

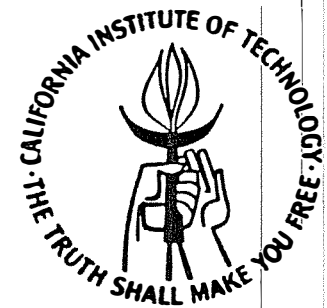
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THE HOUSE IS NOT A HOME: M.P.'S AND THEIR CONSTITUENCIES*

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My wife was going through some old correspondence the other day, and she came across a letter that said: 'Dear Mr. Tuck, I want to thank you for all the help you have given me the past few weeks. My toaster has never worked better.' I can't for the life of me remember the details of the case, but I must have helped her get her appliance fixed.

Raphael Tuck, M.P.

INTRODUCTION

Current American legislative research includes two related lines of inquiry whose emphases differ noticeably from earlier efforts. First, researchers have begun to focus on a variety of legislative activities peripheral to the lawmaking and representational functions stressed by democratic theory. Congressional advertising and constituency service, for example, figure prominently in recent work by Mayhew (1974), Fenno (1978), and Fiorina (1977). In the past, such activities have been denigrated as mere public relations and errand-running, and perhaps for that reason only the most fragmentary treatments of such activities appear in the pre-1974 literature. But increasingly, scholars have come to realize that the constitutional significance of a legislative

activity need not agree too closely with its practical (i.e. electoral) importance. The recent work of Parker and Davidson (1979) is quite suggestive on this point. As a possible resolution of Fenno's paradox (Why do we love our congressman but hate our Congress?), Parker and Davidson suggest that the electorate judges Congress as an institution against the constitutional criterion of legislating effective solutions to national problems, while simultaneously judging congressmen as individuals against the more mundane criteria of providing personal access, a good service bureau etc.

A second new departure is primarily methodological, though its impetus no doubt stems largely from the first one discussed above. As scholars became more sensitive to the variety of activities engaged in by legislators, they began to conceive of constituency influences as something more than correlations between constituency characteristics and roll-call votes. And as scholars began to consider actual instances of advertising, constituency service and so forth, they came to the realization that the district might be a more illuminating arena in which to study such behavior than the Washington office. This line of thinking culminates in Fenno's recent Homestyle, a richly detailed study of how a number of U.S. Representatives relate to their districts.

The preceding new emphases are reflected in recent topics of congressional research. Macartney (1975) and Cranor and Westphal (1978) examine district office operations. Johannes (1978, 1979) focuses on casework. Parker (1979) analyses variations in trips to the district. Frantzich (1979) looks at congressional use of new data processing technology. Yiannakis (1979) explores the content of

congressional newsletters and press releases. And Fenno continues his travels. All of this is fairly far removed from studies of committees, dimensions of voting, constituency influence on roll-call voting, and other major topics of the pre-1974 literature.

We are currently engaged in an extensive study of the electoral relevance of some of the preceding topics, in particular, district offices, staff, trips and other correlates of service activity. These data are not the subject of this paper however. Instead, we wish to share some early thoughts about the comparative side of our work -- constituency service activity, if it exists, in Great Britain. Without advocating simple-minded comparisons of highly disparate legislatures, we do believe that legislative research should produce theories and conclusions whose application extends beyond American federal boundaries. In particular, consider the proposition that legislators pursue individualized constituency strategies in order to insulate themselves against the vagaries of national forces. Given its roots in the electoral incentive, this proposition should have wide applicability, but it appears contradicted by the textbook account of the British situation. The parliamentary system supposedly denies the legislator both the incentive and the opportunity to construct a personal power base even though each member is the sole representative of a geographically distinct constituency. If true, this fact is quite significant; it implies that legislative-electoral institutions can be designed to counteract a strong electoral incentive. For those concerned about the negative side effects of particularized constituency politics in America, a responsible party system like that of Great Britain may be the answer.

