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ON RESTORING POLITICS TO POLITICAL HISTORY

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ABSTRACT

Social, and to a lesser extent, economic history have recently become so professionally popular and have made such inroads into political history that political history has not only been dethroned as the center of the discipline, but has had its very existence as a subject of independent inquiry threatened. Seeking to extend the range of political history to include the connection between electoral behavior and governmental policy by importing the "policy outputs" approach from political science, several recent works have accentuated this non-political trend in political history. Reviewing the policy outputs literature and relating it to the sub-field of "spatial modeling" in political science, I attempt to point the way to a more complex and theoretical approach to the electorate-policy relationship, and by emphasizing the importance of institutional rules and candidate strategies, to inject politics back into political history. The approach is briefly applied to the politics of education in turn-of-the-century North Carolina.

If history ever was simply the study of past politics, it no longer is. Dissatisfied with narratives of Great Men, more interested in analyzing the impact of larger forces and in tracing out patterns of the lives of the masses of people, skeptical that a recounting of election campaigns and a counting of votes reveals much about social thought or action, strongly affected by currents of opinion which have long run deep in France, American historians have turned increasingly to social history.¹ Others, perhaps those more comfortable with mathematics, have concentrated on economic history. Even most practitioners of the "new political history" have focused chiefly on the effect of social forces on politics or used votes as a measure of society's opinions.² Political history is in danger of becoming a mere branch of social history.

Yet this transformation has not gone unchallenged. Although "brought up on the idea that political history was obsolete and out of date," the French historian Jacques LeGoff contends that politics as the study of power may not be the "backbone of history," but should be its "nucleus."³ Critical as they are of quantitative studies, moreover, the Marxists Elisabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene Genovese assert that history "is primarily the story of who rides whom and how" and insist therefore, that history is an "essentially political process."⁴ Nor are social historians alone in their concern for the excluded political dimension. In his recent presidential address to the Economic History Association, Lance E. Davis warns his

colleagues that "if we are to understand economic history we must be able to understand and to explain the behavior of the government sector." And, reflecting the emphasis on theory which has been so central a part of the training and practice of economic historians, Davis highlights the "potential for successful collaboration between political history and theory."⁵

If they have not yet resigned themselves to the annihilation of political history seemingly favored by some social historians, or adopted the subordinate roles implicit in the redirection of the aims of political history promoted by the imperialists from social and economic history, political historians have been reshaping and extending their own territory. Paralleling developments in political science, the new agenda for political history now spans the whole political process from the expression of the society's underlying socio-economic divisions in elections to the formation of policies by elected and appointed officials and the delineation of the consequences of those policies for the society.⁶ Historians have also recently laid a good deal of stress on the effect of institutional rules in shaping candidate strategies, electoral results, and policy choice. What is new about these emerging trends in the political history literature is the rediscovery of the importance of electoral rules and the initiation of an effort to connect policy to the behavior of voters and candidates.⁷ Since political scientists have been studying these particular problems for much longer than political historians have, what can we learn from them?

In the Balkanized discipline of political science, the two sub-fields most closely related to the electoral politics-policy link

and the problem of institutional rules do not border on each other and rarely trade. The first, spatial models of party or candidate competition, is at the extreme abstract or theoretical end of political science, while the second, the policy outputs area, is an intellectual continent away, in deepest empiricism. Although historians seem as yet largely unaware of the existence of spatial models, some have scouted the policy outputs territory. The initial explorers have been too quick to accept that state's deterministic, anti-political orthodoxy. Richard L. McCormick, for instance, has recently applied the policy output political scientists' finding that both electoral behavior and policy formation were, in McCormick's words, "fundamentally shaped not by one another but jointly by factors beyond politics" in a suggestive overview of nineteenth-century American politics.⁸ A reconnoitering of the spatial modeling terrain and its relationship to the policy outputs region however, may suggest other, more complex insights and point political history, as Lance Davis has advocated, in the direction of more self-conscious and systematic theorizing.

The policy outputs literature, like so much else in political science, begins with V. O. Key, Jr. In his classic Southern Politics, Key combined values, theory, and speculation to make a set of famous and influential remarks:

Politics generally comes down, over the long run, to a conflict between those who have and those who have less. In state politics the crucial issues tend to

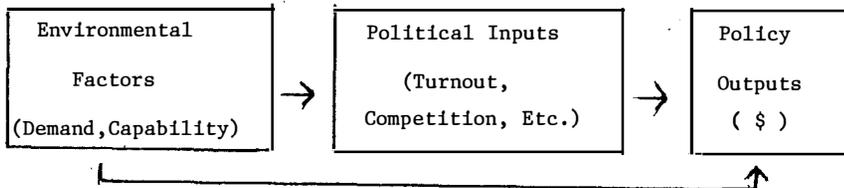
turn around taxation and expenditure. What level of public education and what levels of other public services shall be maintained? How shall the burden of taxation for their support be distributed? . . . It follows that the grand objective of the haves is obstruction, at least of the haves who take only a short-term view. Organization is not always necessary to obstruct; it is essential, however, for the promotion of a sustained program in behalf of the have-nots. . . . It follows, if these propositions are correct, that over the long run the have-nots lose in a disorganized politics. . . .

Noting also that the have-nots in the South were often disfranchised by law, practice, or habit, Key concluded that the one-party factionalism of the South in that period produced an "issueless politics," an unhealthy social system, and a starved set of public services for the masses.⁹

Essentially dormant for some years after 1949, the seeds planted by Key's statement burst forth in 1963, and soon quantitative comparisons of expenditures and other outputs of government across cities, states, and nations had threatened to take over the whole field of political science. The basic framework of the vast majority of these works is simple enough to outline, for they have no theory -- they have systems analysis.

Basically, the framework consists of labeled black boxes

connected with directional arrows, most simply something like this:



The first studies generally read Key as saying that political inputs produced policy, and showed that that link was spurious, since the simple produce-moment correlation coefficients between inputs and outputs across the American states in a post-World War II cross-section went to insignificance when one partialled out the effects of such background variables as per capita income, urbanization, and industrialization.¹⁰ More recent studies have seemingly settled on path analysis, or non-linear variations of that hierarchical system of regression equations, to make similar findings on city, state, and national data sets.¹¹ Dependent policy variables have ranged from highway or recreational expenditures per capita to welfare expenditures, indices of policy innovation, measures of the redistributiveness of taxation and expenditure systems, and proxies for the actual impact of various policies. The vast majority of the studies have been cross-sectional and have focused on recent statistics.¹² Although there have been a good many dissenters, the basic finding of most studies has been that mass politics seems to make little difference in policy formation. In fact, one recent literature review summed up the findings of the field by claiming that "electoral politics does not control the structure of expenditures and taxation, legislator voting patterns, or legislative policy."¹³

