

# The Two Party Pork Barrel

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by Walter Shapiro

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The calm before the storm or the prelude to the dullest election in recent memory? Four months before the New Hampshire primary, it seems implausible that any Democrat would bother to walk to the polls on a freezing day in February to choose among faceless men like Jimmy Carter, Terry Sanford, Lloyd Bentsen, Morris Udall, Fred Harris and Henry Jackson. I'm convinced that there is no one in America—with the possible exception of David Broder—who would recognize them all in a crowded elevator. On the Republican side things are even more baffling. Ronald Reagan is about to challenge Jerry Ford, but it is difficult to imagine an issue on which they disagree. Actually, that's a slight exaggeration. The other day I heard Reagan denounce the federally imposed 55-mile-per-hour speed limit on his syndicated radio show.

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All this does not bode well for the scores of writers who dream of being the Theodore White of the 1976 campaign. My guess is that the major political book to come out of the 1976 presidential race will be on the Secret Service, not the candidates. Another hunch is that no one will get more than 14 per cent of the vote in any of the crowded Democratic primaries. Since, under new party rules, 15 per cent of the vote is needed to win delegates in a primary, we may be in for the ultimate in deadlocked conventions. The race for the Republican nomination will probably revolve around a series of stirring debates between Ford and Reagan over who is the better administrator. The end result? Things going on pretty much as they have. Ford will be elected to a full term and the voters will celebrate by giving him another Congress almost as overwhelmingly Democratic and liberal as the last. In short, four more years of four more years.

If that happens, political analysts finally may be forced to find some logic in the continuing pattern of Republican Presidents and Democratic Congresses. Up to now, they have tended to dismiss the last eight years of divided government as little more than a short-term aberration. Typical is Kevin Phillips, the author of *The Emerging Republican Majority* and perhaps the most interesting current political theorist. In his recent book, *Mediacracy*, Phillips acknowledges that “debunkers of the idea of a ‘new majority’ [Phillips’ theoretical obsession] raise a telling point: Based on historical precedents, no new presidential majority could be taking shape without bringing a Congressional majority in its wake.” Phillips responds much like a Ptolemaic astronomer faced with the Copernican Revolution. Rather than abandon his theory, Phillips tries to save it with a few minor adjustments. He largely blames the failure of the Republicans to win control of Congress in 1968

and 1972 on the increase in ticket-splitting—yet develops no convincing rationale to explain why Nixon voters across the country felt compelled to vote for Democratic congressional candidates.

In their elaborate efforts to divine the national will, Phillips and other less inventive electoral theorists have neglected a much simpler explanation for the continuation of divided government: it’s what the voters want. The combination of a Republican President and a Democratic Congress provides a majority of the electorate with tangible benefits they couldn’t get if one party controlled both the White House and Capitol Hill. To understand what these benefits may be, we must first take a slight detour to discuss the real differences between the two parties.

A generation ago, the differences seemed apparent—the Democrats were advocates of big government and the Republicans weren’t. It was as simple as that. A look at the current federal

budget reveals how outmoded these distinctions have become. Under Nixon and Ford, federal spending has swelled to more than \$360 billion a year—more than double the size of Lyndon Johnson's 1968 budget. Now Ford is trying to win political points as a fiscal conservative by holding 1977 spending to \$395 billion.

