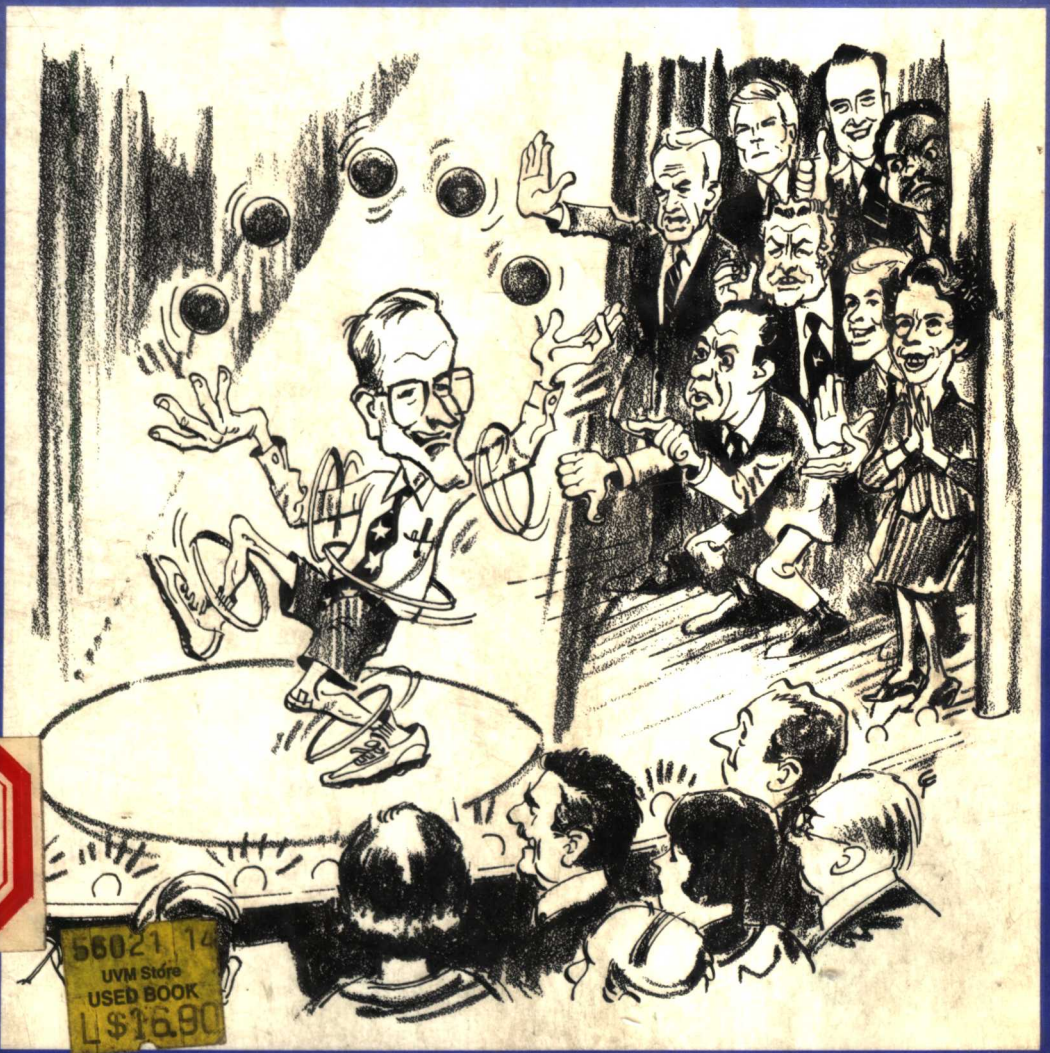
BEHIND THE SCENES IN AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

# PERSONALITIES AND POLITICS

Peter Woll





Eighth Edition

Peter Woll BRANDEIS UNIVERSITY

BEHIND THE SCENES IN

# American Government

## Personalities and Politics

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HarperCollins*Publishers*

Sponsoring Editor: Lauren Silverman
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Art Direction: Teresa Delgado
Text Design Adaptation: North 7 Atelier, Ltd.
Cover Design: Ben Arrington
Cover Illustration/Photo: Erikson-Dillon Art Services Inc.
Production: Jeffrey Taub
Compositor: ComCom Division of Haddon Craftsmen, Inc.
Printer and Binder: R. R. Donnelley & Sons Company
Cover Printer: The Lehigh Press, Inc.

