The Personal Vote

Constituency Service and Electoral Independence

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Introduction

Article 1 of the United States Constitution contains ten sections setting out in detail the structure, powers, and duties of the Congress, along with certain prohibitions on the exercise of the legislative power. Aside from specifying a few formal qualifications for membership, however, the Constitution contains nothing on the powers and duties of the individual members of Congress. To be sure, the Founders were operating in the context of an indigenous tradition of representative government, much of which they could reasonably presume would transfer to the new national government. Still, it is noteworthy how little the framing document constrains the individual members of Congress in the performance of their collective duties.

While the Constitution is unspecific about the behavior of individual representatives, political science is not. An extensive literature describes the way in which individual members of Congress carry out their representational responsibilities. For example, studies of the relationship between legislative roll call voting and district interests, as measured by demographic and economic characteristics, have typically found little or no relationship, possibly suggesting that modern American representatives are not very conscientious. More recent studies, relying on survey measures of constituent opin-

ion, have found stronger relationships between constituency preferences and roll call voting on at least some issues. But many constituents have little information about the issues and their representatives' positions, so doubts about the strength of the representative linkage continue to exist.[1]

Another large literature examines how representatives view their "roles," in particular their representational roles. Are representatives trustees, who use their own best judgment to decide what is in their constituents' interest, or are they delegates, who bend to their constituents' expressed will? Moreover, do representatives see their constituencies as the districts which elect them or as the larger whole of which their districts are parts? How do their role perceptions affect their behavior, and how do they resolve the conflicts that surely occur?[2]

The most recent research raises the question of whether prevailing conceptions of representation are sufficiently rich to encompass the observed activities of representatives. Representation is generally viewed as policy responsiveness, as the representative responding to and articulating the policy positions or ideologies of constituents in the legislature. But in the contemporary administrative state representatives increasingly engage in and are rewarded for ombudsman-like activities which are only indirectly mentioned in the Constitution and rarely treated in the professional literature. Indeed, much of the behavior of American representatives has little programmatic or ideological content. The contemporary representative serves constituents individually and collectively, keeps in close touch with them, and generally tries to cultivate a personal relationship with them, based on accessibility and trust.[3]

This newer research suggests that theories of representation must expand their focus. Modern political science has equated representation with policy responsiveness and symbolic responsiveness: how faithfully does the representative respond to the wishes of the district in words and deeds? Representation also includes allocation responsiveness: does the representative work to ensure that his or her district gets a fair share of government projects, programs, and expenditures? This component of representation is generally viewed in a pejorative light, as "pork barrel." Finally, representation includes service responsiveness: how assiduously does the representative respond to individual and group requests for assistance in dealing with the government bureaucracy? Since represen-

tation involves all of these components and perhaps others, to investigate policy responsiveness alone would yield an incomplete picture.[4]

The obvious solution is to study what representatives do, regardless of the fit between behavior and prevailing theories. If representatives wish to remain representatives, their behavior will be calculated to please constituents. Thus, what representatives do reveals something about what constituents want them to do, and both in turn provide information about the contemporary representative-constituency relationship. If aspects of the relationship other than policy responsiveness loom large, then either some traditional notions of representation are too narrow, or much of what representatives do and constituents want is not representation.

This book is about the underemphasized aspects of contemporary representation, specifically service and allocation responsiveness—constituency service for short. It describes the behavior of representatives and the perceptions of constituents in two developed democracies with single-member district systems, the United States and Great Britain. Service and allocation responsiveness have come to be increasingly important components of the representational relationship, with consequences far more extensive than simply a change in the nature of representation. Constituency service constitutes an important means by which representatives earn personalized electoral support—votes based not on party membership or association with a particular government but on the individual identities and activities of the candidates. From this simple proposition a great deal follows. Important features of democratic political processes vary with the ways by which members of the national legislature gain and retain their seats. To the extent that members develop personalized electoral support, they are able, should they so desire, to withstand efforts by national leaders to control and coordinate their behavior. This ability has obvious consequences for the style of policy making and the types of policies characteristic of the political system. Moreover, the manner in which members of representative assemblies gain office has broader consequences for the development of governmental institutions. Representatives who believe themselves responsible for their own electoral fate are less likely to accept government practices and institutions which deny them the means to exercise individual influence than are representatives whose fate lies in the hands of the national party or

other authority. Again, the consequences for the style and substance of policy making are obvious. In general, a polity's electoral processes, policy processes, and institutional structure are bound together: if one element of the constellation changes, the others will adjust toward a new equilibrium. Before we proceed to a full development of this argument, it will be helpful to review some recent electoral trends in Great Britain and the United States.

Recent Electoral Trends

In 1967 Donald Stokes argued that national forces in elections to the United States House of Representatives were becoming increasingly prominent.[5] A partition of the variance among House districts into national, state, and local components appeared to show that the proportion of variance attributable to national forces had increased over time and the proportion attributable to state and especially to district forces had decreased. Such trends seemed reasonable in that the development of mass communications should naturally work to erode local and regional differences. Stokes then contrasted the interelection swings in party shares of the vote in House elections with those observed in British parliamentary elections. The British swings showed much greater uniformity, consistent with the national character of modern British elections.