How might the British parliamentary system thwart the pursuit of personalized constituency strategies? Perhaps M.P.'s do not think that constituency activities make much difference. Donald Stokes (1975), after decomposing the variance of the party votes in Great Britain and the U.S., argues that the local component is less important in Great Britain than the national one and smaller in magnitude than the local component in America. But then again, Stokes does find a measurable local component, so perhaps the explanation is that M.P.'s are not sufficiently strategic to take advantage of it. An example of this view is P.G. Richards' comment about M.P.'s and constituency work: "There is political benefit to be gained from 'being a good constituency man', but it is quite wrong to suggest that members bestir themselves to deal with problems of electors out of a shrewd calculation of advantage." (1964, p. 169) M.P.'s it seems, are above scrounging for votes. Similarly, Rose and Kavanagh (1972, p. 27) inform us that "The lack of consistent and compulsive concern with winning elections also implies that it is unrealistic to expect elected officials to make policy decisions in accord with the changing whims of voters, or changing figures in opinion polls." So, perhaps the British system works differently from the American because its members are motivated by nobler goals than electoral ones. Perhaps.

A second reason M.P.'s might not actively pursue personal constituency strategies is that such activities are precluded by the resource constraints members face. Without the staff, research facilities, and the independent power base of committees, M.P.'s

lack the means to distinguish themselves. Mayhew (1974, p. 21) for example, writes

British M.P.'s lack the resources to set up shop as politicians with bases independent of party. Television time goes to parties rather than to independent politicians. By custom or rule or both, the two parties sharply limit the funds that parliamentary candidates can spend on their campaigns. Once elected, M.P.'s are not supplied the kinds of office resources -- staff help, free mailing privileges, and the like -- that can be used to achieve public salience. These arguments should not be carried too far . . . But the average backbencher is constrained by lack of resources. It comes as no surprise that individual M.P.'s add little to (or subtract little from) core partisan electoral strength in their constituencies.

Finally, M.P.'s may not work to develop a personal local base because of the opportunity costs entailed by such efforts. Young backbench M.P.'s who aspire to climb the ministerial ladder try to impress party leaders with their legislative work. Diligent constituency effort would divert time and other resources away from that activity. Thus, the British system also differs from the American by establishing a stronger link between legislative work and the attainment of national leadership positions.

To sum up, the conventional wisdom suggests that the alleged differences between British and American legislators stem from some combination of differences in the perceived benefits of constituency service, differences in the resources available to commit to such activity, and differences in the perceived opportunity costs of pursuing locally oriented strategies. These reasons are plausible,

but frankly we think that the stylized description of the relations between M.P.'s and their constituencies overstates the difference between the British and American situations. The plain fact is that the office of M.P. is one which most incumbents wish to keep. And like American congressmen they represent a geographically defined district whose inhabitants control their electoral fates. Subject to the lower level of member resources and the stronger influence of party, we should expect to see a weaker reflection of the kinds of activities performed by American congressmen, at least if those activities are generated by the "electoral connection." If we fail to find indications of electorally-based service activity in other systems such as the United Kingdom, it may be a warning that the electoral connection as the explanation of American service activity needs to be augmented by other considerations.

In the summer of 1978 we interviewed M.P.'s about their "homestyles." Thirteen of the 18 interviews were conducted in the members' constituencies, and each of these "interviews" lasted from one-half to two days. In other words, there was a degree of participant-observation in the data gathering. The body of this paper describes the homestyles of four backbenchers and a sitting cabinet minister. We emphasize that the individuals interviewed are not a representative sample of anything. In fact two of the five profiled were identified beforehand as "good constituency men" by other M.P.'s. This first round of interviewing is only a pilot study. Still, we believe that American legislative scholars may find these profiles provocative. Based on the interviews and observations a number of hypotheses about the nature and extent of constituency

service activity in Great Britain are proposed in the final section of the paper. Again, we emphasize that these are hypotheses, not conclusions.

FIVE CASES OF CONSTITUENCY STRATEGIES

"The Squire" -- Sir H.

Sir H. lives in a manor in a largely homogeneous, rural, agricultural community. He is a highly respected and well known figure in the community, so well known in fact, that when we lost our way on our visit to his home and pulled into a gas station in a nearby village, the station attendant not only knew who Sir H. was, but could tell us exactly where he lived. Sir H. himself is in his seventies and has served in Parliament since the mid-fifties. The fact that parliamentary work is a part time job has enabled him to run a business and serve on the board of directors of several companies while in office. Sir H. believes in the amateur role of the M.P. and fervently opposes attempts by younger members to professionalize the position.

Sir H. is a Conservative whose home style nicely matches the social structure and politics of his constituency. He is the local notable who benevolently oversees the interests of his farming constituency, and his constituents in turn regard him with deference and respect. Sir H. is proud of his community and has worked hard to "keep the character of the constituency from changing" by opposing "relocations of socialists from London" and other proposals that might make it less rural and homogeneous. It is, of course, in

Sir H.'s interests to keep the working class component of his constituency from getting too large since his home style would be very much out of place in an urban, industrial environment. At the same time, his efforts to preserve the rural character of the constituency are very much appreciated by his constituents, who are no more eager than Sir H. to see their constituency change.

