



The Case of the Vanishing Liberal Senators: The House Did It

Eric M. Uslaner

British Journal of Political Science, Vol. 11, No. 1 (Jan., 1981), 105-113.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0007-1234%28198101%2911%3A1%3C105%3ATCOTVL%3E2.0.CO%3B2-0>

British Journal of Political Science is currently published by Cambridge University Press.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/about/terms.html>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/journals/cup.html>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

JSTOR is an independent not-for-profit organization dedicated to creating and preserving a digital archive of scholarly journals. For more information regarding JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Notes and Comments

The Case of the Vanishing Liberal Senators: The House Did It

ERIC M. USLANER*

Members of the House of Representatives often forsake re-election to run for the Senate. Do they realize what they might be giving up? In the 1978 elections only 5 per cent of House incumbents who sought another term were denied it, compared with 40 per cent of the Senators seeking to continue in office. While several students of House elections have referred to the few members in serious electoral trouble (and even fewer who actually lose) as 'vanishing marginals', the safe incumbent Senator, particularly a liberal Democrat, is an endangered species.¹ In the 1976 and 1978 elections, ten moderate-to-liberal Democratic Senators were defeated, five in each election. Over a dozen more faced the electorate in 1980, facing the threat that the liberal majority within the Senate Democratic party would be erased – or at least eroded. While 93.7 per cent of House incumbents seeking re-election won in 1978 (a figure which has changed little since 1968), the Senate figure of 60 per cent is the smallest percentage since the Democratic landslide of 1958.² In an era when House seats have become relatively safe by almost any standard, incumbent Senators appear increasingly more vulnerable.

* Department of Government and Politics, University of Maryland, College Park. With apologies to David Mayhew and Morris Fiorina. The support of the General Research Board, University of Maryland – College Park, is gratefully appreciated, as are the comments and other advice offered by M. Margaret Conway, Morris Fiorina, Russell Hardin, Thomas Mann, Joe Oppenheimer, Glenn Parker, Samuel C. Patterson, Barbara Hinckley, and the anonymous referees, as well as that of the editor, Ivor Crewe. The survey data were made available by the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research. The data analysis was performed at the Computer Science Center, University of Maryland – College Park. The assistance of Samuel Chris Oladipo is also gratefully appreciated.

¹ See, among others, David R. Mayhew, 'Congressional Elections: The Case of the Vanishing Marginals', *Polity*, vi (1974), 295–317; and Morris P. Fiorina, 'The Case of the Vanishing Marginals: The Bureaucracy Did It', *American Political Science Review*, LXXI (1977), 177–81; Morris P. Fiorina, *Congress: Keystone of the Washington Establishment* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977).

² Christopher Buchanan, 'Senators Face Tough Re-election Odds', *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report*, 38 (5 April 1980), 905–9. Buchanan shows (p. 908) that the success rate for incumbents seeking re-election to the Senate did not fall below 70 per cent from 1960 to 1974; except for the landslide year of 1974 (when the success rate was still 88 per cent), House incumbents seeking another term have not fallen below 90 per cent success rate since 1966. Also cf. Robert G. Kaiser, 'Anxious About '80: Wind from Right Chills Senate Liberals', *Washington Post* (10 April 1979), A1, A7; and Michael Barone, 'A Republican Senate?', *New Republic* (13 October 1979), 8–12. The liberals defeated in 1978 were: Wendell Anderson (Minnesota), Dick Clark (Iowa), Floyd Haskell (Colorado), William Hathaway (Maine), and Thomas McIntyre (New Hampshire); the liberals re-elected were Joseph Biden (Delaware), Claiborne Pell (Rhode Island), and Jennings Randolph (West Virginia). The liberal Democrats defeated in 1976 were Vance Hartke (Indiana), Gale McGee (Wyoming), Joseph Montoya (New Mexico), Frank Moss (Utah), and John Tunney (California). The classification was done by comparing scores from groups such as the Americans for Democratic Action with *Congressional Quarterly* conservative coalition and party unity scores. The classifications of Randolph, McGee and Montoya are somewhat controversial and were made at least partially in the light of their challengers.