Whatever the soundness of Stokes's methodology, his conclusions came under challenge almost immediately. Robert Erikson noted that the electoral advantage accruing to incumbency increased markedly in the mid-1960s, and David Mayhew drove home the point with a classic series of histograms.[6] These diagrams show how a condition of reasonably balanced two-party competition gave way to a condition in which incumbents of both parties won by comfortable margins (Figure I.1). Over the course of a generation the marginal districts largely vanished. Since individual incumbency is by definition a district level force, the Erikson-Mayhew findings demonstrated that the ascendant nationalization process described by Stokes had halted and reversed.

Consistent with the increasing advantage of incumbency, the swing ratio—the relationship between seats won and votes gained—declined during the postwar period from approximately 3:1 (roughly in accord with the venerable if atheoretical cube law) to approximately 2:1.[7] As the number of marginal districts declined, fewer

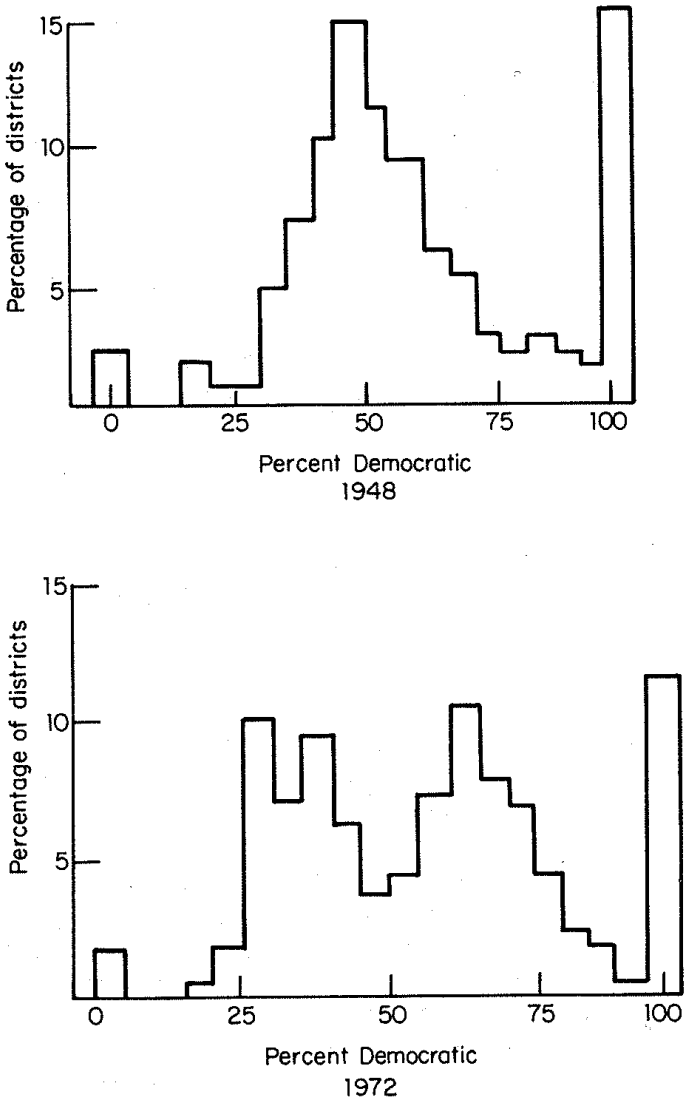

FIGURE I.1. House vote in districts with incumbents running, 1948 and 1972. *Source*: Morris P. Fiorina, "The Decline of Collective Responsibility in American Politics," reprinted by permission of *Daedalus* 109 (Summer 1980).

seats were at risk to vote swings of any given size. Consequently the swing ratio dropped.

Other studies described the deterioration of traditional ties between national conditions and House voting, namely the tendency

for midterm elections to serve as referenda on the performance of the incumbent administration and the decline of presidential coattails. Only seven years after Stokes's study, Walter Dean Burnham was describing the increasing separation of the presidential and congressional electoral arenas. Shortly thereafter, scholars using newly available data were asserting that "congressional elections were local not national events," that incumbency was "the most important single factor" in House elections, and that national responsibility in American politics focused on the president alone. Whatever the validity of the earlier findings, their projection failed to forecast the voting trends in American legislative elections.[8]

Meanwhile, the nationally structured British system began to show signs of erosion in the 1970s. The ability of the two major parties to structure the electoral system declined, and the ebb and flow of party competition in mid-1970s British elections made that decline evident to all. The Liberals made a major resurgence, aided in considerable part by a grass roots, locally oriented strategy.[9] Regionally based nationalist parties also emerged with renewed strength. By the early 1980s the new Social Democratic–Liberal alliance took almost as much of the popular vote as Labour. Amid such electoral upheavals the once uniform swing became less so. Concepts familiar to American scholars began to appear in British discussions:

