

Editor's Corner

Congress, Fiscal Terrorism, and Innovation

Readers of this issue of *PS* will have a chance to see Congress through the eyes of five recent Congressional Fellows: four political scientists and journalist Larry Warren. All but Jack Hoadley, who currently works for Representative Barbara Kennelly (D-CT) and was a Fellow two years ago, are from the 1984-85 class.

A number of their observations are worth pondering. For example, in his piece on the electoral connection, Tim Cook reconciles the revival of partisanship and parties in the House with the apparent decline of partisan identification in the



Christopher J. Deering

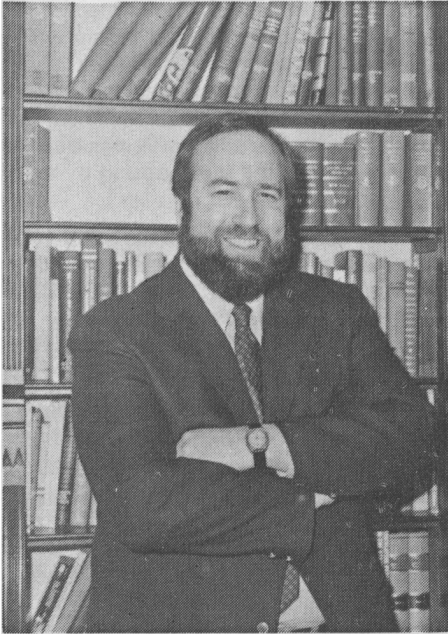
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electorate and shows how members' electoral concerns surprisingly account for the reemergence of parties on Capitol Hill.

Carl Van Horn and Hoadley both look at economic policymaking on the Hill but from different perspectives. Van Horn focuses on the defensive strategy of Democrats who worry that they will lose their majority in the House, and he warns against the tendency to "out-Republican the Republicans." Hoadley, on the other hand, believes that procedures have broken down. The passage of the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings deficit reduction plan "represents a remarkable transformation of the legislative process." The plan, which Charles Schumer (D-NY) has labeled "self-inflicted fiscal terrorism," was enacted on a fast track, that is, bypassing normal legislative procedures. This haphazard method of moving legislation increasingly typifies the process followed for large redistributive bills.

While Hoadley highlights speed and the circumvention of deliberative processes, Chris Deering features the slow pace of the Senate, marked by quorum calls, unrestrained activism, hostage politics and fixation on the budget. He examines how these phenomena affect leadership strategy, but he comes to conclusions similar to those of Hoadley. Action is unpredictable (and consequently highly frustrating to members) and much legislative work takes place in negotiations held in back rooms off the floor of the Senate—circumventing committees and the public.

Larry Warren shifts the tone of the discussion but his observations mesh well with those of his colleagues. In his good-natured examination of politicians' use of the press and especially of the broadcast media, he lays bare the shallow,



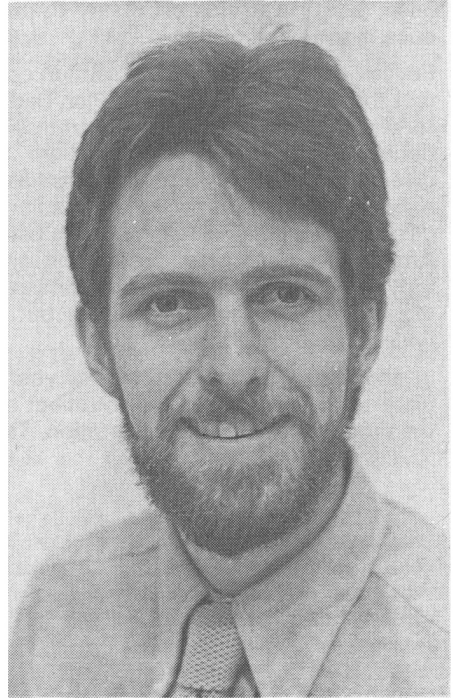
Carl E. Van Horn

manipulated and unsystematic coverage of the Hill by television newscasters in particular.

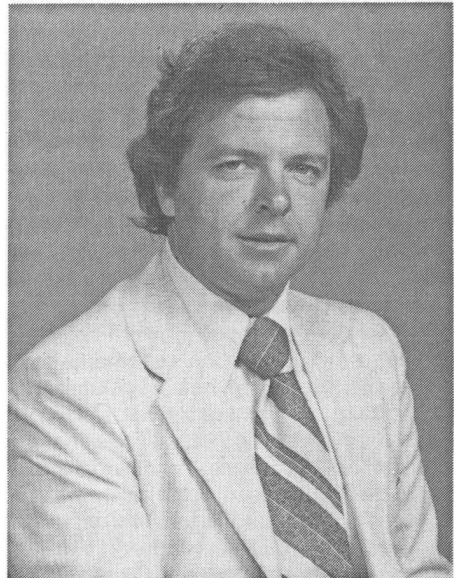
Each of these articles sharpens our perceptions of Congress and advances our knowledge of it. While certain aspects—such as the obsession of senators with reelection, the breakdown of legislative process, the success of show-horse strategies of members in their dealings with the press, the apparent divergence of good politics and good policy—may be troubling, others are not. The strengthening of parties in the House, for example, has long been advocated by political scientists. Moreover, the bypassing of normal legislative routines may indicate that Congress is innovative and flexible in the face of seemingly intractable policy problems. In any case, these pieces will give you a feel for how Congress is operating these days and how some Congressional Fellows evaluate it.

Forum

Too often APSA announces awards for outstanding scholarship at the annual meeting and in *PS* without subsequently giving sufficient attention to the work



Timothy E. Cook



Larry Warren

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itself, both what was necessary to produce it and what is in it.

Several articles in the Forum section correct this lack. *PS* asked David Pion-Berlin to write an article stemming from his double-award-winning dissertation to give readers, both in and outside his field, a flavor of his approach. His resulting "Theories on Political Repression in Latin America" extends his dissertation and provides a provocative way of considering not only political repression but a wide range of political events.

In addition, *PS* invited all of this year's dissertation award winners to reflect on the process of writing a dissertation. The

advice of the five who accepted the invitation reaches beyond thesis writing to any large research project and should be of interest to most scholars, mentors and students of political science. The next few issues of *PS* will include other articles about the work of and by award winners.

Finally, special thanks go to Richard Rose for assembling the articles on editing journals of political science by Chuck Jones, Chet Newland and Rose. The pieces continue prior discussions in *PS* on publishing in the discipline.

Catherine E. Rudder