

ing collection of literature on elitism in the American political system. Elites have always existed, but today their activities need to be given special scrutiny because they have powerful new techniques with which to control the masses. Although there is not a great deal that is new for most political scientists in this book, it merits wide reading by college students and other citizens. It is stronger on diagnosis than on cure, but perhaps the diagnosis is part of the cure. Some critics might charge that the author is only making another polemical argument from the left. These critics are probably the same ones who disregard hundreds of right-leaning polemical arguments that go out to millions of citizens every day by various means of communication. This, by the way, is the kind of apathy Gross hopes to prevent. He argues, persuasively, that unless the current drift is checked, we will be entrapped within a new kind of totalitarian system.

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Electing the Cincinnati City Council: An Examination of Alternative Electoral-Representation Systems. By Howard D. Hamilton. (Cincinnati, Ohio: Stephen H. Wilder Foundation, 1978. Pp. 124. \$3.00, paper.)

In the nineteenth century most American cities had a mayor-council form of government, in which council members, who were numerous, were elected in partisan ward-based elections. In the early part of the twentieth century progressive municipal "reformers" sought to destroy machine politics (and the parochialism which they were seen as fostering) by replacing ward elections with at-large elections, partisan elections with nonpartisan ones, large city councils with small city councils, and mayors with city managers. To a remarkable extent these municipal reformers were successful in their ambitions, although the current decline of local machine politics can also be attributed to a number of factors having nothing to do with structural reform in municipal elections. We are now witnessing the beginnings of what may turn out to be a new period of municipal "unreform," in which a new generation of reformers seeks to *undo* the reforms of their spiritual forebears. In this conflict between one generation's reforms and another generation's unreforms, Hamilton is a judicious referee.

The central focus of Hamilton's monograph is the estimation of the probable and possible effects, both immediate and long-run, of a shift in election methods for the Cincinnati City Council from its present method of at-large nonpartisan

elections to a single-member district (ward) system. Because more than 60 percent of American cities use at-large elections and because this election mechanism (and to a lesser extent, other early twentieth-century reforms with which it is associated) has come under increasing attack in the past decade (especially as leading to significant underrepresentation of minority voting strength), Hamilton's study is of considerably wider interest than its seemingly narrow case-study focus might at first suggest.

The importance of this study as a contribution to the general literature on the political consequences of electoral laws is enhanced by Hamilton's combination of detailed knowledge of Cincinnati's electoral politics (bolstered by an extensive series of interviews with political and community leaders) and his grasp of the empirical literature on U.S. local politics and local election systems. Apparently missing, however, is any familiarity with the recent theoretical literature on seats-votes relations, such as Douglas Rae's *Political Consequences of Electoral Laws* (Yale, 1967) or Edward Tuft, "Relationship Between Seats and Votes in Two-Party Systems," *APSR*, 67 (1973): 540-54.

Chapter 2 provides a thorough review of the arguments that have been advanced in favor of and against wards versus at-large systems. He is well aware of two important points which too often are neglected by students of the effects of municipal election systems. First, he is aware that the world is more complex than a simple trichotomy between district elections, at-large elections, and mixed district and at-large elections might suggest. Variations include geographic residence requirements; the Texas place system (which generates head-on-head contests for numbered district seats with an at-large election) for each seat; requirements for limited voting; and nonpartisan primaries versus open partisan primaries versus closed partisan primaries versus systems without a primary. Second, he is aware that the same election systems may operate quite differently in different cities because of differences in a city's political party system, political traditions, or the institutional context of which the electoral system is only a part. Moreover, rather than merely reporting a litany of the alleged defects and virtues of ward and at-large systems, Hamilton provides an insightful review of the (alas, all too scant) empirical literature examining the claimed benefits and drawbacks of the ward and at-large systems.

Chapter 3 is a before-and-after review of political outcomes in three cities (Dallas, San Francisco, and Indianapolis). In these cities he finds district elections to have increased parochialism of city council members but also to have increased

the diversity of groups represented in the city council and the diversity (in terms of age, income, profession, sex) of the council members themselves. In chapter 4 Hamilton reviews some recent research involving comparative cross-sectional analyses on the impact of local government election mechanisms on black city council representation—research which suggests that district-based elections are more favorable to the achievement of minority representation proportional to their numbers than are either at-large or mixed systems; but he is careful to add the caveat that "black presence or absence on city councils may or may not be an accurate reflection of black political influence." In chapter 4 Hamilton presents a sophisticated computer-drawn map of the density and location of the Cincinnati black population and then uses this data to compare and contrast the effects on black representation of five different sets of equal population district boundaries. In color-blind districting (i.e., districting which follows as closely as possible census tract and neighborhood boundaries and seeks to maximize district compactness) he finds blacks can expect only one and a half of nine or two of ten seats; and even in districts drawn to maximize the election prospects of black candidates, Hamilton is able to show that blacks could only expect control of two of nine, or three of ten seats—compared to a black population proportion of somewhat over 30 percent. Only with PR (used in Cincinnati 1925-1956) could blacks control one-third or more of the council seats.

In recent at-large elections black representation on the nine-member Cincinnati City Council has ranged from zero to two. However, no party had (as of 1978) put more than one black candidate on its slate. Hamilton asserts, correctly I believe, that "districting would be less advantageous for blacks in Cincinnati than in most cities because the black population is more dispersed" (p. 45), but Hamilton also notes that many black leaders expect that "districting would place the choice of black councilmen exclusively in the hands of blacks and that a black district councilman would be a more vigorous champion of black interest than a black councilman elected in at-large elections" (p. 55).

Although in many ways favorable to at-large elections, asserting that they appear to be "a valuable asset to the city" which "should not be discarded lightly" (p. 105), Hamilton summarizes arguments pro and con concisely and judiciously. His is a highly nuanced treatment which recognizes that election systems do not operate in a political and social vacuum. *Electing the Cincinnati City Council* is a careful and thorough case study of the implications of alternative election systems for Cincinnati. It is also an excellent treatment of the theoretical and empirical issues of

ward versus at-large elections for municipal government. It should be of considerable interest both to students of local politics and to students of comparative electoral systems.

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