Before accepting this elitist and anti-institutional counsel of political despair, let us look a bit more closely at the policy outputs literature. I am not wholly convinced by its chief finding for five reasons. First, a point which occurs immediately to a historian: Nearly all of the studies are time-bound, concentrated in the post-War period when the polity and policies of America, and indeed, the developed world, were becoming increasingly centralized and similar. Because of the growing policy emulation and central control across areas, and because of the increasing homogenization of political behavior, there just isn't that much variance in the dependent variable to be explained, nor terribly much variance in the independent political variables with which to explain anything.¹⁴

The recency of the data suggests a second point. As the incrementalist school of policy analysis reminds us again and again, many policy areas have become so bureaucratized in the post-War period that there simply isn't enough "play" in these subsystems for electoral politics to have very great effects. Bureaucrats do make policy over a large range of well-established programs.¹⁵ And since much of any agency's budget goes for salaries, and few politicians can really face up to throwing large numbers of government employees out of work, one shouldn't expect electoral politics to have a great short-range impact on such programs. Where we should expect an impact is in previously unbureaucratized areas, or in periods before the bureaucratic thicket became so dense. In North Carolina in the period from 1880 to 1901, to take an instance to be more fully developed later in this article, the total state education bureaucracy consisted of an underpaid superintendent and a half-time clerk. Education committees in the legislature

turned over almost entirely with every election, which prevented the development of cosy legislative-bureaucratic arrangements. Interest groups of teachers and local administrators were just getting started. In such a simple environment, the translation of political desire into policy could be swift and straightforward.

A third general criticism is that the studies typically use cross-sectional data or data from a relatively short time series.¹⁶ The problem with cross-sectional data is that all geographic units may be subject to the same fundamental trends, that, for example, inflation or recession may force nearly all governments to follow similar policies at the same time, since at any time they are likely to share a common conventional economic wisdom about cutting or expanding budgets to counteract fluctuations in the economy. Moreover, short developmental sequences may disguise major policy shifts, which often take a fairly long time to effectuate.

Fourth, the policy output studies have sacrificed specificity for breadth of coverage, and more detailed studies may yield different conclusions. Suppose one found no correlation between party competition or turnout and, say, welfare support levels across time or space. Then it might be correct to conclude that politics made "no difference" in outcomes. But there are other alternatives. It might be that welfare did not appear prominently on the political agenda, a fact which a closer look at the election campaigns would disclose.¹⁷ If so, there would be no demands to be translated into policy, and the negligible correlation would be easily explained. Or it could be that many voters wished to cut taxes rather than raise welfare levels, or that the cutters and spenders more or less balanced each other out, in which case, again,

the lack of political and policy correlation should be expected.¹⁸ The point is that mass demands for policy changes are inadequately represented in the policy outputs literature. Sometimes the socio-economic background variables are treated as demands, sometimes as merely reflecting the capability of financing policies.¹⁹ More detailed studies and better proxies for demands might change the findings dramatically.²⁰

To illustrate the point about the potential importance of close studies, let me draw an example again from late nineteenth century North Carolina. The correlation across counties between property value per white family and expenditures per white student for seven cross-sections from 1880 to 1910 was quite high, high enough to swamp the effects of nearly every other independent variable which could be entered into a set of regression equations. Although at first, I thought this finding supported those of the economic determinists in the policy outputs field, a closer look at the laws and constitution of the state disclosed the presence of a law, in effect from 1871 to the 1920s in the state, which set one statewide property tax rate, but directed that all taxes were to be spent in the county where they were collected. Further, a series of state court decisions virtually prohibited local taxation until 1905. The relation between wealth and expenditures therefore should be interpreted for this data set as showing not the weakness of the effect of political inputs on policy, but the strength of that impact. Before 1871 and for a time after 1933, state education revenues were collected centrally and distributed to the counties in proportion to the number of educable

children -- a completely egalitarian system. The reactionary Democrats who took control of North Carolina in a Ku Klux Klan coup d'etat in 1870, however, imposed an inegalitarian system of the state, which lasted for a half-century. The political underpinning of the artificially induced correlation between wealth and spending would be missed by an analyst who merely crunched the quantitative data.²¹

My fifth and final criticism of the policy outputs literature is that it lacks any microtheoretical structure.²² No individual people inhabit its black boxes; no human motives travel its causal arrows; no one, neither leaders nor followers, really acts. To employ systems analysis in social science is to mistake metaphor for theory. Along with its sociological sibling, structural-functionalism, systems analysis is the passive voice of social science.

From a social scientific field characterized by data without theory, we now turn to one consisting of theory without data, the study of spatial models of party competition. As befits a subject which is a bastard child of economics and political science, spatial models is of uncertain parentage. Were there a paternity suit, the most likely prosecutees would be Harold Hotelling for his work on the spatial location of businesses, Kenneth Arrow for his on social choice, and Duncan Black for his on committees. The midwife is less in dispute, the obvious choice being Anthony Downs.²³

Spatial models generally appear in the guise of one-dimensional frequency distributions of public opinion on an issue or set of issues, most familiarly a symmetric unimodal distribution in which two parties

compete for the franchises of voters, who decide for whom to vote on the basis of the distance between their preferences and the issue positions of the candidates. The model has a vector representation for multi-dimensional space, and theorems can be rigorously proved by symbolic logic, linear algebra, or game theory. Much of the early work consisted of trying to determine market-like equilibria or core solutions, and the best-known result was that under certain conditions, both parties converged to the position of the median voter.

Now, there are three problems with trying to apply the formal results of spatial models to policy analysis. First, the assumptions necessary to derive these results are violated by common observations in political science. For instance, all voters must at least roughly agree on the weights to be attached to each issue and on where each candidate stands; the candidates must take clear issue positions; and voter preferences cannot be changed by experiences during a campaign.²⁴ The second problem is that even if we suspend disbelief on these assumptions, it can be shown that an equilibrium does not exist if there are more than two candidates or if voters abstain because of "alienation" -- that is, if they decide that neither candidate is sufficiently close to them that it is worthwhile to trudge to the polls.²⁵ Third, even if we had equilibria in these interesting and important cases, the elected politicians might not carry out their announced policies, either because the rules of the policy game robbed them of power to deliver; or because they were incompetent; or because they changed their minds once in office; or, most simply, because they lied during the campaign. As a result of all these problems, it appears that the most recent work in the

field, much of it experimental rather than mathematically deductive, has aimed at developing new and weaker solution concepts which will not absolutely guarantee the adoption of particular policy positions, but will be close enough, as one article has it, "for all practical purposes."²⁶

These difficulties notwithstanding, I think that some of the underlying ideas of spatial models can be profitably employed in an informal and heuristic fashion to illuminate some of the competing theories in the field of policy outputs. Figure 1 is an attempt to turn Key's verbal model into a geometric spatial model. The horizontal axis, here and in subsequent figures, indexes the level of redistribution desired by each voter, and the vertical, the proportion of voters whose ideal point falls at any particular place on the one-dimensional "left"- "right" continuum. There are no restrictions on voting, there is two-party competition, and both parties are assumed to keep their promises. The distribution of opinion is bimodal, and the left mode is higher than the right because there are more have-nots than haves. Allowing voters to abstain because of either alienation or indifference, and assuming away the problems of incomplete or fuzzy information, poorly behaved preference functions, and disagreement on issue weighting, we intuitively expect to observe the two parties both taking issue positions pretty close to the mean or median, say, at P_1 and P_2 . The governmental policies adopted should thus be fairly redistributive, as Key predicted.