Behind the Scenes in American Government, Eighth Edition



**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**
Behind the scenes in American government: personalities and politics / [compiled by] Peter Woll.—8th ed.
p. cm.
1. United States—Politics and government—20th century.
I. Woll, Peter, 1933–
JK271.B533 1991 90-49629
320.973—dc20 CIP

ISBN 0-673-52028-5 (student edition)
ISBN 0-673-52154-0 (teacher edition)

91 92 93 94 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2

# PREFACE

This book is designed to be an exciting supplementary text for introductory American government courses. It is politics through the eyes of participants, focusing upon the personalities who shape the way the political game is played and who, more often than is commonly thought, place their individual imprints upon public policies. The text can also be used to complement a wide range of courses that analyze parties and political campaigning, interest groups and lobbyists, the media and political consultants, the presidency, Congress, the courts, and the bureaucracy.

Politics is, by any measure, fascinating. But this fascination is not often conveyed to students because many books and courses concentrate on structures and processes at the expense of the individuals who constitute the lifeblood of politics. And it is, after all, the people in politics who shape its character, just as they themselves are shaped by it. This book illustrates how character and personality influence politics, and the ways in which political institutions and processes such as the presidency and political campaigning affect the personalities and actions of those who are directly, and sometimes indirectly, involved. Vignettes of famous politicians, pressure group leaders, journalists and political consultants, members of Congress, White House staffers and presidential advisers, Supreme Court justices, and top-level bureaucrats make up the book. By introducing students to the colorful and powerful personalities who are found in politics, I hope to make American government the lively subject that it should be.

## WHAT'S OLD, WHAT'S NEW

The eighth edition of *Behind the Scenes in American Government* portrays the leading and upcoming political personalities that are shaping the politics of the 1990s. In Chapter One, "Political Parties and Politicians," the text retains the popular portrayals of President George Bush and perennial political candidate Jesse Jackson, as well as the riveting Mike Royko account of former Chicago Mayor Richard Daley's personality cult and leadership style. New to the eighth edition is Gary Wills's *Time* cover story, which takes a probing look at Vice President Dan Quayle, rising above the clichés and jokes that have characterized him to suggest he is a far more serious politician than his popular image portrays. Other selections added to the eighth edition in Chapter One include a lively account of how Lee Atwater's political style helped him to rise to power and prominence in the Republican party from relatively obscure roots; a fasci-

nating description of the new black politics and politicians that gained prominence as the decade of the 1990s began; and a fascinating look behind the scenes of Douglas Wilder's successful race for governor of Virginia, written by two young political staffers who helped to forge his campaign and were instrumental in his success.

Chapter Two on pressure groups and lobbyists continues the popular selection on influence peddling in Washington from a *Time* cover story, and *Washington Post* reporter Haynes Johnson's account of the power of money in the nation's capital. *Congressional Quarterly* writer Chuck Alston adds a fascinating account of the role of PACs in the battle for clean air, a piece that profiles a variety of political personalities and is full of flavor.

Chapter Three, "The Media and Political Consultants," has retained the classic and popular selections by Larry J. Sabato on political consultants, Lois Romano on political consultant Pat Caddell, Jonathan Alter on the media and their role in political campaigning, and Jody Powell on "The Right to Lie," a description of the often trying times of a presidential press secretary. New to the eighth edition is a political consultant's firsthand description of negative campaigning, which focuses on political candidates' alleged personality weaknesses and misdeeds in modern elections and which offers advice to candidates on how to cope with it.

New readings in Chapter Four on the presidency include Fred Barnes's profile of President Bush in office, focusing on his leadership style. Veteran *Washington Post* journalists and Washington insiders add a lively profile of White House Chief of Staff John H. Sununu, entitled "The White House Tough Guy." Reagan speechwriter Peggy Noonan contributes an exciting behind-the-scenes account of how a talented speechwriter coped with a detached president and often overbearing White House staff.

