honor the title of Speaker of the House. The office was developed as an instrumentality of government and the idea was inherited by the people through their Colonial Assemblies.

As for the selection and qualification of the Speaker of the House, Article 1, Section 2 of the Constitution states that "the House of Representatives shall choose their own Speaker." The Founding Fathers were silent, however, in naming the manner in which the presiding officer would be chosen. In fact, the selection of the man to fill the Chair was not even confined to membership. It appears the Founding Fathers spent little time on the question of the Speakership and therefore left little enlightenment to their descendants. Nevertheless, the legislative body has since filled in these selection details, and has never turned outside the House to find their Speaker.

Over time certain unwritten customs have developed in regards to the selection of the Speaker. For instance, length of congressional service has become a large factor used in determining the qualification of a member for the Chair. That was not the case in the early days. Henry Clay and William Pennington were elected to the Speakership on their first appearance in the House. Such an instance would not be tolerated today.

In fact, since 1896 the average length of congressional time served prior to a member becoming Speaker has tripled.² Joseph Cannon did not become Speaker until his thirty-first year in the House. It took Champ Clark sixteen years, Frederick Gillett twenty-seven years, Nicholas Longworth twenty-one years, Samuel Rayburn twenty-eight years, John McCormack thirty-three years, and Carl Albert thirty-four years of congressional service to preclude his seat in the Chair of the House of Representatives.

In addition to seniority, members must have won the confidence and esteem of their own party and the general membership. It has also become a customary practice to elect men who have served as chairmen of important committees or as floor leaders in the House. For example, Samuel Rayburn acted as chairman for the Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce as well as the Democratic Floor Leader before becoming Speaker of the House. John McCormack served as Democratic Floor Leader and Majority Whip for twenty-two years prior to his taking the office of the Speakership.

Another long-standing custom that has evolved through the development of the Speaker of the House has been the tendency to re-elect a Speaker for as long as his party remains in control of the House and he retains his seat in that body. Examples of this custom are Joseph Cannon and Champ Clark. Both remained in the Chair for four consecutive terms until there was a change of party control in the House. Samuel Rayburn demonstrates this tendency also, as he served ten terms as Democratic Speaker of the House. His time in the Speakership was only interrupted twice, and that was due to a Republican-controlled House.

Through the selection process the members of the House of Representatives have consistently aimed their efforts towards choosing an effective leader. This task has often been difficult since the leadership of such an institution is not particularly easy or predictable. For political leadership to be of high quality "it must combine in one man sometimes seemingly conflicting qualities."³ For example, a true effective leader must first have the ability to foresee problems that will arise. He must follow through with proposals for solutions of such problems, plans for achievement of those proposals, support from the majority, and the means to implement his solutions. The conflicting qualities become evident when all the necessary attributes to achieve this process are identified. The leader must possess a sense of history as well as an awareness of the present. He must be able to anticipate possible developments while maintaining his ability to differentiate between critical and less important problems. An effective leader must have the will to face the consequence of decisions to act or not to act. He must have self-discipline to allocate time and the ability to keep in touch with public opinion without being fearful of it. And finally, he must know how to persuade and still feel at home with compromise.⁴

In sum, an effective leader must achieve as quickly as possible capable and efficient solutions for problems which arise. This holds especially true in the House of Representatives where a strong leader must impose order on an institution so large that its natural tendency is towards chaos. An effective leader in the House must make it possible for the House to set objectives and devise ways to achieve them. In addition, he needs to

simultaneously improve the public's image of the legislative body by providing a sense of coherence and direction.⁵

As the need for a leader in the House becomes apparent, it should be made clear that the duties and powers of the Speaker have not always been so evident. Originally the Speaker was to preside over the House, preserve the decorum and order, put questions, and decide all points of order. It was also his job to announce the results of votes and vote in all cases of ballot by the House.⁶ In maintaining the Speaker's original duties three historically assumed functions prevailed. The man in the Chair was to act as presiding officer, the legislative leader of his party in the House, and as a member of the House with the same rights and privileges as other members.

Over time the powers and the duties of the Speaker of the House have been expanded, and at times reduced, to include derivatives of the Constitution, the rules of the House, previous decisions of the Chair, and general parliamentary law. Personalities of the individual men in the Chair have also come to have an influential role in the politics of the Speakership. Particular individuals have been known to influence the timing and direction of changes in the House of Representatives, as well as the procedure and organization of that body. Other individuals have been less successful and unable to master the institution over which they sat. The amount of control and personality allowed into office has been determined by timing and the overall mood of society and the government.

The first twenty years of the Speakership, for instance, were characterized as weak. Frederick Muhlenberg, the first man to hold the title of Speaker of the House in 1789, did little more than that. He sat in the

Chair as a mere moderator, present for the sole purpose of presiding over sessions with calm deliberation and impartial favor. Other early Speakers were not considered actual political or legislative leaders of the House either. They served as mere figureheads while the true legislative leadership and control came from the Chief Executive and his trusted floor lieutenants. These floor leaders and committee chairmen acted as presidential agents. They were appointed by the executive and could be dismissed at the President's pleasure. These agents became key men in the legislative process as they instigated main outlines of party measures and directed which policies evolved, which bills passed, and which programs came before the Congress.

Thomas Jefferson was known for such presidential control over the Congress. His recognized leader in the House was James Madison and his duties were to see that members "voted right." A rigid system like this seemed a far cry from democracy to members of the House, especially when the President insisted upon doing the thinking for the Congress and regulating the actions of its members. In fact, since the Speaker of the House was nothing more than a figurehead, leadership became less an issue concerning seniority or even capability. Instead, the first two decades of the Speakership were filled with men who had not necessarily received a privilege conferred to them by the House of Representatives, rather a gift from the President of the United States.

Executive control did finally decline with Jefferson's retirement. A shift of power to the Congress began a steady period of internal legislative leadership. This power shift was marked by the weakness of Jefferson's

successor, President James Madison, as well as rebellion in the House. In addition, there was the appearance in the House of a prominent group of men known as the War Hawks. These men helped to mark the beginning of a period of strong leaders who aided tremendously in the development of the Speakership. This period, from roughly 1811-1911, possessed men who gave the legislative function a strong sense of direction. As effective Speakers they governed the House and permitted it to enjoy greater prestige than the Senate. They succeeded in heading a great institution, and the majority did so without abusing the power they created. What these men did in the Chair did not just matter for the moment. Their accomplishments outlived them and in the end could only be measured by history. This is true not only because these men were great leaders, but because these men were responsible for the political construction of the Speakership. They possessed talent and organization, which in turn led to an enhanced prestige, dignity, and power for the office of Speaker.