Figure 1 here

Let me make three observations about this example. For the median result to hold, we must assume that all issues which have marked redistributive overtones can be collapsed into one dimension.

Most importantly, taxation and expenditure decisions must be made simultaneously; otherwise, it would be perfectly reasonable, for example, for a voter who, ceteris paribus, prefers more spending on welfare, but who is presented with a regressive and unchangeable tax system, to vote against a candidate who agrees with him on welfare but who feels that the existing structure of taxation cannot be amended, at least in the immediate future. Furthermore, a voter who prefers redistributive expenditures on welfare must not, if the median result is to hold for all subject areas, prefer a non-redistributive pattern of educational spending; if he holds these two positions simultaneously, the analyst must disentangle the issues from each other, and such disentanglement may confuse the relationship of each issue to the progressivity of the tax system. Second, the result might not hold if a lot of voters perceived the issue complex as not salient, or if they were too attached to a party or a candidate for these issues to make much difference. Third, this model assumes honest parties. Suppose, for example, the competing elites shared certain ideological presuppositions or all craved approval from the Establishment or all sought to raise campaign funds from people whose ideal points fell in the right-hand mode by satisfying the donors' policy desires. Then Figure 1 might turn into Figure 2, where the C 's subscript the politicians' campaign promises and the G 's, the policies actually adopted when they formed a government. If the true experience is represented by Figure 2, which might fairly aptly summarize the situation in parts of the United States just before the rise of the Populists or that in Great Britain when the Labour Party was in its infancy, then one would expect either the rise of a leftist

party, or a takeover of one of the two parties by a leftist -- for instance, McGovern in 1972, or an attempt to exclude leftist parties from competing -- for example, the Red Scares of 1918-1920 or the late 1940s in America. In the first two cases at least, the polity would probably eventually return to policies which pleased the median voter, but there could be a considerable time lag, and a cross-sectional study taken during the lag might well conclude that there was no relation between competition and outputs. Since one way the lower class could guarantee that there was no divergence between promises and policy would be to select as leaders only those who were ideologically committed to the class's goals, a socialist party might be their best guarantee of a continuation of redistributive policies.

Figure 2 here

Indeed, though Key sometimes spoke of parties as sets of competing elites interested only in maximizing pluralities, as the spatial modelers also assume, he hinted from time to time that he believed the "have-nots" needed a genuinely lower-class party in order to sustain a redistributive program. (Since he did not make the point explicit, he never had to come to grips with Michels.)²⁸ Perhaps the unkept promises point, which seems to me to raise serious problems for spatial competition analysis of policy, led Key to mix his "elite competition" and "lower-class party" notions. In any case, the two variants would lead to quite different predictions about the relations between political inputs and outputs. If the proletariat can trust its leaders, party competition and substantial lower-class turnout may, other things equal, lead to redistribution. If leaders can't or won't

keep their pledges, then redistribution will be likely to occur only if the lower class provides its own leadership -- and then watches its every move.

Key probably would have modeled the 1900-50 Southern political system as in Figure 3, where the dotted lines indicate the disfranchised voters and there is so little continuity from election to election in factional lineups in the multi-candidate Democratic primaries that one cannot really tell where each candidate will fall or how many candidates there will be. Since a candidate who promised a major extension of services for the disfranchised, such as most blacks in the South from 1900 to about 1950, could expect swift retaliation by the voters, the policies advocated would fall in the right-hand hump. But since the factionalism, at least in the early twentieth century South, was quite fluid and since there could be multiple candidates, the winner could choose a platform anywhere on that mode. And because the lack of factional continuity from election to election would decrease the voters' ability to punish candidates who failed to keep their promises, the policies eventually adopted might well stray quite far from the promises made, perhaps even stray into the left half of the redistribution scale. As a consequence, one should expect that a shift from a Figure 1 to a Figure 3 polity would, other things equal, not only decrease the redistributiveness of the policies adopted, but also pronouncedly increase the amount of variance in those policies.

Figure 3 here

Figure 4 represents a political system with the same distribution of opinion on issues of redistribution as Key hypothesized, and

no restrictions on voting, but where the number of parties or candidates is indeterminate and the policies eventually adopted could fall anywhere on the line. The curves are dotted to reflect the fact that in this case, public opinion and policy are disconnected. This graph might represent any of four situations. First, the issue might not be salient in voter decisions, perhaps because of a general belief that government should not intervene in behalf of any particular class.²⁹ Thus, on the line of redistribution the coordinate of the policy adopted would be an unintended consequence of stands taken on other issues.

Figure 4 here

Second, there might be multi-candidate competition, in which case any candidate placing himself, say, on the left mode could always be outflanked on both sides, and, therefore, since no particular strategy would insure success, the policy espoused by the winner could lie virtually anywhere along the line.³⁰ The same effect could be achieved in a two-party state if voters closely observed the candidates' positions and abstained even if only slightly displeased with the issue stands the closest politician took.

Third, open competition might not be allowed, as in Communist countries, and the policies would be determined by other factors. If the party in power were ideologically committed to leftist policies, as most Communist parties are, the policies would generally be leftist; or, if the party were of the opposite ideological persuasion, as is the Chilean junta, for instance, the policies would be rightist. This observation shows that party competition is not a necessary prerequisite of redistributive policies and explains the finding of some cross-national

studies³¹ that Communist and non-Communist countries have adopted similar welfare policies; but it suggests also that the variance in policies adopted by Figure 4 polities should be greater than those of Figure 1 countries.

Fourth, suppose that for some reason, perhaps one of those just enumerated, bureaucrats or interest groups rather than voter-oriented politicians made the crucial policy decisions. Then regardless of the distribution of public opinion or the amount of turnout or the nature of party competition, the policies could fall anywhere on the line. Policy would then vary with the tastes of bureaucrats or the comparative strength of various interest groups, and one would expect, for example, that a disproportionate rise in labor union strength would cause a polity to shift to the left, while a similar growth of organization among big businesses would signal a rightward trend.³² The growth of the bureaucratic state, on the other hand, would shield policy determination from public opinion, a consideration which suggests that we should search for direct connections between politics and policies in areas where bureaucratic domination is weakest, where functionaries have the least independent power, or at a time before they became entrenched.

While the informal discussion of bimodal models has suggested explanations for various findings in the policy outputs literature and prescriptions for future studies, we should not hastily assume a bimodal distribution of public opinion. After all, one of the problems with policy output studies noted earlier is that in most cases we have no direct measures of demands. What if the distribution were unimodal?

Figure 5 represents the most-studied case in spatial modeling, a symmetric unimodal distribution in which two-party competition drives both parties to adopt the position of the median voter.

