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For a political scientist who was weaned on the Nuffield Election Studies and whose education in British politics took him from Bagehot to Butler, it is a special treat to stand on this platform. And it is a treat, too, to return to England after 15 years.

On that previous visit, in early May 1980, I had come to talk about our presidential election, then six months away; and I was a guest on your early morning Today show. In the second segment of the interview--after it had been interrupted by consideration of a more timely puzzle, namely, "Who shot JR?" on the television show Dallas--I was asked to predict the outcome of our election. And I
said that the challenger, Ronald Reagan, would defeat President Carter. That evening, at the University of Keele, the Chancellor told me that he had heard my prediction while he was shaving and that he had, in an uncontrollable fit of consternation, cut himself with his razor! Happily, Professor Shafer's introduction has marked me clearly as a political scientist and not as a pundit. You can take that as his warrant--and mine--that your visitor is harmless and will cause no further bloodletting in the higher reaches of British academe.

My talk does, however, involve another case of bloodletting. For the American congressional elections of 1994 resulted in a large and stunning defeat for the political party which had held its majority in our House of Representatives for 40 years. It was an outcome which neither the equations of the political scientists nor the inside information of the pundits had predicted. It was, at the very least, a fascinating election; and at the very most, an historic one. No doubt, we shall have to wait for a few more
elections and a few dozen Ph.D. (and D.Phil.) theses before we decide whether or not it was historic. In the meantime, of course, events and politicians are on the move and the political scientists and pundits are scrambling to keep up.

For political scientists, the change of party control was both a gift and a challenge. Our analyses of Congress had been proceeding for years, as if the words "majority party" and "Democrats" were synonymous. And two generations of our students had come to believe that Democratic control of the House of Representatives was a law of nature. Now we shall have to explain why that is not so, what changed, and whether our generalizations about Congress will have to be altered because of what happened. And that will certainly be true if the Republicans win again next year. To be sure, the House is only one-half of the Congress. The Republicans had controlled the Senate for six of those 40 years--from 1980 to 1986 during the Reagan presidency. So their recapture of the Senate in 1994 came as less of a novelty or shock. I shall speak
some about the Senate. But I want to focus my remarks primarily on the House of Representatives.

My personal vantage point, which I have called the "worm's eye view" of the election, comes from my travels with four House candidates as they campaigned in their home constituencies. Three were first-term members running for reelection in 1994--a liberal northern Democrat, a moderate southern Democrat, and a moderate eastern Republican. The fourth one, running for the first time in 1994, was a conservative southern Republican. My experiences and conversations with these four politicians helped me to flesh out the large picture with some small real life examples and have given me some connecting threads to use in pursuing my research. 

When, for instance, I went to Capitol Hill a month after the election to talk with two of these people, I experienced the electoral impact in terms of its small-scale, real-life consequences. The liberal Democrat with whom I campaigned had been swept out of office--along with 33 other freshman Democrats. And
I found him packing up his files preparatory to leaving. He spent most of our interview quizzing me about job prospects in teaching and in public policy think tanks. My victorious Republican moderate was also packing his office records. But he was getting ready to move into a more commodious office. And he spent most of our interview talking on the phone with a reporter and with Newt Gingrich discussing welfare reform. Two men who had come to Congress together had been blown by the election into two very different career paths.

Overall, the Republicans had gained 52 House seats and a 26-seat (230-204) majority. The net partisan seat swing was the largest since 1948.

Not only was the magnitude of the 1994 result remarkable, so, too, was the direction of that result—all one way and all against the party in power—the Democrats. Not one Republican House or Senate incumbent (who ran) lost. Nor did a single incumbent Republican
governor. For the first time since 1946, Republican House candidates won more than 50% of all the votes cast country-wide. Self-identified Republicans voted more strongly for their own party’s House candidates in 1994 than they had since the 1970’s. Independents voted more strongly Republican than they had since the 1970’s. Ross Perot’s voters, who had split their congressional votes 50-50 in 1992, went 2-1 Republican in 1994. It was not an election with mixed trends. It was an election with an overwhelming, one-way trend.

Small wonder, then, that the Democrats described the outcome as an earthquake, and the Republicans described it as a mandate for reform. Without necessarily rejecting either of those interpretations, I would prefer to begin by describing the House elections as the best thing that could have happened to the U.S. in terms of maintaining our system of representative government.