The outstanding men who sat in the Chair of the House of Representatives are a varied group: some short, some tall; some fat, some thin; some Republican, some Democrat. In actuality, they are as different as the parts of the United States they represented. What they do share in common is that all were strong leaders who dominated the House and managed to control it. They stood out from other members in that they "built the necessary coalitions (and) found ways to keep them together..."⁷ In doing so, they used their strength to reshape the form of the representative body they originally entered. Most importantly, and perhaps the largest contributor to their success, is the fact that all of the strong

leaders shared a love for the institution they served. Gerald Ford, in describing the most influential Speakers throughout history, once said, "The kings of the Hill did not always reap obvious rewards, but their contributions were significant nonetheless. By working to insure responsible legislation and an orderly process for creating it, men such as Reed, Cannon, and Longworth strengthened not only the House, but the entire nation."⁸

Though this period of the great developmental Speakers ended in 1911, that was not the end of strong individual Speakers. Able and confident men continued to fill the Chair at times. The difference, however, was that the power of the office had declined and there had been a diffusion of responsibility to committees and their chairmen. This made it difficult for individual personalities to have a recognizable influence, but particular men left their mark on the Chair nonetheless.

The following pages will focus on some of the constructive Speakers who played a key role in the development and evolution of power in the office of the Speakership. By looking at the details and characteristics of their legislative lives it should become clear why and how these men became so powerful and influential in the Chair. The House of Representatives has been created and re-created by the strength and personality of these Speakers and, therefore, they are key to understanding what the institution is and how it works.

HENRY CLAY

Henry Clay was a slender, fair-skinned man from Kentucky. He entered the Senate when he was 30 years old, but soon found that the droning debates lacked the passion and immediacy of those in the House of Representatives. Therefore, when the Twelfth Congress began on November 4, 1811, it was no surprise to find Mr. Clay among the freshman members. What may have come as surprise to him was his elevation to the Speakership on that very same day. Not only was Henry Clay the youngest man to ever become Speaker, he was the only man who had ever been elected to that office on his first day in the House. His election was remarkable as the chamber was filled with members of recognized ability. It was also a protest against the way things has been done in the past. Nevertheless, Mr. Clay was chosen to lead the House because of his acknowledged ability and talent, as well as his popularity among members.

Henry Clay and his fellow War Hawks marked the beginning of a period of congressional ascendancy. This involved a shift in the balance of power from the executive to the legislative branch of government. Mr. Clay challenged the weaknesses of President Madison and in doing so allowed the Speakership to emerge as an office of great power and prestige. He brought a new mood to the Capitol as he became the spokesman for a new nationalism. He was a statesman of conquest and his bold and aggressive manner was reflected in the House as it became assertive in all its endeavors.

The first of Speaker Clay's achievements demonstrated his ability to enlist people in a cause. With the help of other members in the House he pushed the weak President Madison into the War of 1812 with England. Mr. Clay's bold conquests continued as he supported or proposed the early recognition of Greece, the independence of South America, the Missouri Compromise, and the protective tariff. He also worked towards internal improvements and was a strong advocate for national defense. Mr. Clay reached far and wide as he scanned the horizons with his suggested acquisition of Florida and parts of South America.

Henry Clay has been called the first great Speaker of the House. He created customs and precedents that still live on in the House today. One of his most memorable contributions was his use of the party caucus as an apparatus of legislative leadership. For Mr. Clay, the party he represented played a key role in his actions. He used the caucus as a technique of discussion, agreement, and discipline. The power and prestige he carried and constructed in the Chair was used to bring about partisan policies. With his power to appoint committees, Mr. Clay took deliberate steps to put men who thought like him into positions where they could translate their convictions into actions.¹ By appointing War Hawks to key positions his party was able to take full control of the House. He also elevated his party by occasionally manipulating the rules of the House so that any advantages would be thrown in their direction. In this sense Clay was not merely a moderator of the House, but rather a party leader who managed to take control.

Although Mr. Clay could be found comfortably leading the House as Speaker, he never did sacrifice his rights as a member. His purpose was to govern and rule the House from the Chair while simultaneously persuading it from the floor. Mr Clay never failed to cast his vote on any measure and refused to deprive his state of full representation. In fact, the House often went into the Committee of the Whole so that Speaker Clay could express his views from the floor. He entered enthusiastically in debate unlike previous Speakers and demonstrated that it was quite possible to blend the duties of the Chair with the privileges of the floor. In doing so, Mr. Clay established the tradition that a party elevating its leader to the Speakership did not necessarily have to lose his service on the floor of the House.

A recognized key in Henry Clay's success as Speaker was his personality. He was full of heart and fire and possessed a magnetism and warmth that drew people towards him. He liked people and would spend hours and hours conversing with them. One member described this characteristic of Clay's saying, "whomsoever he touched, he drained-he read men instead of books."²

Not only did Mr. Clay read men, but he seemed to dominate them in a sense. This also stemmed from his influential personality, as well as his bold and defiant oratory. When he spoke, even "the impartial observer unconsciously became the admiring partisan."³ With Henry Clay there was a perfect union of voice and character. He spoke to the present...to the person who was willing to hear.⁴ In fact, Mr. Clay even controlled those who weren't aware of his personality. He could calm a rowdy crowd and

force a news reporter to be held spell-bound. Abraham Lincoln described this trance-like ability he used to his advantage: "The reporters forgot their vocation, dropped their pens, and sat enchanted from the beginning to quite to the close. The speech now lives in the memory of few old men, and the enthusiasm with which they cherish their recollection of it is absolutely astonishing."⁵

Many men listened to Henry Clay in his years of wisdom and leadership, and almost just as many loved him. Those who were his friends always applauded him, while those who were his enemies found no clear instances with which to denounce him. Even John C. Calhoun, who opposed Henry Clay in many vicious battles, declared, "I don't like Henry Clay. He is a bad man, an imposter, a creator of wicked schemes. I wouldn't speak to him, but, by God I love him."⁶

