

Again referring to Mr. Rayburn, we were in the Speaker's lobby, and a certain matter was up—it does not matter what—but it had been a little embarrassing to me. I thought it was clever on my part to say to Mr. Rayburn—I will not repeat the exact language—but the essence of it was that I did not mind being a goat, if there was authority to go along with it, but I sure hated to be one and not have the authority.

As I say, I thought it was clever. He didn't.

But there is a great area in the responsibility in the House Administration Committee that is a little difficult to find spelled out in the rules and in the law. Regardless of what you may do with this resolution, what direction it may take, and where it goes and to what committee, I think the House Administration Committee needs some clarification as to the responsibility of that committee. A long time ago I sought certain changes and amendments but it had little interest until things go wrong.

It has always been assumed that when a Member certifies that a person is on his payroll, and what their salaries are, their activities, and so forth, you take that at face value. The same is true of a committee chairman.

That was the case in the matter of Mr. Powell. There has been criticism that the House Administration Committee should have halted the illegal practices now revealed in this case and we did but it was after the fact. We had no way of going behind these activities to prevent their happening.

You do not catch credit cards and telephone charges until 60 days after charges. We have no such thing as a preaudit. We now propose that we have a preaudit, and that we hire an expert for that purpose in the committee.

We have tried to operate very modestly with a small staff, and we have had no investigators to go behind these things to determine what was right and what was wrong even if there was clear authority—I think the staff of this committee is very good—we send claims back to committees every day. I do not believe I am exaggerating in saying that every day there is some question to explain something. We have always done that.

Then, if the chairman of that committee makes a satisfactory explanation of it, it is approved. It always has been, it is the practice, and I think a good one, that when it is certified by the chairman of a committee I think you have a right to think it is justified.

However, clarification is needed if a proper job is to be done. We can have a more thorough examination, a preaudit of the accounts before it even gets into disbursing, and have a great deal more thoroughness. Even if it is necessary to go into a committee to inquire about it, maybe we should do that.

There should be a distinction, too, in the authority between committees and that of the Member's office. As you know, committee operations, all these investigations, are financed from the contingent fund. The House Administration has authority over the contingent fund of the House. We pay the bills.

It is different in a Member's office. Your offices, your clerk hire and all the things you are allowed to run your office, does not come out of the contingent fund.