Figure 5 here

Suppose, however, that one of the parties is too weak, because of historic party identification or some other reason, to pose a real threat to the other. Then the majority party could take any position on the line, though a risk-averse party might feel constrained not to wander too far from the median, as indicated by the dashed lines in Figure 6.³³ The risk-averse majority (P_{MR}) locates between the dashed lines, while the gambling parties (P_{GL} and P_{GR}) take positions to the left and right of the spectrum. If we compared Figure 5 to Figure 6 polities, in other words, we might find them adopting fairly similar policies on the average, but we would expect much more dispersion in the choices of the latter than the former.

Figure 6 here

Consider further a shift from Figure 5 to Figure 7, which, paralleling the change from Figure 1 to Figure 3, represents the disfranchisement of the lower classes and the ending of organized party competition. As in the earlier discussion, we would expect the policies adopted by the regimes after the change to be both less redistributive, although perhaps not as much less as in the bimodal case, and less predictable than those of the administrations before the change.

Figure 7 here

But suppose we found that policies did not vary systematically across systems which diverged widely on measures of turnout and party

competition? Then either we would be back in the unstable case of Figure 2, or the more stable one of Figure 4, allowing unimodal distributions with side-conditions analogous to the bimodal case in each, or we would have to hypothesize a set of much narrower, more sharply peaked distributions, as in Figure 8. For it is two-party competition which drives policy to the center in Figures 1 and 5; without that competition, societies with bimodal or broad unimodal distributions would almost certainly experience greater policy variance, as in Figures 3, 6, or 7. Only with a distribution like Figure 8 would one expect all candidates to bunch around the modal point regardless of the degree of competition or the number of candidates.

Figure 8 here

Distributions such as Figure 8 appear to capture what members of the "social determinist" school of policy outputs have in mind when they consider socioeconomic variables as indicators of demands, instead of resource availability. If their contentions can be extended to issues of redistribution, which they are somewhat loathe to do³⁴ the implication is that each type of society is characterized by a firm policy consensus. Less "developed" states or countries have either less taste for redistributive policies than their more fortunate counterparts, or are less able to indulge their desires. If the contrast in policies adopted is determined largely by such differences in tastes, then Figure 9 might adequately represent public opinion in two polar cases. In each of the two states, which appear on the same graph for convenience, the public overwhelmingly agrees on policies, and any candidate would be irrational to stray to a position on the line not under the closed umbrella of

consensus. If a polity in which opinion was distributed as in Figure 8 disfranchised a segment of the populus or ended party competition, policy would not change, for only the height of the mode would diminish.³⁵

Figure 9 here

All nine of the figures that I have presented probably apply to some issues in some locations at some times. The problem is that since we often lack direct measures of demand, not to mention an appropriate metric, we can seldom apply any one of them with perfect confidence. We should, however, try to step back and consider which might be most appropriate in a given circumstance, and, if we can come to no conclusion by mere logic, attempt to determine how we can go about testing one against the other in any particular situation. The attractiveness of Key's models (Figures 1-3) is that they follow from the assumption of rational self-interest on the part of voters and politicians and his observation of a markedly skewed income distribution. If the horizontal axis is changed to another group of issues, it may be more difficult to specify the assumptions required to produce a particular distribution of opinion or set of political combatants. If, after considerable thought on the part of the data analyst, no distributions or strategies appear more likely than any others, that very fact may imply that it would be unreasonable to expect to observe a connection between policies and the political process on such a set of issues.

I can best illustrate how the observations which I have made about the policy outputs and spatial modeling literature can be applied by discussing my current project on Southern education from 1880 to 1910.

My study is designed to overcome six problems of previous analyses of policy outputs. First, the direct effects of educational benefits, unlike, for example, many of the direct effects of highways, recreational expenditures, or national defense, are relatively easily divisible, easily assignable to particular persons or groups. It makes sense to talk about the distribution of the benefits of educational spending; whereas, it is much more difficult to divvy up the shares of purer public goods.

Second, the distributional issue, while of varying importance from campaign to campaign, was clearly central throughout the period. When Radical Republican governments assumed power during Reconstruction, practically the first thing they did was to set up public school systems; and both their educational programs and rhetoric were suffused with egalitarian sentiments.³⁶ When Redeemer governments, dominated by wealthy Democrats, and often, as in Texas and Mississippi, for instance, spearheaded by tax-cutting movements, took over from the Radicals, they reduced general spending levels for education, thereby punishing most those who could not afford private schools.³⁷ In other states, such as North Carolina, the Redeemers combined overall spending cuts and tax limitations with decentralization of finance and control, thereby mandating malapportionment of schooling. The movements at the beginning of the century for increased local taxation and legislative acts which enabled the multiplication of special taxing districts which segregated wealthy from poor areas were self-consciously elitist, and succeeded only over the repeated and vehement protests of those who wished to spread educational opportunity equally.³⁸ Specific facts aside,

education, which consumed thirty to fifty percent of Southern state budgets, and was widely believed around the turn of the century to be the key to societal progress and equality of opportunity, was an issue which must have been extremely salient to most voters.

Third, the issue is one to which a calculus of simple self-interest seems obviously appropriate. From time to time public policy analysts have tried to match public opinion and policy on such issues as lotteries or the death penalty.³⁹ These studies may be possible when one has adequate survey data, but scientific surveys only began in 1935, and few analysts can hope to make use of an extended time series of surveys on important policy issues, at least below the national level. In such cases, one is forced to hypothesize about the shape of public opinion on an issue, subject to whatever approximate tests of the assumptions are available, and therefore it is helpful to choose policy areas in which relatively simple hypotheses seem adequate.

Fourth, by concentrating on the period from 1880 to 1910, one escapes the homogenized world of the present, and has a long enough time series to observe major alterations in policy. The period largely precedes the development of potent bureaucracies and scholastic interest groups, at least in the South, and one may therefore avoid having to disentangle the impact of these groups on policy.

Fifth, the data set, essentially all the counties of the eleven ex-Confederate states, with the statistics often separated by race, is large and diverse enough to provide an adequate amount of variance in both potential independent and dependent variables, while the general topic is small enough and the secondary literature rich enough to enable

a diligent researcher to uncover many crucial details which someone studying, say, all countries in the developed world, would probably miss.

Finally, there are at least three ways to try to determine, at least in a gross sense, the shape of public opinion on the issue. Models of individual behavior are therefore possible, at least in principle. First of all, there are a few statewide referenda on distribution-related issues. In 1882, for instance, Kentucky, which did not really secede, but which has always been at least "romantically" Southern, held a referendum on whether to increase the white property tax rate by 10 percent in order to triple school expenditures for blacks, thereby equalizing state-level expenditures for both races. The correlates of voting patterns on this proposal tell us a good deal about the opinions on black education of voters with various characteristics.⁴⁰

A second way to approximate demand is to look at variations in local tax rates. Those areas which had higher tax rates must have been willing to pay a larger proportion of their incomes for the education of their children than those in low-tax areas, other things equal. If the taxes were highest where the people were poorest, which was overwhelmingly the case in North Carolina, for instance, then it is but a short step to conclude that the poor, black and white, had a strong demand for redistribution through taxes and spending, while the wealthy, nearly all white, were content to finance their own schools at their current low tax rates without increasing their subsidy to the children of the less fortunate.⁴¹

A third way to learn something about opinion on redistribution is to look at the actions of state legislators in key sessions. In 1870 in North Carolina, for instance, legislators from rich counties generally supported the shift from a statewide to a county-wide collection and disbursement of funds. In 1883 in North Carolina, in 1886 in Alabama, and at other times in other states, legislatures passed laws allowing local school boards to discriminate against blacks in the allocation of funds within counties or districts.⁴² Although I have not yet studied these cases in detail, their analysis should reveal a good deal about attitudes toward inequality of educational opportunity for blacks.

