

## Congress, Officials Take Status Formerly Reserved for Nobility

ARTICLE I of our nation's Constitution specifies that no title of nobility shall be granted by the United States. This provision has never been violated.

However, some people are beginning to wonder if Congress and certain government officials have not devised means of obtaining perquisites of royalty, without titles and without inheritance through noble birth.

In ancient times, royalty, from the king down through lesser rulers, increased their incomes and living standards by sending forth tax collectors to bring in more tribute.

By so doing, they exercised a privilege not available to the rank and file of citizenry, who may have had just as much desire and greater need for additional income.

Congress has power to raise salaries of its own members and to assess the public for taxes to pay them. This is a noble privilege not enjoyed by all Americans.

An old adage said, "The king can do no wrong," meaning that he would decide for himself what was right. Congress also enjoys this royal privilege to a considerable degree.

That body now is considering a new code of ethics which presumably would raise standards of honesty and integrity of its members. The debate does not revolve around what is right and proper, but turns upon what it would cost each congressman in outside income. The dollar, not morality, is the issue.

A current question is whether it is right to exempt government workers from the steadily increasing burden of Social Security taxes. Some argue that it is undemocratic to allow them to escape taxes imposed on other individuals and companies.

Officials of federal bureaus would not generally be regarded as

being royal or noble, but they exert great power.

Federal agencies and regulatory bodies have lawmaking authority delegated to them by Congress and their rules are automatically considered to be valid until taxpayers spend their own money to prove otherwise. Agencies spend taxpayers' funds to defend themselves and to prove that their rules are legal.

The counterbalancing influence of the legislative, executive and judicial branches of government has often been cited as a great strength of the American system, with the public generally regarded as the final arbiter of authority.

This was questioned recently when the speaker of the House in Congress declared that any attempt of the President to "go over the heads of Congress and appeal directly to the public" would be the biggest mistake he ever made.

Intimidation of the people by the people can be regarded as intimidation of the people themselves. This is a type of privilege linked with royalty, not democracy.

Royalty almost certainly never will come into existence in the United States by direct action, but indifference of voters and public apathy in governmental affairs can provide opportunities for ambitious rulers to assume power by other means.