These are hard times for liberalism. While the American public is becoming more liberal on 'life-style' issues, the opposite trend is clear on questions of public expenditure, the typical bread-and-butter issues on which sub-presidential elections are contested.³ Yet, progressive members of the House have not been defeated in anything like the numbers of their colleagues in the Senate. One can look for idiosyncratic factors to account for the defeat of liberals in 1978 (Anderson arranged for his own appointment, Clark may have been overcome by the same anti-abortion sentiment that was claimed to have defeated Rep. Michael Blouin in Iowa,⁴ and McIntyre apparently underestimated the depth of concern of New Hampshire voters about the Panama Canal treaties). Yet such factors are often difficult to demonstrate and, in the case of the abortion and Panama Canal issues, are viewed with some doubt by observers in the states. More to the point, the sheer number of Democrats in danger suggests that something systematic is occurring above and beyond problems specific to candidates. Focusing on such problems obscures the need for generalizations – and this need is all the more apparent since the survival rate of Senators (again, particularly liberal Democrats) sharply dropped in 1976 and 1978 while the safety level of incumbents for the lower chamber has, by other criteria, actually increased.⁵ In the cases of the liberal Senators who have been defeated, there are also few traces of statewide tides against the incumbent's party. Thus, the problem of the Senators becomes even more puzzling and worthy of our attention.

I do not dismiss the greater importance of issues in Senate elections than in House contests.⁶ But then the question becomes why this should be the case. The 'incumbency advantage' that Representatives build up by initiating contacts with the constituency (including casework, newsletters, and porkbarrel projects) may very well provide the basis for an explanation of why House and Senate liberals fare so differently. The thesis advanced here is: House members devote proportionately more time than Senators to constituency service (in contrast to legislating); Senators are more inclined towards 'position-taking' through national forums such as the press and television.⁷ This behaviour by Representatives creates in the electorate a set of like expectations for Senators which, if not followed, lead to greater electoral insecurity.

In an era when liberalism is not fashionable, progressive members can get re-elected if their constituents do not vote on the basis of issues. As Fenno has maintained, Representatives establish a tie with their constituents on the basis of trust rather than

³ On life-style issues, see Warren E. Miller and Teresa E. Levitin, *Leadership and Change* (Cambridge, Mass.: Winthrop, 1976), Chaps. 4, 7, and 8. For the evidence on issues of spending, see William Watts and Lloyd A. Free, *State of the Nation III* (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1978), pp. 62–4 and especially Table 3–4, p. 63, where Watts and Free show a decline in public support for spending on fourteen items and increased support for only two, both related to defence, over the 1972–76 period.

⁴ Charles W. Hucker, 'Senate: Slightly More Conservative', *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report*, 36 (11 November 1978), 3244–7.

⁵ See Larry Light, 'For Many Incumbents, Running for Re-election is Now a Full Time Job', *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report*, 37 (7 July 1979), 1350–7. Light presents data which indicate that Mayhew's trend of 'vanishing marginals' in House contests is increasing: the percentage of incumbents for the lower chamber winning with margins exceeding 60 per cent of the vote rose from 69.2 per cent in 1976 to 76.6 per cent in 1978.

⁶ Cf. Eric M. Uslaner, 'Ain't Misbehavin': The Logic of Defensive Issue Voting Strategies in Congressional Elections', *American Politics Quarterly*, ix (1981), forthcoming.

⁷ On position-taking, see David R. Mayhew, *Congress: The Electoral Connection* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1974), pp. 61–73.

specific policy pronouncements.⁸ Parker has shown that attention to the local district is a key to electoral success for House incumbents while Hinckley has persuasively argued that a critical advantage that House members possess but Senate incumbents do not is far greater familiarity than their opponents among the electorate.⁹ In 1978 House members enjoyed an advantage over their challengers of 90 to 44 per cent for all types of contact, compared with Senate incumbents' edge of only 94 to 82 per cent; for personal contact with constituents, the advantage of House members is 23 to 4 per cent compared with only 9 to 5 per cent for Senators.¹⁰

Senators generally have larger constituencies, of course; and the office of Senator has not been associated with constituency service or the initiating of communications. Most Senators would prefer to appear on 'Meet the Press' or 'Face the Nation' than to address a garden club or listen to a constituent's personal problems in some remote 'district office' in their own state.¹¹ House members are not forced to make such choices; their 'home styles' are necessarily local.¹²