By the late 1960s, social issues provided a new shorthand for distinguishing between the two parties. The Democrats took the high road, the Republicans the low. The orthodox interpretation of the McGovern debacle is that his campaign seemed so obsessively concerned with abortion, amnesty, gay rights, and the lettuce boycott that it drove Democrats who were conservative on social issues (many of whom had voted for George Wallace in 1968 and the 1972 primaries) to support the reelection of the President. It's an interesting theory, but it doesn't seem to have much relevance for 1976, since the social issues that promoted cleavages during the 1960s have generally disappeared. Remember campus disorders? The only activism on college campuses these days comes from students protesting that they aren't getting enough job training. Amnesty was defused by none other than Jerry Ford. Drugs are no longer the center of national attention: marijuana use is increasingly accepted and the use of "hard" drugs has become less visible. Crime is still a serious problem, but voters have grown increasingly sophisticated about simplistic political solutions. Just because Frank Rizzo is mayor of Philadelphia doesn't mean that the city is filled with brotherly love. Abortion still arouses passions on both sides, but recent polls indicate that even a majority of Catholics support the Supreme Court decision legalizing it. That leaves busing as the only issue capable of arousing all-consuming passions. But the recent rash of liberal defections in the Senate indicates that outspoken supporters of busing are becoming about as numerous as Israeli admirers of Idi Amin.

This emphasis on social issues has tended to blur much more significant differences between the two parties. To my mind, the important distinction is that Republicans support the "military pork barrel" and Democrats are wedded to the "social pork barrel." When either party talks of cutting the federal budget, it is invariably referring to the opposition's pork barrel programs, not its own. Kevin Phillips, whose prose sometimes seems a parody of modern social science, puts it this way: "The important distinction appears to lie between that segment of the knowledge sector *essentially engaged in social and human resources endeavors*—academicians, urban planners, journalists, social-welfare experts—and *those whose expertise is spent in the direction of military and aerospace research, product marketing, and industrial technology.*"

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### The Social Pork Barrel

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We all have a fairly good sense of who benefits from the military pork barrel, but the concept of "social pork barrel" requires a bit more elaboration. In the early 1970s Edith Green—a Democratic congresswoman from Oregon who grew increasingly disenchanted with liberal social welfare nostrums—began using the phrase "Education-Poverty Industrial Complex." The actual term "social pork barrel" comes from David Stockman, a former aide to Republican Congressman John Anderson, who used it as the title of a compelling article in the spring 1975 issue of *The Public Interest*.

Stockman argues that wasteful subsidy programs for social services have replaced rivers and harbors legislation as the way in which legislators can deliver pet projects to their constituents: "The billions that pass through the social welfare budget each year are anchored in place by political sinews as sturdy as those which line the Internal Revenue Code. . . . The care and maintenance of the social welfare

spending pipeline that extends to each of the 435 Congressional districts in the nation have now become a central preoccupation of Members and their staffs." Stockman's thesis is that in an era of limited government resources, we won't be able to finance expensive liberal social programs like national health insurance and a guaranteed annual income unless we eliminate many of the other subsidies that make up the social pork barrel.

While interesting in its own right, Stockman's concept of "social pork barrel" can also be used to characterize the philosophy of the Democratic Party.

There is now an awareness that a large portion of the electorate would be adversely affected by any significant cuts in the military budget. In addition to the three million soldiers and civilians on the Pentagon's payroll, there are another 1.5 million Americans directly employed by defense contractors. When you add those indirectly dependent on military spending, the number is many times larger. Shifts in federal funding patterns can plunge entire cities into mini-depressions like that of Seattle in the early 1970s.

What is not so clearly recognized is that there are millions of Americans who are equally dependent on the social pork barrel. Most of these people are convinced that they are working to solve the nation's pressing social problems, much as the executives at Grumman Aircraft are probably genuinely concerned about the growth of Soviet military strength. While those with strong ties to the military tend to be disproportionately Republican, those whose jobs are provided by the social pork barrel are understandably likely to be active Democrats. One telling illustration is provided by Daniel Moynihan's account of *The Politics of a Guaranteed Income*. Moynihan makes clear that the most damaging opposition to Richard Nixon's Family Assistance Plan came from the left, rather than from Republican conservatives con-

cerned about "welfare chiselers" getting something for nothing. In hindsight, it is easy to understand why a group like the National Association of Social Workers would be deeply threatened by a plan to provide cash grants to the poor, rather than services. Lyndon Johnson's Great Society is now ridiculed for having provided more jobs for middle-class "poverty professionals" than direct aid to the poor. Kevin Phillips is close to the mark in *Mediocracy* when he notes that "various studies of Great Society programs have shown how little money—often 10-25 percent—actually made its way through the maze of bureaucratic, consultant, and business-contractor overhead into the hands of the poor."

