

Participation In American Politics: The Dynamics Of Agenda-building

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mostly through group contacts. In the early loyalty-security cases, Radical Bar lawyers had both personal and ideological ties to their clients; the Civil Libertarians who took the later and safer loyalty oath cases had neither. Group Advocates, ambivalent about grounds to raise, may, as in the reapportionment cases, use broad ones for pragmatic reasons, but Civil Libertarians would be interested in them for abstract reasons. Casper also suggests that Group Advocates can be counted on in times of repression, whereas Civil Libertarians may be "fair weather friends."

Most of the cases Casper's lawyers argued were decided before a development attributable in large measure to decisions like *Gideon*: the recent substantial growth of public defender offices, which Casper suggests will produce more lawyers concerned about general problems of the disadvantaged. Yet one wonders. Institutional demands on public defenders can blunt their idealism and lead to increased plea-bargaining, "package dealing," and indifference to clients. In his balanced speculation, Casper recognizes that these results may occur at the trial level, but he suggests that frequency of involvement with issues might lead to stressing broader policy matters and that appellate public defender divisions would be more inclined to raise the large issues.

In this volume, in which one needs to look hard for something to criticize, Casper has given us an important addition to our knowledge about the lawyers' role in the policy process, and, because of the "clientele" focus, a contribution to the group theory of the legal process. Because of the study's importance and the questions it raises, it is sometimes difficult to keep in mind that only the Supreme Court is covered. What we now need is a replication for the post-1966 period and interviews both of Casper's respondents about other cases and of lawyers who petitioned for *certiorari* but were unsuccessful in getting to oral argument before the high court.

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Participation in American Politics: The Dynamics of Agenda-Building. By Roger Cobb and Charles Elder. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1972. Pp. 82. \$3.50.)

Political scientists frequently use but rarely study the concept of the political agenda. While notions such as gatekeeping, demands, mobilization of bias, and nondeliberation making are familiar conceptual waves, the explicit questions of how and when problems gain agenda status

have, for the most part, not been treated systematically. Roger Cobb and Charles Elder offer an introductory framework and a useful perspective on how problems become political issues and assume their place on the political agenda. The two political scientists critically evaluate system, power, decision making, and group approaches, and then they construct their own group conflict paradigm of agenda building. Though the paradigm is probably of only modest value, Cobb and Elder successfully sort out, define, and examine many of the important questions about agenda building.

Perhaps most noteworthy is their distinction between two basic types of political agendas—systemic and institutional. The systemic agenda refers to issues that are defined by members of a political community as warranting government action. Cobb and Elder suggest three prerequisites for issue access: (1) widespread attention or at least awareness; (2) view that action is required; and (3) view that action is appropriate for government. The institutional (or formal) agenda consists of those sets of items that are explicitly up for consideration before a governmental body.

After reviewing four major approaches to agenda building as noted, Cobb and Elder, adopt a group conflict approach, which hypothesizes that political issues result from procedural or substantive conflicts between two or more identifiable groups for either scarce resources or scarce positions. And borrowing heavily on Coleman and Schattschneider, the authors view conflict as a dynamic process.

Cobb and Elder distinguish five characteristics of issues that influence their likelihood of reaching the public docket. Adapting Parsons's pattern variables, they focus their definitional dimensions on the nature of the issue conflict. They point to the scale of groups—organizational skills, extensivity and intensity of communications, size, resources—as of major importance in issue expansion. In addition, they elaborate major roles the audience can play in the expansion of issue conflicts.

Cobb and Elder devote several chapters to issue expansion. Their basic position is that "the greater the size of the audience to which an issue can be enlarged, the greater likelihood that it will attain systemic agenda standing and thus access to a formal agenda" (p. 110). They discuss the types of symbols used to enlarge the scope of a conflict and the crucial role played by mass media in terms of various strategies to enlarge controversy and muster support.

Cobb and Elder do not foreclose inquiry into agenda-building. Their general paradigm, while

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