> The 1974–1979 swing was not uniform: it varied more from seat to seat than in any other election since 1950. Because of the greater attention he can command in the media and the constituency services he can render, an incumbent MP [Member of Parliament] is more likely than a prospective parliamentary candidate to be able to establish a personal vote, consisting of those who support him as an individual rather than as a party representative . . . the more important and unexpected change is the reduction in the number of marginal constituencies . . . on average, about 12 seats would change hands for each 1% swing. However, the equivalent tables produced after the 1964 and 1966 elections showed that about 18 seats would change hands for each 1% swing. This dramatic reduction in the number of seats liable to change hands has undermined the "cube law," which if it holds, does result in practice in about 18 seats changing hands for each 1% swing.
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> In the 1970s both major parties won more seats by large two-party majorities: the distribution of the two-party vote widened and flattened. Before 1974 it was unimodal with a peak near its centre; the distribution is now bimodal with peaks where both parties win safe seats by moderately safe majorities.[10]

Nonuniform national swings? Incumbency effects? Vanishing marginals? Declining swing ratios? Students of American elections may experience a rush of *déja vu*, although the magnitude of the changes in Britain is small compared to that in the United States. Given the past stability of the British electoral system, however, even such small changes drew notice.

Although the electoral changes within each of the two countries are complex and multifaceted, and undoubtedly derive from somewhat distinct sources, they are nevertheless intimately connected, and the connection lies in the efforts of professional politicians operating within single-member district electoral systems. Consider the modern U.S. House of Representatives. Most of its members view politics as a career and care a great deal about retaining their office, even if most are generally on the lookout for an open Senate seat. As compared to their nineteenth century amateur predecessors, modern representatives serve longer, win re-election more dependably, and work harder at their responsibilities, as shown by the lengthening of congressional sessions, the increase in the number of committee and subcommittee meetings, and the expansion of district activities. Typically representatives struggle to establish a solid personal base of support during their first few terms and work thereafter to maintain that personal base against various sources of erosion, often making strenuous efforts and great personal sacrifices in order to do so.[11] Their efforts are understandable. As politics has become a profession, and service in the House a realistic and attractive career, job security has become as important for the professional representative as for any other professional—but more problematic.

In contrast to the House, the British Parliament has long been a bastion of amateur politics. In recent years, however, the frequency of part-time parliamentarians has declined, age at entry has decreased, and tenure has increased. The voluntary retirement rate now stands at about 10 percent, actually lower than in House elections of the 1970s. Moreover, there has been a steady increase in the number of elections lost before the first electoral success of new members of Parliament (MPs), suggesting that modern MPs are willing to endure more for the prospect of eventual success. As a result of such trends, career politicians increasingly make up the Cabinet and House of Commons.[12]

Career representatives have compelling personal motives to concern themselves with the good opinion and, by implication, the well-

being of their constituents. Solicitude for constituents should vary closely with the importance of their votes for the representative's life goals. But if the desire to be re-elected explains why representatives pay attention to those important for their re-election, the fundamental electoral law has much to do with defining the particular individuals who are important. Candidates who run at large or on national party lists in proportional representation systems are not formally responsible for representing a specific geographical area; they have no particular district to represent. By comparison, in single-member district systems representatives have geographical areas to call their own. These systems present an opportunity and create a motivation for relationships between represented and representatives that are more personal, particularistic, and idiosyncratic than in other kinds of systems.[13] Such relationships are often based on relatively nonpartisan, nonideological, and nonprogrammatic constituency service—the various activities carried out by representatives on behalf of individuals, groups, and organizations in the district. Expanding on the traditional legislative role, the representative engaged in constituency service acts as an ombudsman or broker concerned with the particular impact on the district of the policies of the national government.

Building a personal following is not the only source of safety for representatives in democratic societies; it may not even be a major source outside the United States. In most systems there is some security in the fact that electorates manifest a high degree of inertia in their behavior. Party loyalties are sufficiently widespread and stable, and the level of public information is sufficiently low, that violent shifts in partisan support seldom occur, though recent trends in both Britain and the United States lessen somewhat the degree of stability expected from these sources. Electoral fluctuations do occur, however, and such fluctuations need not be massive for incumbents, particularly those who hold marginal seats, to regard defeat as a genuine possibility.[14]

This study explores the connection between constituency effort and the personal following that representatives develop. To reiterate, numerous aspects of democratic politics reflect the process by which members of the national legislature gain and retain their seats. To the extent that members manage to build and maintain bases of personal support in their different constituencies, they are better able to resist attempts by national leaders to control and coordinate

their behavior, should members desire to do so. National leaders in turn must take this independence into account when attempting to formulate and secure the passage of legislation. Moreover, the processes by which members gain and retain office have long-range consequences for the evolution of governmental institutions. Representatives who consider themselves responsible for their own electoral fates are less likely to accept government practices and institutions that deny them the means to exercise individual influence than are representatives whose fate lies in the hands of the national party or other higher authority.

In sum, a polity's electoral process, its policy processes, and the finer details of its institutional structure are bound together. If one changes, the others adjust accordingly. Thus, even small features of the electoral process have implications larger than might at first appear.

The Concept of a Personal Vote

The personal vote refers to that portion of a candidate's electoral support which originates in his or her personal qualities, qualifications, activities, and record. The part of the vote that is not personal includes support for the candidate based on his or her partisan affiliation, fixed voter characteristics such as class, religion, and ethnicity, reactions to national conditions such as the state of the economy, and performance evaluations centered on the head of the governing party. These nonpersonal factors account for the lion's share of the variation in election outcomes, especially outside the United States.