A simple measure of attentiveness to the constituency is trips back home to the district (state) by a member of the House or Senate. Fenno's study of the district activities of House members did not find a relationship between margin of victory in 1972 and the frequency of trips back home the following year among 419 House members, although a more limited study by Frantzich found moderate correlations between trips by approximately a hundred members during the height of the 1978 electoral period and the percentage increase in the member's vote from 1976 to 1978.¹³ Parker also has demonstrated that personal contact with House members is strongly related to voters' general perceptions of their member's attentiveness which, in turn, is a powerful predictor of incumbency voting.¹⁴ Following Fenno, I have gathered data on the frequency of trips home in 1977 for the twenty-three incumbent Senators seeking re-election in 1978 (excluding only Maryon Allen (D., Alaska) and Paul Hatfield (D., Montana), interim appointees who lost primary bids for full terms).¹⁵ I do not maintain that trip behaviour

⁸ Richard F. Fenno, Jr., *Home Style: House Members in Their Districts*, (Boston: Little, Brown, 1978), especially Chaps. 3-4.

⁹ Glenn R. Parker, 'Incumbent Popularity and Congressional Elections', in Louis Maisel and Joseph Cooper, eds., *Sage Electoral Studies Yearbook* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1980), forthcoming; and Barbara Hinckley 'House Re-elections and Senate Defeats', *British Journal of Political Science*, x (1980), 441-60.

¹⁰ Supporting this argument are data I analysed from the 1978 National Election Study of the Center for Political Studies which indicate that 80 per cent of those who had some type of contact with the incumbent only in Senate races voted for the incumbent compared with 63.8 per cent who had contact with both the Senator and his opponent (and none of the four cases who only had contact with the challenger).

¹¹ Cf. Thomas E. Mann and Raymond E. Wolfinger, 'Candidates and Parties in Congressional Elections', *American Political Science Review*, LXXIV (1980), 617-32. They report (Table 12) that both Senators and their challengers made contact with most voters (80 and 70 per cent respectively) through the medium of television; newspapers and magazines rank second (73 per cent and 63 per cent); only mail from incumbents among the other six types of contact reached the majority of Senate voters.

¹² Fenno, *Home Style*, especially Introduction and Chap. 1.

¹³ Fenno, *Home Style*, p. 36; and Stephen E. Frantzich, 'The "Perking" Up of Electoral Fortunes: The Use of Perquisites by Congressmen' (United States Naval Academy, mimeo, 1979).

¹⁴ See Parker, 'Incumbent Popularity and Congressional Elections'.

¹⁵ Fenno gathered his House data for an off-year and thus it seemed logical to follow in his footsteps. Trip data for 1978 were also gathered, and the overall pattern did not change markedly. Fenno is currently working on a study of the home style of Senators and will present a more complete

for Senators is *the* explanation for victory or defeat; rather, it may affect the increment which can be gained and perhaps aid in attempts at re-election. Trips home probably cannot save someone destined for certain defeat, but they might provide the margin of victory in close contests.¹⁶

Fenno divided his House sample into three categories: high (forty-three or more trips home), medium (twenty-four to forty-two trips), and low (twenty-three or fewer trips). The modal category was high (161 members), with the medium and low categories each representing 129 members. I shall employ his classification here because, according to the thesis advanced, House members set the standard for member-initiated communications with constituents. The data are presented in Table I and indicate that the pattern is hardly random. While only 35 per cent of the whole sample fell into the 'low' category, five out of eight Senators (63 per cent) defeated in 1978 made twenty-three or fewer trips back to the state. In contrast, only two out of six Senators who went home very frequently and only one out of nine in the middle category lost their re-election bids. While the over-all relationship may not appear to be particularly strong, the concentration of losing candidates in the lowest category of trips home, as well as the finding that over 60 per cent of those who went home infrequently lost, suggests that inattention to constituency may be costly to an incumbent. There may well be a threshold effect, where even a moderate amount of trip activity may serve to shield incumbents from the wrath of the electorate; there seems to be a marked relationship between trips and re-election rates for those who went home infrequently and most of the defeats came from the ranks of liberal Democrats. Furthermore, only three liberals were victorious among Senate incumbents: Biden, Pell, and Randolph. Biden and Randolph are two of the six Senators who went home often. Since Randolph barely won, this evidence is far from conclusive. Yet, despite the crudeness of the data, there is clearly a relationship between a Senator's home style and electoral success.