Representative government requires some alternation in power and
responsibility, some periodic change of places between winners and losers. And yet, for 40 years, one party had been in control of the House of Representatives. Between the Civil War and 1954--when the Democrats began their 40 year winning streak--no one party had ever controlled the House for more than 18 years in a row. And while it is hard to say just how long is too long, it is not hard to say that 40 years is far too long to go without an alternation in power--especially in "the people's house," in a representative democracy. In that same 40-year period, British parties had exchanged control of the House of Commons four times; and the minority party had held power for one-quarter of the time.

It is hard to interpret or to appreciate what has been happening in America without acknowledging the harmful effects that 40 years of one party rule had on our political system. On the part of the House Democrats--who were in power, those 40 years produced arrogance; on the part of the House Republicans--who were out of power, those 40 years produced frustration; from the combination of
Democratic arrogance and Republican frustration, 40 years produced an increasingly polarized, partisan, uncivil and stalemated House of Representatives. And from all of this, we got, worst of all, a culture of condemnation—an increase in public disapproval and contempt for Congress as an institution, and for the politicians who populate it. At the time of the 1994 election, only 18% of the citizenry expressed any degree of confidence in Congress—our most important representative institution.

Democratic arrogance was best reflected in the scandals which developed in the administration of the House—in its bank and in its post office. Untended and out-moded, they had become warrens of old style patronage politics on Capitol Hill. Their irregularities and lack of accountability came to exemplify an out-of-touch institution in the minds of a cynical public. The scandalous mismanagement—now thoroughly documented in a recent audit of House business practices—helped to soften up the Democrats for their one-sided rejection in 1994.
My 1994 worms-eye glimpse of Democratic arrogance came through the eyes of my losing liberal Democrat— a young lawyer who had gotten into politics through his leadership of the reform-minded public interest group, Common Cause, and who had quickly become the chairman of the Freshman Reform Caucus inside the House. As such, he became the leader of a band of first-term Democrats who had come to office with Bill Clinton in 1992 promising change, especially change in the operation and the reputation of Congress. His leadership brought him an unusual degree of national media attention, but it brought him no legislative success. When I was with him during his campaign he said that, "My reformist identification is a problem in the campaign. It’s difficult for me to make the case that I’ve been the leader and have lived up to expectations when Congress as a whole has not lived up to expectations." And when it was over, he complained bitterly in an op-ed piece in the New York Times. "I am angry," he wrote,

(And) my anger is directed at the Democratic party leaders...
Rarely has a group of political leaders so richly deserved defeat... Speaker Tom Foley and his team... ignored the calls of many freshmen Democrats to move quickly on reform legislation and some of these leaders even ridiculed our efforts and belittled us personally... Two years ago, I sat in Tom Foley's office together with a dozen other freshmen Democrats and pleaded with him to pursue a reform agenda early in the Congress. He responded that by the 1994 elections, no one would ask us about congressional reform.

Speaker Foley's unwillingness to tackle congressional reform, coupled with his assumption that the Democrats would survive no matter what, exemplifies what I call Democratic arrogance.

The long-term frustration of House Republicans was best reflected in their campaign platform--known as "The Contract With America"--to which both of my Republicans and 380 other House candidates subscribed on the dotted line. The three featured institutional
reforms in that platform—term limits for members of Congress, a constitutional amendment requiring a balanced budget and a line item veto for the President—constituted nothing less than a frontal attack on Congress itself as a governing institution. Each of these three hugely popular proposals called for a diminution of congressional independence, prerogative and power within our political system. As such, they reflected the frustration of a party unable to win elections and uneducated in the burdens of legislative responsibility.

The architect of this Republican attack on the Congress was Newt Gingrich. From the time he came to Congress in 1978, Gingrich had but a single goal—to build a Republican majority in the House. And he had but a single strategy—to attack the Democrats by attacking the institution and blaming them for all its shortcomings. The Republicans, he believed, could not win a majority through bipartisan cooperation, but only through relentless partisan confrontation. He would burn the House down if
necessary, to take control if it.

He forced the resignation of a powerful Democratic Speaker of the House, and his followers forced the House bank and post office scandals into the fullest light of day. The House in the late 1980’s and early 1990’s became the most bitterly partisan in half a century. The 1994 election, of course, marks the achievement of Gingrich’s goal--a Republican majority in the House. In the process, however, he surely contributed to a culture of political condemnation that may yet threaten his majority’s work.