Even in the United States the single most important variable affecting the congressional vote remains the voter's partisan identification. Partisan attachments lend stability to the electoral results, although the level of loyalty and its impact on the vote have declined in recent years. Possibly as a consequence, short-term forces now determine electoral outcomes more often than they did a generation ago. Among these various short-term forces, two have to do with programmatic considerations. One force is the incumbent's voting record and position on the issues. Only a minority have any accurate information about these matters, and fewer still know as much about the typical challenger. In contrast, evaluations of executive performance and national issues and conditions make smaller

informational demands on the voter. Economic conditions in particular have been salient in recent congressional election campaigns. Even so, the impact of economic conditions on voting for Congress is smaller than popularly assumed, and the precise mechanisms by which it works remain controversial.[15]

Within the set of possible short-term forces only the activities and characteristics of the candidates have increased in significance in recent years. The importance of incumbency has grown dramatically. Incumbents win because they are better known and more favorably evaluated by any of a wide variety of measures. And they are better known and more favorably evaluated because, among other factors, they bombard constituents with missives containing a predominance of favorable material, maintain extensive district office operations to service their constituencies, use modern technology to target groups of constituents with particular policy interests, and vastly outspend their opponents.[16]

Recent electoral trends in Britain are not entirely dissimilar from those in the United States, although qualitatively similar patterns should not obscure the large quantitative differences. Partisan affiliation is an even better predictor of voting choice in the United Kingdom than in the United States, but in Britain too the influence of party loyalty has declined in recent years. Economic conditions have also played a major role in recent British elections, as have such issues as immigration, devolution, and the European Economic Community (EEC). The effects of issues and economic conditions are generally associated with the national parties and their leaders, not the individual members, under the rationale that individual MPs simply do not have the independence to carve out distinctive programmatic identities. In recent years, however, a spate of readoption fights and increasing dissent in the Commons have intensified the differences between individual and party positions.[17] If these trends continue, the voting records and policy stands of MPs could become more of a factor in future elections.

The term "incumbency" rarely figures in discussions of British politics. Generally the characteristics of the candidates for MP are seldom regarded as consequential. Nonetheless, even before the recent upheavals involving the Social Democratic-Liberal Alliance, there were increasing indications of some sort of incumbency effect in the national elections, as illustrated by the passages quoted earlier. As yet, however, there is little systematic research on the subject.

The magnitude of the effect is indeterminate, though generally agreed to be small, and its bases are largely a matter of informed speculation.[18] Indeed, the principal reason for our original decision to study Britain was the belief that it was a single-member district system in which the forces underlying incumbent-oriented voting had been completely checked, although incumbent MPs were known to engage in some of the same kinds of activities as congressmen. Only after the study was underway did it become apparent that we were looking at a significant and possibly growing phenomenon.

The import of the personal vote depends on three interrelated factors: its magnitude, the electoral swings common in the system, and the degree of competition for legislative seats. Other things being equal, a large personal vote has greater implications for legislative behavior and policy making than a small personal vote. But other things may not be equal. The average personal vote in one system might be 5 percent as compared to 10 percent in another, but if the second system often experiences interelection swings of 15 percent, whereas the first seldom sees a swing larger than 3 percent, the smaller personal vote of the first system could be more consequential than the larger personal vote of the second. Similarly, if the districting arrangements mean that most districts in the first system are won by less than 5 percent and most districts in the second are won by more than 15 percent, the smaller personal vote of the first system could motivate the representative more than the larger personal vote of the second.

Although the importance of the personal vote evidently depends on both the magnitude of electoral swings and the value of the swing ratio, or the relationship of seats to votes, the magnitude of the swing ratio is itself affected by the existence of personal votes. As Stokes noted, every interelection swing in the United States can be thought of as composed of three components: a national swing, a state swing, and a district swing, which includes the personal vote. Personal votes may augment favorable swings and depress unfavorable ones, and the effect may not be at all random. For example, those most endangered by swings, marginal incumbents, may work most diligently to construct personal supporting coalitions. If successful, the swings evident in different districts would be composed in different parts of national, state, and local swings. Similarly, if representatives construct personal votes and thereby enhance their margins, this would simultaneously alter the swing ratio, explaining

the temporal decline in the U.S. swing ratio and perhaps the recent decline in the British ratio.

There are, in short, many difficulties in moving from studies of representatives' personal votes to studies of their broader implications for the political order. The critical considerations involved are mutally interrelated and difficult to disentangle.

The Personal Vote and Intralegislative Relations

There is a large personal vote in the United States and a small but possibly growing one in Great Britain. Such electoral support is related to other significant electoral phenomena, such as the decline of party loyalties, electoral volatility, and changes in the nature of campaigns. But of more far-reaching significance, the personal vote also holds implications for the process and substance of policy making.