The rural and homogeneous nature of Sir H.'s constituency influences his home style in various ways. To begin with, its geographical dispersion makes certain strategies for dealing with his constituency less feasible than others. A common method for learning about the complaints and opinions of constituents in Britain is to hold surgeries at designated times during the month. Surgeries provide opportunities for constituents to speak directly with their M.P.'s about the problems they might have. These meetings are usually held at the local Town Hall or constituency party headquarters and usually last 1 to 2 hours. As Sir H. points out, however, surgeries are less effective in rural constituencies, because people have to travel greater distances to attend them. Early in his career, Sir H. tried to institute regular surgeries throughout his constituency, traveling dutifully great distances from village to village. He found only a handful of people at these meetings and rapidly came to the conclusion that the attendance did not warrant the effort. He has not held a formal surgery in many years. Sir H. complains that academics and journalists often seize upon the frequency of surgeries as a crude index of how constituency oriented a particular M.P. happens to be. Sir H. believes that this is unfair since it is insensitive to the different demands of rural constituencies like

his own. He claims that he keeps in touch with his constituents just as effectively by mail, personal visits and phone calls as an M.P. in an urban constituency does by weekly surgeries.

The nature of Sir H.'s constituency affects his home style in other important ways. Sir H.'s style is similar in some respects to the "person to person" style of Fenno's Congressman A. It is both dictated and made possible by the closely knit structure of the villages which comprise his constituency. The styles of both Congressman A. and Sir H. are very personal, requiring an intimate knowledge of the customs, values and interests of their constituencies. What distinguishes Sir H.'s "person to person" style from that of Congressman A. is the paternalistic role that Sir H. plays in his community. By comparison, Congressman A.'s "presentation of self" to his constituents is his claim to be "one of the boys" not the paternal "squire."

Sir H. has a secretary who helps him with correspondence and arranging speaking engagements, but he personally oversees all communications with his constituents. He gives his secretary very little autonomy in dealing with constituency matters and often responds to letters himself in longhand. We can confirm this fact since his invitation to us to visit his constituency came in the form of a personally handwritten note. Sir H.'s secretary resides in the constituency and knows it very well. Indeed, as Sir H. is quick to point out, a secretary in Westminster would not even be able to address the letters to his constituents since many of the residences in his area are not designated by street names and house numbers.

Sir H.'s "person to person" style is suited to the context of his constituency -- i.e. the expectations of a conservative, rural agricultural community. It is also personal in the sense that Sir H. is very comfortable with the role of the paternalistic squire. At the same time, his style is strategic, because it is calculated to win and maintain support in the community. Sir H. is very careful to attend to the details of constituency politics. He and his secretary regularly scour the local paper for wedding and death announcements and send on personal notes to the families. Sir H. believes that his constituency work has played a major role in building up the morale of the local party and in helping to make his seat safe. As he explains it, the very fact that a man of his stature in the community takes the time to listen to some average fellow's problems in itself creates good will and electoral reward. To illustrate his point, he gave us the example of some fellow in a pub complaining to his friends about a problem he has with the government. His mates tell him that he has been wronged and suggest that he see Sir H. So the fellow calls or writes Sir H. who dutifully sends off a letter to the constituent informing him of his actions and one to the relevant minister asking the minister to please enquire into the matter. The minister writes back a reply -- in many cases, unable to help -- and Sir H. sends a photocopy of the minister's letter to the constituent. The constituent's problem often does not get solved, says Sir H., but at least the constituent can take the letter with him to the pub, "happy in the knowledge that his case has received attention at the highest levels." Sir H. in return acquires

the reputation of being a good constituency man who cares about his constituents.

This anecdote is revealing in two senses. First, it indicates the high esteem that Sir H. enjoys. His mere consideration of the matter is sufficient to please his constituents. Secondly, it is noteworthy that Sir H. would take the time to contact a Minister about a constituent's problem. There is, of course, no evidence that such efforts have a measurable positive effect, but it is significant that Sir H. should think so. Community ties, Sir H. claims, are such that knowledge of a favor for one constituent is communicated by word of mouth to others, reinforcing the support of not only the particular constituent involved, but also that of his friends and his family. The belief that this generates electoral support justifies Sir H.'s substantial investment of time in constituency work, which includes an hour or so every weekday dealing with letters, Monday morning meetings with his staff to go over constituency matters and general political meetings on Friday evenings. Being a good constituency man is consistent with Sir H.'s self-image as the local squire (i.e. his social obligation), but it is also a calculated attempt to secure electoral support. Sir H.'s "person to person" style is no less strategic than Congressman A. S.

