

POLITICS & GOVERNMENT*Black Votes
in Mississippi*

"Mississippi Blacks and the Voting Rights Act of 1965" by Paul E. Joubert and Ben M. Crouch, in *Journal of Negro Education* (Spring 1977), Bureau of Educational Research, Howard University, Washington, D.C. 20001.

Mississippi has a higher proportion (36 percent) of blacks than any other state in the Union, but prior to 1965, black Mississippians who attempted to vote faced economic reprisals, complicated literacy tests, and sometimes violence.

The Voting Rights Act (VRA) of 1965, renewed by Congress in 1975, guaranteed blacks the right to vote; federal examiners enforced that right. Joubert and Crouch, professors at the University of Southwest Louisiana and Texas A&M, respectively, report that within 30 days after the VRA was signed into law, registration of blacks in the state rose 120 percent, from 35,000 to 77,000. By the end of 1970, the percentage of registered Mississippi blacks was comparable to that of the white majority, with 71 percent—or 286,000—of the eligible blacks on the voting rolls (82 percent of the eligible whites were registered). A year later, 50 blacks were elected to public office in Mississippi, more than in any other Southern state.

These advances have brought renewed white opposition. Some counties, the authors note, have instituted re-registration laws, effectively purging much of the black electorate. Threats of violence and of economic sanctions are increasing. The black achievement in Mississippi may be substantial, contend Joubert and Crouch, but among many whites "no real change in attitude" has occurred since 1965.

*Neo-Conservatives
and Politics*

"Intellectuals and Power" by Richard Gillam, in *The Center Magazine* (May-June 1977), Box 4068, Santa Barbara, Calif. 93103.

The connections between the "power elite" and the "intelligentsia"—and ultimately, between both these groups and society as a whole—continue to engross American intellectuals.

But in recent years, argues historian Gillam, a "general reorientation" has jeopardized the independence of what Lionel Trilling once called the intellectual "adversary culture."

The "old muckraking style of thought," Gillam observes, has been replaced among growing numbers of political intellectuals by the ideology of "neo-conservatism." Power is perceived by them as "preordained," human society as impervious to all but the most insignificant tinkering, and radical agitation as an irrelevant exercise that is, in sociologist Daniel Bell's words, "increasingly apocalyptic, hedonistic, and nihilistic."

POLITICS & GOVERNMENT

By rejecting the adversarial stance of the late 1930s and early 1940s, contends Gillam, such neo-conservatives (and former liberals) as Bell, Nathan Glazer, and Irving Kristol have tended to view the workings of political power as rigidly managerial, elitist, and virtually unchangeable. On the one hand, he writes, these intellectuals are no longer sure that the mind "can or should resist the imperious advance of power"; on the other, they are strongly aware of the "unanticipated and usually negative" consequences of many government efforts at social uplift. They now urge a strategy of "salutary" neglect vis-à-vis a wide range of social issues; "coping" is all that one ought to expect.

Gillam quotes George Orwell, who 30 years ago contended that embattled intellectuals would "rob reality of its terror by submitting to it." Gillam claims that the neo-conservatives are doing just that, by asserting the impotence of "reason" in the search for solutions to social problems.

Bargaining on Capitol Hill

"A Revised Theory of Winning in House-Senate Conferences" by Gerald S. Strom and Barry S. Lundquist, in *The American Political Science Review* (June 1977), 1527 New Hampshire Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

Congress-watchers have recently noted a curious phenomenon: When House and Senate meet "in conference" to resolve differences over a piece of legislation, Senate proposals usually win.

The authors, political scientists at the University of Illinois, report that, since 1960, in House-Senate conferences on appropriations and taxes, Senate modifications were adopted in 55 to 65 percent of the cases, (The House figure is 25 to 30 percent, with the balance classified as a "draw.") This result is surprising because the House—with its members' greater specialization, tighter organization, better committee attendance, and "tougher" bargaining stance—would seem the favorite to win in such contests.

Some analysts contend that the Senate is stronger in conference because Senate conferees enjoy greater support from the "parent chamber" than do House conferees. Others suggest that the greater media "visibility" of U.S. senators provides a cushion of popular support from interest groups, lobbyists, and the public.

But in fact, the authors suggest, the primary cause of Senate predominance is structural: The House acts first on most bills (it initiated 61 percent of all legislation passed during the 92nd Congress) largely because of its constitutional responsibility for revenue and appropriations bills; conferees acting first, the authors argue, "have an incentive" to accept amendments made by the other body in order to preserve the original core of the legislation. The second body thus acquires bargaining leverage because of its implicit veto power.