Consider the matter of intralegislative relations. The internal structures and processes of the American Congress and British Parliament differ greatly. Congress is a decentralized body with legislative labor and power divided among the various committees and subcommittees. Because so much of real political importance takes place in these "little legislatures," rules and practices have developed that allow routine access to and orderly accretion of power within them.[19] The resulting legislative structure is highly sensitive to the wishes and requirements of the ordinary member. In contrast, governing authority in Britain is concentrated in the front benches of the ruling party. There is a division of labor between front and back benches but relatively little division of labor within the back benches. Legislative success depends overwhelmingly on the favor of the front bench of the majority party. Overall, the organization of Parliament shows much less accommodation to the needs of the individual members.

Moreover, the structure of legislative careers differs profoundly between the two systems. The path to power in Britain runs through the party. If leaders are impressed with a new member, they may put him or her on the leadership ladder as a parliamentary private secretary or junior minister. Alternatively, if the aspiring leader fails to impress or alienates the party leaders in some way, he or she risks permanent backbench status. While the life of a backbencher is

attractive to some, it is frustrating to those interested in making policy or putting their mark on politics. The contrast with Congress is marked. In Congress there are many ways to exercise influence and thereby to shape a career. Depending upon the representative's place in the committee system, a congressional seat can be used to attain local or regional benefits, build expertise and influence in important policy arenas, or shape the chamber's internal conduct.[20] Moreover, congressmen can use their office as a stepping-stone to a more influential office in the public sector or a more lucrative position in the private sector.

Many of these contrasts between Congress and Parliament stem from explicit constitutional differences. In particular, the American concepts of checks and balances and the separation of powers have no counterparts in Britain. The evolution of strong national party organizations in late nineteenth century Britain is another major factor. For reasons not fully understood, British parties developed in such a way as to establish effective control over access to parliamentary office.[21] By so doing, the parties gained a degree of control over their elected members that is matched only faintly in short periods of American history. At the national level American parties have never been much more than loose confederations of state and local organizations, and even within this confederated structure, state and local leaders generally have not exercised more than a modicum of control over access to Congress. American congressmen represent their districts to the national party; in Britain the reverse is more nearly true.

The nature of the representative's electoral base helps to explain the degree of control that parties and their leaders exercise over individual members of the legislature. To the extent that members achieve a personal hold on their office, they become more difficult for party leaders to coordinate and control. The result may be the kind of "managed" politics found in Britain around 1760, the immobilism of the French Third Republic, or the stalemates between legislative and executive branches common to the United States in the past few decades.[22]

To elaborate, if legislative office is valuable, incumbents will seek to increase their hold on it. They may press for additional resources, such as staff, offices, and other perquisites, or for expanded opportunities to claim credit. Efforts to increase credit-claiming opportunities can take the form of demands for a secure hold on committee

seats and ranks, such as the 1910–1911 revolt in the House, or for growth in the number of committee seats, as has been the general trend in Congress since 1946, or for expansion in the role of committees per se in the legislature, as in the recent British select committee reforms. Such pressures may appear unexceptional in many cases, but their cumulative effect can have a structural impact, and party leaders who understand the implications of such demands for legislative coordination resist them. If representatives attain a significant measure of control over their own fates, however, they are likely to bring renewed pressure on legislative leaders to increase the level of resources and opportunities, which will produce still further independence. Thus, party discipline unravels as increased resources and influence interact with electoral independence in a mutually reinforcing fashion. Evolution of the legislative process in this way is entropic. Power devolves to subunits; representatives feel free to defect on party votes; norms of party responsibility crumble; and responsiveness to national electoral verdicts gives way to bargaining among particularistic interests.[23]

Thus, within the institutional context of single-member simple plurality systems, the vigor of legislative discipline and ultimately the possibility of coherent legislative behavior rests on assuring that the maintenance and advancement of individual careers occur through the auspices of party. The party leadership must work to maintain this dependence by restricting access to resources and opportunities that would allow legislative members to build strong personal ties to their constituencies. If the leadership fails to do so, the game is up. Once members can assure their return to office independently of the course of national events and national performance, the parties must rely on shared views and moral suasion—which are better than nothing, but not much to depend on when the chips are down.[24]

Events in the United States have gone very far in these respects. Contemporary congressional leadership is severely constrained by the necessity to accommodate to the needs of the rank and file. Congressmen generally get the committee assignments they request; they rise rapidly to positions of subcommittee leadership without consideration of their loyalty; and they routinely gain floor recognition to offer motions and amendments inimical to party interests.[25] In these and other ways they have numerous opportunities to engage in policy formation as independent actors, subject only to constituency sanction.

