

Lobbyist David Vienna likes to tell this story to illustrate his pleasure with the California congressional delegation:

In 1981 House and Senate conferees were sitting down to horsetrade on the new Reagan administration's first budget bill. Chief among the Republicans' spending targets was a funding formula for Medicaid, and cuts passed by the Senate were designed to pare spending primarily in the 12 most populated states — particularly in California.

Republican John Danforth, a stately Missourian on the Senate Budget Committee and an ordained Episcopalian minister, opened the discussion on Medicaid. As Vienna, who represents California's two taxing agencies and the controller's office, tells it, Danforth fixed his eyes across the table at Henry Waxman, the Los Angeles Democrat who chairs the House Subcommittee on Health and the Environment, and intoned: "Mr. Waxman, I want you to know that my people in Missouri don't wear Gucci shoes, and they don't shop on Rodeo Drive, and they don't have acupuncture in their Medicaid program. They're poor." Danforth was going to do everything he could to whip those flashy Californians into line.

Flanking Waxman was freshman Bobbi Fiedler, the Northridge Republican who had just been swept into Congress in the wake of her anti-school-busing drive on the Los Angeles school board. Waxman and Fiedler are hardly ideological soulmates. But, Vienna recalls, Fiedler responded to Danforth's pronouncement by rising to give "this wonderful routine on fairness and equity. It was just super. Waxman didn't have to say a thing."

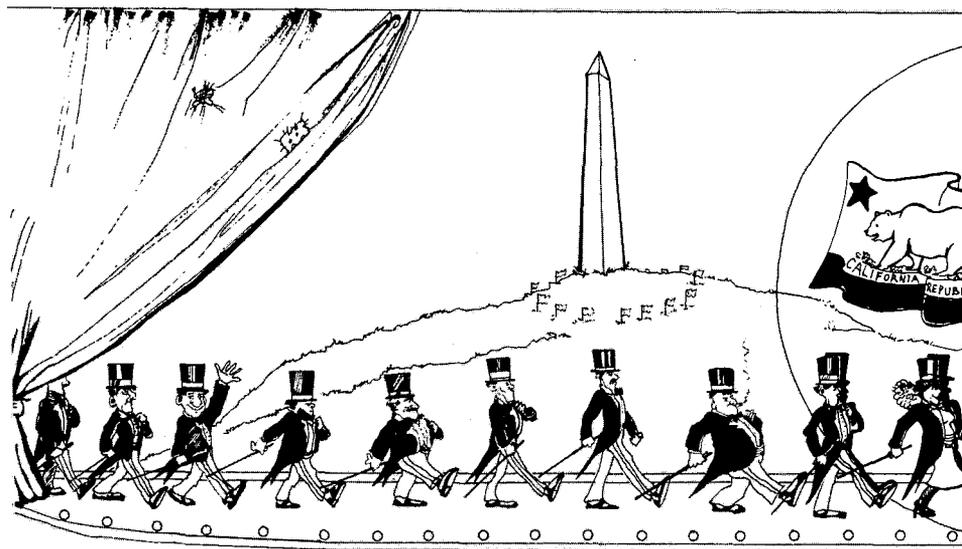
It was a spontaneous show of bipartisan unity from the largest state delegation in the House, and it set the stage for a California victory over the Republican plan.

The anecdote illustrates a trend that Vienna and other lobbyists, journalists, politicians and observers of Congress' largest state delegation have perceived, and one that California Democrats love to talk about: The 45-member California delegation has pulled together into a more cohesive and identifiable force during the 1980s, particularly on matters affecting the state's access to federal money and, to some extent, on the environment.

The evidence crops up in a variety of arenas.

On offshore oil drilling, despite the recent narrow defeat of a four-year

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ANOTHER P

California's congressional delegation moves center stage

By D

drilling moratorium, Californians in Congress have successfully thwarted the Reagan administration's aggressive drilling plans for the environmentally-sensitive central and northern coast and some Southern California waters. California House Democrats also went to court to force the Reagan administration to release \$11.5 million in impounded funds for refugee-assistance programs.