A related issue considered by several Southern legislators and constitutional conventions suggested one measure for the distribution of educational benefits. In the late 1860s and early 70s, and again after blacks were substantially disfranchised about 1900, there were widespread calls, especially from wealthy white Democrats, for the passage of laws or constitutional amendments denying funds raised from taxes on whites to black education. Since blacks were almost unanimously poor, confining their schools to the relative pittance which could be raised from taxes on the race meant consigning their schools to severe and permanent inferiority. Because such blatant discrimination might inflame northern public opinion, or be invalidated by the courts, and because less obvious, but equally effective means of discrimination existed, none of these laws passed.

These proposals suggested the following index of racial discrimination over time. For a few states where data on taxes and

spending is available by race for the whole period, I determined the proportion of expenditures which went to blacks and the proportion of direct taxes paid by blacks. I call this index the "black balance of payments" and present the statewide trends for North Carolina in table 1, which is based on data collected for each of the thirty years and averaged over five-year periods in order to equalize the numbers of observations for each period and to smooth out the impact of non-recurring expenses for school construction.⁴³

Table 1 here

The trend in the table is clear enough. The level of white subsidy to black education was roughly constant from 1880 to 1900, when the state passed a law which disfranchised at least 95 percent of the blacks. The subsidy immediately dropped to about half the pre-1900 level, and fell off by another 20-25 percent in the last part of the period.

Even more interesting is the shift in the correlates of the black balance of payments over time. Table 2 presents OLS regression coefficients for county-level data in North Carolina. A wide assortment of variables were initially included in the regression equations, and I eliminated those which had no significant coefficients. Removal of the extraneous terms left the remaining parameter estimates virtually unaffected. The pattern of coefficients for the percentage Negro variable is the most striking facet of the table -- strongly positive coefficients until 1900, weakly positive for the five-year period immediately after disfranchisement, and negative, though not significant, coefficients in the final half-decade.

Table 2 here

My gloss on this pattern is that while blacks enjoyed the vote, they were able to use their political power to extract a larger subsidy from whites in counties where there were a great many black votes, despite the fact that it was precisely in those counties where white racism and the plantation economy's hierarchic socioeconomic structure were strongest. After disfranchisement, black votes lost their value as currency negotiable for government benefits.

It seems unlikely that this marked distributional shift merely reflected some underlying socioeconomic upheaval, for, first, the correlation between the black payments account and the wealth per white male adult stayed pretty constant and insignificant through the era. Second, the economy improved markedly after 1900. The statewide value of real and personal property per white male adult, which had varied from \$875 in the early eighties to \$798 in the still depressed late nineties, jumped to \$904 and \$1,094 in the last two periods. The 37 percent rise in property value in a decade meant that the state was capable of distributing a larger amount to its poor after 1900 than before; instead, it gave a markedly lower percentage of available funds to blacks, which decreased the relative standing of black vis-a-vis white schools, and therefore made the black opportunity to progress through schooling growingly unequal. And the perfect correlation in time between disfranchisement and the diminution of the black balance of payments strongly suggests that politics made all the difference.

Although it would be possible to present further numbers making essentially the same point through different means, the major

conclusions are clear.⁴⁴ In turn-of-the-century Southern education, figures 1 and 3 sketch the before and after pictures pretty well. The decisive factor in the shift in the distribution of expenditures and taxes from one which favored blacks to one which left them approximately as badly off as under the social status quo was political, not social or economic.

The findings of the policy outputs studies should not disturb believers in democracy quite as much as they have. Rather, by providing a better grounding in individual behavior and by choosing data sets carefully, we can begin to specify the conditions under which mass politics will make a difference in policy. Such a deeper understanding should lead to the construction of more fully articulated and complex models of the process of policymaking in different areas at different times and strengthen the relationship between sophisticated techniques and sophisticated theory. And in giving institutional rules and candidate strategies a prominent place in the theoretical structure, we will be restoring politics to the central place it deserves to hold in political history.

TABLE 1

STATEWIDE TRENDS IN THE "BLACK BALANCE OF PAYMENTS," 1880-1910

Period	Balance*	Period	Balance*
1880-1884	.205	1896-1900	.189
1886-1890	.177	1901-1905	.097
1891-1895	.174	1906-1910	.057

*Black proportion of expenditures minus black proportion of property and poll taxes.

TABLE 2

THE SHIFTING CORRELATES OF THE BLACK BALANCE OF PAYMENTS -- MULTIPLE REGRESSION STATISTICS

Period	Percent Negro	Percent Negro ²	White Wealth (in \$1000)	Constant	R ²
1880-1884	+ 0.54*	- 0.33*	+ 0.05*	- .02	.86*
1885-1890	+ 1.02*	- 1.15*	+ 0.02	- .04	.75*
1891-1895	+ 0.85*	- 0.87*	+ 0.02	- .02	.74*
1896-1900	+ 0.85*	- 0.85*	+ 0.01	- .02	.69*
1901-1905	+ 0.32*	- 0.40*	+ 0.09	- .04	.53*
1906-1910	- 0.08	- 0.01	+ 0.06	+ .01	.11