By comparison, the differences between backbench and leadership interests are sharply delineated in Britain. Party leaders oppose granting committee powers and staff resources to backbenchers and have only grudgingly made concessions in these areas in recent years. Even so, the period in which these concessions occurred has been one in which members have begun to show greater independence in their parliamentary behavior. Party voting on three line whips has eroded substantially since 1974, and governments have shown less of a proclivity to turn division lobbies into questions of confidence.[26] Common forces underlie these small erosions in the front bench monopoly of power. Anthony King noted the relationship between developments such as the decline of party cohesion, the increasing importance of select committees, and the rising careerism of MPs. Geoffrey Smith, a political journalist, wrote:

> What is beyond doubt is that a more assertive and independent breed of MP is entering the House these days. They are professionals in the sense of devoting their careers to politics, even if they retain another job on the side. They have gone into Parliament not because they believe it to be the best club in Europe but because they want to have a direct influence on public policy. That was always true of a number of members, of course; nowadays it applies to nearly all entrants. It follows that there are therefore a higher proportion of ambitious—and potentially frustrated—backbenchers who are determined to exercise their own judgment on public policy.[27]

In sum, the first potential effect of the personal vote is upon legislative discipline and control. If individual legislative members are independent representatives of distinct geographical areas, legislative discipline must rely relatively more on the carrot and less on the stick. But increasingly independent members will seek to appropriate the carrot after they have eliminated the stick. Thus, policy making evolves toward a system of symmetrical bargaining among near equals. Such a system is inherently limited in the kinds of policies it can develop and the type of representation it can provide its citizens.[28]

The Personal Vote and Executive-Legislative Relations

Where the executive and legislative branches are separate, as in the United States, the personal vote affects relations between the two.

Where formal separation is absent, as in Britain, with the legislative party leaders forming the government, any inability to control back-bench behavior creates difficulties in the coordination of executive and legislative actions.

The formal separation of power makes coordination between the branches of government dependent upon informal institutions and practices. Patronage is one of these practices. If the executive can deliver such services as attractive jobs and contracts to important allies of legislators, then within certain limits legislators may choose to sell their policy support. Historically, patronage has been an important tool of executive leadership in both the United States and Britain. For a variety of reasons, however, it has declined in both importance and acceptability.

Executives and legislators can still engage in explicit exchange. Legislative support can be purchased by modifying the proposal at issue or other unrelated proposals. Logrolling, horse trading, and other colorful metaphors describe such activity. But if the goal is coordination in support of a coherent legislative program, the means and ends are at cross-purposes: coordination is purchased at the expense of coherency. Coordination based on exchange may be an improvement on no coordination at all, but it also contributes to policy failures and frustrated expectations.[29]

Historically, informal electoral practices have provided a significant incentive for legislative-executive cooperation. If presidential coattails are lengthy, for example, many legislators will regard their electoral fates as closely connected with that of the president. If the president fails, the legislators may also. Similarly, if the electorate treats midterm elections as referenda on the performance of the incumbent administration, legislators again have a self-interested reason to concern themselves with the administration's performance. A message of dissatisfaction from the electorate may entail their defeat. When such electoral ties exist, the president can count on some degree of self-interested support from legislators simply because they realize that national conditions and presidential performance are not abstract notions but critical determinants of their own electoral support.

At times presidential-congressional electoral ties have been strong in the United States. For example, the Democrats lost 116 seats in the midterm of 1894, the Republicans lost 75 in the midterm of 1922, the Democrats lost 56 in 1946, and the Republicans lost 49

in 1958. In recent years, however, midterm elections have seemed much less like national referenda. The Carter administration lost only 15 seats in 1978, and the Reagan administration, despite the most serious recession since the 1930s, lost only 26 seats in 1982.

Presidential coattails also appear to have weakened. In 1920 the Cox candidacy cost his fellow Democrats 59 seats, and in 1932 Hoover led the Republicans to a loss of 101 seats. By comparison, the Democrats lost only 12 seats in the McGovern debacle of 1972 and 33 in the Carter repeat of 1980. The connection between presidential and House voting has dropped 75 percent since the New Deal.[30] A dramatic manifestation of this long-term trend appears in the rise in the number of districts that support the presidential candidate of one party and the congressional candidate of another (Table I.1). Whereas a mere 3 percent of the districts split their vote in 1900, the percentage has averaged about a third of the districts since 1964.

Declining party loyalties, weakened coattail effects, and a lessened impact of national conditions on the congressional vote have produced numerous unrelated electoral mandates which members of Congress reasonably attribute more to their personal record than to the president's actions or the party's reputation. This development can only reinforce the parochial outlooks they already possess.

Table I.1. Split results in presidential and congressional elections

Year	Districts
1900	3.4%
1924	11.8
1944	11.2
1964	33.3
1968	32.0
1972	44.1
1976	28.5
1980	32.8
1984	43.7

Source: Norman Ornstein et al., *Vital Statistics on Congress, 1984–85* (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute, 1984), Table 2-14.

Instead of considering a policy from the perspective of its effect on the national electorate, incumbents place greater weight on the policy's effect on their individual districts. Thus, congressmen assessed many of Carter's economic and energy proposals in terms of how these proposals would differentially help or hurt various geographical interests.[31] In short, the particularism that representatives manifest in their policy outlooks has deep roots in the disjunction of electoral bases. By holding only the president responsible for national conditions, the contemporary electorate undercuts critical incentives which in the past brought some cohesion to an institutionally fragmented national government.

The Personal Vote and Interest Group Bargaining

In all democracies interest groups participate in the formulation of public policies. Some groups have highly particularistic concerns and lobby only for policies that favorably affect their narrow interests. Other groups have broader policy or ideological concerns. The pursuit of their aims, broad or narrow, leads groups to try to influence policy making at any relevant level of government, such as bargaining with bureaucrats at a particular agency or ministry, negotiating with cabinet ministers, dealing with the chairmen of relevant legislative committees, or working through local representatives.