The Burton legacy

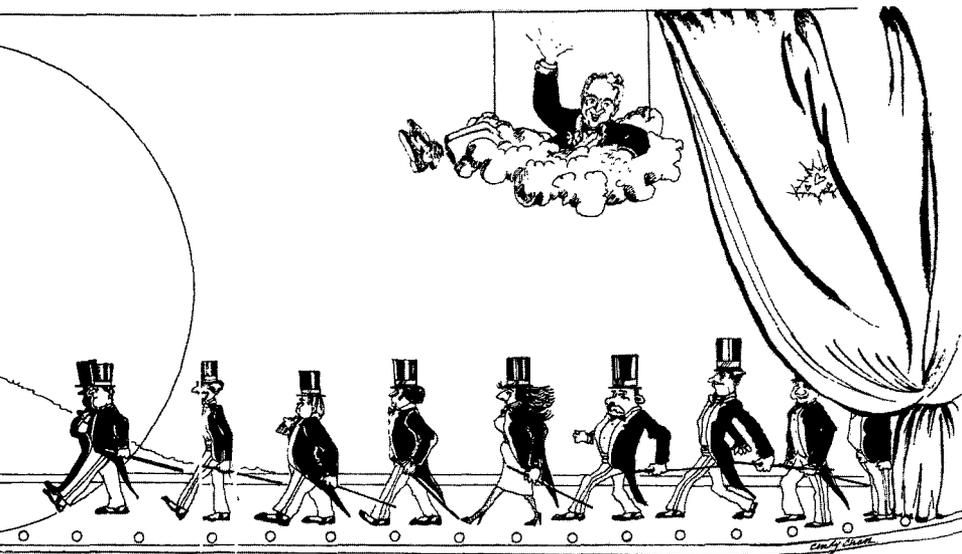
A good part of California's power is a legacy of the late Phil Burton, San Francisco's mountain of a congressman whose still-controversial 1980 redistricting plan gave California Democrats nearly two-thirds dominance of the state's House seats. With that delegation — the largest in a Democrat-controlled House — California enjoys not only numerical muscle but the image of strength that goes along with it.

Lest the picture look too rosy, though, let it be said that there are fissures in the California delegation — some dramatic. The most obvious is that, though individuals from both sides of the aisle sometimes work well together, as a whole the state's 27 Democrats and 18 Republicans operate almost as two separate and distinct delegations, rarely uniting on any issue.

Compared with other large state delegations in the House, California's cohesiveness falls somewhere in the middle. Texans of both parties long have been noted for working in unison for the good of their state. But then, as one California aide noted, "The distinction between Democrats and Republicans in Texas just isn't as delineated as it is in California." On the other end of the spectrum is New York whose 34 lawmakers once were characterized in the *Wall Street Journal* as resembling "a roomful of bickering fishwives."

Most of the organization in the California delegation has been on the Democratic side, led by San Jose's Don Edwards, the elected chairman of the California Democrats and one of the three most-senior members of the delegation. Elected as chair in 1981, the quiet, unassuming Edwards is accorded almost gushy praise by fellow California Democrats for stepping aside and allowing younger colleagues to seize center stage — unlike the blustery Burton, who ruled the delegation with an iron glove.

"Phil had a hard time with all these, what he called 'upward mobiles,'" West Sacramento's Vic Fazio recalls. "He wanted to manage everybody's career. But with Don, it's like a thousand flowers shall bloom."



BURTON LEGACY Congressional delegation to new stage

by Tom Hart

Edwards formalized weekly breakfast meetings of the Democrats that are closed to staff, lobbyists and the press so members could "let their hair down." He also opened a \$65,000-a-year delegation office, staffed by former Federal Election Commission attorney Deborah McFarland and assistant Pamela Barry, to analyze how legislation and administration budget plans will affect California. The office is paid for with \$2000-a-year assessments on each California Democrat's office, plus some miscellaneous funds. The office and its occasional press conferences to herald "California (Democratic) delegation" stands on selected issues have built a notable perception of unity and organization for the state's delegation on Capitol Hill.