Much of this respect and admiration for Mr. Clay evolved from his charm and tact. Such attributes he carried with him always, especially in the Speaker's Chair. This is demonstrated through his views of the office of the Speakership. Clay believed it was the Speaker's job to "carefully guard(ing) the preservation of the permanent laws and rules of the House from being sacrificed to temporary passions, prejudices, and interests."⁷ He also found it his duty to be prompt and impartial in deciding questions of order, to display "patience, good temper, and courtesy" to every member, and to make the best arrangement and distribution of talent of the House for the dispatch of public business. Through Mr. Clay's years in the Chair he maintained that the Speaker "must remain cool and unshaken amidst all storms of debate," carefully preserving the well-being of the House.⁸ This

was a difficult task in his time due to the emergence of strong political passions, an increase in membership in the legislative body, and an essentially unlimited right of debate. Nevertheless, Henry Clay kept control and dignity within the walls of the chamber and gained not only appreciation but also affection in the process.

Overall, Henry Clay was more than an asset to the Chair. He transformed the Speakership from a largely ceremonial office to one of power and prestige. Mr. Clay displayed a spectacular assertion of direction and confidence that pulled the House out of a period of executive dominance. He combined qualities that had never been found in one Speaker before. He was an adored party leader, a brilliant statesman, and a matchless orator. He was swift in decision-making and with his instinctive consciousness, Mr. Clay took the lead naturally and gracefully, as if it was his unquestioned right.

Henry Clay was elected to the Speakership six different times and he served intermittently for more than ten years. Although he voluntarily resigned his seat twice, he was immediately re-elected when he returned to the legislative scene. In fact, between the years of 1811-1825 Henry Clay was regarded as the most powerful man in the land. He was the only man to spend his entire congressional service in the House of Representatives in the Speaker's Chair. Mr. Clay was never met with formidable or serious opposition and frequently he was almost unanimously chosen. This is in direct contrast to the strife and turmoil that prevailed in the elections of which he was not a candidate. In addition, at the close of every Congress he

led, with only one exception, the customary resolution of thanks was extended to him unanimously.

Mr. Clay had indeed created the office of Speaker of the House. Even he realized this as he declined various executive appointments in order to hold on to the power of the Speakership and the pride he felt for his role in its creation. Although Speaker Clay dominated the House at all times, his dominion was considered to be fair and beneficial. He was never called a Czar as he guided the House with calm and judicial deliberation.⁹ Mr. Clay's House stood first in both legislative and procedural performance.

With his commanding intellect, strong will, and pleasing personality, Henry Clay gained complete supremacy of his own party and a ready control of the House. More importantly, however, is the fact that Mr. Clay firmly established the office of the Speakership. Three principles, in particular, were set up through his genius. The first was the increase of the Speaker's parliamentary power. As Mr. Clay used his powers to his full ability he controlled the floor with courage and direction. The second principle involved the retention of the Speaker's personal influence upon the legislative process. Speaker Clay demonstrated this through his motivational debate on the floor and his desire to continue to represent his state and his party. The third sign of Clay's initiative was the establishment of his position to be one of legislative leadership. With both his personality and his love for not only the House of Representatives but also its members, Henry Clay promoted the office of Speaker of the House to a leading, if not the leading, power position in the country.

JAMES G. BLAINE

On March 4, 1869, a man who appeared much like Henry Clay took a seat in the leading Chair of the House of Representatives. His name was James G. Blaine and he possessed a charm and leadership style similar to that which Mr. Clay had so successfully demonstrated. During his three consecutive terms as Speaker, Mr. Blaine took command of the institution over which he presided. Because of his fearlessness, persistence, and aggressive manner, he was elected Speaker after only two years of service in the House. Mr. Blaine seemed a natural for the office as he showed a thorough knowledge of the parliamentary rules of the legislative body. In addition to possessing an understanding of parliamentary matters, James G. Blaine revealed a comprehension of the basic theories behind those rules and therefore had an ability to apply them courageously and quickly.

Mr Blaine entered the Speakership during a time when little more than party management was required to fill the Chair. In fact, he acquired power in a Congress of mediocrity.¹ Nevertheless, Mr. Blaine went beyond the bare minimum and used the Speakership to work his legislative will. He had an entire agenda that he planned to accomplish, and with his marvelous genius for organization and details he worked to promote not only the ideas of his party but also those of his own. For example, when organizing committees and assigning their chairs Speaker Blaine considered each representative's stand on a wide range of issues. This was

done to insure that his party and his personal ambitions would become the controlling force in legislation.

Aside from committee assignments, Mr. Blaine's artful use of the power of recognition played a key role in his leadership. When a member of the House sought recognition from the Chair, Mr. Blaine wanted to know more than just the intentions of that member. He demanded to know the precise reason for which the Representative requested acknowledgement. Many times Mr. Blaine asked to be informed beforehand so that he could be the first to know the purpose. If the purpose did not commend itself to him, the favor or "right" was denied. This often forced members to yield a part of the bill to please the Speaker rather than lose an entire bill by being denied the floor.² Through his development of the power of recognition as a legislative function Mr. Blaine enhanced a vast power of the Speakership that, in turn, enabled him to shape the framing of bills.

Through the use of such legislative tools Mr. Blaine's Speakership was quite political. He was a true partisan and understood the science of politics. Mr. Blaine knew how to operate the machine he had been given the power to run. In doing so, he mastered its principles, laws, and the interdependence of its parts. While in command he manipulated the rules to assist his party. And just when the minority felt that unceremonious treatment had been accorded to them, Mr. Blaine reasserted his personal fairness back into his regime. He did this by disallowing the numerous charges of corruption of many minority leaders to influence his decisions concerning authority and committee assignments.³

James G. Blaine had a style that served him well in the Chair. Although his intelligence and his innate self-assurance played a key role in his success, Mr. Blaine also had a way of drawing people in towards him. Thaddeus Stevens described this as a "magnetic manner."⁴ Blaine was filled with enthusiasm and an electric vitality and his geniality appeared effortless and candid. He had a way of touching men's hearts, for although he was the most partisan man who had yet sat in the Chair, he was very popular with all members on both sides of the chamber. Because he was so likable it was difficult to hold a grudge against Mr. Blaine. This became apparent when he stepped down from the Chair in 1875 and received a wide round of applause and thanks from the large group of men who had served under him.