Turning to Chapter Five, on the Congress, the eighth edition of *Scenes* takes into account major upheavals on Capitol Hill that occurred in the late 1980s and early 1990s as power shifts occurred among congressional leaders. The chapter retains the classic selections by Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, "The Johnson System," and by Laurence Leamer on the contrasting Senate styles of Robert Byrd of West Virginia and Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts. New in the eighth edition is an in-depth *Wall Street Journal* profile of Michigan congressman John Dingell, who wields wide power as the chairman of the influential House Energy and Commerce Committee. Another new and timely piece describes how West Virginia Senator Robert Byrd changed his style in the Senate as he stepped down from being majority leader to become chairman of the influential Appropriations Committee. Internal Senate power is also the subject of a new profile of West Virginia Senator John D. Rockefeller IV, who adopted an "old-fashioned" Senate style to gain influence. Finally, students should be particularly fascinated with a fresh selection written by a young congressional candidate who challenged an incumbent, which describes his life as a congressional candidate.

Chapter Six, "The Courts," has kept the popular Bob Woodward and Scott

Armstrong selection from their best-selling book *The Brethren,* which gives a behind-the-scenes account of how the personalities and styles of individual justices played an important role in making the historic abortion decision in *Roe v. Wade* (1973). For the eighth edition there are new portrayals of justices William J. Brennan, Jr., who led the Court's liberal wing from his first day as a justice until his resignation in 1990, and Antonin Scalia, who has become the Court's leading conservative.

Chapter Seven, "The Bureaucracy," keeps the classic selections by Sanford J. Ungar on "The King"—J. Edgar Hoover—and by Jonathan Alter on "The Powers That Stay." Added to the chapter is the popular piece by David Stockman, drawn from his best-seller *The Triumph of Politics,* giving a firsthand account of his critical role as budget director in the Reagan presidency. Stockman also highlights the crucial role bureaucrats often play in making important government decisions.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am especially indebted to Elaine Herrmann, who has assisted me over the years with this and other projects. Her extraordinary skills and especially her good humor in the face of the many pressures that always accompany writing and publishing a book have saved many a day for me. I would also like to thank my editors, Lauren Silverman and Claire Caterer, with whom it has been a delight to work. Their professional competence improved the book and smoothly guided it through the intricate publishing process.

Peter Woll

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# POLITICAL PARTIES AND POLITICIANS

## Chapter One

In classical democratic theory, political parties are supposed to bridge the gap between people and government. They are to be the principal policy-makers, presenting contrasting choices to the electorate so that, by voting, people can participate in the choice of government programs. It is important that a political party have control over its candidates and office holders, because a party that has a majority in the legislature and controls the executive branch will then be able to carry out its platform.

Although political parties in an ideal situation are suited to presenting meaningful and realistic policy choices for the electorate, they also serve the personal goals of their active members, which may have nothing at all to do with implementing one public policy instead of another. Roberto Michels draws from the great German sociologist Max Weber to define the political party as:

> A spontaneous society of propaganda and of agitation seeking to acquire power, in order to procure thereby for its active militant adherents chances, ideal and material, for realization of either objective aims or of *personal advantages,* or of both. Consequently, the general orientation of the political party, whether in its personal or impersonal aspect, is that of *machtstreben* (striving to power).[1]

In this chapter we will be concerned with the personal motives of active party members. These motives affect the organization and orientation of political parties at national, state, and local levels. The drive for power may completely overshadow party policy. American party leaders will often shape their policy promises in accordance with the wishes of the majority of the electorate. And, in the absence of any clear electoral desires, which is a common situation, party leaders themselves must determine their actions, which are usually directed toward expanding their power and status in both the party and government. Their personalities often determine the kinds of decisions they will make, and the way in which they conduct their offices. At the lower levels of parties, particularly in city party machines, the orientation of adherents is often economic security as much as a drive for power. Policy is almost completely irrelevant at these lower echelons.

[1]Alfred D. Grazia, trans., Roberto Michels's *First Lectures in Political Sociology* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1949), p. 134. Italics added.