A new power

But beyond the perception are more significant developments. Under Edwards' quiet guidance is a teeming crew of young, ambitious mid-career Democrats, many of whom cut their teeth in the most professional and sophisticated state legislature in the nation and who are about to break into their own.

With the combination of the unity that Edwards has bred, the seniority that individual members have built and the aggressiveness and ambition that

imbues the delegation, California could be on the brink of a coalescence of new power in Congress. Gone are the days when Burton and John McFall engaged in a bloody political battle for the House majority leadership and ended up losing it to Texan Jim Wright. Today's California Democrats engage in some unusually selfless political behavior for the advancement of the delegation and state interests.

Take Norm Mineta, the San Jose Democrat who chairs the House Subcommittee on Aviation. A member of the post-Watergate Class of '74, Mineta considered parlaying the respect he had built into a run for the House Democratic whip post, number three position in the House leadership and a rung on the ladder to the speakership.

But the odds-on favorite is Central Valley powerhouse Tony Coelho who seized the rudderless Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee in 1980 and turned it into a campaign money machine to which countless House Democrats are indebted (see page 383).

Mineta withdrew before even mounting a race. He could have been motivated by political reality. Coelho has a lot of chits, and a run against him could be pointless. But his withdrawal fits in with the tone set by Edwards who is

credited with bringing the diverse, ambitious group together.

"We would never have a public fight," Edwards says emphatically.

Then there's Fazio, a veteran of the state Assembly who acknowledges he would like to succeed Coelho as chairman of the DCCC and whom colleagues say deserves the position. Fazio currently holds the purse strings of the state Democratic Party's congressional political action committee.

But Fazio is managing Coelho's campaign for the whip post and concedes he is up against a daunting handicap with his own ambitions — the concentration of too much leadership power in the West. With Wright of Texas the likely next speaker, Tom Foley of Washington in line for majority leader and Coelho almost a shoo-in for whip, a fourth westerner to round out the House leadership undoubtedly would force southern and northeastern lawmakers into a self-protective frenzy.

New Yorker Charles Rangel already is pounding that theme in his effort to knock Coelho out of the whip race, though early indications are that he will be unsuccessful. "I don't want to weaken Tony's chances by falling into a trap . . . of being accused of having a slate operation," Fazio says.

Unlike the speakership, the majority leadership and the whip post, the DCCC chairmanship is not elected by the Democratic Caucus. It will be appointed by the new leadership. If that means Wright, Foley and Coelho — and most in the House believe it does — they will be acutely aware of the political need for a regional spread.

Recognizing this, Fazio ponders, "Are my own ambitions being sublimated? I think they have to be at this point. But I'm not worried about where I'll fit in."

The attitude among California House Democrats toward Coelho's shot at the whip post is akin to a Catholic family's reverence for a son who goes into the priesthood. Not only are they proud of their member's impending achievement, they are mindful that this could be their, and the state's, ticket to political heaven.

But the promise of the California delegation does not rest solely with Tony Coelho. It exists also in the strategic placement of Californians from both parties throughout the House committee system, and the seniority many are attaining — another by-product of Phil Burton's redistricting plan. Safe districts mean the same members return year after year, thus accumulating the seniority necessary to advance toward committee chairmanships.

"We are larded throughout the machinery," Edwards says with a long,

drawn-out air of satisfaction. "If there's a problem, you can turn to almost any California chairman and get something done."

Indeed, shrewd placement of California Democrats through the years has resulted in a current tally of 21 subcommittee chairmanships and four chairmanships of full committees or task forces (see box). California Democrats play a major role on almost any issue that confronts Congress these days, most notably on issues of critical interest to the state:

- Henry Waxman on health care and the environment;
- Leon Panetta, Barbara Boxer and George Miller on the budget;
- Glenn Anderson on highways;
- Norman Mineta on airports and air safety.

