

Editorial

Gramm-Rudman or the Constitution

Although a three-judge panel declared portions of the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings budget-slashing act to be unconstitutional on February 7, the constitutional crisis which the Act was intended to provoke, has not abated.

First, although the court declared that the “automatic deficit reduction process”—by which the Comptroller General of the United States orders the President to impound a specified amount of funds—is unconstitutional, and it declared that the President’s February 1 “sequestration” order is without legal force and effect, the court stayed its judgment until the U.S. Supreme Court hears the appeal of its decision.

Second, the court’s ruling was made on narrow grounds, even with respect to the arguments raised by the complainants. The court overturned the law on grounds that it violated the constitutional doctrine of separation of powers, because the Comptroller General is given executive powers under the act, but he is an officer of the government who is removable by Congress and not by the President. As such, he cannot exercise executive-branch powers and, indeed, issue binding orders upon the President. At the same time, the court rejected the more far-reaching argument raised by opponents of Gramm-Rudman, that it constitutes an unconstitutional delegation of legislative power.

Third, the narrow—and intricate—reasoning of the court (the opinion runs to 50 pages) ignores the deeper issue which was not raised by any of the bill’s opponents—the unconstitutionality of the bill as a whole.

The simple fact is that Gramm-Rudman places a priority on debt service, thus placing interest payments to bankers above any other obligations—including the national defense, infrastructure, health services, or pensions earned by retired government employees.

To view a piece of legislation as constitutional which will undermine our defense and destroy our economy,

is to totally fail to comprehend our Constitution. Further, Gramm-Rudman represents a yielding of our national sovereignty to supranational institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the international bankers’ cartel (the “Group of Five”) who have been demanding budget cuts and the imposition of IMF-style “conditionalities” on the United States.

The American Revolution was not fought, nor our Constitution written, to protect bankers and financiers. The Declaration of Independence proclaimed mankind’s inalienable rights as “Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness”—not John Locke’s “life, liberty and property.”

The Preamble to the Constitution of 1787—the standard by which all particular provisions of that document and all laws made under it must be judged—reads:

We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

Gramm-Rudman violates all of the great purposes of our Constitution, as defined therein. It will undermine justice, destroy domestic tranquility, sabotage the common defense, weaken the general welfare, and abandon the blessings of liberty, especially for our posterity. It brings IMF conditionalities to the United States, bringing us down to Third World standards, rather than developing the economic power of the United States to raise the Third World to our standards. As long as Gramm-Rudman exists as the law of the land, we as a people are trampling on the Constitution.