Mr. James G. Blaine controlled the House and filled the Chair during a difficult time in history. His six years of control were shadowed by a low moral tone that was reflected in the Congress as well as other public offices. The people of the nation were still filled with patriotism left over from the war and had little desire to focus on much else. President Grant proved to be a failure as he was ignorant of politics and a poor judge of men. The Republicans were blamed for the weak executive since they had forced General Grant into that position. At the same time, there existed a carnival of corruption among politicians throughout the country.

Nevertheless, Mr. Blaine entered the office of Speaker of the House with high aspirations. A positive and fearless attitude on his part enabled him to achieve an authority in the House that preserved the Republican party for a time and directed a mediocre group of legislators. He was a

powerful thinker and through his wide range of knowledge Mr. Blaine became an admirable presiding officer. Although Mr. Blaine failed to reach his ultimate goal, the Presidency, he aided tremendously in maintaining and protecting the power and prestige of the Speakership. Mr. Blaine recognized this and bid his respect for the office in his farewell address: "The Speakership of the American House of Representatives is a post of honor, of dignity, of power, of responsibility. Its duties are at once complex and continuous; they are both onerous and delicate, they are performed in the broad light of day, under the eye of the whole people, subject at all times to the closest observation, and always attended with the sharpest criticism."⁵

With pride and accomplishment, Mr. James G. Blaine stepped down from the Speaker's Chair with little criticism and a great deal of respect.

THOMAS REED

Thomas B. Reed began his first term as Speaker of the House in 1889 at the start of the Fifty-first Congress. As a lawyer from Maine he had initially entered the House in 1876 at the age of twenty-two. Mr. Reed had been the undoubted leader of his party in the House since 1882 and was the undisputed choice for Speaker when the Republicans regained control of the House. With his opportunity in the Chair he enhanced the power and dignity of the lower branch of Congress while simultaneously strengthening the office of the Speakership.

Mr. Reed was a man of wit and very rarely did he refrain from expressing what was on his mind. Mr. James Cox, who served with Reed in the House as a Democrat, described this clever retort declaring that Mr. Reed might have been the President "but for a sarcastic turn of mind and a sharpness of tongue." Because of his wicked tongue, no one was truly safe when Mr. Reed was in the room. Fellow partisans in the House were denounced: "They never open their mouths without subtracting from the sum total of human knowledge." Democrats did not fare much better: "We live in a world of sin and sorrow. Otherwise there would not be any Democratic party." Not even the United States Senate escaped Mr. Reed's lashings as he described it as the "little" House, "a place where good Representatives go when they die."¹

This power of the tongue became an asset to Mr. Reed as he used it as a sword of attack and an armor of defense in debate.² He was aggressive

and cautious as a debater and preferred a great short speech to flamboyant gestures and long-windedness. Joseph Cannon respected Mr. Reed's ability to condense a whole argument into an epigram: "I have never heard my friend from Maine take the floor upon a subject but that I did not feel sometimes regretful that I could not crystalize an idea...as he does, roll it up with my hands into proper shape, and hurl it at the head of my opponent."

Even when a member dared to verbally oppose Mr. Reed in debate, the Speaker almost always emerged triumphantly. For instance, as a reply to an interruption he paused to announce, "Now having embalmed that fly in the liquid amber of my discourse, I wish to proceed."³ From that moment on no one again cared to submit himself to such ridicule.

Despite his recognized verbal shrewdness, Thomas B. Reed did not enter the Speakership with intentions to strike down members of the Congress. He had other courageous intention in mind. It was his belief that the purpose of Congress was to accomplish something. He stated this in 1890 when he noted that "the object of a parliamentary body is action, and not the stoppage of action."⁴ Mr. Reed worked to promote this ethic as he strived for improved legislative operations in the House. Prior to Reed taking the Chair there existed disorderly behavior, fist fights, shootings, assaults, and intimidations in the House chamber. The procedural rules that stood were repeatedly altered or broken. Organization was obscure and intangible while discipline was lacking in all dealings that involved legislation. Reed took over the Speakership in 1889 with the desire to take responsibility and control of the existing mess and to create an efficient legislative body.

Mr. Reed succeeded in his leadership task due to his expertise in the parliamentary rules of the House. He was familiar with minute details and had an incredible grasp on the business of the chamber. Because Mr. Reed served twelve years in the House before entering the Speakership he became a treasure of procedural knowledge. In fact, Speaker Reed was considered more expert in the rules and proceedings of the House than any member had ever been. This knowledge soon became the most important source of Mr. Reed's influence as he used what he knew to bring about the most revolutionary changes in the way business was performed in the House.

Mr. Reed's reform and reconstruction of the House began on January 29, 1890. He had long-since tired of the techniques used by obstructionists in order to stall or halt legislative business. Although the rules of the House had been revised and codified in 1880, an efficient mechanism for enacting legislation still did not exist. A determined minority could keep action from being taken by the use of dilatory motions and disappearing quorums. With the use of a dilatory motion any member needed only to secure the floor with the support of one-fifth of the members present and make a move to recess or adjourn. This motion could be repeated in order to delay legislative action. In reality, such motions left four-fifths of those present helpless and unable to conduct business. When members chose to enact a disappearing quorum they essentially refused to be present for purposes of counting a quorum. In the Constitution a majority of members of the House constitute a quorum and are needed to take a vote. Hence, by refusing to answer a roll call members were considered absent and were able to halt a vote if they so wished.

On January 29, 1890, when a member of the House refused to answer a quorum-counting roll call, Speaker Reed made a statement that marked the beginning of change. Quite simply he said, "The Chair directs the Clerk to record the following names of members present and refusing to vote." Those seventeen words demonstrated his determination to get business done. By overruling the disappearing quorum Mr. Reed made it clear that he found it a contradiction for a member to be present for obstruction and not present for business.

