

the dominant branch of government. History has proved the fear of legislative usurpation to be misplaced; today the need is to strengthen the legislature, not to weaken it. Further, the best check on the legislature is clearly focused public accountability.

Unicameralists also dispute the claim that bicameralism prevents corruption of the legislature. In the past, unicameralists point out, simultaneous corruption of both houses of states legislatures has actually occurred. Today, protection of vested interests requires primarily the blocking of legislation rather than the passage of new legislation. Bicameralism presents more points at which legislation can be stopped, and with less fear of popular understanding of what has happened, than does unicameralism. In this view, corruption is a more threatening danger under bicameralism.

Finally, unicameralists reject the validity of the argument that bicameralism is desirable since it is traditional and understood by the voters. A traditional form of government does not mean it is good. When Lord Bryce wrote the *American Commonwealth* after visiting the United States in the 1880's, he commented that the government of the cities, then almost all bicameral, was the one conspicuous failure of the United States. The dramatic improvement of city governments since then can be traced directly to the abandonment of the traditional bicameral system in favor of unicameralism.¹⁷

Voters are in intimate contact with city governments and have a good understanding of unicameralism. Voters also have some knowledge of corporate structure with its strong parallels to unicameralism. Further, it is widely known that

¹⁷ Shepard, *supra* note 4, at 535.

Nebraska has experimented successfully with unicameralism. Under these circumstances, unicameralism can no longer be passed off as something strange and untried to be rejected in favor of the "traditional" bicameral government.

Not only do unicameralists dispute the merits of every claim made for bicameralism, they assert that bicameralism has a number of positive disadvantages.

First among the disadvantages is the conference committee. This committee, it is claimed, often functions as a secret "third" chamber, unaccountable to the electorate. Further, compromise measures as reported out by the conference committee must be accepted or rejected by each house in toto without opportunity for amendment. Since the work of the conference committee is carried out in secret and sometimes hastily, unicameralists claim the conference committee is not only undesirable but a negation of the claim that bicameralism assures a check to prevent faultily drawn legislation. A student of the conference committee as it functioned in Nebraska before the adoption of unicameralism in 1934 reported that over 25 per cent of all measures that were amended by the second chamber passed through conference. This same student of the Nebraska experience also found that almost 70 per cent of all bills considered by the conference committee were referred to that committee during the last twenty days of the legislative session and that almost 50 per cent of such bills were referred during the last ten days of the session.¹⁸

¹⁸ Burdette, *Conference Committees in the Nebraska Legislature*, 30 AM. POL. SCI. REV. 1114 (1936); *The Conference Committee Ogre*, in UNICAMERAL LEGISLATURES 117 (B. Aly ed. 1937), as cited by B. TRIMBLE, *THE STRUCTURE OF THE LEGISLATURE* 14 (1943).