

Top Republican on House Panel

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Jesse Edward Hutchinson

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WASHINGTON, March 25 —Jesse Edward Hutchinson is a millionaire who wears white socks, even with his conservative blue business suits. Despite his wealth,

Man to the glamour, Man in the sophistication and News power of Washington, the Michigan Representative holds on to his simple ways, the ways of the small town residents and farmers of the rolling hills on the southern border of Michigan —the wealthy strawberry, apple and grape growers, the dairymen, the Christian Reformed Church members, the conservatives, John Birchers and others who elected him to Congress.

His colleagues in the Capitol may snicker at his white socks, but Mr. Hutchinson, who has reluctantly found himself in the limelight as the ranking Republican of the House Judiciary Committee, which is considering the President's impeachment, is widely praised even among Democrats, as honest and sincere.

Writes His Speeches

Mr. Hutchinson said he "never sought" power or publicity, but the seniority system thrust him into the Republican leadership of the Judiciary Committee after 10 years in Congress, stripping him of the anonymity he enjoyed so much.

"As I see it, my chief responsibility is to represent my constituency," said the Representative as he rhythmically rocked in his desk chair through an interview. "I never thought my viewpoint represents any kind of majority."

Within that guideline, Mr. Hutchinson writes all his own speeches, a newsletter to his constituents and most of the bills he introduces, and he has personally answers thousands and thousands of letters from his constituents since he was elected in 1962.



The New York Times

"Steady and reliable"

"He is not innovative in any sense of the word," said a former aide, Joseph C. Armstrong, but "he's a good, sound Congressman who does his homework."

Asked what he thought his major achievement in Congress was, Mr. Hutchinson said, "Oh, I don't know," in his soft, slow voice. Mr. Armstrong thinks perhaps a bill that the Representative introduces in each session, to limit the term of Supreme Court Justices to 12 years, would be the most important piece of legislation Mr. Hutchinson has proposed.

Those who acclaim him as "steady and reliable" note his attendance record. He voted on 96 per cent of the bills before the House last year, while the average Representative voted on 89 per cent. His voting record reveals that he tends to be anti-Government spending, anti-union, anti-social reform, pro-business and promilitary, according to an analysis compiled by the Ralph Nader Congress Project in 1972.

"He's a good lawyer," said Thomas E. Mooney, associate counsel of the Judiciary Committee, "probably one of the best." But other staffers note that he does not command the authority or exert control over the Republican members

of the committee that would normally be expected of the senior Republican member.

Edward Hutchinson — he dropped the Jesse because "five syllables is enough name on any ballot"—was born to his wealth and his political leanings. His father was a successful businessman, first with a flour mill, then a fruit spraying business and a phone company and electric power company, among other things, in Finnville, Mich., where the future Representative was born on Oct. 13, 1914.

"It was more or less accepted in my family that I would go into law and then get in politics," said Mr. Hutchinson. A state Senator, took him, at age 15, to Lansing and made him a page boy in the Senate.

Upon his graduation from the University of Michigan with bachelor and law degrees, Mr. Hutchinson practiced law for a year before he was drafted into the Army in 1941.

Following World War II, he returned to Finnville, where he "found friends had put me on the ballot," to run for State Representative. After serving 14 years in the Michigan House and Senate. He met his only political defeat, in 1960, when he ran for nomination as Lieutenant Governor.

Popular in His District

He may not have broad support in the state, but his district has enthusiastically sent him to Washington for the last 11 years. Mr. Hutchinson beat his last opponent, State Senator Charles Zollar, almost 2 to 1.

"Charlie Zollar ran the campaign of a city slicker," explained one Michigan political observer. "Zollar was well financed with lots of good literature, but it was much too sophisticated for people of that district. All Hutchinson did was walk down Main Street and greet everybody by name. He didn't bend their ears a lot, just said hello and that's the way people like it."