At this point, only one of the full chairmanships can yield fruits for California — Augustus Hawkins' stewardship of the education and labor committee which the Los Angeles congressman inherited when Kentuckian Carl D. Perkins died suddenly of a heart attack in 1984. The other full chairmanships belong to Ron Dellums who heads



the District of Columbia panel (a difficult and thankless position since it yields nothing for the home interests), Edward Roybal and George Miller, who chair select committees on aging and children, families and youth, respectively. Though the select committees serve as forums for sweeping social legislation and yield lots of publicity, they hold no budget-authorizing power.

But Miller, who also sits on the budget committee and chairs the interior panel's key subcommittee on water and power resources, is third in line for the interior chairmanship. He is behind Arizona's Morris Udall, the current chair-



man, and Ohio's John Seiberling — both in their late 60s and expected to retire within the next few congresses.

Personal style

The chairmanships are important to the state's congressional power, but they are meaningless if separated from the personal style of the politicians who hold them. A case in point is L.A.'s Waxman, another state Assembly veteran and another Democratic fund-raising whiz. Waxman often is cited these days as one of the most powerful members of the House for much the same reason Coelho is a shoo-in for whip. He raises a lot of money and gives it to other members. Waxman used his L.A.-based fund-raising machine to help out other members of the energy and commerce committee when the Clean Air Act was up for reauthorization in 1982. He was up against the committee chairman, John Dingell of Michigan, who favored relaxing the law, and both men played rough, a committee aide recalls.

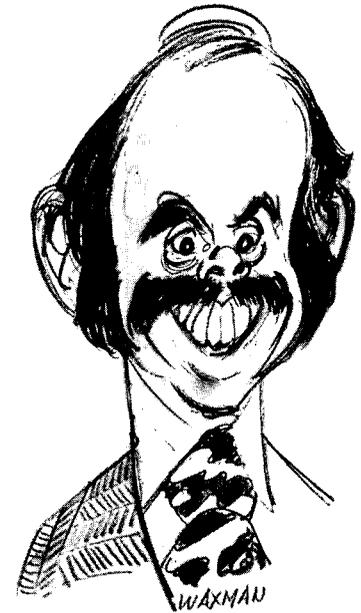
"There is resentment (in the House) about some of the things the California delegation has done, like Henry giving money to other members" both to win the Clean Air Act and to seize the chairmanship of his subcommittee from a more senior member in 1978, the aide said.

But, said the aide (who has 20 years' experience on Capitol Hill) "members like to get money," so the technique exploited by both Waxman and Coelho is predictably effective.

Other California Democrats have achieved national acclaim on given issues, including Leon Panetta of Monterey on budget matters. A three-term member of the House Budget Committee, Panetta is a respected moderate



who was favored by many to take over the chairmanship from Oklahoman Jim Jones. But House rules prohibit a member from serving on the prestigious budget panel beyond three terms, and Panetta lost a hard-fought campaign for a rule waiver from the House Democratic Caucus in December 1984. Though he had to leave the panel, Panetta still is a deputy whip for budget



matters and often is quoted in the *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal* because of his expertise.

Edwards now calls Panetta's loss in the caucus a "misstep" and says, mystified, "Leon never asked the delegation for help." Yet even Edwards cites a danger in acting as a bloc, adding numerical muscle to what some already characterize as the state's image in the House as "the bully on the block."

"We find other states are jealous of

Status and power: congressional committee assignments

DEMOCRATS

Committee chairmen

- Education & Labor** — Augustus Hawkins, Los Angeles
- District of Columbia** — Ronald Dellums, Berkeley
- Select Committee on Aging** — Edward Roybal, Los Angeles
- Select Committee on Children, Families & Youth** — George Miller, Martinez

Subcommittee chairmen

(with full committees in parentheses)

(Agriculture)

- Domestic Marketing, Consumer Relations & Nutrition — Leon Panetta, Monterey
- Livestock, Dairy & Poultry — Tony Coelho, Merced

(Appropriations)

- Legislative Branch — Vic Fazio, West Sacramento
- Treasury, Postal Service & Gen'l Government — Edward Roybal, Los Angeles
- District of Columbia — Julian Dixon, Culver City

(Armed Services)

- Military Installations & Facilities — Ronald Dellums, Berkeley

(Budget)