The reaction of the floor was one of surprise and defense. Chaos erupted in the chamber as protests flew from the mouths of Democrats. Insults were hurled at the Speaker as Reed ignored the raging Democrats and their obstructive motions. A Representative who was present later described the scene: "It is to be doubted whether there was ever such wild excitement, burning indignation, scathing denunciation, and really dangerous conditions as existed in the House...while quorum-counting was being established."⁵ Never before had a Speaker taken a quorum to mean those present rather than those voting. Even James G. Blaine had refused to do this stating, "The moment you clothe your Speaker with power to go behind your roll call and assume that there is a quorum, why, gentlemen, you stand on the very brink of a volcano."⁶

Nevertheless, Speaker Reed sat cool and determined with his serene and tranquil manner. When Representative McCreary of Kentucky announced, "I deny the right of the Speaker to count me present," Mr. Reed confidently replied, "The Chair simply stated the fact that the gentleman from Kentucky appears to be present; does he deny it?"⁷ With his response

members ran for exits and dodged under desks. As doors were bolted and the minority members scrambled it was obvious that they had lost all sense of personal and official dignity.

The history behind such legislative obstructions is interesting to note. One of the first rules ever adopted by the House of Representatives was one requiring all members to vote. John Quincy Adams was the first to persistently refuse to vote in 1832. Initial efforts to compel him to vote failed and by the 1840's his stunt became firmly established as a means of effectively blocking business. In the Thirty-eighth Congress a suggestion was made to count those present but not voting so as to constitute the necessary quorum. Schuyler Colfax, however, refused to assume the responsibility for such a radical departure from custom. In 1875, during the Forty-third Congress, leaders sought to induce Mr. Blaine to do the same. He, too, refused and declared such a move an absurdity. When the idea was proposed in the Forty-seventh Congress, it was denied support by none other than Thomas B. Reed. In fact, when the Republicans were in minority he never hesitated to take frequent and effective advantage of the technical obstruction in order to prevent the majority from acting.

On January 29, 1890, just four sessions of Congress later, a proposed code lay on Speaker Reed's desk that authorized the Chair to count, for purpose of quorum, those members present but refusing to vote. It had not yet been admitted to the House when Mr. Reed startled the chamber with his words. He had been waiting for a reduction of the Democratic minority to assure passage. But Reed could not tolerate any more delay. He took charge when he overruled the disappearing quorum and shocked not only

the House but also the country. He did so, however, with a body of precedent and the logic of the Constitution standing behind him.

Through various legislative and municipal bodies Mr. Reed's actions found authority. The Supreme Court of New Hampshire stated that "the exercise of the law-making power is not to be stopped by the mere silence and inaction of some of the law-makers who are present." The Supreme Court of Indiana agreed: "It is inconceivable that their silence should be allotted greater force than their active opposition..." And in 1889 the principle of quorum-counting was specifically incorporated into the joint rules of the legislature of Massachusetts.⁸

Speaker Reed took official aim at the rules of the House on February 12, 1890 and saw the adoption of his proposal two days later. By a vote of 161-144 the members of the House approved a set of principles later known as the "Reed Rules". Five innovations were included in the proposal:

- 1) All members must vote unless they have a pecuniary interest in the question at issue.
- 2) The dignity of the House and the rights of members are given precedence over every other question but a motion to adjourn.
- 3) One hundred shall constitute a quorum in the Committee of the Whole.
- 4) Members present but not voting may be counted as a part of the quorum in any ordinary session of Congress.
- 5) No dilatory motion shall be entertained by the Speaker.⁹

Later, Mr. Reed was asked what he would have done if the House refused to support his radical ruling. He replied, "I should have left the Chair, resigning the Speakership, and left the House resigning my seat in the Congress. I had made up my mind that if political life consisted in sitting helplessly in the Speaker's Chair and seeing the majority powerless to pass legislation I had had enough of it and was ready to step down and out."¹⁰

With the adoption of Reed's Rules there was a renewed rage of opposition. Democrats called Mr. Reed the assassin of democratic government. They believed he became a one-man power and that the dilatory motion rule allowed him to declare from his own judgement which motives were intended to obstruct business. Those in opposition cried out for the "sacred rights of the minority" and continued to cause chaos and disruption. What the minority members failed to speak of, however, were the duties they held as legislators.

Through all the commotion and resistance Speaker Reed stood determined and refused to let down his iron will. By mastering the House he allowed for a new efficiency and brought true meaning to the term "majority rule". In fact, charges that claimed Reed's Rules would prevent all debate were struck down when the Congressional Record cited more debate in the Fifty-first Congress than in any other. In addition, time that had previously been used for dilatory motions was soon devoted to legitimate legislative discussions.

When the Fifty-first Congress adjourned in 1891 Mr. Reed did not receive the customary display of thanks by his fellow members. Although

the Democrats had regained control and the Speakership for the Fifty-second session, there was still ample hostility within the chamber. Eventually, Mr. Reed did receive his deserved recognition. The Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the rule that those present may be counted for purposes of quorum. The greatest monument to his memory, however, came in the Fifty-third Congress while he was minority leader of the floor. In the Fifty-second session the Democrats in control had banished the Reed Rules. The result was an unwieldy and inefficient House. In the Fifty-third session, although the Democrats were still in control of the House, "those rules of procedure which had been so ruthlessly thrown overboard" were brought back into play.¹¹

Reed was filled with satisfaction as he had the chance to see his political opponents adopt the very system of rules for which they had denounced him. Later Mr. Reed would express his pride in his first administration: that session "...broke down the barriers of custom and reestablished the right of the majority to rule. This was its greatest achievement, for which it will have a name in history."¹²

Thomas Reed returned to the office of Speaker of the House for the Fifty-fourth and Fifty-fifth sessions of Congress. There he continued his successful leadership through the use of party discipline. So controlling was he that one member described him as "sitting in the Chair with his feet on the neck of the Republican party."¹³ Hence, Mr. Reed organized a party machine that enabled him to pursue an active legislative agenda. Under him the House was magnificent as it carried out its conceived obligations to the country effectively and efficiently. The House gave strict attention to

public business through measures such as the McKinley Tariff Act, the Customs Administration Law, the Sherman Anti-Trust Act, a pension law, a bankruptcy act, and a meat inspection law.

During his six years in the Speakership Thomas B. Reed effectively combined a strong character with a force of ideas. His aggressive temperament and will of iron enabled him to accomplish necessary and radical changes for the House. He was not the umpire of the House but rather the true leader as he took the means which would most easily and quickly accomplish his end.¹⁴ Mr. Reed was undoubtedly the second man in government during his day, and at times he surpassed the President in power. While he was in office no scandal ever touched him and his honesty and integrity were never questioned. With much thanks due to Mr. Reed, the Republican party dominated and took an active role in molding and constructing the legislation that was passed.