Most telling in Table I are the over-all frequencies of going home for the Senate. For

TABLE I *Frequency of Trips Home by Incumbent Senators, 1977**

| High (43+ trips) | Medium (24-42 trips) | Low (23 or fewer trips) |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Baker (R., Tenn.) | <i>Griffin (R., Mich.)</i> | <i>Anderson (D., Minn.)</i> |
| Biden (D., Del.) | Helms (R., N.C.) | <i>Brooke (R., Mass.)</i> |
| <i>Case (R., N.J.)</i> | Huddleston (D., Ky.) | <i>Clark (D., Iowa)</i> |
| <i>Hathaway (D., Me.)</i> | Johnston (D., La.) | Domenici (R., N.M.) |
| Randolph (D., W. Va.) | McClure (R., Ida.) | <i>Haskell (D., Colo.)</i> |
| Tower (R., Tex.) | Nunn (D., Ga.) | Hatfield (R., Ore.) |
| | Pell (D., R.I.) | <i>McIntyre (D., N.H.)</i> |
| | Stevens (R., Alaska) | Percy (R., Ill.) |
| | Thurmond (R., S.C.) | |

* Senators in italics were defeated in either the primary or general election.

picture of Senators' trips in that work. I am grateful to the many Senate staffers who provided the data and other forms of encouragement. Every office I contacted was helpful in this regard.

¹⁶ This is essentially the same argument that Fiorina makes in 'The Case of the Vanishing Marginals', p. 181.

the twenty-three Senators in this sample, 26 per cent went home quite often, 39 per cent a fair amount, and 35 per cent not that frequently. Fenno's House data show respective percentages of 38, 31 and 31. Senators go home considerably less frequently than House members; the modal category for House members is the most frequent trips, while it is the middle one (not much larger than the low category) for Senators. In contrast, note that Senators' authorized trips home at government expense had increased from forty-two to forty-six while House members are only entitled to twenty-six each; before 1966, members of either house were authorized only three trips home a year.¹⁷ House members have created a set of expectations about their behaviour by paying such close attention to their constituencies. Many voters may expect similar treatment from their Senators, as noted by Alben Barkley (D., Kentucky) over two decades ago.¹⁸ In particular, if a Senator is not ideologically attuned to his (her) constituency, the bid for re-election may be hindered by a lack of attention to the voters back home. Voters may become so accustomed to seeing their Representative that they expect similar attention from their Senators – and want to see the latter members in person rather than on television from Washington (or, worse, speaking in some distant state). Even members who think that they know their constituencies, who have effectively combated charges of being too liberal (or conservative, in some instances) for the state in previous contests, may now be vulnerable. In this category is Thomas McIntyre (D., New Hampshire); McIntyre may not only have underestimated the importance of the Panama Canal treaty in his re-election bid, but also could not counter his opponent's media advertisements that the Senator had sold his home in New Hampshire and bought a condominium in Florida.¹⁹ Senator Floyd Haskell (D., Colorado), already in serious trouble, may have ensured his own defeat when it became known that he intended to marry a Washington journalist.

Not only is the number of trips home important, but also what members do when they are home can make a difference. Some members from relatively safe seats (Pell, Huddleston, McClure, Nunn, Johnston, Stevens, Thurmond) can afford to go home with no more than reasonable regularity provided that they spend many days in the state during recesses. This type of scheduling is often found among Westerners, both in the House and the Senate (Domenici and Hatfield), who have longer distances to go and whose constituents have not become accustomed to as much attention as other members give their districts. The frequency of trips by itself can sometimes be misleading; some Senators who go home often won (Biden and Randolph, for example) but others who returned home just as often lost (Case and Hathaway).

¹⁷ These figures are discussed in Fiorina, *Congress: Keystone of the Washington Establishment*, p. 61.