To sum up, it is my view that the country would now be better off had we not had 40 years of one-party rule in the House. Had we had some alternation of power during that time, we would not have had the House bank and post office scandals, we would not have had the movement for term limits, we would not have had as steep a decline in citizen approval of Congress, we would not have had a bombing-throwing type of Republican rise to the speakership of the House.
and we would not have had a House membership so impatient to do so much in such a hurry and yet so suspicious of compromise. Forty years of one-party control had put our representative system badly out of whack. Institutionally speaking, therefore, the 1994 election should be welcomed as a long over-due correction.

Besides this distinctive institutional dimension, the 1994 election also had a distinctive policy dimension. In long-term perspective, we can view the Republican victory as part of a pro-conservative tide that has been gaining ground in the country since sometime in the mid-1960's. New Deal liberalism reached its high water mark with the landslide election of Lyndon Johnson over Barry Goldwater in 1964. In that first year of Johnson's Great Society, when pollsters asked citizens about the desirability of government power, 70% (equally split) answered either that government should use its power more vigorously or was using it just right. Johnson's Great Society program gave us major initiatives in education, health care, voting rights, urban housing and anti-

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poverty legislation. In the mid-term election of 1966, however, the Democrats lost more seats than they had in 20 years. And somewhere in that period, the Democrats also lost their intellectual momentum. Conservative intellectuals began to produce a smaller government, less regulation, free market-oriented policy agenda; cultural conservatives became increasingly active; and Republicans began to dominate our presidential politics—two Nixon terms, two Reagan terms and one Bush term.

Republican success in five of the last seven presidential elections has been grounded in voter preference for certain Republican policies—policies involving management of the economy, protection of national security and the maintenance of law and order.

Up to 1994, however, politics at the House of Representatives level remained Democratic. And the success of the congressional Democrats was grounded in a different set of policy preferences, as voters looked upon the Democrats as the most reliable protectors of...
middle class entitlements, social welfare programs, locally beneficial expenditures and regulatory safeguards in areas such as health, safety and the environment. For much of the post-Great Society period, these two rather different sets of policy preferences yielded divided party control of the government--a Republican president, a Democratic Congress. Bill Clinton's election in 1992 restored unified government--but it turned out to be a very mixed blessing for the Democrats. It gave them an opportunity which they did not take advantage of. For the first time in fifteen years, the voters could heap all the blame for their unhappiness on the President and the Congress of a single party which they did.

This concentration of power and blame in a unified Democratic government helped to produce the most unusual characteristic of the 1994 congressional elections--their national scope. In explaining the long Democratic dominance of the House, political scientists have been devoted to the proposition formulated by a prominent
House Democrat that "all politics is local." The idea is that congressional election results depend primarily on the popularity, the resources, the attentiveness and the protective accomplishments of the local congressional candidate--on the personal vote. In that kind of an election, the incumbent candidate--typically a Democrat--had the overwhelming advantage. For most congressional elections in the 1970's and 1980's, the proposition held true. But not in 1994. In 1994, all politics was not local. It was, instead, unusually national.

Both self-identified Republicans and self-identified Conservatives--who had frequently voted Democratic for Congress--voted more strongly than ever for Republican congressional candidates in 1994. Most of the seats the Republicans captured from the Democrats were in districts where Republican George Bush had done well in 1992, thus indicating that voters were bringing their local congressional votes into close alignment with their national presidential votes. A major nationalizing force seems to have been the policies of the OXFORD LECTURE (10/10/95)-16
Republicans and their ability to impose those policies on the 1994 electorate to a degree that overrode local issues.

In November 1994, for example, an absolute majority of Americans told pollsters that the Republican party would do a better job than the Democratic party in handling: "the economy," "taxes," "the federal budget deficit," "crime," and "welfare reform." And a plurality even said that the Republican party would do a better job on "health care," the most helpful policy area for the Democrats two years earlier. The economic discontent that had fueled the Democratic victory in 1992 had only slightly subsided by 1994, but the people who thought the economy was in bad shape voted the other way in 1994. These voters made up two-thirds of the electorate in both elections. They voted Democratic for Congress in 1992; but then, and by the identical percentage (62%), they voted Republican for Congress in 1994. The 1994 elections were both a Republicanizing and a nationalizing event.
The most significant long-term partisan effects of this event were registered in that part of the country which had historically been the most Democratic--the South--known for most of the 20th century and through the New Deal years as "the Democratic solid south." Beginning with Dwight Eisenhower in the 1950's, Republican presidential candidates had been making inroads into the region. Nixon, Reagan and Bush all carried a majority of the southern states. But a majority of southern House members had remained steadfastly Democratic--until 1994. Now, for the first time--by 76-61--a majority of southern House members are Republican.