In 1899 the great Mr. Reed fell out of sync with his party. "Manifest Destiny" became his undoing as he opposed national expansion, the war with Spain, and the annexation of Hawaii and the Philippines. He fought hard against such issues and even acted against the administration and the wishes of his fellow Republicans. The House voted to support the issues at stake and Mr. Reed finally gave up his fight. He was too much of a statesman and patriot to become an obstructionist and thus he chose to withdraw from public life. It turned out that "majority rule, which Reed had insisted upon as a political and moral necessity, brought the triumph of a cause he thoroughly despised."¹⁵

It was a bitter end for Thomas B. Reed. He was elected to the Fifty-sixth session but resigned his seat before Congress met. He had battled for so long within the walls of the House and eventually lost his heart for battle. He left the institution declaring, "I have tried, perhaps not always successfully, to make my acts of public life accord with my conscience, and I can't do this thing."¹⁶

Mr. Reed did more than succeed in the Chair. He brought organization and power and dignity to both the House of Representatives and the office of Speaker. His personality and strength turned his days in the Chair into a lesson of determination and courage. Mr. Reed stood firmly in the Speakership and showed men that the power of the Chair could accomplish necessary and beneficial ends for an entire legislative body. As an asset to the leadership in the House, Thomas B. Reed left behind a more powerful Chair and a system of efficiency on the floor.

JOSEPH G. CANNON

Joseph G. Cannon sat as a freshman in the House of Representatives in 1873 and did not bid his farewell to the institution until 1923. He served the House in every session of those years with the exception of the Fifty-second and Sixty-third. Mr. Cannon spent many of those years as a supporter of Thomas B. Reed. In fact, he was Speaker Reed's lieutenant during the great quorum-counting battle of the Fifty-first Congress. On November 9, 1903, after thirty years of service, Mr. Cannon rose to the Speakership. He served four consecutive terms in the Chair and is known as one of the few men who "put iron into the institution of the Speakership."¹

Mr. Cannon did not become famous in the House for his style and imagination. He came from Danville, Illinois, and seemed to lack the influences of education, culture, and travel. His attitudes were unenlightened and his manners followed suit at times. Mr. Cannon used profanity, smoked a cigar, and chewed tobacco. Such characteristics begot him his ever-popular nickname "Uncle Joe".²

He succeeded in the House, nonetheless, with much thanks due to his strong character. Mr. Cannon possessed an admirable work capacity and carried with him a true spirit and dignity. He was proud of the House and its power and through his honesty and personal virtues he made the House proud of him. Mr. Cannon displayed a rare and courageous indifference to

public opinion and his tendency to be both frank and blunt demanded the respect of his fellow members.

Joseph G. Cannon took the power of the Speakership into his hands and soon after became the controlling force of the legislative body over which he presided. He centralized power in the House almost immediately upon taking the Chair and in doing so he allowed his will to prevail. Mr. Cannon's system was directed towards the efficient operation of the House and he worked to perfect a type of organization and discipline to achieve such a system.

With his partisan views in mind, Speaker Cannon began his surge of control by attacking the committee system. He used his committee appointment power to transfer Representatives from committee to committee in order to achieve policy objectives. He appointed his key lieutenants on the floor to the prominent Rules Committee so that he could control actions of the House. During his eight years in office, Speaker Cannon transferred forty-one members and filled ninety-one committee vacancies. His intention was to preserve the party system and to maintain stability through discipline. "Stick to your party" was his motto and those who did not often paid the consequences. Such was the case when many senior members of a committee did not receive the appointment to the Chair of their committee. Jesse Overstreet of Indiana, for example, became the chairman of the Post Office and Post Roads Committee after only four terms, while other members of that committee with eight or sixteen terms of service were left without control.

The removal of members from committees was also common in Cannon's regime. Mr. Cannon explained his reasons for removal or demotion of a member stating that those members "...failed to enter and abide by a Republican caucus, and this being a government through parties, for that as well as for other sufficient reasons, the Speaker of the House, being responsible to the House and the country, made the appointment with respect to these gentleman as he conceived to be his duty in the execution of the trust reposed in him."³ Once again, Cannon believed that "wisdom resided in caucus rather than in individuals."⁴

Mr. Cannon's notion of party government through committee appointments created a House that was ruled by not only the Republican party but also by the Speaker himself. He developed an inner organization in the House of which he was the head and the committee chairmen his trusted informants. With information provided by these lieutenants Mr. Cannon could know at all times where every member stood on a particular issue. This information allowed the Speaker to determine an entire legislative program behind the scenes prior to a roll call. The Speaker became so powerful with his committee appointment power that even the trusted chairmen of committees soon learned that they were creatures of the Chair. This realization created a tendency in chairmen to avoid any inevitable conflict with the vast power that filled the Speakership.

Mr. Cannon further enhanced his centralization of power in the House through the use of his power of recognition. As a major device of control, this allowed the Speaker to deny a standing member consideration if he disapproved of his purpose. In Cannon's House the only reliable way

to get recognized was to establish a record of support for the Speaker. This was accomplished through office visits and informal conversations with him. In addition, it was often necessary to request a specific day for recognition as Mr. Cannon usually carried an approved list of recognitions with him onto the floor. If a member was at odds with the Speaker it was in his best interest to remain seated and avoid the frustration of being ignored.

In pursuing his desire to make his will prevail, Speaker Cannon worked hard to maintain a strong sense of conservatism in the House of Representatives. He was a "stand-patter" and saw no reason to change the country's protectionist ways. He did not favor the progressive legislation sought by Theodore Roosevelt and despite the executive attention he received, Speaker Cannon did not follow the President's will. Instead, he used his powers to block the social and economic reforms he opposed. By punishing members who stood against him, assigning bills to hostile committees, and using his recognition power selectively, Mr. Cannon managed to keep the President's proposals away from the light of legislative day.

And so it appeared that "Uncle Joe" Cannon had achieved a type of domination. He used the Reed Rules to control the organization and direction of the House. While in the Chair, the "success or failure of a measure largely depended upon his pleasure."⁵ In fact, due to his control over the Committee of Rules, Mr. Cannon became "a piece of machinery necessary to assist the majority of the House of Representatives in working its will."⁶ His personal ideals became such a commanding force in the system that once, when a constituent requested a copy of the rules and

regulations of the House, his Representative sent the man a copy of Cannon's picture.