- Task Force on State & Local Government — George Miller, Martinez
- Task Force on Income Security — Vic Fazio, West Sacramento

(District of Columbia)

- Full committee — Ronald Dellums, Berkeley
- Judiciary & Education — Julian Dixon, Culver City

(Education & Labor)

- Full committee — Augustus Hawkins, Los Angeles
- Elementary, Secondary & Vocational Education — Augustus Hawkins, Los Angeles
- Employment Opportunities — Matthew Martinez, Monterey Park

(Energy & Commerce)

- Health & The Environment — Henry Waxman, Los Angeles

(House Administration)

- Personnel & Police — Leon Panetta, Monterey

(Interior & Insular Affairs)

- Water & Power Resources — George Miller, Martinez

(Judiciary)

- Civil & Constitutional Rights — Don Edwards, San Jose

(Public Works)

- Surface Transportation — Glenn Anderson, San Pedro
- Aviation — Norman Mineta, San Jose

(Science & Technology)

- Transportation & Materials — George Brown, Riverside

(Select Committee on Intelligence)

- Legislation — Anthony Beilenson, Los Angeles

(Select Committee on Aging)

- Full committee — Edward Roybal, Los Angeles
- Retirement Income & Employment — Edward Roybal, Los Angeles

(Select Committee on Children, Families & Youth)

- Full committee — George Miller, Martinez

(Domestic Task Force on Hunger)

- Full committee — Leon Panetta, Monterey

Party and leadership positions —

Democratic Steering & Policy Committee

- Tony Coelho (leadership)
- Henry Waxman (regional)
- Vic Fazio (speaker's appointment)

Majority Whips

- Norman Mineta — Deputy Whip
- Leon Panetta — Deputy Whip for Budget
- Richard Lehman — regional
- Mel Levine — regional
- Vic Fazio — at-large
- Tony Coelho — at-large
- Barbara Boxer — at-large

Speaker's Cabinet

- Tony Coelho
- Don Edwards

REPUBLICANS

Subcommittee ranking members

(Appropriations)

- Legislative Branch — Jerry Lewis, Redlands

(Banking, Finance & Urban Affairs)

- Economic Stabilization — Norm Shumway, Stockton

(Energy & Commerce)

- Energy Conservation & Power — Carlos Moorhead, Pasadena
- Fossil & Synthetic Fuels — William Dannemeyer, Fullerton

(Foreign Affairs)

- Western Hemisphere — Robert Lagomarsino, Santa Barbara

(Government Operations)

- Government Activities & Transportation — Al McCandless, Bermuda Dunes

(House Administration)

- Accounts — Robert Badham, Newport Beach
- Elections — William Thomas, Bakersfield
- Office Systems — William Thomas, Bakersfield

(Interior & Insular Affairs)

- General Oversight & Northwest Power — Charles Pashayan, Fresno
- National Parks & Recreation — Robert Lagomarsino, Santa Barbara

(Judiciary)

- Courts & Civil Liberties — Carlos Moorhead, Pasadena
- Immigration & Refugees — Dan Lungren, Long Beach

(Merchant Marine & Fisheries)

- Oceanography — Norm Shumway, Stockton

(Science & Technology)

- Investigation & Oversight — Ronald Packard, Carlsbad

Party and Leadership positions

Republican Policy Committee

- Robert Badham
- Robert Lagomarsino
- Jerry Lewis

Republican Committee on Committees

- Jerry Lewis

National Republican Congressional Committee

- Robert Lagomarsino
- Jerry Lewis
- William Thomas

Western Regional Whip

- Duncan Hunter



California . . . so it would be self-defeating to talk about our meetings and act as a bloc," says Edwards.

Speaking for the whole California delegation, Republican Jerry Lewis of Redlands is more blunt: "There's great danger in dominating the scene in Congress. The moment we mobilized 45 people, you'd see a big group form out there to cut off our heads."

On the Republican side, 11 Californians are ranking members of House subcommittees, and Southern Californians Lewis, Robert Lagomarsino and Robert Badham serve on the Republican Policy Committee (see box, page 381). Lewis and Lagomarsino also sit on the National Republican Congressional Committee, and Lewis holds a third party leadership position on the Committee on Committees.

