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The 1996 Election Ends in a Political Status Quo, with Both Sides Calling for Comity, Not Collision

So what happened to all the anger and angst in 1992 that ended 12 years of Republican rule in the White House and then in 1994 shattered 40 years of Democratic dominance of Congress? And why was the "Contract with America," which Republicans had heralded as a master plan for legislating, virtually disregarded in the election campaigns of 1996?

Last month's election was supposed to endorse the era of big changes. In fact, it did little of the sort. Oddly though, for all the stridency of the campaign rhetoric, the contentiousness so evident in the 1994 Congressional election seemed muted, and there was little evidence of the throw-the-bums-out attitude in the results. Though President Bill Clinton appeared to roll over Bob Dole with 379 electoral votes to his rival's 159, the results left Clinton a President with 49% of the popular vote, an improvement over 1992, against Robert Dole's 41% and Ross Perot's 8%. Woodrow Wilson was the last President without a majority for two terms. But, as it happens, no Democrat has won a second term since Franklin Roosevelt's election to a second term in 1936.

In Congress, Republicans kept control of both houses, taking two more seats in the Senate while losing nine in the House (though runoff elections in two districts of Texas are to be held on 10 December).

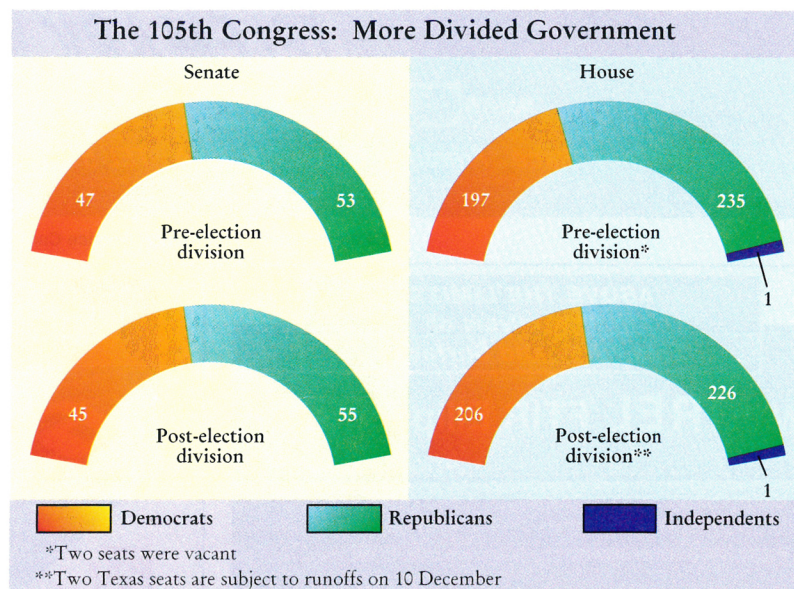
So the balance of power has not shifted. Indeed, to the dismay of Clinton and the Democrats, not since Woodrow Wilson was elected President in 1916 has a victorious Democrat failed to lead his party to a majority in the House. The Republican Congress also made history: Not since 1928 has the party been in the majority on Capitol Hill for two successive elections. The political pundits observed that Republican control of the House could no longer be considered a fluke but may be a sign of a lasting realignment.

In fact, neither party can claim a mandate from the nation's voters. After enduring a lengthy and dreary campaign, the electorate appears to have opted for divided government as a continuing check on Presidential power and Congressional partisanship. Nonetheless, both Clinton and Trent Lott, the Senate majority leader, who has emerged

from the election as king of the Hill, have promised less political warfare and more legislative comity, and to run the country from the "vital center"—as soon as they decide what that is.

Two of the issues that dominated the campaign, both nationally and locally, were public education and welfare reform. Science and technology went virtually unmentioned—probably because both sides seem to agree on the importance of these matters for the nation's progress. Even so, some changes in Clinton's Cabinet and in

lost five members: Robert S. Walker, a 10-term Pennsylvania Republican and its chairman for the past two years, retired, and Seastrand and Bill Baker, both California Republicans, lost their elections, as did two Democrats, Harold Volkmer of Missouri and Mike Ward of Kentucky. The committee's senior Democrat, George E. Brown Jr of California, finished his race with a slim majority of 865 votes out of a total of some 102 000 ballots—a closer call than in any of his previous 16 terms. Brown has been on the Republican hit



the makeup of Congress are likely to affect R&D in the next few years.

Last fall, 28 of the 74 Republicans in the Class of '94, calling themselves the "new Federalists," urged the House to eliminate three Cabinet departments—Commerce, Education and Energy—as a cost-cutting way to balance the budget. Only a handful of these House members were defeated—notably, Dick Chrysler of Michigan, Linda Smith of Washington and Andrea Seastrand of California. Steve Stockman of Texas, one of the firebrand Republican freshmen, is awaiting a runoff election on 10 December, while Sam Brownback of Kansas, one of the most ideologically driven freshmen, won Dole's seat in the Senate.

The House Committee on Science

list before, but this time he was among the top 20 Democrats targeted for defeat.

F. James Sensenbrenner of Wisconsin is virtually certain to succeed Walker as the Science Committee's chairman and to change the style and staff of the committee. The level of personal antagonism that was evident in clashes between Walker and Brown will subside. While Sensenbrenner is considered cranky, he does not possess Walker's feisty character. Unlike Walker, who often shot from the hip, Sensenbrenner is known to rely on staff reports for his views. As chairman of the space subcommittee, Sensenbrenner has been wary of Russian collaboration in NASA's space station and Mars expeditions. He also is luke-

warm to US participation in international projects, which may bear on US support of CERN's Large Hadron Collider and the proposed International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor.

