The delegates assembled in the old Supreme Court Chamber in the Capitol, which is now used as a Committee Room. Mrs. Wingert introduced Mr. Ralph Dungan, a member of the staff of the Senate Labor Committee, and Mr. Rosenslug, a member of Senator Kennedy’s staff.

Mr. Dungan began the discussion by describing the way in which a piece of legislation gets started on its way to becoming a law. Often pressure organizations of one kind or another, lobbyists, or consumer groups, will urge a Senator to introduce legislation. Most legislation, however, is begun in Congress itself. There are always continuing problems which need reassessment. For example, the Labor Committee hearing which the delegates were to attend later in the afternoon is considering a Labor-Management reform bill.

Once a bill is prepared, it is introduced on the floor of the Senate and is then referred to whatever Committee is responsible for that type of legislation.

After a bill is referred to a Committee, the chairman will begin to hear from people or groups who have some specific interest in it. He will then schedule hearings and line up witnesses for and against it. If, after the hearings, the Committee feels that the bill fills a need, it will be listed on the Calendar of the Senate, and the Major Policy Committee will schedule debate on it. Not every bill receives public hearings. Bills which pass the Senate then go to the House for passage, and vice-versa. All tax legislation must be initiated in the House. The largest number of bills are passed under the unanimous consent rule. This means that if there is no objection by a Senator, the bill is passed without a roll-call. If there is even one objection the bill must be brought up again. If a bill is passed by both Houses, it goes to the President for his signature. If he should veto it, it can become law only if passed again by a 2/3 majority in both Houses.

Mr. Rosenslug then explained that the Consent Calendar, is a morning set aside on which bills may be passed rapidly if there is no objection from the floor. This is necessitated by the fact that the Senate has unlimited debate, and many bills are needlessly held up by filibusters on other issues. This process also shows confidence in the Committees and their expert judgment. Each party has an official objector who sits on the floor during the Consent Calendar morning.
MRS. WINGERT: How do the Senators keep up with all the current legislation and how, time-wise, are they able to do the necessary reading and gain the necessary preparation to vote on bills?

MR. DUNGAN: A Senator has to be a multiple person in many respects. He also has a competent staff to help him. The Majority Policy Committee has the responsibility to notify him as to when a bill is to be presented so that he can be informed.

DELEGATE: How large a staff does each Senator have?

MR. DUNGAN: Each Senator decides for himself. He usually has an Administrative Assistant and one or two Staff Assistants. Each Senator receives an allotment for clerks based on the population of his state.

DELEGATE: What is the length of time from the time a bill is referred to a Committee until it comes to the floor?

MR. DUNGAN: It varies a great deal. A bill may die in Committee. Last week the Pension and Welfare Bill was passed, which was introduced four years ago. Another bill passed last week was introduced in February.

The delegate asked how a Senator goes about objecting to a bill on the Consent Calendar.

Mr. Dungan replied that the Senator would communicate with the Democratic Policy Committee, and a staff member would protest when it came to the floor.

DELEGATE: What percentage of bills introduced in the Senate are passed on the Consent Calendar?

MR. DUNGAN: About 75%. (Mr. Dungan emphasized that this was a rough guess).

DELEGATE: Who sits on the floor on a Consent Calendar?

MR. DUNGAN: An official objector sits on the floor (a Senator) for each party. He communicates with the calendar committee and notifies the Senators when the bill is coming up. He receives any objection they have and announces it on the floor.

DELEGATE: How many people are usually on a Senator's staff?

MR. DUNGAN: A Senator is allotted a certain amount of money for what is called "clerk hire". This amount is based on the population of his state. The amount covers all his help including his administrative assistant and he can divide it up as he sees fit.

DELEGATE: What amount of time elapses from the time a bill is submitted to Committee and it is brought back?

MR. DUNGAN: It depends on how many public figures are interested in the bill and will apply pressure to get it pushed through. It also depends on the interest of the general public and the members of the Committee in the bill. Bills can die in Committee and as high as 90% do.
Mr. Dungan spoke of the hearing which was to be held shortly. The Sub-Committee on Labor of the Senate Labor Committee was to hear Professor Archibald Cox of the Harvard Law School. He is an expert witness rather than an interested party. The Sub-Committee is made up of Senators Goldwater of Arizona, Purtell of Connecticut, Ives of New York, Kennedy of Massachusetts, McNamara of Michigan, Morse of Oregon and Yarborough of Texas.

Every Democratic Senator entering the Senate receives one Major Committee assignment. The Republicans still operate on the seniority rule. No Senator sits on more than two major committees. In the House, the rule is one Major Committee. Only standing legislative Committees have the power to report bills to the Senate. A Select Committee has no power to report legislation on its own, but must report to another Committee.

DELEGATE: How many committees does a Senator usually have?

MR. DUNGAN: He usually has two major committees and one minor. A number of years ago there were 30 or 40 standing committees. In 1916 an effort was made to streamline the Committee system, and the number was drastically cut.