The context of the community Sir H. represents also shapes the nature of the problems he has to deal with and the focus of his activities in the constituency. Urban M.P.'s report that they get a large number of cases dealing with housing, immigration and crime, but Sir H. is more likely to hear about pensions, taxes and farming problems. Sir H. has a very well defined sense of what does and does

not fall into his proper domain of responsibility. In his view, the M.P. looks after the interests of constituents as they are affected by the national government. Thus, when a civil servant in Westminster, or in some local office, administers the law in an unfair way, the M.P. should try to bring his influence to bear upon the ministry in order to rectify the situation. Therefore, tax and pension problems fall properly in Sir H.'s domain, but purely local matters such as housing and the decisions of the local council do not. These, he refers to the proper local authority. Sir H. does not try to compete with local officials for power and attention. He comments only that "My relations with local officials are cordial and I command their respect." Sir H.'s homestyle involves a fairly high commitment of resources to constituency matters, but it is bounded by a "traditional" view of the M.P.'s responsibilities. Where some of the younger M.P.'s involve themselves in almost every conceivable local issue, Sir H. restricts himself as much as possible to contacting ministers about administrative decisions, raising parliamentary questions, and in some rare instances, promoting private member's bills suggested by problems that arise in his constituency. Constituency politics are both an obligation and a means of helping to build up support, but Sir H. believes that in the end they are subordinate to his role as a national legislator. This, as we shall see, sets Sir H. apart from his younger colleagues.

"The Local Man" -- Mr. G.

This M.P. managed to recapture in 1974 what had been a former Labour seat held by the Conservatives since the fifties. Mr. G. is

a highly energetic and articulate man in his thirties, who previously had taught at a polytechnic. He is well read in political science, and takes its lessons very seriously. He has studied the American political system and personally observed American congressmen in their districts. He believes that British M.P.'s have much to learn from them. He opposes more limited conceptions of the M.P.'s role -- such as Sir H.'s -- and thinks that his is the homestyle of the future in Great Britain. Mr. G. is one of a number of young M.P.'s sitting in marginal constituencies whose homestyle's have become controversial among older members. Sir H. and others like him believe that the trend established by M.P.'s like Mr. G. will lead to the undesirable professionalization of the office and an unnecessary proliferation of expense.

Mr. G.'s constituency is over 50 percent white and working class, but has substantial middle class and ethnic neighborhoods as well. At one time, this region had been a thriving industrial center, but it has been slowly decaying since the Second World War. Numerous industries have closed, and the population has declined. Traveling through the constituency, we saw several blighted residential areas and abandoned factories. Mr. G. is almost evangelical in his desire to revitalize the area. He speaks bitterly of the political neglect which contributed to the economic and social decline of his constituency: in his eyes, the primary culprits are incompetent and poorly motivated local officials, and he believes that it is his responsibility to prod them into action. It is a bit hard to understand precisely why Mr. G. feels so intensely about this community since he was not born or raised there, although he taught at the nearby polytechnical school. Nonetheless, the fact remains that Mr. G.

now sees himself as closely tied to the community.

A second curious and notable aspect of Mr. G. is that while he belongs to the Tribune group -- the left of the Labour party -- his constituency politics are indistinguishable from the service and locally oriented politics of Fenno's Congressman E. Mr. G. votes with the far left for large scale nationalization, heavy wealth taxes and getting out of the Common Market, but what he really seems to care about are problems in the constituency like housing. Mr. G. is more interested in building up his position in the community than in national politics. In the few days that we spent with Mr. G., we heard very little about his ideology and a great deal about his constituency. He is very careful not to let the former interfere with the latter.