¹⁸ Alben Barkley recounts the following story in his *That Reminds Me* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1954), p. 165: 'I would relate to the crowds how I called on a certain rural constituent and was shocked to hear him say he was thinking of voting for my opponent. I reminded him of the many things I had done for him as prosecuting attorney, as county judge, as congressman, and senator. I recalled how I had helped get an access road built to his farm, how I visited him in a military hospital in France when he was wounded in World War I, how I had assisted him in securing his veteran's benefits, how I had arranged his loan from the Farm Credit Administration, how I got him a disaster loan when the flood destroyed his home, etc., etc. "How can you think of voting for my opponent?" I exhorted at the end of this long recital. "Surely you remember all these things I have done for you?" "Yeah," he said, "I remember. But what in hell have you done for me lately?"'

¹⁹ James M. Perry, 'Gordon Humphrey: Copilot to Senator in One Short Hop', *Wall Street Journal* (22 January 1979), 1, 31.

Clifford Case (R., New Jersey) would often make trips home on weeknights rather than on weekends. He would spend much of his time at short meetings and would return to Washington early that same night. (This pattern also describes the trips of Brooke, the Massachusetts Republican who lost.) In contrast, Biden commuted home to Delaware every night while Randolph would often fly to West Virginia when the Senate adjourned, spend the night meeting with constituents, and return after midnight. Based upon the information provided by the two offices, it appears that Case met most frequently with the people Fenno called his 'primary constituency'; the people who supported him the most and the ones he felt most comfortable with; on the other hand, Randolph's trips, also supplemented by visits home virtually every weekend, included not only his 're-election' constituency, the supporters on whom he depended for votes, but also the entire geographic constituency.²⁰ Case went home often, but was not very visible. Randolph not only was a frequent visitor in his state, but also maximized his re-election chances by meeting a wide range of his constituents. The Senator's patterns hardly differed from a House member. Thus, as Fenno has stressed, what matters is not only how often one goes home, but the member's 'home style', the way in which one's sense of identification with the constituency is communicated to potential voters.²¹

HOW THE WEST WAS LOST

A casual glance at Table 1 as well as an examination of Fenno's data will show that very few Westerners fall into the category of going home a lot.²² In 1976 Jimmy Carter carried only one Western state (Hawaii). While only one Democratic Senate seat of the five lost in 1978 was west of the dividing line roughly at the Missouri River (drawing a slightly crooked line between Minnesota on the east and North Dakota on the west), four of the five party defeats in 1976 Senate contests occurred in the West; this suggests that the relationship between electoral fortunes and trip behaviour might be spurious, a function of region.²³

Let us examine this argument. I begin with an analysis of some simple aggregate data in Table 2 on the re-election percentages by region for the House and Senate respectively. To present the case for the counter-argument as generously as possible, I do not dichotomize region but include five relevant regions. The table shows a very high incumbent success rate for Western Senators, but most of these are Republicans. On the other hand, House incumbents of both parties do quite well throughout the country and Western Democrats are slightly less vulnerable than their Eastern counterparts! The

²⁰ Fenno, *Home Style*, Chap. 1.

²¹ Fenno, *Home Style*, especially Chaps. 2-4.

²² Fenno, *Home Style*, p. 38. The regions employed in Table 2 are those used by Fenno.

²³ This suggestion was made by the anonymous reviewers, one of whom recommended gathering trip data for House members as well. This was simply not feasible. Other trip data on the House provided problems as well. The Frantzich data (see fn. 11) comprise a limited sample for the height of the 1978 campaign; the Parker figures are more complete but are more dated and were not available for analysis. For the Parker data, see his 'Sources of Changes in Congressional District Attention', *American Journal of Political Science*, xxiv (1980), 115-24; and 'Congressional District Attention: Trends, Cycles, and Cohorts' (presented at the annual meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago, April, 1979). In any event, there are grave problems in comparing trip data gathered by office surveys (such as Fenno and I have done) and by examining travel vouchers from the Clerk of the House (Parker and Frantzich). Discussions with both Fenno and Parker have been helpful in this regard, although they fail to resolve the issue; I, not surprisingly, lean toward the office surveys.

puzzle remains, then, about why House Democrats from Western areas, including the Midwest, do not suffer some of the same consequences of low travel rates that some of their Senate counterparts do.

