

POLITICS & GOVERNMENT

Then gradually, between 1420 and 1440, the royal Chancery began to write more of its documents in English, because citizens could no longer understand anything else; by 1460 local officials followed suit.

Like other medieval English institutions, the Chancery had evolved from an arm of the royal household into an administrative secretariat led by a powerful Chancellor. All correspondence from King and Parliament, all petitions, proclamations, records, indentures, summonses, and writs, were written by the Chancery. And just as all Chancery clerks came to write in a distinctive "Chancery script," so too their words acquired linguistic uniformity when they began to write in English.

Thus, while a simplified, phonetic spelling was coming into vogue elsewhere in 15th-century England, the Chancery persisted in the archaic forms we retain to this day (such as *though* for *tho* and *right* for *rite*). But it replaced the old adverb construction *lich* (as in *openlich*) with a modern one (*openly*); changed the plural from *z* to *s*; dropped the *e* in words like *oure* and *whiche*; and adopted a past tense ending in *d* instead of *t* (as in *asket*).

Written English, concludes Fisher, grew up outside church and school, and in the absence of any other national model for writing the vernacular, the king's prolific chancery clerks set the style.

Democratic Republicans

"Partisan Patterns of House Leadership Change, 1789-1977" by Garrison Nelson, in *American Political Science Review* (Sept. 1977), 1527 New Hampshire Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

According to many political scientists, leadership in the U.S. House of Representatives has been determined more by custom than by the clash of interests and ideologies. In this view, a representative, whether Republican or Democrat, reaches the top of the party hierarchy largely because he has come up the ladder: Service as majority whip leads to the majority leadership, which in turn is the springboard to the speakership.

Nelson, a political scientist at the University of Vermont, challenges this notion of an "institutionalized" House. In an analysis of House leadership contests from 1789 to the present, he concludes that Democrats and Republicans exhibit distinctly different selection patterns that reflect the two parties' contrasting political philosophies and social composition.

The Democrats have had a higher proportion than Republicans of appointed leaders (such as deputy whips and committee chairmen), as well as of elected leaders who moved from post to post in an "ordered succession." Appointed Democratic leaders have often been "removed from above" by the elected leaders (for example, by the speaker or majority leader). Elected leaders themselves, however, are subject only to infrequent, usually unsuccessful challenges from the party caucus. In short, House Democrats exhibit a hierarchically arranged, tightly con-

POLITICS & GOVERNMENT

trolled succession process, which downplays internal conflict.

Republicans, on the other hand, display a more "egalitarian" system. They have relied more on the *election* of their leaders (even for minor posts, such as chairman of the Republican Conference), and, to a greater extent, are willing to challenge their dominant party colleagues in caucus. The elected G.O.P. leadership has never removed appointed leaders. The Republican tendency is "removal from below" by the rank-and-file (the most recent example: Gerald Ford's 1965 victory over incumbent Charles Halleck for the minority leadership).

Nelson speculates that the homogeneous, conservative composition of the House Republican membership has been conducive to more open leadership contests. The large, heterogeneous membership of the House Democrats, however, must cope with fiercely contending regional and ideological interests. Their highly regulated succession process seeks to avoid the internecine warfare that plagues the Party at large.

Reaping the Farm Vote

"Agrarian Political Behavior in the United States" by Michael S. Lewis-Beck, in *American Journal of Political Science* (Aug. 1977), 5980 Cass Ave., Detroit, Mich. 48202.

Two decades ago, studies of U.S. voting trends portrayed American farmers as "isolated" and the least politically involved of the nation's major social groups. Farmers had few party links and were "psychologically uninvolved" with politics. Their voting shifts tended merely to reflect changing personal economic fortunes.

That may have been true in the 1950s, writes Lewis-Beck, a political scientist at the University of Iowa, but times have changed. Data for the 1952-72 period reveal that farmers have become one of the most politically active groups in the land. Analyzing their political behavior in terms of voting turnout, letters to public officials, and election campaign activity, he finds that with 83 percent of them voting and 42 percent writing letters, farmers stand second only to white-collar urban professionals in political participation. Moreover, although the farm population's average age is rising (and older Americans tend to be among the most politically active), it is the younger farmers who show the greatest activism, a result of their rising economic status and greater education. However, farmers' participation in actual campaign activity remains low—20 percent compared to 48 percent among professionals—reflecting their traditional lack of involvement in either political or farm organizations.

Farmers hardly represent a major voting bloc (9.5 million people or 4.5 percent of the population in 1973), but they have become a "strategic national interest group" in their role as food producers. While lack of organization will probably prevent U.S. farmers from tapping that potential to push their own interests, Lewis-Beck believes that the time may be ripe for mobilization of the farm vote by other interest groups.