One incident particularly reinforces this point. Shortly after we arrived in his constituency, Mr. G. took us to a meeting with the head of the local Chamber of Commerce. The president of the local and the Mayor were major figures in the local Conservative party and had energetically campaigned against Mr. G. during the last election. They frequently competed with Mr. G. for publicity in the local press. As we headed to the meeting, Mr. G. recalled with undisguised glee the time that the Mayor and The President of the local Chamber of Commerce tried to hold a press conference at the opening of a new shopping center in an urban renewal area. Hoping to capture the publicity for themselves, they saw to it that Mr. G. was omitted from the list of invited guests. Mr. G., not to be denied, decided that he would attend anyway, and, although he was not allowed to sit on the podium, he strategically placed himself nearby so that his face appeared the next day in the pictures taken by the local paper. It was a moment of great triumph for Mr. G.

The purpose of this meeting was for Mr. G. to announce to the Chamber of Commerce that he was organizing a jobs fair, and that the Chamber was welcome to set up a booth. Mr. G. had been careful not to invite the Mayor and the Chamber of Commerce to participate until after the initial publicity, complete with his picture, had hit the local press. Mr. G. did not want any confusion about who was responsible for this event. Towards the end of the meeting, discussion wandered, and the Chamber of Commerce official began to criticize at length the Labour government's intervention into Rhodesian affairs. We expected that Mr. G. would leap to his government's defense and that a heated discussion would ensue. Instead, Mr. G. nodded his head in quiet sympathy, finished his coffee and a few minutes later apologized to his host for the fact that he really had to be moving on since he had another appointment to attend to. National issues and ideology are simply of secondary importance for Mr. G.

Mr. G. is deeply involved in all sorts of community affairs. He holds surgeries every week at two locations for two hours each. He actively solicits cases by advertising his surgeries in the local paper and by walking through the town on weekends and letting people approach him on the street with their problems. As Mr. G. explains, this serves the dual purpose of picking up cases from people who could not attend the surgery as well as making him visible to his constituents. As we walked through the town market and through complexes of council homes, people would come up to

Mr. G. to tell him their problems. Mr. G. in each case recorded the person's request in a notebook and promised to get back to them shortly. Some of the people we saw invited Mr. G. in to have a quick cup of coffee while they complained about the vandalism of neighborhood kids or the neglect the local council has shown towards the repair of their homes. Mr. G.'s willingness to play the social worker seems to know no bounds. He never turns down a case and will go to great lengths to find new ones. Local affairs are not off limits in the sense that they were for Sir H. Mr. G. sees himself as a general ombudsman who fights against the maladministration of local as well as national government. Consequently, Mr. G.'s relations with local officials are far more complex than Sir H.'s. Some local officials -- such as those in the Consumer Advice Bureau -- are his allies while others - like the Mayor and the Chamber of Commerce -- are his chief rivals for attention and influence in the community.

Mr. G.'s typical cases are housing, social security, immigration and vandalism. The importance of housing derives from the role of the local authorities as the landlords of council housing. Those who come to Mr. G., because they feel that they deserve a better flat, or because they have been denied permission by the local authorities to move are not likely to be helped by Mr. G. (although he tries) since the housing allocation process was changed a few years ago to a point system with objective criteria for different classifications. Mr. G. is somewhat more successful at prodding repairs out of the local council. The immigration cases are a very

important bridge to the immigrant community for Mr. G. He has no trouble developing links with the white, working class community, but the immigrants tend to maintain separate religious and cultural ties. Thus, Mr. G. has to work especially hard to court their favor. On one particular evening, for example, Mr. G. took us to a local immigrant bar-brothel where he nonchalantly collected cases and heard complaints while we looked on in slightly embarrassed discomfort.

Mr. G.'s local and service oriented style is consistent with his personality. He seems indifferent to ministerial ambitions and more interested in his community than his national stature. It is also partly dictated by the context of his constituency. His is a constituency with serious economic problems, and Mr. G.'s crusade to stop the decay has obvious electoral appeal. His willingness to take up any community cause -- individual complaints, the funding of a local football team, the building of a new shopping center helping the relatives of immigrants to enter the country -- fits nicely with the heterogeneity of the constituency. His primary supporters are working class, council house dwellers, but he reaches out for support from diverse groups. Mr. G.'s style is certainly strategic. He has excellent working relations with the local press and writes his own press releases. Mr. G. claims that a recent edition of one of the papers had 11 articles about him in it.

Mr. G. took over a marginal constituency, and a good part of what makes him work so hard is the hope that this will give him a safe seat. Mr. G. feels somewhat bitterly about M.P.'s who neglect

their constituencies. A recent issue of the local paper carried his advertisement of weekly surgeries next to an announcement by the neighboring Conservative M.P. that he would be unable to hold surgeries during the next month since he would be on vacation.

