

**POLITICS & GOVERNMENT**

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*“A Political Party  
Known as COPE”*

“The Politics of American Labor” by Jack Barbash, in *Challenge* (May-June 1976), 901 N. Broadway, White Plains, N.Y. 10603.

An American labor party could have emerged from the mass unionism of the 1930s but it did not happen—and it’s not going to happen. Barbash, a University of Wisconsin economist, traces early American unionism from its anti-industrial and anti-capitalist origins to the New Deal era, when labor leaders like the coal miners’ John L. Lewis turned their backs on class theory and embarked on “political collective bargaining” in Congress and the state legislatures. So successful were these pressure-group tactics, argues Barbash, that even the class-conscious leaders of the CIO (Congress of Industrial Organizations) unions were unwilling or unable to create a genuine labor party. Why? Because young labor militants were reluctant to risk gains made under the New Deal for the “vague pie-in-the-sky of third-party politics,” because union leaders now had a role in the Democratic party, and because Marxist activists were ultimately driven out of big labor.

Since the 1940s, American unions have come to resemble their West European counterparts in some ways. The AFL-CIO maintains permanent political action organizations; it pushes Congress and the White House on domestic and foreign policy. “We have a political party and it’s known as COPE (Committee on Political Education),” AFL-CIO president George Meany once noted. Such efforts are likely to increase as labor seeks to stave off erosion of its gains in the face of slower economic growth and environmental pressures. No separate labor party will result, Barbash predicts, because union leaders fear isolation from the American middle class, and the Republicans and Democrats would co-opt the most palatable parts of any separate labor party program anyway.

*Voting for  
Motherhood*

“Why So Few Women Hold Public Office: Democracy and Sexual Roles” by Marcia Manning Lee, in *Political Science Quarterly* (Summer 1976), 2852 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025.

After 50 years of full citizenship, few American women hold public office today. Rutgers political scientist Lee surveyed 301 men and women who were active participants in local politics in four middle- and upper-income suburbs of Westchester County, New York. Her “regrettable conclusion” is that the percentage of women elected to office is unlikely to increase substantially in the future “unless radical changes occur in current sexual role assignments.” Annual per family income in the communities surveyed ranged from \$13,000 in Tuckahoe to \$42,500 in Scarsdale. (Eastchester with \$20,000 and Bronxville with \$27,000 were in between.)

**POLITICS & GOVERNMENT**

Lee found that what inhibits activist women in these communities from competing with men for political office has little to do with distaste for politics, lack of zeal, or reluctance to commit time and effort. Rather, the big factor was constraint imposed by child-rearing—a constraint felt by men as well as women. (Of women surveyed who had children at home, 5.3 percent had run for local public office, as against 26.1 percent with no children at home who had done so. For men it was 21.5 percent as against 38.9 percent.) Lee found women also shy away from seeking office because they see it as an inappropriate form of political activity (as distinct from helping others win election), because they feel others (both men and women) would disapprove, and because they fear sex discrimination (74.7 percent predicted they would not be accepted by men). Lee sees some signs of change: Not only do Louis Harris polls show women no longer opposing efforts to advance women's rights, but there has been a sharp increase in women candidates for Congress, from 26 in 1970 to 34 in 1972 and 46 in 1974.

### *A New Look at Eisenhower*

"Eisenhower Revisionism" by Vincent P. De Santis, in *The Review of Politics* (Apr. 1976), University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, Ind. 46556.

Dwight Eisenhower, as President, was a mediocrity, a political innocent who avoided decisions, delegated too much authority to subordinates, and devoted his energies to the golf course. For two decades, this was the conventional wisdom among academics and newsmen analyzing the Eisenhower years. Columnist William V. Shannon, for example, wrote (in 1958) that "the Eisenhower era is the time of the great postponement." In a 1962 poll of scholars ranking the Presidents, historian Arthur M. Schlesinger put Eisenhower at the bottom of the "average" category, between Andrew Johnson and Chester A. Arthur.

But during the '70s, many commentators—some of them, like I.F. Stone, writing from a Left perspective—have found things to admire. Why? Notre Dame historian De Santis observes that "the most important single thing about Eisenhower was that we did not go to war while he was President." Ike ended the Korean War in six months and reduced military spending. This "rehabilitation" of Eisenhower is also uncovering new character strengths. Garry Wills has described him as "a political genius." Author Richard Rhodes calls him "a brilliant man" with a "phenomenal memory." Other revisionist studies show him keeping a tight rein on Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, and withholding public condemnation of Senator Joseph McCarthy because he sincerely believed it would damage the dignity of the presidential office. The author concludes that the Eisenhower presidency "will always be associated with prosperity, abundance, and peace, no mean accomplishment."