Important differences in interest group bargaining patterns characterize different countries. There are two prototypical cases. The first is the pluralist pattern of interest representation, defined by P. C. Schmitter as one in which groups are organized "into an unspecified number of multiple, voluntary, competitive, non-hierarchically ordered and self-determined (as to type or scope of interest) categories not specially licensed, subsidized, created or otherwise controlled by the state and not exercising a monopoly of representational activity within their respective categories." The second is the corporatist pattern, defined by Schmitter as one in which groups constitute "a limited number of singular, compulsory, non-competitive, hierarchically ordered and functionally differentiated categories, recognized or licensed (if not created) by the state and granted a deliberate representational monopoly within their respective categories in exchange for observing certain controls on their selection of leaders and articulation of demands and supporters."[32]

Consider a system in which individual legislators can personally earn financial or other forms of electoral support by promoting the causes of particular interest groups. Such a system is more likely to facilitate, or at least be more compatible with, a pluralist pattern of interest group bargaining than a corporatist pattern. When individual legislators can benefit from intervening on behalf of interest groups, any one group has greater difficulty in establishing a monopoly on bargaining rights in a given area. Additionally, legislative leaders find it difficult to enforce centrally negotiated agreements upon their erstwhile followers. Thus, by stimulating the development of numerous routes of influence below the leadership level, the personal vote encourages pluralistic bargaining and discourages corporatist.

These patterns are related to the tension between functionalist and territorial bases of representation. Functionalist representation gives a voice to the major social and economic groupings in society without regard for spatial considerations. The central justification for this mode of representation holds that policy should reflect the viewpoint and desires of the great interests in a society. Thus, big business and trade union interests should play a major role in shaping economic policy because their expertise is useful and their cooperation is essential. When these patterns become formalized and particular interests achieve a monopolistic bargaining position, functionalist representation assumes a corporatist pattern.

A territorial basis of representation inevitably introduces particularistic and parochial concerns into the policy-making process. A representative elected with the votes, efforts, and resources of the people of a specific geographic area naturally attaches special importance to their views and requests, out of a sense of obligation as well as self-interest. The exact level of particularism varies with many factors, especially the strength of the party system, but the potential basis for local interest advocacy always exists.[33] Territorial and functional representation are not always and everywhere in conflict. A sponsored union candidate in a heavily union constituency, for example, might feel no conflict about representing union and local interests at the same time. When functional representation assumes a corporatist structure, however, there is likely to be conflict between its national outlook and the particularistic orientation fostered by territorial representation.

Both bases of representation probably can be detected in all political systems, but systems differ in the degree to which represen-

tation is territorial or functional, as well as in whether the institutional pattern is de jure or only de facto. The same can be said about the degree of pluralism or corporatism which characterizes interest group bargaining patterns. In both Britain and the United States the dominant pattern is pluralist and territorial. Members of Parliament and of Congress avidly defend local, particularistic interests. In Congress, the power of district interests manifests itself in the ways that committees distribute money and projects, their pork barrel practices. Similarly, MPs champion the causes of groups in their constituencies. By and large MPs do not initiate legislation; hence, interest groups cannot look to them for that favor. Still, interest groups can use MPs to lobby ministers and to publicize their causes. Additionally, the threat of backbench rebellion can persuade the government not to introduce legislation or at least to modify it in some way.[34]

The capacity of a government to establish corporatist arrangements depends in considerable degree upon its control over its component parts.[35] Other factors are relevant, including the structure of the interest groups themselves. Still, the government cannot perform its part in a corporatist arrangement if it cannot control its own members, just as the interest groups must exercise control over their own members and component groups. This connection between member independence and interest group bargaining patterns was evident in the 1930s. For a brief period President Roosevelt struck bargains with interest groups directly, without negotiating with legislative leaders, and still got the legislation through Congress. As the emergency receded, however, policy making moved away from high-level negotiations and returned to the more normal pattern of American politics, namely bargaining with locally oriented congressmen and senators with independent bases of power. More recently the increased weakness of the president vis-à-vis the Congress in domestic policy relates to the growing electoral independence of individual congressmen.[36]

Although backbench MPs are more successfully excluded from the processes of policy formulation than are congressmen, interest groups have similarly used them to force issues onto the parliamentary agenda in the face of indifference or opposition from the government. The Clean Air Act of 1956 and the Deposit of Poisonous Waste Act of 1972 illustrate this role of the backbench MP. The greater discipline of the party system and the smaller personal vote in Britain may account for the fact that governments there can deal

more easily and directly with affected interests than can governments in the United States. Still, MPs eagerly assume the role of policy "scavengers," a propensity perhaps related to the weakening of party ties and the increasing assertion of backbench independence.[37]

In sum, by affecting intralegislative relations, coordination between legislature and executive, and the pattern of interest group bargaining, the personal vote affects the policy-making processes and ultimately their outcomes. When any element of the complex changes, the others can be expected to adjust as well. To the degree that legislative members are able to secure electoral independence, they are less dependent on executive success, less controlled by legislative leaders, and more capable of dealing independently with interest groups. Cumulatively these effects produce a more decentralized policy-making process with greater room for particularistic considerations.