Figure 1

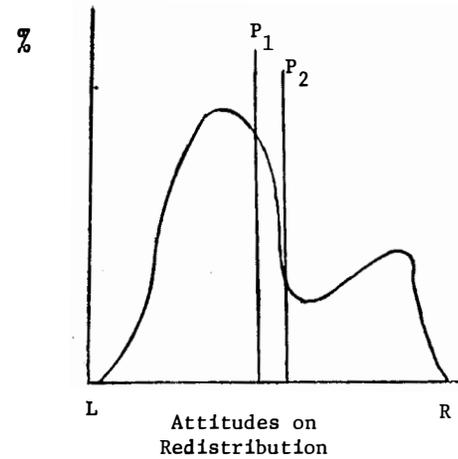


Figure 2

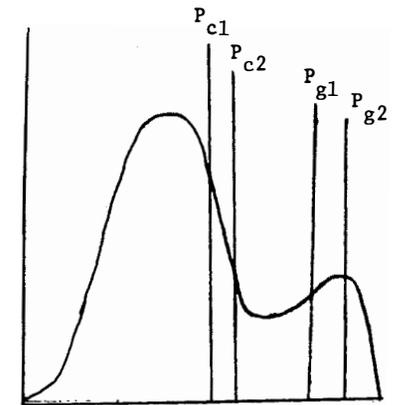


Figure 3

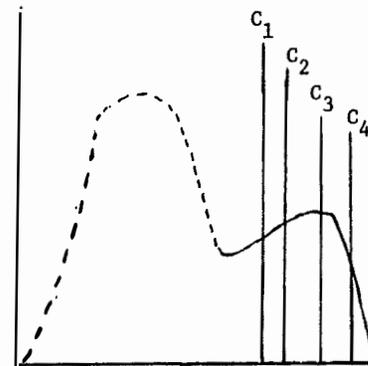


Figure 4

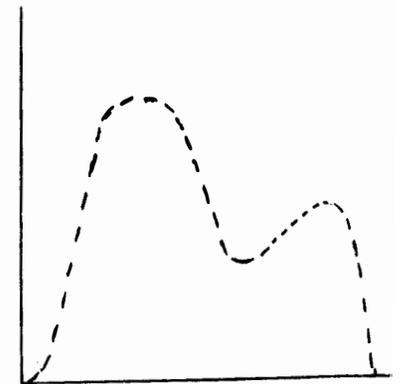


Figure 5

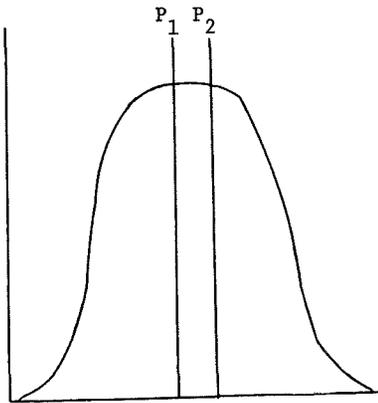


Figure 6

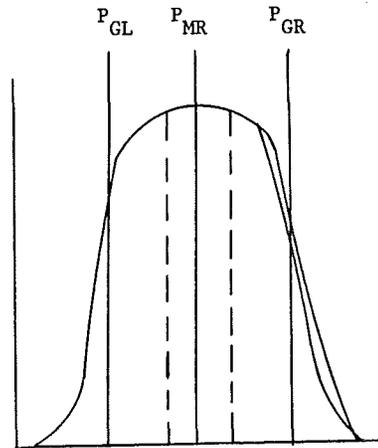


FIGURE 9

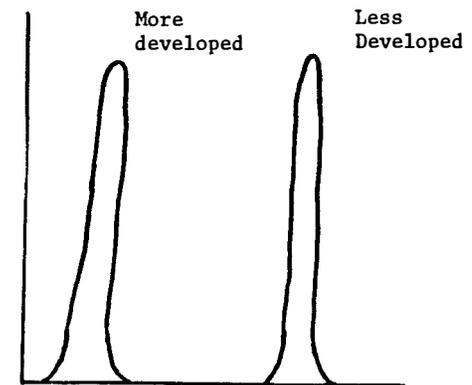


Figure 7

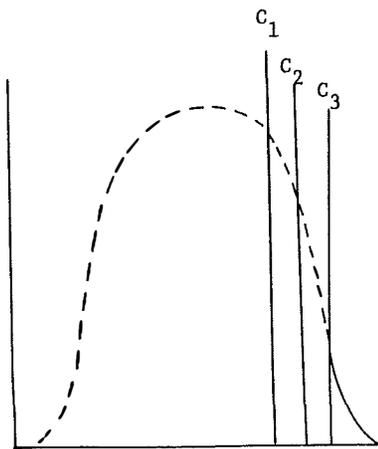


Figure 8

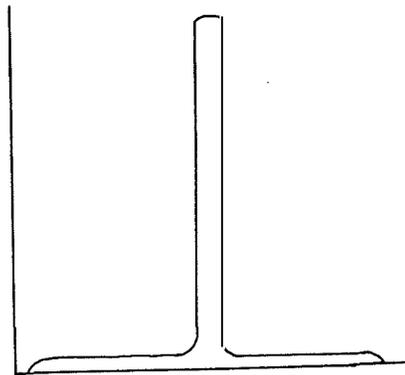
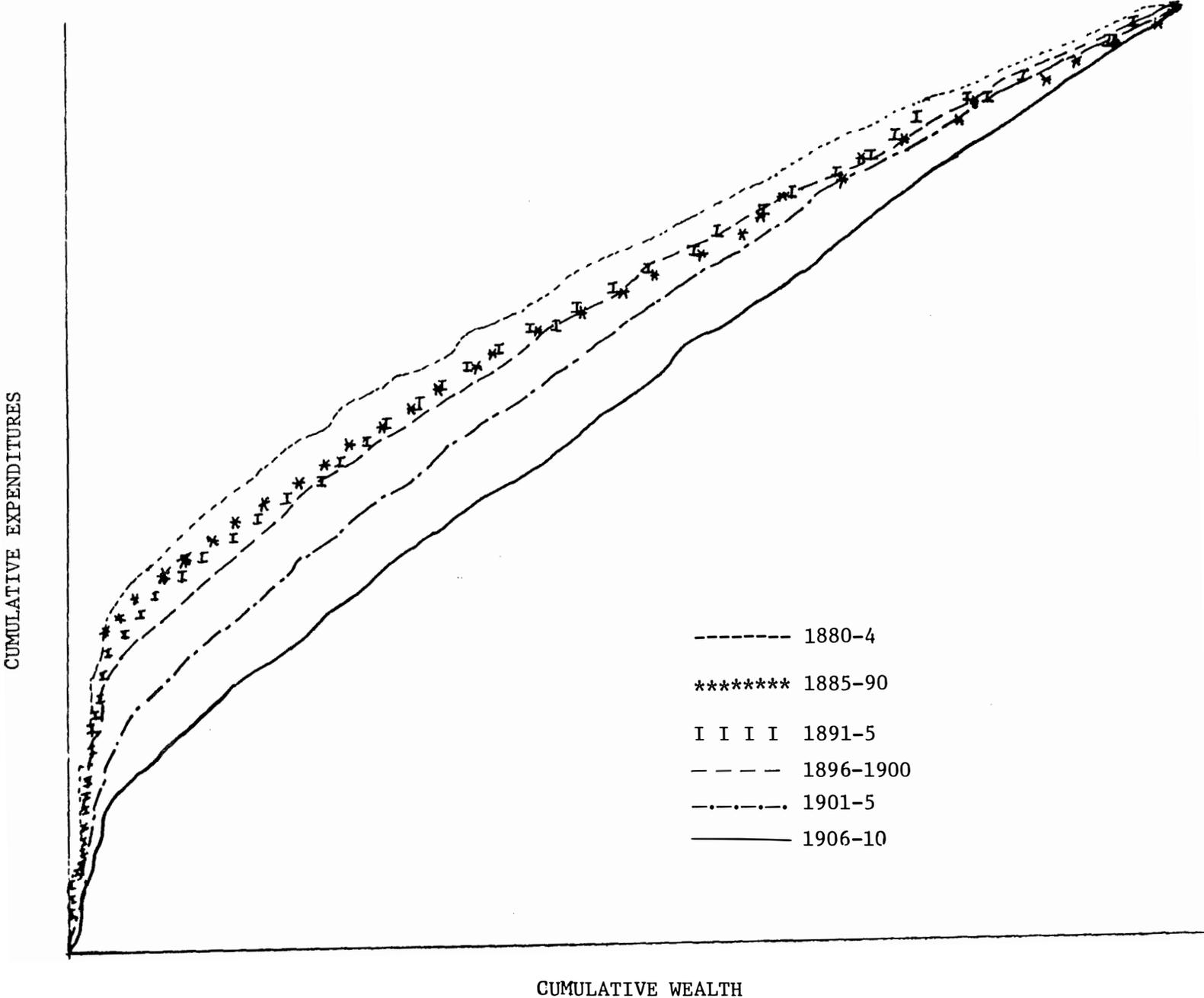