More important than the science committee in the future of government-funded R&D are the appropriations committees in both chambers. In the House, John Myers, an Indiana Republican who headed the Appropriation Committee's energy and water development subcommittee, and Tom Beville, an Alabama Democrat who was the subcommittee's longtime chairman and has been the ranking minority member for the past two years, are both retiring. Jim Chapman, a Democrat of Texas, was defeated in November and leaves another vacancy on the subcommittee for energy as well as on the subcommittee for Veterans Affairs, Housing and Urban Development and independent agencies, which approves the budgets for the National Science Foundation, NASA and the Environmental Protection Agency.

On the Senate Appropriations Committee, Ted Stevens, the Alaska Republican, will replace Mark Hatfield of Oregon, who is retiring after serving as the committee's senior Republican since 1981. Stevens, a 28-year Senate veteran, is often independent, especially when it comes to spending issues affecting his own state. As a leading board member of the now-defunct Office of Technology Assessment, Stevens was usually outspoken on issues involving science and technology. Also leaving is J. Bennett Johnston of Louisiana, the senior Democrat on the Energy and Natural Resources Committee and former chairman of the Appropriations Committee's energy and water development subcommittee.

Johnston was a staunch advocate of most Energy Department research programs, particularly high-energy and nuclear physics (see *PHYSICS TODAY*, January 1996, page 51). Replacing Johnston on the energy committee will be Dale Bumpers of Arkansas, whose populist position on many issues has put him at odds with officials of the energy and aerospace industries. His perennial attempts to scuttle NASA's space station have failed five times.

The defeat of Larry Pressler, a South Dakota Republican, will produce major changes at the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee. His successor is likely to be John McCain of Arizona, who has taken a notably more free-market approach than did Pressler and other committee members on regulatory issues such as spectrum allocations without charge to broadcasters. With Sam Nunn of Georgia leaving the Senate Armed Services Committee after two decades, Carl Levin of Michigan is almost certain to ascend as senior Democrat.

Moderates on the rise

Another senior Democrat who decided to retire is James J. Exon of Nebraska, who held his party's highest seat on the Senate Budget Committee. In line to take Exon's place is Frank R. Lautenberg of New Jersey, who is more peppery and partisan than Exon on many issues, though the balanced budget hasn't been one of his priorities.

Still, the Senate Budget Committee will continue to be led by Pete Domenici of New Mexico. Domenici also figures as a powerful force in the Senate. He is admired as a canny moderate and friend of R&D, as is the other senator from New Mexico, Democrat Jeff Bingaman. Both champion the nuclear weapons laboratories in

their state—Los Alamos and Sandia.

Moderates are most likely to dominate in both chambers of the 105th Congress. Sure, Newt Gingrich of Georgia will continue to be Speaker of the House, even though the pollsters named him the most unpopular politician in the country because he took the heat for shutting down the Federal government twice last winter and for his arrogantly partisan stance on many issues. Lott will still control the legislative calendar as Senate majority leader. Richard Gephardt of Missouri and Tom Daschle of South Dakota again will lead the opposition. But the election suggested that many of the new members in both parties are middle-of-the-roads.

President Clinton has pledged to adopt a bipartisan approach to balancing the budget, advancing education programs and reducing the welfare rolls. He has declared that if he "could do one thing" in his second term it would be to balance the budget, which he asserted was "easily achievable if we all work hard in good faith and if the Democrats remember too that we have to do it." Clinton has called on members of Congress to meet on "common ground." "It's a 180-degree change from where the President stood in January 1995, when he submitted a budget that called for \$200 billion deficits as far as the eye can see," said Robert D. Reischauer, who headed the Congressional Budget Office until the Republican takeover of Congress in 1995. "The bottom line is that the Republicans have triumphed in that they have set the agenda." How that agenda plays out in the 105th Congress, which opens on 7 January 1997, will have a lasting effect on funding science and technology into the next century.

IRWIN GOODWIN

At Last, Nuclear Powers Sign Comprehensive Test Ban But Doubts Remain on Nonsigners and Subcritical Tests

In 1954, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru of India proposed a "standstill agreement" on all nuclear testing. It would be the first step by any government, he said, toward a ban on nuclear tests. Four years later, US President Dwight Eisenhower called for the end of all nuclear testing as the best way to slow the arms race with the Soviet Union. Now, with the Cold War over and the Soviet Union broken up into 15 separate countries, the comprehensive test ban (CTB) treaty was signed on 24 September, the opening day of the 51st session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York City. Within a week, more than 90 nations signed the CTB document. But India

did not sign, despite appeals from the existing nuclear powers and many other countries. In fact, India went to great lengths to prevent the treaty from reaching the UN. Its neighboring rival, Pakistan, had indicated earlier that it would support the treaty, but later reversed course and refused to sign as long as India didn't.

President Clinton was the first world leader to sign the treaty—notably with the same pen used by President John F. Kennedy in 1963 on the world's first treaty limiting nuclear tests in space, the atmosphere and the seas, but not underground. At the UN ceremony, President Clinton called the CTB "the longest-sought, hardest-

fought prize in arms control history." He hailed the accord for preventing the world's acknowledged nuclear nations "from developing more advanced and more dangerous weapons [and for limiting] the ability of other states to acquire such devices themselves."

After Clinton came the representatives of the four other acknowledged nuclear weapons states—Britain, China, France and Russia. All have now declared moratoriums on nuclear testing. All told, they have conducted 2045 known nuclear tests in the 51 years since the first one, called Trinity, exploded over the desert at Alamogordo in New Mexico. In the