National planning is needed, says Smith

By Dave Danford

"I believe the Constitution is an ineffectual way to run a government," said Howard K. Smith, coanchor of the ABC-TV Evening News, speaking at the Harvard Law School Forum.

Smith, before an audience of over three hundred, on Wednesday night, cited "frustration caused by negative and ineffective government" as a primary cause for "the manifest unhappiness of Americans with their lot."

Acknowledging the difficulties involved in making constitutional changes, Smith focused on campaign financing as a particularly corrupting system. "Money far too much dominates American politics and it should be gotten out of American politics," he said. Smith went on to suggest a plan for government financed campaigns.

Other traditions mentioned by Smith as negative influences on the American government were the Senate's right to filibuster and the Congressional committee system. Also a target for Smith's wrath was the seniority system which, he said, "allows the oldest man from the most feudalistic parts of the country to control legislation."

Another cause Smith named for the negative mood in America today was "the pace of change to which we've been subjected since World War II." He stressed the need for foresight, and planning on the national level. The creation of an official board, perhaps affiliated with the White House, to study possible problems of future years, Smith suggested, might be a preventive for crises which now take us by surprise.

Smith also addressed the question of the role of TV and other news media in educating the people on current problems. He admitted oversimplification of TV news, but said that it would be difficult to go into greater depth by expanding national news shows to a one hour format. "It would be hard to hold the public's attention that long," he argued. "I think people should read more and get more of their news from newspapers, good newspapers. Alas, there are very few of these left."

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