

POLITICS & GOVERNMENT

the need for a federal "industrial policy" devoted in part to restoring corporate profits. He dismisses Burnham's prediction of a severe U.S. political crisis as "fanciful."

The Democrats' seeming disarray obscures the fact that they remain America's majority party, outnumbering registered G.O.P. adherents by two to one. The party, notes Sigelman, who teaches at the University of Kentucky, is "one of the oddest political coalitions ever assembled" and is by nature and tradition given to bickering, turmoil, and more than a dash of excitement. As Will Rogers put it more than half a century ago: "I belong to no organized party. I am a Democrat."

New Checks And Balances

"After the Congressional Veto: Assessing the Alternatives" by Robert S. Gilmour and Barbara Hinkson Craig, in *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* (Summer 1984), John Wiley & Sons, 605 Third Ave., New York, N.Y. 10158.

Between 1932 and 1983, Congress periodically granted itself a "legislative veto" as a check on the power of the White House and the federal bureaucracy. Last year, however, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled the congressional veto unconstitutional.

Before the Supreme Court acted, Congress had written its veto power into some 200 pieces of legislation. In each case, either the President or an executive agency was "required to submit proposed orders, regulations, and plans to Congress for review and potential veto by majority vote of one or both houses," note Gilmour and Craig, political scientists at the University of Connecticut and Wesleyan University, respectively.

The Court's ruling dismayed the legislators; but, say the authors, Congress can live without the veto. In fact, the lawmakers have exercised only 125 such vetoes: Of those, 66 overruled presidential "budget impoundments" (refusals to spend money appropriated by the Congress), and 24 halted executive office reorganizations. Only 35 actually dealt with a proposed regulation or project. More important than the veto itself was the leverage that the *threat* of using it gave Congress over the White House. A case in point: The 1976 stipulation that major overseas arms sales be submitted for review on Capitol Hill led to a reshaping of five controversial U.S. arms packages but no actual vetoes.

Congress will retain considerable leverage simply because whenever controversy simmers, the White House still needs support from Capitol Hill. If all else fails, Congress can just pass a law barring any executive activity that displeases it (though this would face a presidential veto requiring a two-thirds Congressional vote to override).

Congress has been known to grant itself the veto power as a way of putting off tough decisions. In 1980, for example, it created the U.S. Synthetic Fuels Corporation but left the new agency to figure out for itself how much its programs would cost—subject to legislative veto. Now, the Congress will have to make such decisions itself and write them into law. That, the authors suggest, is a good thing.