Nearly every pro-Republican voting statistic in the 1994 election registered most strongly in the south. Black voters remained, as always, overwhelmingly Democratic--although lower than normal turnout among black voters may have hurt some southern Democratic candidates. Overall support for Democratic House candidates among white southerners dropped from 47% in 1992 to 35%. And the drop was greatest among white men. Nationally, white males voted more
Republican than white females. But white males in the south voted even more Republican than white males nation-wide. And there was a strong anti-Clinton bias in their vote. White southerners disapproved of Bill Clinton more than white voters nation-wide. But southern white males disapproved most of all. Only 27% of white southern males approved of Bill Clinton. And 44% of white southern males said their vote was a vote vs. Bill Clinton. White southerners were more conservative on the issues than white voters nation-wide--and particularly so on cultural issues such as abortion, school prayer, gay rights and gun control. Southern white men were the most anti-Clinton and most ideologically conservative voters north or south. They are the southern wing of the so-called Reagan Democrats, lower middle income, working class cultural conservatives. In the north, these traditional Democrats are still crucial swing voters; but in the south, they seem now to be Republicans.

My worm’s eye view of this phenomenon came from the campaign of my
conservative southern Republican--the first member of his party to be elected to Congress from his district in 120 years. "I ran," he says,

on a platform of institutional change--term limits, balanced budget amendment, line item veto. Term limits is the most important idea of the Contract... By far the most important factor in my election was Bill Clinton. People here were against almost everything he did... When I first heard about the Contract, I was reluctant. I was happy just running against Bill Clinton... But the Contract gave me an agenda to talk about and my opponent had nothing--only sniping. The Contract nationalized the election. That was its big contribution.

While it is true that few voters knew anything about the Contract With America, it did--as in this case--keep Republican candidates singing from the same policy hymn book, and even more important, it
set their agenda when they took power.

My southerner campaigned among the whites in his district, ignoring the 21% of his constituents who are black. Among the whites, he says, "The Chamber of Commerce and the Christian Coalition share the same values--get the government out of my life. If you're business, it's the economic stuff. If you're social, you are against homosexual rights and abortion." He is an ex-Army major and a strong cultural conservative. As a state legislator, he was best known as the leader of the 1993 fight to bar homosexuals from the national guard in his state. "There are more Baptists than anything in my district," he says. "Whatever the Baptists want, I want."

He and his southern Republican colleagues have given their party a distinctly southern coloration. The visible symbol of that historic transformation is the make-up of the new Republican party leadership. The House Speaker, Majority Leader, and Majority Whip
are all southerners. [Only once before in this century has this happened—with the new Democratic majority eighty years ago.]

Indeed, the only non-southern Republican now in the three top party leadership positions in the House and the Senate is Bob Dole of Kansas. And he is striving mightily to divest himself of that distinction.

So the question becomes: What can the Republicans make of their 1994 victory? Was it an aberration or part of a trend? The last two Republican victories—in 1946 and 1952—turned out to be only transient two-year spasms. Can the Republicans stretch their control of Congress from two years to four years—something they have not been able to do since 1928? Can they capture the Presidency along with Congress to produce a unified Republican government—something they have been unable to do since 1954? And can the Republicans capitalize on their victory by accelerating or solidifying the long-term conservative policy trend that began in the mid 1960's? And, of course, what about the Democrats?

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I must confess, as a student of Congress, it is a very strange feeling even to pose these questions which center around the behavior of the Republicans. Thankfully, however, 1994 has left the fundamentals of our electoral analyses pretty much intact. And we can still work with them as we think about the future.

First, the advantage of congressional incumbents—so widely researched in explaining Democratic majorities—remained alive and well in 1994. Ninety percent of those incumbents who ran for reelection were reelected. And we can expect to see that fundamental advantage now shift to the Republicans. Almost immediately following the election, for example, the flow of political money—which always moves toward incumbents—reversed itself and began flowing toward the Republicans—especially to the freshmen Republicans. And the party has been unusually aggressive in using persuasion and threats to make certain that this flow continues.
Another fundamental electoral advantage which swings now to the Republicans is the quality of new candidates for Congress. Many political scientists have attributed the 40 year Democratic dominance largely to that party's ability to recruit more experienced, ambitious and committed candidates--the largest number of which were typically found among state and local office holders.

In 1994, the Republicans captured nearly 500 state legislative seats from the Democrats--a huge increase in their talent pool. That increase, plus the wide spread expectation that 1996 will be a good year for the Republicans, should make it easier this time for them to recruit high quality candidates than the Democrats. And the early line on recruitment indicates that such is, indeed, the case. It looks, also, as if congressional retirements will be heaviest among the Democrats, thus magnifying the importance of the new Republican recruitment advantage.