COMMONLY REFERRED TO BY the media as "wimp," Vice President George Bush proved the image to be far from the truth as he readily captured the 1988 Republican presidential nomination and went on to campaign vigorously for his place in history as president of the United States. Bush brought to his campaign leadership skills that were known to the public and of little interest to a media apparently obsessed with George Bush's alleged Irangate mistake in not vigorously opposing President Reagan's plan to sell arms to Iran in exchange for hostages. Nor did Bush, if he knew of it, apparently oppose the even more serious White House debacle, engineered by the president's staff, that secretly and in violation of federal law transferred arms sales' funds to the Nicaraguan contras.

But Vice President Bush, like his predecessors, had to play second fiddle to the president. The vice president's office by its very nature is low-key. No president wants a vice president to upstage him. It was impossible for "the real George Bush" to emerge from a White House dominated by "the Great Communicator," Ronald Reagan.

However, Bush, like many former vice presidents, used the office to gain the support of Republican organizations throughout the nation. Richard Nixon had done the same in the late 1950s. Bush, like Nixon before him, generously gave his time to party fund-raisers and organizational meetings. He seemed the natural *party* heir to Ronald Reagan, although not necessarily Reagan's ideological equivalent.

Bush built his presidential campaign on an effective organization and loyalty to Ronald Reagan. Ironically, public opinion polls suggested that Bush's party rival for the nomination, Kansas Senator Robert Dole, would be more likely to win against Michael Dukakis, the leading contender for his party's nomination. But Dole's organization could not match that of Bush. Internal bickering and staff fights crippled the Kansan's organization, and Dole's leadership style, drawn from the legislative rather than the executive arena, appeared to be hesitant and uncertain. Whether Bush won by default or by design will remain a question for political historians to decide. But after Bush swept the critical Southern primary on March 8, 1988, that encompassed all of the southern states, including Florida and Texas, there was no doubt he was on his way to the nomination.

The Bush campaign, however, did not seem to illuminate much about the candidate himself, neither his personality nor what issues, except in the vaguest of terms, he considered to be most important. The author of the following selection goes in search of George Bush, and in the process sheds light on his character and style, which, as political scientist James David Barber has pointed out, are always important ingredients of presidential performance.[1]

[1]James David Barber, *The Presidential Character,* 3rd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1986).

# 1 Randall Rothenberg
# IN SEARCH OF GEORGE BUSH

A crackling fire warmed the White House office of the Vice President this raw winter day, complementing the deep wood tones, the rich Oriental rugs and the family photographs. Sprawled in a chair, George Bush contemplated a question: How would his leadership differ from that of his chief rival for the Republican presidential nomination, Senator Robert J. Dole of Kansas?

"Can't talk about Bob Dole's leadership," Bush said of the man who humiliated him in the Iowa caucuses and whom, in turn, he defeated in the bitterly contended New Hampshire primary. Then, immediately, Bush caught himself. "I can work well with people," he added. "I can effect change without brutalizing people."

A simple response to a simple question, but telling in what was omitted. After seven years as deputy in the most ideologically charged Administration in this century, and in the midst of the political fight of his life, George Bush's credo remains intact: all politics is personal.

He has strewn handwritten epistles by the thousands along the path of his political career ("George Bush is a fiend for writing personal notes," says a former White House official). On the stump, he seems to delight less in being recognized than in recognizing. "Hey, my main man!" he says to a high school student he greets by name in Ames, Iowa. He spots a fellow back in a crowd in Iowa City. "Hey, how's Shirl? Back in Marshalltown?" After his Iowa drubbing, he attacked New Hampshire not with policies but with *politesse*—offering help to locals whose cars had stalled, shaking hands at factory gates, tossing snowballs with reporters.

But ideas? "I'm not what you call your basic intellectual," said Bush during a break in a campaign whose next test comes two days hence, in the agglomeration of Southern primaries dubbed "Super Tuesday." He grew insistent: "Be what you are in life. Don't try to be everything just because you're running for president."

The statement rings with irony, for if any man in American politics has *been* everything, it is 63-year-old George Herbert Walker Bush. Yet his résumé is the paradox of his public existence.

Throughout his rapid ascension from job to appointive job, Bush has left in his wake respect and deep affection. He is credited with building the Texas Republican party, keeping the G.O.P. together when Watergate ripped its fabric, and restoring morale at a Central Intelligence Agency critically damaged by Congressional investigations.

From *The New York Times Magazine*, March 6, 1988. 