

The legislation proposes to reverse nearly 200 years of American history by, for the first time, designating by statute (Title I, Section 151) a single uniformed officer as the "Principal Military Advisor" to the President. That change in the role of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is profound in its implications.

Similar proposals have been specifically and overwhelmingly rejected by the Congress in the past—in 1947, 1949, and 1958—on the grounds that, in a democracy, no single military officer, no matter what his personal qualifications, should have such power and that no single officer could effectively or adequately perform the function. The issue is distinct from, although related to, the question of the establishment of a "general staff," which also characterized earlier debates about the organization of the Department of Defense and the powers of the Chairman and the members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

It is well to recall the legislative history. The position of Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff was created by the National Security Act Amendments of 1949. Congressman Carl Vinson, speaking to the House on August 2, 1949, following conclusion of the conference with the Senate, described how the position came about and what was intended:

Now let me tell you about the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Naturally, this subject was controversial in both the House and Senate committees, because of the fear of a single Chief of Staff and of possible military dictatorship in the country.

Mr. Hoover [The Hoover Commission's Task Force on National Security Organization] and Mr. Eberstadt [The Eberstadt Task Force] were particularly concerned about the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. They wanted a Chairman, and recommended one, but they wanted his duties clearly defined and wanted it made clear in the law that he was not to be a single Chief of Staff.

The Senate proposed that this Chairman would be the principal military adviser to the President and the Secretary of Defense. Even though the Senate specified that the Chairman had to function as such when serving as the principal military adviser, nevertheless it was quite evident that had the Senate language been retained, the country would have had a de facto Chief of Staff over the armed services.

In respect to the Chairman, I am pleased to advise the House that the Senate took the language proposed by the House conferees with only the change that the Chairman shall not have the right to vote in the proceedings of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

What the bill provides now is this: . . .

Now, the most important provision of all of these is the language proposed by the House conferees that all of the Joint Chiefs of Staff as a body, including the Chairman, shall be the principal military advisers to the President,