Finally, the long-term trend in partisan identification has brought
the Republicans nearly even with the Democrats. The 18-point Democratic advantage in 1980 has been reduced to three points in 1994. And the districts which the Republicans captured from the Democrats in 1994 have a strong Republican advantage in party identification.

In sum, most of what we know about congressional politics tells us that the 1994 elections have delivered an electoral advantage to the Republicans. And, considering only electoral factors, they should retain control of the Congress in 1996.

But we also know, however, that the electoral equation will be affected by the governing equation. In the matter of governing, too, the 1994 elections have given the Republicans advantages--first and foremost, of course, the organizational advantage that comes from majority party command of leadership positions inside Congress and the capacity to control the legislative agenda. The Republican leadership used the advantages of their majority status.
to engineer a radical centralization of party leadership inside the House. Speaker Gingrich eliminated some committees; he hand-picked committee leaders regardless of their seniority; he limited their tenure; he screened committee staffs and he handed committees their legislative timetables.

Then he presided over a remarkable 100-day forced march during which every agenda item of the Contract With America was brought out of committee to a vote on the House floor. And passed successfully, too, on the floor in every case except the constitutional amendment on term limits with its two-thirds vote requirement. On the 33 votes pertaining to items in the Contract, the average Republican defection rate was five votes. And only on term limits was there a significant defection--40 votes out of 230. It was an unusual display of cohesion for a contemporary congressional party. And in the first three months of the year, references to the behavior of British prime ministers and British parliamentary parties dotted our media commentary.

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Newt Gingrich has been the strongest House leader since Uncle Joe Cannon in 1910. Certainly, I have seen nothing like it in my years of study. All the Speakers I have known came to their job by getting on the leadership ladder courtesy of some patron already on the ladder and rising to the top spot by accommodating to others and by waiting their turn. They did not become leaders by virtue of their policy leadership or because they had a personally loyal following in the party. Newt Gingrich came to power--first as Minority Whip then as Speaker with the support of an inner circle of philosophical soul mates; to which he added, first, an outer circle of indebted colleagues and finally, the shock troops of a very conservative 73 member freshmen class. We would have to go back to Henry Clay in 1812, I think, to find another Speaker who came to power as a policy leader with a loyal and like-minded policy following. A majority of all House Republicans have come to the House in the last two elections. And there are very few of these newcomers who do not owe Gingrich for something--campaign help, committee position or intellectual leadership.
My moderate Republican from the suburban northeast is my worm's eye example. This congressman, a social worker by profession, is not a policy acolyte of the Speaker. He is opposed to Gingrich on social matters like abortion and gun control. But when the congressman was elected in 1992, Gingrich--then the minority whip--helped him get a choice committee assignment. "When Gingrich called to congratulate me," he recalled,

I told him I was interested in the Commerce Committee. He said that it was one of the best committees from which to solicit money from Political Action Committees... He also said the Republicans ranked committees red, white and blue and the three blue committees were the most asked for--Ways and Means, Appropriations, Commerce. After I got on the committee, Gingrich said to me, 'We gave you the best committee for getting PAC money...'

In the American system, committee assignments shape congressional
careers. This moderate Republican is indebted to the Speaker. And he was a loyal supporter of the Speaker throughout the 100 days of voting on the Contract With America.

At the end of the first 100 days, the ability of the House Republican majority to fulfill its campaign promises and to move legislation through the House brought a 20% jump in citizen approval of Congress. Since then, however, the legislative process has been slowed by the enduring features of the American political system—a system which was not constructed to facilitate sharp or sweeping or revolutionary changes in public policy. The conservative influence on the government has been ebbing and flowing in and out of our several governing institutions at different rates of speed and staying power since 1980. We have not yet had a full scale conservative influence to match the Thatcher years in Britain. Ours has been a halting and a piecemeal conservative revolution at best. And so it continues.
Since the 100 days, the House Republican juggernaut has been slowed by the built-in inertia of a separation of power system, by the internal strains within the Republican coalition and by the distracting onset of presidential politics. Comparisons with the British parliamentary system have disappeared from contemporary commentary. And since the summertime, the politics of governing have assumed the familiar patterns of divided government and incremental change. The 100 days of the forced march have been followed by 200 days of trench warfare.