Stockman's article provides some telling examples that this pattern did not end with the Great Society. In fact, it can be argued that these middle-class subsidy programs have been accentuated by seven years of a Republican President and a Democratic Congress. Take the amendments

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to the Social Security Act that were designed to provide a broad range of social-psychological services to public assistance recipients. The goal was to help the poor become independent of welfare, but the result has been to annually provide \$2.5 billion of federal funds to help support a host of day-care centers, recreation programs for the elderly, summer camp programs for the young, family counseling services and job-training centers. Rather than reducing dependency on welfare, this program has made thousands of social service workers dependent on the federal budget for their jobs. What makes matters worse is that often these services are no longer even targeted at the poor. The program has been reorganized since Stockman's article appeared. The new legislation (known as Title XX) is so complicated that consulting firms have had a field day interpreting it for states and local governments. A report commissioned by the Child Welfare League explains that "low income people" are "the basic target group for the Title XX support." But it then goes on to define "low income people" as anyone "at or below 115 percent of the state's median income level . . . ." This means—believe it or not—that probably 70 per cent of the population is now eligible for federal assistance under a program designed for welfare recipients.

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### 'Forces of Change'?

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Public employees are yet another beneficiary of the Democratic Party's social pork barrel. The federal civil service has had a definite liberal bias since the New Deal, but only recently has the identification of government workers with the Democratic Party become pronounced. In Congress, it is the conservative Republicans who mount the generally futile efforts to delay cost-of-living bonuses and raises to already overpaid federal workers. Another significant trend is the growing importance of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) within the Democratic Party. No major Democrat seems uncomfortable in the embrace of these unions—although they are largely responsible for New York's harrowing financial crisis.

Stephen Schlesinger's recent book, *The New Reformers*, provides an ideal illustration of the widespread failure to make a connection between unions like AFSCME and the increasing size of government budgets. Schlesinger's book is largely an uncritical paean of praise for the "forces of change" within the Democratic Party. Along with obligatory chapters on the blacks, the women, the gays, the Chicanos, and the Puerto Ricans, Schlesinger delineates the schism in labor between those unions loyal to George Meany and those identified with the reform wing of the party. It makes for unintentionally revealing reading. Jerry Wurf, the president of AFSCME, is described in glowing terms as a "vibrant, sparkling iconoclast." Schlesinger then goes on to quote one Victor Gotbaum, "a dark, shaggy, articulate man, one of Wurf's principal lieutenants who heads the influential New York local of AFSCME." Gotbaum's predictable tirade against George Meany is not worth repeating. But while portraying Gotbaum as a liberal hero, Schlesinger neglects to mention that the exorbitant contracts won by Gotbaum's union are a major cause of New York's budget deficit. Nowhere in *The New Reformers* is there even a hint that the interests of the average taxpayer and those of Victor Gotbaum's AFSCME may not entirely coincide.

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### Rational Self-Interest

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None of this, however, explains why the American voter may be displaying rational self-interest when he elects a Republican President and a Democratic Congress. Divided government means that the military pork barrel is dominant in the White House

and the social pork barrel in Congress. The advantages of this arrangement over one-party control should be evident. It must be remembered that Democrats also tend to be critical of military spending and Republicans are likely to be skeptical about new social programs. If the Democrats controlled both the White House and Congress, the military pork barrel might be threatened. Conversely, if the Republicans somehow managed to obtain a congressional majority to go along with their hold on the presidency, the continuation of the social pork barrel might be jeopardized.

But the underlying ideology of both parties is "Don't Rock the Boat." The presidential candidacy of Henry Jackson is enough to indicate that not all Democrats share a knee-jerk horror of all things military. But Jackson must overcompensate for his hawkishness by being especially zealous in his support of the social pork barrel. Similarly, Hubert Humphrey's surprisingly strong showing in the 1972 California primary can be attributed to widespread fears that George McGovern would cost defense workers their jobs.