The system which concentrated all the powers of the House into the Speaker's hands was a dangerous one for the members on the floor. Although it was perfection in terms of efficiency and expediency, individual members were voluntarily subordinated to the power of the Speakership. They had little choice but to follow the Speaker's will and often sacrificed their independence and conscience in pursuit of another man's ideals. Quiet opposition emerged in private conferences where members expressed shared concerns. These men were frustrated victims of the rigid system of party discipline and regarded the system as a hindrance to the exercise of their natural ability. They felt restricted in their freedom to bring forth measures they were interested in as statesmen or politicians.⁷

As opposition grew among the Democrats and insurgent Republicans the term "Cannonism" emerged. This was used as a synonym for the arbitrary use of the Speaker's powers to obstruct the legislative will of the new progressive majority in the House. Those in opposition to Cannonism had endured the control of the Speakership for too long and agreed to move against the power of the House.

It should be noted that even as revolt trembled throughout the walls of the chamber it was never the intention of the insurgents to attack Speaker Cannon personally. Despite his domination, he was a man who demanded and received a great deal of popularity and respect from his peers. Because of this "it was unanimously agreed upon that no fight was to be made on the Speaker."⁸ The planned attack was to be directed against

the system and not against individuals. Even Mr. Cannon's enemies, those who did not take relief in his honesty and common sense, "...understood that it could be counterproductive to attack Cannon himself, and as they revolted against the power of his Speakership, they felt obliged to emphasize that nothing personal was meant by it."⁹

This is not to say that Speaker Cannon was not often regarded to as a Czar. He had perfected a system which gave him so much power that legislation was practically impossible without his consent. Mr. Cannon dictated the operations of the House as he not only decided what legislation was permitted, but he shaped the form so that it would comply with his personal views. While the newspapers and cartoons depicted him as Czar Canon, the Speaker himself admitted it with a foundation: "Yes, I know I am a Czar in Democratic platforms and in some of the moral uplift magazines, but only just so long as I have a majority behind me who liked a Czar. There has been much said about Thomas Reed and his rules, and that he was the first Czar. Tom Reed led, but would have stood naked before the minority if he hadn't been clothed with a majority. That is what makes a Czar in this House, a majority, and it makes no difference whether it is on the Republican or Democratic side."¹⁰

And so the revolt began! It was aimed not so much at the rules and procedures of the House as it was at the system Mr. Cannon had perfected for their application and enforcement. The first useful reform took place the first week of March in 1909. It was referred to as Calendar Wednesday and was a drastic rule in that it could only be dispensed with by a two-thirds vote. With this rule, one day was set aside each week for calling the roll of

committees. This gave each committee the opportunity to bring before the House for consideration a bill which might be objectionable to the Rules Committee. The idea was to insure the House a chance to act on measures that were favored in committees but opposed to by the leadership of the House. Previously the powerful committees generally monopolized the time of the floor while those committees of less importance to the organization were sidetracked. Calendar Wednesday marked the insurgents' first success in curtailing the power of the Speakership and the system. Up to this time the Speaker determined which bills were to be considered, with the exception of privileged matters.

Members of the House formed coalitions against the party in control of the House machinery in order to gain some independence and control. They also did so in reaction to an emerging state of mind in the country. A moral sentiment against centralized power had permeated political and social life in the nation. With this public influence the House gained strength and moved forward with a sense of confidence.

George W. Norris was the man who led the next substantial action of revolt in March of 1910. He was an insurgent and had long been out of sympathy with his Republican party. Mr. Norris was both aggressive and combative and stood firmly in opposition to the system of House government under Speaker Cannon. He authored a resolution which strictly limited some of the most important sources of power of the Speakership. The present system was so perfect, however, that although Norris was resourceful, he could not find a way to get consideration for his resolution. The Speaker's absolute power of recognition enabled him to ignore Mr.

Norris. Finally, on March 16, 1910, Representative Norris requested immediate consideration for his resolution declaring that it was "privileged by the Constitution" since it dealt with amending the presiding rules of the House.

The original Norris Resolution proposed the abolition of the existing Rules Committee of five members and suggested that it should be substituted with an elective Committee of Rules of fifteen members. This new committee would have power to select its own chairman and the Speaker of the House would under no circumstance be a member. Such a change in organization would have stripped in a single stroke one of the greatest sources of power of the Speaker. The inner organization instantly perceived the danger of such a measure and Speaker Cannon called for a point of order to overrule Mr. Norris' resolution offer.

It was up to the members of the House to either sustain the Chair or to accept the resolution offered by Norris as a matter of highest privilege for consideration of a vote. In the following twenty-nine hours members engaged in one of the most important discussions ever to take place in the history of the House. Battle raged all day, all night, and into the next day. Motions made for recess and adjournment were defeated. Absent members were awakened and taken from their beds so that when it came time to vote a quorum could be established.

On one side of the debate were the insurgent Republicans and the cooperative Democrats. Representative Nelson of Wisconsin expressed their views: "We are fighting for the right of free, fair, and full representation in this body for our representative constituents...We know,

indeed, by bitter experience, what representation means under these rules. It means that we must stand by the Speaker, right or wrong, or suffer the fate that we have endured. Let no one accuse us, therefore, of an alliance with Democracy for unworthy purpose. We are fighting with our Democratic brethen for the common right of equal representation in this House, and for the right of way of progressive legislation in Congress, and we are going to fight on at any cost until the inestimable rights have been redeemed for the people."¹¹

Speaker Cannon responded by enunciating the doctrine of party loyalty. He explained that it was the highest consideration in the House, and that members of a party are bound by the action of the party caucus. He declared that members could and should be punished for the failure to abide by the decision of the caucus.