First, there have been the effects of bicameralism. The Senate--an equally powerful body--is not the House. It is altogether a more individualistic, less governable and less predictable body than the House. Its rules and practices give individual senators the widest scope for undisciplined maneuver and give to party leaders the fewest resources with which to forge reliable legislative majorities. The business of the House, for example, can be managed with 51% of the votes; but in the Senate, where special rules
protect extended debate, control of floor business requires 60% of the votes.

The House Republicans have their necessary 51%. If they stick together, they can do anything. The Senate Republicans, however, who have only a 55% majority--do not have the 60% they need to insure floor success. Senate decisions are usually the result of time consuming bipartisan accommodation; and the swing votes of the centrist-moderate members of both parties are pivotal for most outcomes. Which makes the Senate a good deal more moderate than the House. On top of which, the Republicans ran the Senate for six years under Ronald Reagan. Having experienced power and responsibility, they have a patience and a sense of pace, unknown in the House.

The sum of these bicameral differences has produced noticeably less forward motion among Senate Republicans--for the Contract With America (which they did not sign) and for the full sweep of its
shrink-the-government enthusiasms. On the crucial Contract provision for a balanced budget amendment, for example, the House passed it after two days of debate, and the Senate turned it down after three weeks of debate. Try as he might, Bob Dole could not get the one last Republican vote he needed for Senate passage. By September, the Senate had acted on only half of the 10 items in the Contract; and only one had been signed into law.

The Republican march has also been slowed by the gradual onset of divisions within its own ranks. In our system, electoral majorities seldom translate into reliable governing majorities. Policy majorities must be built and rebuilt inside Congress. And the new Republican majority has had to wrestle with divisive social issues like abortion, gun control and school prayer that were deliberately kept out of their Contract With America. In June, the House and Senate negotiated an historic agreement on a blueprint for a balanced budget by 2002. It was the greatest bicameral triumph thus far in the Congress, and it promised an historic
rightward shift in the thrust of social policy. Speaker Gingrich was more involved in that process than any modern Speaker. Now, however, they have had to turn from their blueprint to the actual implementation of budget and tax policies that will divide the deficit-reducers from the tax-cutters and will affect real programs, real interests and real constituents.

My worm's eye window on internal Republican divisions came from my moderate Republican who, in the late spring, led the pro-choice forces in the House in a revolt against the first attempt by the party's cultural conservatives to tack an anti-abortion amendment onto a spending reduction bill. As he told the story:

I'm a member of the 'lunch bunch,' a group of 40 to 50 Republican moderates who get together once a week for lunch to discuss issues. Sometimes, in the last Congress, we took a position on an issue. But we never drew a line in the sand.

When you are in the minority, after all, it doesn't much
matter. But this time we drew a line in the sand. We said, if you don’t remove this anti-abortion amendment, we are going to kill the bill. I got 20 signatures on a letter to the leadership stating flatly that we could not support the bill with the amendment in it... I called Gingrich over the weekend to tell him about the letter. And I told him there were at least a dozen more members who would vote to kill the bill, but did not want to sign the letter.

After some wrangling, Gingrich persuaded the party’s right wing to postpone their amendment till later. And afterward, the moderate commented,

If we had lost this fight, we would have been out of business for the rest of this Congress... Now that we have won, we have served notice that we must be consulted. We are 20% of the Republican membership and we want 20% of the legislative business.
This conservative-moderate split among House Republicans has surfaced in other policy areas such as welfare reform and environmental regulation--and again, recently, when party splits over abortion in military hospitals sank the defense appropriations bill.

Legislative success in the House will now depend on the willingness of the more conservative Republican majority to negotiate with the less conservative Republican minority--and sometimes, too, on the willingness of the zealous, get-it-all-now newcomers to defer, in matters of timing and pace to their more patient senior colleagues. "I’m the leader of a broad coalition," says Gingrich. "I’m not a dictator. We have 73 freshmen. You don’t get them marching in line. You get them sort of saying, ‘Maybe I’ll be with you; call me back in an hour.’" The common expectation is that House party factions will, in the end, negotiate budgetary and policy compromise, on the theory that all factions share one overriding goal--to demonstrate to the public the party’s ability to govern.

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They also know that a fickle electorate reversed its voting pattern in the two years between 1992 and 1994 and is perfectly capable of doing it again.

I have concentrated on the Republicans because, as the 1994 winners, they control the national agenda--both the legislative agenda and--as various public hearings remind us--the investigative agenda. The losers of 1994, the congressional Democrats, find themselves reacting to a timetable and an agenda established by others. It is a strange position for them; and they have been learning how to cope--with Republican aggressiveness and with their own internal divisions. Long-standing Democratic divisions between the liberal majority and the conservative minority--divisions which tended to be submerged while the party was in power, have been exposed and magnified now that they are out of power.