Conservative opposition to the social pork barrel is also often more theoretical than real. David Stockman notes that in Congress "the political maintenance capabilities of the system are so strong that all except the most extreme and idiosyncratic conservatives are eventually brought into the consensus. . . ." They may protest when a program is initially proposed, but before long they are voting for annual appropriations just like their Democratic colleagues.

The best indication that the American voter wants both subsidy programs going full blast is the political fate of Barry Goldwater and George McGovern—the only two presidential candidates who really threatened the status quo. In 1964 it was feared that Goldwater would dismantle the entire social welfare bureaucracy. In 1972 McGovern was portrayed as a man who would decimate the military bud-

get. Both times the election results were overwhelmingly pro-subsidy.

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### The Subsidy Party Always Wins

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With this hold over both political parties, the millions of beneficiaries of the federal pork barrel should be sanguine about the future. But when your livelihood depends on the vagaries of the political process, it's dangerous to be over-confident. The anti-military rhetoric of most Democrats is enough to arouse some fears. And the budget-cutting efforts of governors like California's Jerry Brown raise the spectre of a possible new alliance between disenchanted liberals and old-fashioned conservatives.

That's why a divided federal government is needed to minimize the chances of any significant alterations in either subsidy program. Divided government alone is not sufficient—the Republicans must control the White House and the Democrats the Congress. The survival of the military pork barrel requires a sympathetic President and Secretary of Defense. An administration committed to trimming the military budget could probably prevail against a pro-Pentagon Congress. In contrast, Congress is the key to the social pork barrel. As the legislative problems of Harry Truman and Jack Kennedy indicated, social welfare programs can be easily throttled by a conservative coalition in Congress.

If, as I suspect, Jerry Ford is reelected along with another overwhelmingly Democratic Congress, we will begin a second decade of divided government. Sooner or later, the political analysts are going to notice that we have entered into a new age: the politics of permanent pork barrel. As long as the Democrats control Congress and the Republicans run the Defense Department, the chances of wiping out these economically draining subsidies will remain scant. The question is how long can the American economy survive giving the voters what they clearly seem to want? ■

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# This Time Everybody's Got a CREEP

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by Bruce F. Freed

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Jeb Stuart Magruder, former deputy director of the Committee to Re-Elect the President, couldn't have been closer to the mark when he wrote in his Watergate mea culpa, *An American Life*, that "the significance of the 1972 Nixon campaign . . . has been obscured by Watergate, but its lessons will not be ignored by politicians of both parties who plan future presidential campaigns."

As the 1976 presidential campaign gets underway, those lessons are being studied very carefully by campaign planners. John T. Calkins, one of President Ford's top political aides, openly confesses his admiration of the managerial side of the original CREEP. He calls the Nixon operation "a masterfully done political reelection job despite Watergate." CREEP, he adds, "is an indication of the management and accounting organization needed for future campaigns."

What sinister force has brought the

CREEP style back in presidential politics? Nothing other than the 1974 campaign finance law—the very law that was passed at the behest of Common Cause to prevent future Watergates. In an ironic twist, that legislation has ended up helping to institutionalize the CREEP model of campaign organization, a development that has very serious implications for American politics.

At first glance, the 1976 campaign organizations now taking shape bear little resemblance to what made CREEP so notorious. There are no Maurice Stanses flying around the country with attache cases scooping up illegal cash contributions; John Mitchells are not ordering their lieutenants to draw up plans for spying on the opposition. But cut away the tainted money and the illegal acts and you'll find in today's campaign organizations major similarities to CREEP.

The underlying structure of CREEP is succinctly described in *Jaws of Victory*, an analysis of the 1972 presidential election by the liberal

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*Bruce F. Freed reports on campaign finance for Congressional Quarterly.*