FIGURE 10

LORENTZ CURVE ILLUSTRATING THE IMPACT OF DISFRANCHISEMENT ON THE DEGREE TO WHICH EDUCATION WAS REDISTRIBUTIVE IN NORTH CAROLINA, 1880-1910 (BOTH RACES)



FOOTNOTES

1. Jacques Le Goff, "Is Politics Still the Backbone of History?" in Felix Gilbert and Stephen B. Graubard, Historical Studies Today (New York, 1972), 337-55; Michael Kammen, "Introduction: The Historian's Vocation and the State of the Discipline in the United States," in Kammen, ed., The Past Before Us: Contemporary Historical Writing in the United States (Ithaca and London, 1980), 34-35.
2. Lee Benson, Toward the Scientific Study of History: Selected Essays (Philadelphia, 1972), 105-59; Samuel P. Hays, "The Social Analysis of American Political History, 1880-1920," Political Science Quarterly, LXXX (1965), 373-94.
3. Le Goff, "Is Politics Still the Backbone of History?", 337, 349.
4. Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Eugene D. Genovese, "The Political Crisis of Social History," Journal of Social History, X (1976), 219.
5. Lance E. Davis, "It's a Long, Long Road to Tipperary, or Reflections of Organized Violence, Protection Rates, and Related Topics: The New Political History," The Journal of Economic History, XL (1980), 2,8.

6. The linkage between policies and their consequences for the society has rarely been explored systematically by historians, probably because it is terribly difficult to sort out the impacts of specific policies from other possible causes. Discovering methods for such sorting should be one of the prime tasks of political history.
7. Allan G. Bogue, "The New Political History in the 1970s," in Kammen, ed., Past Before Us, 251 found that up to mid-1979, most "new political historians" had ignored the interactions between popular voting and policy. The trend is very new. Works exemplifying the trend include Richard L. McCormick, "The Party Period and Public Policy: An Exploratory Hypothesis," Journal of American History LXVI (1979), 279-98; and J. Rogers Hollingsworth and Ellen Jane Hollingsworth, Dimensions in Urban History: Historical and Social Science Perspectives on Middle-Size American Cities (Madison and London, 1979). Recent treatments of the effects of institutional rules include Paul Kleppner and Stephen C. Baker, "The Impact of Voter Registration Requirements on Electoral Turnout, 1900-16" (paper presented at 1979 American Political Science Association meeting); J. Morgan Kousser, "Progressivism -- For Middle-Class Whites Only: North Carolina Education, 1880-1910," Journal of Southern History, XLVI (1980), 169-94; Peter H. Argersinger, "'A Place On the Ballot'" Fusion Politics and Antifusion Laws," American Historical Review, 85 (1980), 287-306; Gary W. Cox and J. Morgan Kousser, "Turnout and Rural Corruption: New York as a Test Case," California Institute of Technology Social Science Working Paper #292 (Oct. 1979).

8. McCormick, "Party Period," 292. Although he offers many interesting insights, McCormick, in my view, too easily accepts the ethnoculturalists' treatment of certain crucial issues as merely symbolic and The American Voter's treatment of electors as unideological men whose partisan behavior merely mimicked their fathers'. See Paul Kleppner, The Third Electoral System, 1853-1892: Parties, Voters, and Political Cultures (Chapel Hill, 1979), 3-15; Angus Campbell, Philip E. Converse, Warren E. Miller, Donald E. Stokes, The American Voter, (paper ed., New York, 1964), 86-96; McCormick, "Party Period," 282; Hollingsworth and Hollingsworth, Dimensions in Urban History, 121. Failing to consider systematically such large issues as slavery, sectionalism, the tariff, and financial policy, McCormick views nineteenth century American governmental policy as primarily a series of unconnected decisions about how to distribute localized public goods. However useful in reminding historians of an important and too often overlooked set of decisions, McCormick's scheme is not wholly convincing, for it transfers attention entirely away from most of the issues that politicians continually discussed.
9. V. O. Key, Jr., Southern Politics in State and Nation (New York, 1949), 307-10.
10. Thomas R. Dye, Politics, Economics, and the Public: Policy Outcomes in the American States (Chicago, 1966) is the leading example.
11. Gary L. Tomkins, "A Causal Model of State Welfare Expenditures," Journal of Politics, XXXVII (1975), 392-416; Gerald C. Wright, Jr. "Interparty Competition and State Social Welfare Policy: When a Difference Makes a Difference," ibid., 796-803; Michael S. Lewis-Beck, "The Relative Importance of Socioeconomic and Political Variables for Public Policy," American Political Science Review, LXXI (1977), 449-66; Robert Jackman, Politics and Social Equality: A Comparative Analysis (New York, 1975).
12. For references to and summaries of the literature, see Richard I. Hofferbert, "State and Community Policy Studies: A Review of Comparative Input-Output Analyses," Political Science Annual, III (1972), 3-72; Thomas R. Dye, Understanding Public Policy (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1972).
13. Robert R. Alford and Roger Friedland, "Political Participation and Public Policy," Annual Review of Sociology, I (1975), 445.
14. The major exception, Hollingsworth and Hollingsworth's Dimensions in Urban History, is based on a sampling design which deliberately cut down the variations in both independent and dependent variables by limiting the data to middle-sized American cities and by pooling data over an eight-year time span.
15. McCormick, "Party Period," 297, and Richard Winters, "Party Control and Policy Change," American Journal of Political Science, XX

(1976), 597-636 stress this point.

16. Virginia Gray, "Models of Comparative State Politics: A Comparison of Cross-Sectional and Time Series Analysis," American Journal of Political Science, XX (1976), 235-56 demonstrates that cross-sectional and time-series estimates of the same basic models of policy may yield quite different results.
17. Indeed, when Hollingsworth looked more closely at local electoral contests in three late nineteenth century Wisconsin towns, he found that campaigns often lasted for only a few days and usually only involved issues of "personal morality." It is no wonder that he found no connection between turnout and expenditure changes there, for questions of expenditure levels seem not to have, for those times and places, been matters of political conflict. See J. Rogers Hollingsworth, "The Impact of Electoral Behavior on Public Policy: The Urban Dimension, 1900," in Joel H. Silbey, Allan G. Bogue, and William H. Flanigan, The History of American Electoral Behavior (Princeton, 1978), 367.
18. R. Kenneth Godwin and W. Bruce Shepard, "Political Processes and Public Expenditures: A Re-examination Based on Theories of Representative Government," American Political Science Review, LXX (1976), 1127-35.