My worm's eye window on the interplay of congressional Democrats has been the experience of my second term Democrat, a moderate
southerner, whose district is rural, agricultural and heavily populated with white, lower middle class retirees. She is a New Deal liberal on economic and social programs—social security, health, welfare, food stamps, education. But she is conservative on matters such as free trade, gun control and environmental regulation.

In the House, she is frequently allied with the party’s shrinking conservative minority. And when the new Congress convened, she joined them in fighting for fair treatment in committee assignments from the dominant liberal wing. As she described their first Democratic caucus:

There had been no preparation for making committee assignments—who would get them, how they would be chosen. We said, ‘Wait a minute; you’ve got to have rules.’ We thought the rules should be inclusive. (But) some liberals wanted a rule that said people should be removed from their committee
positions if they voted the wrong way on certain issues. They wanted a litmus test on people. How good a Democrat are you? We said, 'Wait a minute; you ought not to run the party that way--some of us wouldn't be back here if we hadn't bucked the system.'

Afterward, when conservative (mostly southern) Democrats decided to form an informal caucus called "The Coalition," she had to decide whether or not to join. "I started with them," she said, but when it came right down to it, I decided I couldn't join. I'm a Democrat. And when I saw the bad way the group was being perceived, I said 'I can't do it.' So, I may vote with them, but I'm not one of them.

"The Coalition" has become something of a half-way house for southern Democrats on their way to becoming Republicans. Three have taken the step this year and the Republicans are actively...
courting another half-dozen. My southerner, on the other hand, has never been tempted. And she has already been singled out as a prime Republican target in 1996.

Her experience during the 100 day march through the Contract With America strengthened her Democratic identity.

"The place is in a turmoil," she said in the spring.

The Republicans on my committee don't know what is in the committee bill, and they can't answer questions about it. The Chairman admitted he didn't know what the provisions meant; but he wanted us to pass it anyway. It was completely partisan. I know why I'm a Democrat. They are going too fast--hurting people they shouldn't be hurting. Thank God for the Senate.

As her comments indicate, she and her party colleagues in the House
were swept along by the early tide. Sometimes, they have found unity in a kind of guerrilla warfare, using procedural and obstructionist devices to slow down the legislative process. Recently they have begun to rally to protect their programs against budget cuts--most importantly health care for the elderly, Medicare. In a positive sense, however, they have developed neither a party program, nor strong party leadership. Their disarray shows signs of an aging coalition which has lost its one time intellectual advantage and faces something of an identity crisis. The aggressiveness of the scope and pace of Republican legislative activity still remains bewildering--for them and for their interest group allies. Certainly, they have not been sufficiently well organized or unified to give reliable support to Bill Clinton and his policies. Columnist David Broder recently characterized the party's overall performance as "a rout of historic proportions."

Which brings us, finally, to the President--and to the question of
his leadership--of his party and of the country. On that subject, I have no worm's eye view--only a bird's eye perspective. And from far away, Bill Clinton's leadership seems intermittent and inconsistent--and yet somehow always promising. Political psychology aside, there are political reasons for his ambivalent performance.

First, the election of 1994 was clearly a stunning setback for him. It was the worst mid-term loss for a sitting president's party since 1946. He had not expected it; he was not prepared for it. He was unable, from the outset, to settle on any guiding interpretation of what happened. Was it a repudiation of his policies or of him? Was it a reenforcement of the 1992 call for change which he had issued--and, if so, did change mean a change in direction or faster movement in the same direction? Did the voters expect him to cooperate with or confront the new Republican Congress. And when should he do which? The very uncertainty of his electoral interpretation--in sharp contrast to the certainty of
the Republican interpretation--imparted an initial ambivalence to his leadership efforts.

Second, whatever he decided to do, his agenda-setting power had been severely limited. For most of the year, Newt Gingrich has occupied "the bully pulpit" and the President has been crowded out or limited to a posture of reacting. On the question of when and how to respond to Republican initiatives, his behavior has often underscored his ambivalence. With respect to his budgetary performance, for example, he first submitted his own unbalanced budget. Then he withdrew his support for it, left the field and waited for the Republicans to act. When they did, he decided to get back in the game by submitting a balanced budget of his own. But it came too late to have much effect--except to reenforce doubts about his leadership.