TABLE 2 *House and Senate Incumbency Victory Rates, 1978 (in percentages)**

| Region | All Senate Races | House Democrats | House Republicans |
|----------|------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| East | 25.0 (5) | 91.2 (57) | 96.2 (26) |
| Border | 100.0 (3) | 100.0 (24) | 100.0 (8) |
| South | 100.0 (5) | 98.4 (63) | 96.2 (26) |
| Midwest | 25.0 (5) | 90.6 (53) | 95.3 (43) |
| Far West | 80.0 (5) | 92.7 (41) | 94.7 (19) |

* Numbers in parentheses are numbers of cases. Regions are the same as those used by Fenno (see fn. 15).

I do not propose a general answer to the question, but suggest that the trip relationship is not only real but even pronounced in the West. Employing data from the 1978 National Election Study of the Center for Political Studies, we can get some idea of the effect of personal contact with one's Senator or Representative.²⁴ Because of the relatively small sample size of potential Senate voters, we now do dichotomize region as indicated above. Quite surprisingly, we find that 8.4 per cent of Eastern respondents had personally met their Senator compared to 8.5 of Westerners. In contrast, there was a slight advantage for Eastern incumbents in the House (18.9 per cent to 16.2). Thus, it is not simply the frequency of meeting one's Senator that varies from one region to another.

When we look at voting behaviour, however, we find that 69.2 per cent of Eastern voters who met their Senator voted for the incumbent compared to 60.6 per cent who had not met the member; for Eastern House members the respective percentages are 85.6 and 84.1. In the West, the relationships are stronger. For the lower chamber, 87.8 per cent of those who had met the incumbent voted for him (or her), compared with 76.1 per cent of those who had not. In the Senate races, the percentages are more dramatic (although based on far fewer cases): 81.8 per cent to 54.7 per cent. These results suggest that Western members of both houses may manage to meet as many constituents as their Eastern colleagues (although other forms of visibility are probably more questionable), but that their re-election chances depend more heavily upon such meetings. If some other factor such as ideological disagreements with constituents were to depress Western Senators' base votes, these relationships would be readily explicable.

For those who remain sceptical, the most appropriate test would compare voters' expectations of Senators' behaviour by their standards for House candidates. The best available test in the 1978 election study is a comparison, among those voters participating in both House and Senate contests, of Senate voting behaviour among those who had

²⁴ Mann and Wolfinger, 'Candidates and Parties in Congressional Elections', discuss some of the limitations of this survey for analysing Senate races. Controls for party are not presented below because any breakdown beyond simple cross-tabulations for these variables literally produces 'vanishing marginals'. What few results I have obtained indicate few differences between the parties.

met the House incumbent and not the Senator or *vice versa*: 78.6 of those who had only met their Senator and 84.6 who had met both their Senator and their Representative²⁵ voted for the upper chamber incumbent, in contrast to 57.4 per cent who met neither and only 55.9 per cent who had met only their Representative. There is evidence, then, that contacts with the Representative create expectations about the role and district activity of incumbent Senators. While the number of cases for analysis is perilously small, there are nevertheless no shifts of any magnitude when region is controlled.

CONCLUSION

While there is no guarantee that close attention to one's state will result in victory for incumbent Senators, there does seem to be evidence that failure to pay such attention may be politically costly. All of the incumbents who lost – with the *possible* exception of Hathaway – were perceived by observers in their states as distant from their constituents. Even among the Republicans who were defeated by more liberal Democrats (Brooke and Griffin), the Senate campaigns were marked by charges that the incumbents had lost contact with the folks back home. (The situation was particularly troublesome for Griffin, the Senate Minority Whip, who had previously announced his retirement only to change his mind later.) The impact of trips home is thus not limited to liberal Democrats. One could pose an argument that such Senators would have a more national and international focus than other members and a more positive approach to what Washington can and should do, thus focusing their attention on the capital. But even if one does not accept this thesis, the simple fact has been that the hard times for liberalism have made the re-election quests of such Democrats more difficult in recent years. Any member in electoral difficulty must pay attention to home style, and the effects of trip behaviour on electoral success may be more pronounced for liberal Democrats precisely because these days they are the incumbents least secure for other reasons.