Another strong debater for government by party was James R. Mann of Illinois. He was a lieutenant of Speaker Cannon and stated, "On the whole, the rules of the House are probably the best considered, most scientifically constructed, and finely adjusted rules governing any parliamentary body on earth." In defending the Speaker, Mr. Mann stood firm: "It is not true that Speaker Cannon is an autocrat in the House. It is true that the present Speaker is the leader and strongest influence in the House, and that he has been so for ten years ... Great men have been abused at all times-such is the history of mankind-but when the book of history of this generation shall have been written, together with the legislation that has been enacted, the years of the Speakership of Mr. Speaker Cannon will stand out among the most brilliant in the history in the country."¹²

A continuous session of almost thirty hours of debate led to a vote of 162 ayes and 182 naves. The Representatives chose not to sustain the order of the Chair and in doing so brought the Norris Resolution before the House. An amended version was soon after adopted by a vote of 191-156. It called for a Committee on Rules of ten members, all of whom were to be elected by the chamber. Six members were to be from the majority and four from the minority party. The House Speaker was not allowed to a member. In addition, the committee was to elect its own chairman from among its members.

With the adoption of the resolution Mr. Joseph Cannon suffered the most severe defeat that had ever been administered to a Speaker. He immediately transformed from a potent leader through whom the will of the majority was brought to bear upon all questions presented for consideration, discussion, and settlement to an impotent and inconsequential moderator. Speaker Cannon responded to his defeat, recognizing that there was a new majority made up of Democrats and insurgent Republicans that were not in harmony with him. He refused to resign, however, stating that "a resignation is in and of itself a confession of weakness or mistake or an apology for past actions. The Speaker is not conscience of having done any particular wrong."¹³ Instead, Mr. Cannon entertained a motion to declare the Chair vacant so that the House might proceed to the election of a new Speaker. "Uncle Joe" was still personally popular with many members, however, and his motion failed by a vote of 192-155. Even Mr. George Norris voted in favor of Mr. Cannon

demonstrating his belief that it had not been a battle about personalities and that a Republican in the Speaker's Chair was still an ultimate goal.

Thus, Mr. Cannon emerged from the revolution with continued respect and admiration. In the end, he deserved at least that much. It had taken more than a century for the strengthening of the power of party government through organized leadership to be accomplished, of which Speaker Cannon had played a key role. He had completed the development of a system which bred revolt at the very same moment it made the business of the Congress the most efficient it had ever been. Eventually, the system fell because in reaching perfection as an instrument of government, the system sacrificed flexibility for efficiency.

Circumstances had changed for Mr. Cannon, though. He left the office of Speakership under quite a different spirit than when he had entered. Although still considered successful and popular with members on both sides, the emotions involved had been altered. This is evident through two very different resolutions expressed to him. At the close of Mr. Cannon's first Congress on March 4, 1905, Mr. Boutell of Illinois said,

"There are two kinds of leadership—one of the head and another of the heart. There are great leaders who sometimes have to drag their followers by iron chains of conviction; the greatest leaders draw their followers with the golden cords of affection. Our Speaker has the chains, but he never needs to use them.

This hour is wholly dedicated to his leadership ... for we who know him best know that...his door has always been open to receive any Member of the House, his mind always impartially open to receive suggestions and

advice, and best of all, his heart has always been open to give out friendly counsel and encouragement."¹⁴

Six years later, at the close of the Sixty-first Congress on March 4, 1911, Mr. Champ Clark delivered these words: "Thanks are due to the Honorable Joseph Cannon for the intelligent, constant, and courteous manner in which he presided over its important deliberations."¹⁵ Lacking from this farewell was a great deal of emotion and any regard for Mr. Cannon, the man.

Nevertheless, Mr. Joseph Cannon remained in the House of Representatives until 1923. He had seen the beginning of telephone and radio, as well as the development of a nationwide rail network and the start of manned flight. Half of the men who filled the seats in the chamber in 1923 had been born while he had been in the House. More important, however, is that during his many years of service in the House Mr. Cannon not only watched the power of the Speakership evolve, he participated in the growth and decline of that power. His personality and determination dominated the Chair for eight years as he worked towards mastering an efficient legislative machine. Eventually, however, the members of the House extinguished that machine and in doing so weakened the power of the Speakership tremendously. In fact, by the time Mr. Joseph Cannon left Capitol Hill, the office that had made him famous stood as powerless as it had in the nation's beginnings.

CONCLUSION

Through examining the men who have influenced the House of Representatives and the office of the Speakership it becomes clear that neither institution is a fixed entity. The United States Congress is affected by changes in membership, in history, in society, and in the world. Because of the this, all of its parts must be adaptable. The House and its office of leadership have demonstrated this adaptability by working with dominant President's, controlling the moods of the nation, providing a sense of legislative direction, shaping the rules of business, improving efficiency and effectiveness, and enhancing the power of the House. Wars and corruption and violence and revolt have all entered the walls of the chamber, and each has been dealt with accordingly.

The idea of the House as a moving and changing entity is not new or surprising. It has been described as follows: "The House is not a painting so much as a moving picture with new characters constantly entering as others leave, and a description of it at any moment is no more than a freeze frame, which will change as soon as we start the film rolling again."¹ Some of these characters have been more influential than others and are responsible for what the institution is. It is these people who have constructed and developed the House and the office of the Speaker by determining the amount of power held in the Chair and the prestige and power relations of the legislative body.

Strong Speakers have dominated the Speakership and the chamber due to their character and personality. They have taken risks, developed new concepts, and stood firm in their beliefs. They have influenced the daily occurrences in the House by forming rules, changing rules, or mastering the existing rules. With their guidance and leadership, the House of Representatives often functioned as an efficient legislative machine.

Those men with strong personalities also developed pride and respect in the institution, and in doing so they elevated their individual prestige. In a sense, the influential and constructive Speakers created an interdependence between the office they filled and the Representative members of the chamber. Together, the group worked to accomplish new ideals and goals. In fact, the power that emerged from the House during periods of potent and effective Speakers has enabled the institution to surpass the Senate and the President in terms of power and influence at times.

Weak Speakers have not fared quite so well. Those men without determination and a strong personality have never productively operated for any length of time. Their impact on the House has been minimal, and they have done little to aid in the construction of the Speakership. Not due to a lack of effort, but perhaps due to a lack of innovation or character, weak Speakers did not leave their mark as they did not often contribute to the importance of the office or the success of the House.

Hence, the evolution of the Speakership, as well as much of the history of the House of Representatives, can be traced through the history of

its Speakers. Those men with strength and personality brought power to the office and the institution. They helped create not only a leadership position but also a part of American government. By contributing their hearts and souls to something they believed in, the influential leaders made the institution work. It is because of those people that the House and the Speakership have evolved ... and will continue to prevail.

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