He retains, of course, a potent reactive power--the veto power. And he has used the veto and the threat of a veto effectively--
signalling his defense of the most widely supported Democratic programs while, at the same time, inviting the Republicans to find "common ground" and compromise. The net result, I think, has given him a kind of initiative. It is he, and not the Republicans, who has been the first to emphasize that they need each other to get most things done; and the public is likely to favor anyone that seems to be going "the extra mile" to avoid gridlock. The veto remains, however, a weapon of intermittent engagement, and one not suitable for generating policy initiatives.

Third, the President's public popularity has remained--with small fluctuations up or down, just about where the voters of 1992 pegged it--at 43% support. And that number is insufficient to induce any substantial number of House (or Senate) Democrats to hitch their political futures to his. His congressional Democratic compatriots do not feel they need his support for their individual survival; and they have behaved according to their own survival instincts. Indeed, it was the Republicans, not the Democrats who gave him his
greatest legislative victory and his greatest boost in citizen approval—the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement.

Fourth, his ambivalent leadership reflects the substantial difference in the make-up of the liberal-leaning Democratic party coalition inside the Congress and the centrist-leaning Democratic voting coalition out in the country. He must spend some of his resources leading the party in Congress and some leading the country. A charting of his speeches and public appearances records an almost inevitable oscillation in tending his two coalitional bases. Policy pronouncements on affirmative action, for example, pleasing to liberals, will be followed by policy pronouncements pleasing to centrists—on welfare reform, for example. His need to tend two constituencies, however, feeds a picture of inconsistent leadership. And it promotes the popular parlor game—is Bill Clinton a liberal or a centrist, an old Democrat or a new Democrat—the underlying premise of which is that he has no hard core beliefs.

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That problem will only grow in the next year--since everything he does will be interpreted by the media as a matter of strategic calculation and not policy commitment. After his State of the Union address in January, his public appearances and statements will be interpreted as reelection driven. And each behavioral nuance will be interpreted as one more effort to reinvent himself for a temporary political purpose.

By focusing on his leadership difficulties, I do not mean to imply that Bill Clinton cannot win some legislative skirmishes--he has. Nor that he cannot be re-elected--he may be. Given public acceptance of divided government since the late 1960's, there is no reason to assume that Republican momentum in congressional elections will carry over to the presidential election. I mean only to place in the interpretive mix my view that he has not been a strong leader--neither decisive nor widely popular. And to say that the 1994 elections did not help him in that regard.

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He remains a person of uncommon intelligence, campaign skill and resilience. And he is, after all, the President, holding an office that commands national respect, public attention and some levers of power. He may prove to be a better counter-puncher than an agenda-setting advocate. Compare, for example, his effective use of the veto counter-punch with the failure of his health care initiative.

As the incumbent, the election will be about him. And he will not be as feckless as his predecessor in that position. Bill Clinton likes politics. And he will surely have more success in managing a convention and in conducting a campaign than George Bush.

The Republicans, of course, may help him. They may try to do too much or go too far and self-destruct. Or, they may nominate an unappetizing presidential challenger. Or, they may disappoint and otherwise fail to make a positive legislative impression on an inattentive and volatile electorate. A summertime poll found that only 27% of the citizenry agreed that the Republicans "represent real change," while 68% agreed that Republicans "represent business..."
as usual." This response may reflect the party's failure to enact the major reforms on which they campaigned--term limits and balanced budget amendment plus campaign finance reform, a favorite of political independents and Perot voters. Which reminds us of other possibilities. That with a quarter of the citizenry now expressing either neutrality toward, or disapproval of, the two major parties, the prospect of a third party candidate--which is what got Bill Clinton elected in the first place and which citizen Perot now threatens--adds uncertainty.

To conclude, the 1994 elections brought a welcome measure of stability to our representative system of government, even as they substantially shook up its various elements. It looks as if the terms of our policy debates have been substantially changed--in a rightward direction. If the Republicans win both the Congress and the Presidency, 1994 will clearly have been a watershed election. Otherwise, 1994 will take its place as a conservative policy agenda. Otherwise, 1994 will take its place as OXFORD LECTURE (10/10/95)-47
October 10, 1995--half-way between an unexpected congressional election and an unformed presidential election--is a perilous time to be making predictions. Republican prospects for retaining control of Congress do look bright; and their prospects for capturing the presidency look about 50-50. Maybe, if I came back again some early morning next May, I might do better. But the smartest thing to do is to quit while I’m ever so slightly ahead. Which is what I shall do. Thank you very much.