When a large number of individuals from this neighboring M.P.'s constituency began to appear at Mr. G.'s surgery, Mr. G. would take their cases but remind each one that the reason their M.P. was not helping them was that he was in the south of France. He then wrote a letter to the editor of the local paper complaining about his neighbor's neglect of his parliamentary duties. This summed up a great deal about Mr. G. for us: he was altruistic enough not to turn them away, but strategic enough to use it to political advantage.

"The Ambitious Young Man" -- Mr. B.

Mr. B. is widely considered to be a bright young prospect in the Labour party. When we mentioned his name, we were told several times that Mr. B. was a man to watch in the future. He was almost certain to be given a ministerial post in the next Labour government and a good bet to become a senior minister in the Cabinet eventually. Indeed, Mr. B. is an extremely intelligent, well read and pleasing person. He was educated at the right schools and spent some time teaching at a prominent English University. His perception of politics is much more analytical than that of Mr. G. or Sir H., and he seems more conscious than they of the long run trends and implications of parliamentary homestyle. Like Mr. G., Mr. B. has

visited and observed American Congressmen, but he is not nearly as enamored of the Congressional model as Mr. G. Mr. B. would like to see the staffs of British M.P.'s expanded, but he feels that it is important that this growth not get out of hand the way he believes that it has in the U.S. He reminded us that large staffs are unnecessary in Great Britain since the size of the average British constituency is about one-fifth that of a Congressional constituency.

Mr. B. self-consciously steers a course between his local responsibilities and his national aspirations. He realizes that his performance as a backbencher will determine how far and how fast he rises up the ministerial ladder. At the same time, he realizes that he needs to establish a reputation as a good constituency man if he is to retain his seat in the future: Mr. B. is in effect "digging in." He believes that his service work will give him a buffer against changing national tides. His constituency, like that of Mr. G., was very marginal in 1974. In a sense, however, it is even more marginal than Mr. G.'s since Mr. B.'s seat is more naturally Conservative and middle class. He hopes that by taking an interest in local affairs and by doing diligent casework, he can offset any policy disagreements he might have with his constituents.

Mr. B. works hard at his constituency duties. He estimates that he spends about one-third of his time on constituency affairs when Parliament is in session and nearly all of his time between sessions. Mr. B. is quite candid about the future problems raised by his strategy. As Mr. B. rises in the ministerial ranks, there

will be less time to devote to constituency matters. His hope is that once established, his early record of constituency service will give him enough credit so that he will not lose his cushion of support when future Parliamentary responsibilities cut down the time he can devote to his constituency. Later, if all goes well, Mr. B. will be a minister, and the national publicity and pride factor that goes with the job (i.e. the pride that constituents feel about having an important minister in their seat) will offset the necessarily national allocation of his time and resources. Mr. B.'s hypothesis is that his vulnerability will follow a curvilinear pattern. During his first years in office, diligent constituency work will help to establish local support, but in the beginning stages of his parliamentary career, his vulnerability will increase since he will have neither the time to devote to his constituency affairs nor the national publicity to offset his neglect. Complicating matters is the basic problem that Mr. B. has no firm idea of what electoral impact his constituency work has, nor how quickly an advantage built upon local work will decay if he has to neglect his constituency in the future. At the time we interviewed him, Mr. B. was most interested in the fate of Dr. David Owen, the Labour Minister of Foreign Affairs. Owen was sitting in a marginal seat which, it was rumored, was in grave danger of being lost in the next election, because of his prolonged absences from the constituency on foreign policy missions. Party workers in Owen's constituency feared that these absences may have seriously undermined local support for him. Mr. B. felt that Dr. Owen's fate might provide some clue as to the likely success of his strategy.

Mr. B., like Mr. G., does not draw the line of his responsibilities at the national government. Mr. B. willingly takes on local cases like housing, and works very closely with local Labour councillors. He thinks that the growing involvement in local affairs by M.P.'s was caused by the incompetence of local officials, the greater salience of the M.P. such that people were more likely to turn to him than to less well known local councillors, and the fact that he and others like him actively solicited cases. As Mr. B. pointed out, the demand for casework and services is endogenously related to supply: by being more open to taking on cases, the M.P. increases the demands placed upon him by his constituents. Mr. B.'s homestyle is strategic in the sense that he sees it as a short run tactic that will enable him to achieve his long run ambition of becoming a minister. It is contextual in the sense that the marginality of the seat forces him to find a way to protect himself against unfavorable national trends. It is somewhat less personal than the homestyles of either Mr. G. or Sir H.: one suspects that were Mr. B. in a safe seat or were it the case that there was a better way of building an electoral cushion, Mr. B. would abandon constituency work rapidly. Mr. B. does not have Sir H.'s conception of himself as a local squire, nor Mr. G.'s desire to win power in the local community. Mr. B. is dealing with electoral circumstances in the best way that he can. If he succeeds and the curvilinear hypothesis is correct, Mr. B.'s homestyle will probably change in the future.