One can suggest many other controls which should be applied. Indeed, I tested for the effects of state size since one might expect Senators from smaller states to adopt home styles more like those of Representatives; a variety of types of controls failed to show significant differences. Two other explanations of the decreasing advantage of incumbency for Senators should be considered: (1) voters have different expectations about the prospects of meeting Senators and Representatives; and (2) incumbent Senators lose more frequently than Representatives because they have stronger challengers,²⁶ rather than because voters compare them unfavourably with House incumbents. There are no *direct* data to support or contradict the first thesis, although 35 per cent of Senate voters (compared to just 40 per cent of House voters) believed the most important role that their Senator (Representative) should adopt was the handling of constituents' personal problems. Perhaps, then, the gap between expectations for Senators and Representatives is perceived to be greater by legislators than by the electorate.

The second explanation is more comprehensive and undoubtedly tells us much (if not most) of the story about why House and Senate elections differ. Yet not all types of contact with voters are equally effective in translating perceptions (even favourable ones) into votes. Trips seem to be among the more productive and, as discussed above, give

²⁵ Averaging the small number of cases ($N = 27$) yields 81.5 per cent in the combined category voting for the Senate incumbent.

²⁶ Cf. Hinckley, 'House Re-elections and Senate Defeats'; and Gary C. Jacobson, 'Congressional Elections, 1978: The Case of the Vanishing Challengers', in Louis Maisel and Joseph Cooper, eds., *Sage Electoral Studies Yearbook* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, forthcoming).

House members much greater advantages against their challengers than Senate incumbents have. A challenger can become stronger if the incumbent is perceived to be too distant and it hardly requires a great inferential leap for a voter to compare an absent Senator not only with the challenger but also with a constituency-oriented House member. Indeed, the home style of many House incumbents just might scare off stronger challengers.²⁷ There is some evidence that a belated recognition of this relationship is occurring in the upper chamber, as suggested by the small plane that McIntyre's successor, Gordon Humphrey (R., New Hampshire), has purchased (he is a former commercial pilot) to help fulfil his pledge to return to the state every weekend and every recess.²⁸ His colleagues in the upper chamber have also begun to make weekend travel more convenient for themselves. The percentage of meetings held on Fridays, when legislators might otherwise be home among constituents, has dropped from 19.1 in 1977 to 11.9 in 1979.²⁹ Perhaps Senators, particularly liberal Democrats (as well as conservatives), will stop running for President and begin running for Congress.

²⁷ I owe this idea to Malcolm E. Jewell. A similar statement is found in Barbara Hinckley, 'The American Voter in Congressional Elections', *American Political Science Review*, LXXIV (1980), forthcoming.

²⁸ Perry, 'Gordon Humphrey', p. 1.

²⁹ It was Bruce Barr, a former member of Senator Pete Domenici's staff (R., New Mexico), who first suggested to me that Friday sessions were becoming less frequent following the defeat of eight Senators in 1978. The figures are 34 Friday meetings out of a total of 178 days in the 1977 session, 26 out of 158 (16.5 per cent) in 1978, and 20 out of 168 in 1979. These data were graciously provided by Beth Shotwell of the Senate Democratic Policy Committee. Senate Majority Leader Robert W. Byrd (D., West Virginia) has told Democratic Senators that no votes would be scheduled on Fridays during the 1980 election year. Senators could thus skip Friday sessions without missing roll calls.

Testing the Butler–Stokes Model of a Polarization Effect Around the National Swing in Partisan Preferences: England, 1979

R. J. JOHNSTON*

In the section of their book *Political Change in Britain* entitled 'The Sources of Uniform Swing', David Butler and Donald Stokes presented a model to account for an apparent paradox in Britain's electoral geography – the relative uniformity of the 'two party swing' between elections across all parts of the country.¹ This uniformity is paradoxical because if the national trend in changes of partisan preferences were to apply equally in all areas then the swing against a party experiencing a net loss of votes should be greatest in those areas where it won most votes at the first election: indeed, as Butler and Stokes show, it may even register a net gain of votes where it was weakest, despite the national trend being against it.

Butler and Stokes accounted for this paradox with an ecological model which is based on the axiom that (at least some) voters obtain their cues from their local environment. If that environment strongly favours a certain party, this local orientation may help it to retain votes there even if the general trend is away from it. Their survey data provided evidence in line with this account. As yet, however, little further work has been done to

* Department of Geography, University of Sheffield.

¹ David Butler and Donald Stokes, *Political Change in Britain*, 2nd edn. (London: Macmillan, 1974), pp. 140–51.