

POLITICS & GOVERNMENT

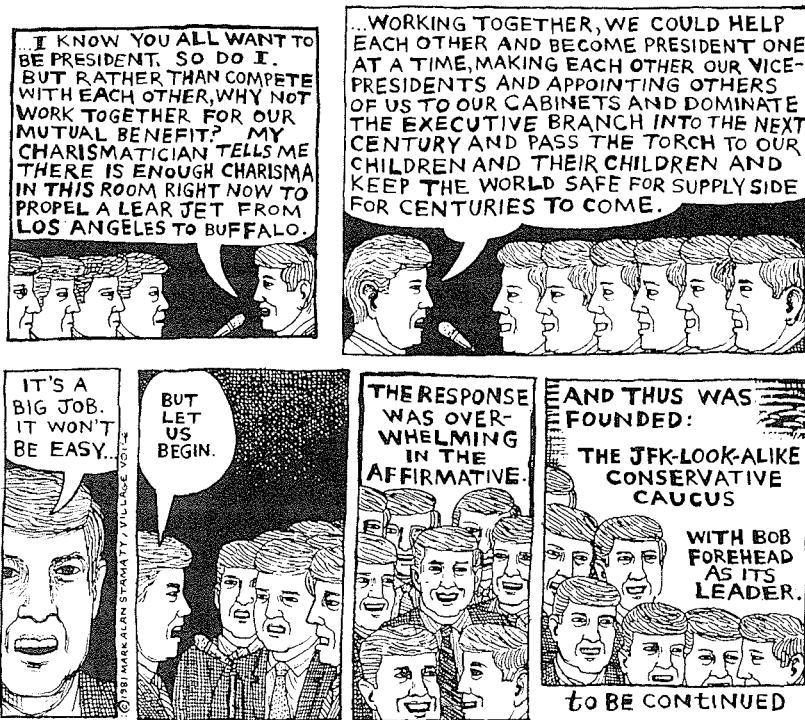
Though Justice Brennan thinks that the Court should shelter the nation's political minorities from "the reach of the temporary political majorities," Graglia sees such fears as unfounded. Expressed through the political process, "the good sense of the American people," he says, will afford adequate protection.

*Who Likes Charisma?*

"Evaluating Presidential Candidates: Who Focuses on Their Personal Attributes?" by David P. Glass, in *Public Opinion Quarterly* (Winter 1985), Journalism Bldg., Columbia Univ., 116th St. and Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10027.

Everyone knows that personality plays a big role in determining who ends up in the Oval Office. But which voters are most swayed by style over substance?

Contrary to popular assumptions, Glass, a demographics researcher at the University of California, Berkeley, asserts that college-educated voters pay more attention to a candidate's "personal attributes" than do



Grooming for the presidency: Rep. Bob Forehead and his colleagues brainstorm in the cartoon strip *Washington* by Mark Alan Stamaty.

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those with less schooling.

Glass drew on data from the National Election Studies (NES) of the University of Michigan Center for Political Studies, which has been recording voters' "likes" and "dislikes" vis-à-vis presidential candidates since 1952. Among people with a college education, 55 percent of candidate evaluations through 1984 have involved such "personal attributes" as: "competence" (dependability, experience), "character" (leadership, integrity, education), and "personal attraction" (appearance, friendliness, sense of humor). Only 42 percent of those with less than a ninth-grade education said that they would cast ballots for or against a candidate because of some personal trait.

Glass did find that, on average, voters more often rated candidates on the basis of character (50 percent) and competence (33 percent) than on superficial appeal (17 percent). This last trivial factor influenced equally the voting decisions of the college-educated and those who did not complete high school. In the elections of 1972 (Richard Nixon versus George McGovern) and 1976 (Jimmy Carter versus Gerald Ford), personal attributes actually outweighed the candidates' political positions in the minds of most voters. Indeed, in 1980, a majority of those voting for Democratic incumbent Carter over Republican Ronald Reagan did so because of the 69-year-old challenger's "age." A perceived "weakness/indecisiveness" in Carter lost him more votes than did any of his policies.

Such voter response can be disheartening, says Glass. Perhaps Americans are justifiably skeptical of campaign promises and cast ballots based on intuition. On the other hand, apathy may also play a part.

Whatever the case, concludes Glass, the scholar's prevailing "rational voter model"—which assumes that voters judge candidates mainly by their political stance—does not hold up.

### *Go West, Republicans*

"Republican Prospects: Southern Discomfort"  
by Richard Scammon and James A. Barnes, in  
*Public Opinion* (Oct./Nov. 1985), American  
Enterprise Institute, 1150 17th St. N.W., Wash-  
ington, D.C. 20036.

In recent years, for one party to control both the House of Representatives and the Oval Office has been a rarity. Particularly stymied by this "disalignment" has been the GOP: Although Republicans have won six of the last nine presidential elections, Democrats have kept a majority in the House for 32 years.

With the Democrats controlling 253 of the 435 congressional districts, the Republicans are a long way from bringing about "realignment" in their favor. But they have hopes, and are pinning them on the South. Today, of the 116 House seats allotted to the 11 states of the old Confederacy, an all-time high of 43 are held by Republicans. Indeed, of the 15 net seats that the party gained in 1984, eight were Southern. Yet Scammon and Barnes, a Visiting Fellow and a research associate, re-