"The Issue Man" -- Mr. R.

Mr. R. is a committed socialist. Unlike Mr. G., Mr. R. cannot talk about politics without reference to socialist principles. The world is neatly divided into two camps for Mr. R.: there are those who exploit the working class and those who defend it. Mr. R. was one of the few M.P.'s who queried us about our politics: were we sympathetic to the working person's cause or were we typical bourgeois intellectuals? Our properly ambiguous response annoyed him. Recently, Mr. R.'s world has been complicated by the Scottish devolution issue. Mr. R. is a fervent supporter of socialist devolution, meaning devolution that would give greater power to a Scottish working class party. He is scornful of the more heterodox Scottish National Party: devolution without socialist principles, he explains, would be no improvement over the status quo.

Mr. R.'s constituency is a Labour stronghold in a Scottish industrial area. Until recently, Mr. R. was a sponsored M.P., which meant that his nomination was controlled by a large union in the constituency. In recent years, he has split with the Labour party over devolution and has lost his affiliation with the sponsoring trade union (he is retiring at the next election). Mr. R. sees his constituency in far less personal terms than the other M.P.'s we have looked at so far. His constituency is the "working class" and his role is to protect their interest. After his break with the Labour party, he has come to define his constituency more narrowly as the Scottish working class. Mr. R.'s conception of his constituency is more abstract than personal: it is not based upon individuals for

whom he has done favors or with whom he has had personal contacts. He is bound to his constituents by a common link of objective class interest. Mr. R.'s job is to represent that interest even when his constituents are indifferent to it. Many times in our conversation, Mr. R. referred with dismay and a slightly detectable contempt to the inertia of his constituents. Interest in socialist causes has declined, he contends, and the working class has lost its leadership and direction. Bright young workers often lose their interest in socialist causes when they acquire the educational training to become leaders.

Mr. R. allocates his personal resources primarily towards his national responsibilities. When his relations with the sponsoring trade union were good, he tried to establish an informal organization of local party and trade union officials to take some of the burden of local affairs off his shoulders. The services these people provided him were voluntary. Together with one secretary each in the constituency and Westminster, these people acted as filters on most constituency cases, leaving him free to carry out his legislative duties. Select cases would be passed on to him, but in general, Mr. R. made it clear that he does not believe in the personal touch. Consequently, the demands placed upon him by his constituency are less than those placed upon the others we have examined so far. Mr. R. holds his surgeries on the last Friday of every month whereas Mr. G. and Mr. B. hold them every week. Mr. R. does not usually take phone calls or visits at his home as does Sir H. unless the case is very urgent. Mr. R. was one of the few Labour M.P.'s we interviewed who had serious reservations about interfering in local matters like

housing. Mr. R. believes that the proper role of the M.P. is as a legislator. To the degree that an M.P. must act as an ombudsman, Mr. R. feels that it should be restricted to protecting against executive directives issued by the civil service. In this sense, Mr. R.'s preferred role is most similar to that of Sir H.

Despite his conception of the proper responsibilities of the M.P., Mr. R. has had to make concessions to the growing constituency demands upon him. He claims that the "social worker" role of the M.P. has increased in importance greatly over the last 25 years: in his words, it has come "to assume an importance way out of proportion." While he believes that local affairs like housing lie outside his area of responsibility, he says that his staff used to handle these cases when they were brought in. His staff had very good relations with many of the local officials they had to deal with due to connections through the Labour party and the trade unions. These ties facilitated a speedy response to their requests.

