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Abstract
**The Italian Economists as Legislators and Policy Makers during the Fascist Regime
(1924-1943)**

This paper aims at analysing the role played by the Italian economists as members of Parliament (the Chamber of deputies and the Senate) and in the government during the fascist regime. Recent research (Melis, 2018; Soddu, 2008; Gentile, 2002 and 2003; Fimiani, 2001) stresses the fact that during fascism the role of Parliament and of the executive changed substantially. From its very beginning, fascism rejected the principle of the 'sovereignty of the people' as expressed by a freely elected, pluralistic Parliament and acted to shift the balance of power in favour of a government led by a charismatic *duce*. In November 1926, the deputies who opposed the regime were expelled from the lower chamber. Then, after 1928, elections for the lower chamber became *de facto* a plebiscite: citizens were asked to approve *in toto* (or hypothetically to reject) a list of 400 candidates made out by the fascist party. In 1939 the lower chamber itself was transformed into a 'corporative chamber'. Furthermore, the parliamentary debate in the plenary sessions was severely restricted and most of the work was carried out by restricted committees. The action of the government also changed substantially: the ministers were increasingly selected (by Mussolini) as 'experts' of the field, to draw new laws by decree and to implement policy decisions. The Parliament, however, did not simply rubber-stamped legislative initiatives promoted by the government: in several cases cooperated actively to the final drafting of laws with emendations, suggestions and advices (Melis, 2018). In this framework, the Italian economists played a significant and, until recently, largely neglected role. Overall, 19 economists and statisticians became members of both chambers and/or of the government in the period 1924-43. This paper analyses systematically their work in these institutions during this period. A major point is that the majority of the economists selected by the regime (mainly by Mussolini himself) as legislators and policymakers acted indeed as 'experts' (*tecnici*). The 'ideologists' of corporatism played a minor role. To this aim, after dealing with the residual opposition (1924-26: Antonio Graziadei; Arturo Labriola; Angelo Mauri; Luigi Einaudi) it analyses the key role played by Alberto de' Stefani as minister of Finance in the early years of fascist regime. It deals then with the 'experts' (*tecnici*). We include in this category Alberto Beneduce, Federico Flora, Achille Loria, Attilio Da Empoli, Pietro Sitta, Gaetano Zingali, Carmelo Giuseppe Broglia. Given Mussolini's emphasis to self-sufficiency in the production of food and in land reclamation and improvement, it is not surprising that agricultural economists were largely represented in parliament (Giacomo Acerbo, Arrigo Serpieri, Giuseppe Tassinari, Vincenzo Ricchioni; Zeno Vignati). On the contrary, only two 'hardline' corporatists became members of the Parliament: Gino Arias and Agostino Lanzillo.