
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.