DELEGATE: What is the function of the Select Committee?

MR. ROSENBLUG: It is to investigate and recommend legislation, but it does not have the power to report legislation to the Senate on its own. The legislation must go to a sub-committee which reports it.

MR. DUNGAN: A Special Committee is usually created for a limited time, and it is also limited by appropriation, and by its particular mission.

Mr. Dungan cautioned the delegates not to be disappointed by the sight of a Senator addressing a nearly empty chamber, or perhaps a few apparently uninterested fellow Senators. Great things happen in other parts of the Capitol where much of the important work is done in the Committees. Only spasmodically do the great things happen on the floor. Right at this time, he said, there are seven Senate Committees meeting.

In response to a question, Mr. Dungan said that closed Committee sessions are held when the details of a bill are being worked out, or when witnesses are called on to testify on classified material. There is an increasing tendency to keep hearings open whenever possible. The Chairman of a Committee has the responsibility of calling witnesses and deciding whether a meeting is to be open or closed. The Chairman of a Committee is appointed on the basis of seniority. While this system has its disadvantages, its prime advantage is that a Chairman will have been in the Senate long enough to have acquired a great deal of experience. In a closed session only members of the Committee and its staff are present. Staff members cannot talk as freely in open sessions.

A delegate brought up the matter of a recent article in the "New York Times" which quoted Senator Neuberger as objecting to the practice of a Senator having the privilege of correcting or deleting remarks he had made on the floor, before they are printed in the "Congressional Record".

Mr. Dungan said that this practice is not very widespread, and is usually not abused. It is used mostly to make a point more precise or to delete invective.
DELEGATE: How does the bell system work?

MR. UNGAN: One bell means a vote, two bells mean a quorum, there was some question as to what three bells mean and four bells mean adjournment.

DELEGATE: How long does a Select Committee serve?

MR. UNGAN: The mission of the Committee, the term of service and the funds are all specified when the Committee is set up.

DELEGATE: Is the press present at all hearings?

MR. UNGAN: No, obviously some questions can be threshed out more thoroughly and with greater facility without an open meeting.

Senator Kennedy entered the room at this moment, and was introduced by Mrs. Wingert.

He greeted the delegates, and expressed his pleasure that they could meet in this historic room, which, he said, had witnessed the Golden Age of the Senate. It was formerly the old Supreme Court Chamber, and the Senate also met here for a period before the Civil War, while the regular Senate Chamber was being rebuilt. Some of the most famous debates of the Senate's history were held here during the period when Webster, Clay, Calhoun and Sumner were members. The Emancipation Proclamation was signed here.

The Senator spoke of the importance of public opinion on legislation. A great deal of pressure is put upon all Senators by spokesmen for various groups. The public as a whole doesn't have time to become informed on most subjects, yet it is important for everyone to take an interest. There is a great responsibility on citizens' groups who attempt to inform the public. They must try to keep up with legislation which is in the public interest. Ordinarily, the only people who take an active interest in a particular piece of legislation have themselves something to gain or lose by it. Whenever possible, the Senate tries to get a disinterested viewpoint from an expert, as for example, the testimony of Professor Cox will be this afternoon.

He said that a Senator sometimes finds himself in a difficult position when he is confronted with the alternatives of voting for a piece of legislation which is in the public interest, yet is against the interests of his own particular constituents.

Senator Kennedy quoted Winston Churchill in saying that, "Democracy is the worst form of government devised, except for all the others." He further said that politicians are inclined to go along with private persons because they will remember longest what has been done for them. He voted for the St. Lawrence Seaway several years ago, because, though it did not particularly benefit Massachusetts, he felt it was for the good of the nation. While the general public doesn't know or remember a thing about it, the specific persons hurt remember it.

He said that groups such as the Junior League could do a great service if they kept themselves informed on pending legislation in the public interest and if they would give support to Senators who cast their votes for the good of the country as a whole, but perhaps have to buck the opposition of vocal minority groups.
Senator Kennedy reminded the delegates that, "Democracy to operate successfully requires public participation".

MRS. WINGERT: What does a Senator want to know when he receives a letter from a voter?

SENATOR KENNEDY: He wishes to have specific information. He said that often a Senator did not have time or the ability to cover all sides of a question and that outside information could help to throw light on many facets of a problem.

A brief discussion followed on the means of citizens informing their Congressmen on opinion. Senator Kennedy said that the individual letter, or a letter from a group carried weight. Duplicate or form letters with signatures were less impressive in informing Congressmen of citizens' points of view.

Mrs. Nicholson and Mrs. Wingert thanked Senator Kennedy for talking to the group.

The delegates were introduced to the Senators of the Sub-Committee who expressed pleasure that the group would attend the Hearing which followed.

A visit to the Senate Gallery and a brief tour of the Capitol concluded the afternoon.