Lewis expresses frustration that the state delegation as a whole does not work more closely together but recalls with amusement a University of California political scientist who worked with the Californians several years ago and tried to bring them together.

"He just walked away from here kinda scratching his head," the Redlands Republican says. "We seem incapable . . . of working together, except on selected issues. We tried to have some joint breakfasts. But we found you could get more members to go to separate (party) meetings."

Indeed, even within the parties are occasional rancorous splits, inevitable when big egos and ambitions — not to mention competing constituencies — clash. One notable Democratic split came in 1984 when Panetta, who represents agricultural areas dependent on seasonal workers, pushed for inclusion of a "guest worker" program in the Simpson-Mazzoli immigration reform

bill. Civil libertarians like Edwards were outraged, as were California Hispanic lawmakers like Esteban Torres and Roybal who castigated Panetta's plan on the House floor as a return to "slave labor."

And despite his influence, Coelho was defeated by colleagues when protections for the Tuolumne River — precluding diversion of irrigation water for Coelho's Central Valley farmers — were included in the 1984 California wilderness bill, another legislative legacy of Phil Burton.

On the Republican side, two House members who left their seats to challenge Alan Cranston for the Senate — Fiedler and Silicon Valley entrepreneur



Ed Zschau — didn't manage to win the support of all their colleagues. Southern California conservatives William Dannemeyer and David Dreier in the

closing days of the primary race endorsed L.A. television commentator Bruce Herschensohn.

The Republicans are generally less organized than California Democrats, though they do meet regularly under the chairmanship of Carlos Moorhead of Pasadena.

In defending the congressional delegation against charges of disorganization and in-fighting, though, Lewis echoes sentiments that seem to be programmed into the vocabulary of every California lawmaker, Republican or Democrat. "The reality is, you could go from the tip of Florida all the way up to New England, and you'd have people representing coastline, urban centers, farm country . . . and I'm sure our delegation shows more unity than all the congressmen from those areas, yet we're talking about roughly the same size area with the same diversity of people."

The diversity of the state — and the power its lawmakers have built in Congress — will come into play again after the 1990 census. Redistricting is a coming political battle that lobbyist Vienna



speculates could unravel the tenuous balance of cooperation that the California delegation exercises today.

"You have a real possibility of the Republicans taking over . . . the Legislature by the time of the next reapportionment," says Vienna. "If that happened, the Democrats are going to become very, very uneasy, and Republicans who are currently comfortable are going to be drawn into the fight. This is one of the reasons why (House Speaker Thomas P. "Tip") O'Neill, Wright, Foley, Coelho and Fazio are going to pay special attention to California. The reapportionment of those congressional seats could easily flip the balance in the House." 