19. Thomas R. Dye, Policy Analysis: What Governments Do, Why They Do It, and What Difference It Makes (University, Alabama, 1976), 29, 42-3, 60, 71-3.
20. Paul Burstein, "Citizen Preferences, the Party Balance, and Political Outcomes," paper delivered at American Political Science Association meetings, 1978. One attempt to operationalize public opinion more precisely is Ronald E. Weber and William R. Shaffer, "Public Opinion and American State Policy-Making," Midwest Journal of Political Science, XVI (1972), 683-699.
21. For more details, see Kousser, "Progressivism -- For Middle-Class Whites Only."
22. Cf. Hollingsworth and Hollingsworth, Dimensions in Urban History, 158.
23. Harold Hotelling, "Stability in Competition," The Economic Journal, 29 (1929), 41-57; Kenneth J. Arrow, Social Choice and Individual Values (New York, 1951); Duncan Black, The Theory of Committees and Elections (Cambridge, 1958); Anthony Downs, An Economic Theory of Democracy (New York, 1957).
24. The best introduction to recent findings on these issues is Benjamin I. Page, Choices and Echoes in Presidential Elections: Rational Man and Electoral Democracy (Chicago, 1978).

25. Otto A. Davis, Melvin J. Hinich, and Peter C. Ordeshook, "An Expository Development of a Mathematical Model of the Electoral Process," American Political Science Review, LXIV (1970), 426-48.
26. John A. Ferejohn, Morris P. Fiorina, and Herbert A. Weisberg, "Toward a Theory of Legislative Decision," in Peter C. Ordeshook, ed., Game Theory and Political Science (New York, 1978), 183
27. This is not a strained example. Consider the difficulty of shifting the financing of social security from the regressive payroll tax to the income tax, or, in many states, of replacing regressive sales taxes with more progressive taxes on income or wealth as the primary means of financing state contributions to education. An attempt to overcome this difficulty by excluding services financed through regressive taxes excludes too much policy. See Christopher Hewitt, "The Effect of Political Democracy and Social Equality on Equality in Industrial Societies: A Cross-National Comparison," American Sociological Review, XLII (1977), 450-64.
28. Robert Michels, Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy (New York, 1962, reprint of 1915 ed.). For a suggestive use of the "lower-class party" variant of Key, see Edward T. Jennings, Jr., "Competition, Constituencies, and Welfare Policies in American States," American Political Science Review, LXXIII (1979), 414-29.
29. McCormick, "Party Period," 291-92.
30. Downs, Economic Theory, 142-63.
31. Jackman, Politics and Social Equality; Harold L. Wilensky, The Welfare State and Equality: Structural and Ideological Roots of Public Expenditures (Berkeley, 1975).
32. Alexander Hicks, Roger Friedland, and Edwin Johnson, "Class Power and State Policy: The Case of Large Business Corporations, Labor Unions, and Governmental Redistribution in the American States," American Sociological Review, 43 (1978), 302-15.
33. The effect of risk-aversion on spatial choice has been studied under somewhat different conditions by Kenneth A. Schepsle, "The Strategy of Ambiguity: Uncertainty and Electoral Competition," American Political Science Review, 66 (1972), 555-68; and Richard D. McKelvey, "Some Strategic Aspects of Ambiguity in Spatial Models of Policy Formation," Public Choice, forthcoming.
34. Dye, Understanding Public Policy, 262.
35. There are interesting parallels between the clashes among students of policy outputs in political science and the arguments over "consensus" interpretations of American history during the 1960s. Many on the political left as well as the right in political

science agree that "politics doesn't make a difference" in capitalist bureaucratic states, just as many leftist historians join their right-wing colleagues in the belief that consensus rather than conflict has characterized the history of American politics. (Surely Gabriel Kolko's The Triumph of Conservatism [New York, 1963] is as much a work of consensus history as any of the books by Richard Hofstadter.) In each case, liberals and moderate leftists have stood fast in the belief that the "democratic class struggle" has often found expression in politics, that, at least under certain conditions or in certain instances, the lower-class could express and obtain its will through normal political channels. The correlation of both debates with ideological world-views, and especially the fact that the "equations" for positions on the consensus-conflict dependent variable, if you will allow a fanciful regression equation, are dominated by a quadratic term -- that is, both "ideological extremes share a consensus on consensus, while the centrists are more likely to see conflict -- indicates the unlikelihood of resolving either debate. For true believers will explain away evidence. And even a general exogenous shift of opinion toward one end of the political spectrum, which might settle simpler controversies by decimating one side's adherents, won't resolve these battles. In these cases, a leftward or rightward shift will change the balance between leftist and rightist adherents of consensus or social determinism, but it won't eliminate the devotees of conflict and pluralism in the center, or change very

much the overall strength of the extremes against the middle. Thus, those who plan their careers by playing the futures market of intellectual interchange can safely invest in the continuation of both these conflicts.

36. W. E. Burghardt DuBois, Black Reconstruction in America: An Essay Toward a History of the Part which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860-1880 (New York, 1935), 637-69.
37. Dudley G. Wooten, "The Reconstruction Period, 1865-1874," in Eugene C. Barker, ed., Texas History (Dallas, 1929), 506-13; William C. Harris, The Day of the Carpetbagger: Republican Reconstruction in Mississippi (Baton Rouge and London, 1979), 624-28; Horace Mann Bond, The Education of the Negro in the American Social Order (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1934) 92, 105-08.
38. The best places to start to trace these arguments are in the periodic reports of state school superintendents. See especially those of South Carolina (1881-2, 631-32; 1899, 21-22; 1900, 28-29, 32; 1902, 15; 1904, 13; 1910, 12); Mississippi (1872, 19-20; 1904, 11); Alabama (1908, 118-19).
39. E.g. Weber and Shaffer, "Public Opinion and American State Policy-Making."
40. J. Morgan Kousser, "Making Separate Equal: Integration of Black

and White School Funds in Kentucky," Journal of Interdisciplinary History, X (1980), 339-428.

41. Kousser, "Progressivism -- For Middle-Class Whites Only," 176, 191.
42. Bond, Education of the Negro, 107-09.
43. Indirect taxes accounted for only about 12 percent of total school expenditures and there was no clear trend in the proportion of support from such sources.
44. For a variety of such numbers, see Kousser, "Progressivism -- For Middle-Class Whites Only." Hollingsworth and Hollingsworth, Dimensions in Urban History, 145, draw similar conclusions about the relation of turnout to educational expenditures in the turn-of-the-century South.