Institutionally, the electoral strategies of legislators in systems like the Anglo-American tend to push "reform" in the direction of more decentralization and less coordination from the top. Thus, legislators request more staff and perquisites. They look with favor on the creation of additional committees and with suspicion on the strengthening of central coordinating mechanisms. They prefer to control the financing of elections and are wary of measures that would give the parties such control. And if they could freely choose the timing of elections, they would schedule legislative and executive elections for different times.

Such institutional developments have an obvious consequence for policy making: they make it more difficult to formulate decisive, coherent policy. Decentralized systems generally are characterized by inconsistency and stalemate in the policy-making process. Where a corporatist state might formulate and impose a coherent five-year economic plan, the decentralized pluralist state is more likely to adopt an internally inconsistent compromise. Strong coherent policy is not at all times and in all places preferable. There may be significant advantages to giving voice to local, particularistic interests and even to preventing the imposition of coherent, long-term policies. Whatever the outcome, the personal vote is highly important in single-member district systems. Its implications extend to the processes of policy making and ultimately to the nature of the policies themselves.

Study Design

This study of the United States and Great Britain contrasts a political system in which national representatives are viewed as independent political entrepreneurs with one in which national representatives are viewed as the regimented members of cohesive parties. Within the universe of single-member, simple plurality systems, the United States and Great Britain offer the greatest contrast and the most difficult test for arguments based on the significance of electoral incentives.

The design of the study includes both elite and mass components in each country. A comprehensive study of representational questions must provide information about both representatives and those whom they represent. Surveys of the general public alone cannot show what elites really do, nor can surveys of elites show what the public really thinks. The two levels must be brought together in one study, as in the 1958 Miller-Stokes Survey Research Center (SRC) study of representation and the mid-1960s Butler-Stokes study of political change in Britain.[38]

The data on constituents in the United States come primarily from the 1978 and 1980 National Election Studies carried out by the University of Michigan Center for Political Studies, hereafter referred to as NES/CPS.[39] In 1978 the NES/CPS survey introduced a number of items designed to explore nonpolicy aspects of representative-constituency relationships. The survey sampled constituents in 108 of the 435 congressional districts. In order to examine changes over time, we also use the 1958 SRC study and the 1963–1966 Butler-Stokes study.

The data on congressmen and their offices come from interviews with 102 administrative assistants in the 108 offices whose constituents fell in the mass survey sampling frame. The assistants were chosen for interviews because they generally know more than the congressmen about office activity and organization. Few congressmen get deeply involved personally in the details of office structure and activity. The congressional questionnaire included items on the size and organization of the congressman's office, the kinds of activities it undertakes, its attitude toward various constituency activities, and its perception of the efficacy of constituency service efforts. Because of the presumed importance of the electoral incentive in the United States, the American questionnaire focused less

on motives than did the British. And because of the generous staffing and equipping of congressional offices, the American questionnaire focused much more on patterns of resource employment.

The British surveys were designed to parallel those in the United States insofar as practical. The data on constituents were obtained from a postelection poll conducted by the British Gallup organization in May of 1979, using questions adapted from the NES/CPS survey to fit the British context. In most instances this meant only small changes in wording, such as "constituency" for "district," but a few concepts were harder to translate.

The data on British MPs come from interviews with 69 MPs and 32 party agents from 101 of the 133 constituencies included in the Gallup sampling frame.[40] A sample of agents and MPs does not exactly parallel a sample of administrative assistants. Agents are staff of the party, not the MP, and their involvement in constituency service varies greatly. The typical MP's staff consists only of some secretarial support, and MPs themselves are deeply engaged in constituency work. Thus the MP was the primary survey target, with the agent a second choice when the MP was unavailable. Because MPs have so much less than congressmen in the way of staff and other resources, and because their motives for engaging in constituency work are less clear, the British questionnaire focused more heavily on their motives, perceptions, and thinking.

Table I.2. Study design

Data	United States	Great Britain
Members	Administrative assistant interviews (n = 102)	MP interviews (n = 69) Agent interviews (n = 32)
Constituents	1978 NES/CPS (n = 2304) 1980 NES/CPS (n = 1408) 1958 SRC (n = 1450)	1979 Gallup (n = 2031) 1963, 1964, 1966 Butler-Stokes (n = 2009, 1769, 1874)

The design of the study makes it possible to compare the perceptions and behavior of American and British representatives and to compare the perceptions, evaluations, and behavior of the American and British publics (Table I.2). More important, it permits the combination of information within each country so as to associate each constituent with a level of activity undertaken by the member of Congress or Parliament from that district and to associate each member with a distribution of perceptions and evaluations of his or her efforts. The value of the merged data set is that it permits an examination of the relationships between what constituents see and what representatives actually do, thereby avoiding the vulnerability of survey responses to problems of perceptual bias. A relationship between constituent perceptions and constituent evaluations of representatives' activities is not as convincing as a relationship between constituent evaluations and reports by administrative assistants or MPs about their activities.