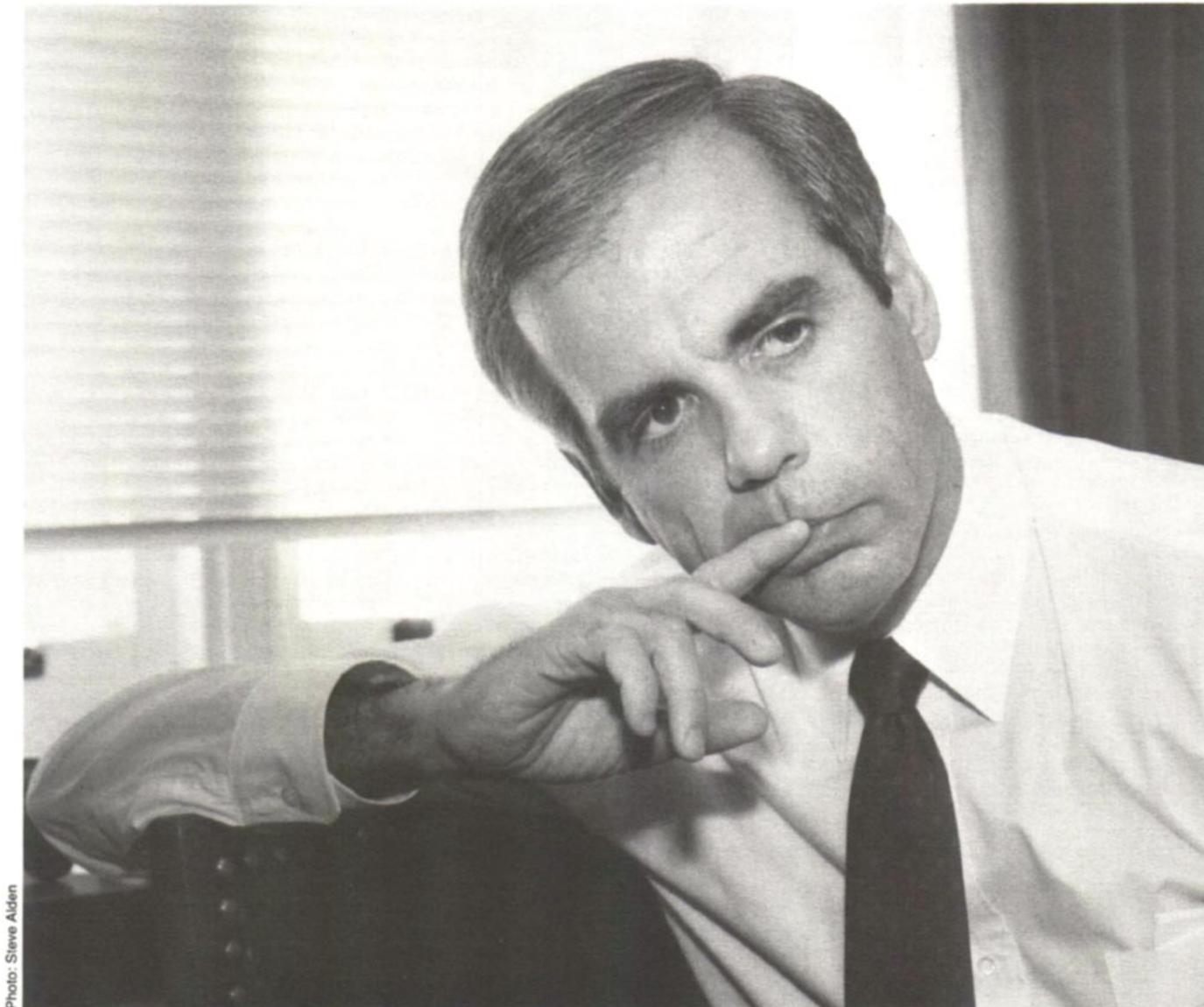


Photo: Steve Alden

THE MERCED MILKMAN

A leading role for Tony Coelho

By RICARDO PIMENTEL

Taking cow teats in hand or attaching them to a machine, Tony Coelho saved his dairy farming family a bundle. As he explains it, the family business could ill afford hiring extra hands so Coelho, now the fast-track House Democrat from the San Joaquin Valley, worked the farm before sunrise and long after sundown, attending a Dos Palos high school in between.

Coelho, 43, is still milking.

As chairman of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC), his job is to get House Democrats elected and reelected. That takes money. Before Coelho assumed the

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job in 1981, business contributors and political action committees were about as fidgety as un milked cows on cold pre-dawn mornings, much preferring to sidle up to Republican milking machines.

That has changed a bit. A moribund committee before Coelho's ascendancy, the DCCC went from \$1.8 million raised in the 1979-80 contribution cycle to \$6 million in the following cycle. The figure is estimated to go as high as \$15 million in the most recent cycle. Coelho beefed up direct-mail efforts, aggressively targeted vulnerable Republicans nationwide, built a media center where Democrats can make their own television and radio spots and criss-crossed the country to drum up money and support for Democratic candidates. In 1985, friends say, he spent a total of one weekend at home with his family.

The GOP counterpart group's four-to-one advantage in contributions has now been whittled to two-to-one. Coelho is credited with staving off the expected GOP rout of House