More than the other M.P.'s Mr. R. cares about the role of the M.P. as legislator. This is of course, consistent with his issue orientation. Rather than see staff expanded to meet constituency needs, Mr. R. would prefer to see the research facilities in Parliament improved upon, and every M.P. provided with a research assistant. The problem with existing research facilities, from his perspective as a policy oriented critic of the government, is that it provides you only with information from existing government sources. If one is to be an effective critic, he maintains, one needs independent sources of information. This, he says, is especially

important in the British situation, because of the high degree of secrecy that surrounds decisions made by the Cabinet and the Civil Service. As Mr. R. puts it, "If the civil service and ministers decide that you should not know about something, you don't have a bloody chance." To be an effective legislator, he believes that M.P.'s need every bit of research assistance they can get.

Mr. R. also argues that making the M.P. an effective legislator will require making the job full time. The part time status of M.P.'s, he says, suits the Tory gentlemen who take their legislative duties lightly and make a comfortable living on the side as a company director, business or professional person. The glorification of the part time legislator is in his eyes another manifestation of the anti-working class bias of the British government. Mr. R. explains it this way, "I am a toolmaker, and there isn't any factory I know of that has any use for a part time toolmaker."

Mr. R.'s presentation of self is as a highly principled socialist who is committed to principles and policies of the working class and not to specific individuals or interest groups. He accepts the job of social worker grudgingly, and has tried to build an informal organization around him who would screen him from excessive constituency work and free him to pursue his proper role as legislator. He sees himself as a trustee rather than as a delegate. More often than not, he feels that he has to prod his constituents to action rather than respond to their demands. Mr. R.'s national orientation sets him apart from Mr. G. or Mr. B. Younger Labour M.P.'s "have discovered that they can get elected to Parliament on the basis of

individual help," and this has caused them to turn from a national to a local orientation. This bothers Mr. R. He blames younger M.P.'s for excessively "looking for the vote" and constituency parties for being too preoccupied with local rather than national issues. At the same time, Mr. R.'s commitment to principles sets him apart from Sir H. Sir H. would not approve of strengthening Parliamentary committees nor of opening new sources of information in order to criticize his own party, and he most certainly would not break with his own party over some policy, as Mr. R. has done.

Mr. R.'s homestyle appears to be dictated by personal taste in the sense that he is a committed ideologue, and, for all his protestations about intellectuals, he is an intellectual in his own right. It is also partly explained by institutional factors in the sense that he represented a trade union sponsored, working class constituency which was sympathetic to his ideology. Since the seat was safe, Mr. R. did not have to build up a personal constituency to buffer himself against national swings. Curiously, then, Mr. R.'s homestyle is the least strategic of the M.P.'s in our sample. It does not appear that Mr. R. is strongly conscious of whether his homestyle maximizes votes or not. He is almost scornful of those who do preoccupy themselves with winning votes. It is possible, however, that Mr. R.'s lack of interest in the strategic implications of his homestyle may have been his own undoing.

"The Cabinet Minister" -- Mr. S.

Mr. S. is a major figure in the Labour party and has held several key cabinet posts. He has been in Parliament since the end of World War Two, and when he reflects on the changes that have taken place in constituency politics since then, he has a hard time distinguishing between changes which are part of a general trend and those which are the result of different stages in his Parliamentary career. Mr. S.'s seat is something between safe and marginal: he claims that it is less marginal now than it was when he first took it over, but it is, he emphasizes, by no means absolutely secure. Mr. S. represents a London constituency, and he thinks that this has given him an advantage over the years. M.P.'s who represent constituencies a considerable distance away from London must travel long distances to attend to their constituencies. As he points out, after a grueling week in London, the prospect of rushing back to the constituency is not very attractive. It either takes its toll on the M.P.'s personal life, or the M.P. begins to neglect his constituency. Having his constituency in London, however, has made it easier for Mr. S. to be diligent both as a legislator and as a constituency man. Since Mr. S. resides in the constituency, he is frequently seen about the neighborhood and is able to keep on top of local developments even as he ascends the ministerial ladder.

As his career progressed, Mr. S. tried to shift the focus of his activities to the national scene, and thinks that he has done so fairly successfully. In his early days as a backbencher, Mr. S. spent a great deal of time on constituency work. He believes that

this work helped establish his reputation as a good constituency man. As he explains it, he got involved in heavy constituency work at the beginning of his career because he had the incentive -- his seat was marginal and he needed every vote he could get -- and because he had the opportunity. The war had left a "whole host of problems" such as national service status, veteran's compensation, rationing and the like. In addition, Mr. S. felt that his constituency party expected a high level of involvement on his part in the affairs of the community. In a sense, he argued, what may be more important to the M.P. is not the prospective gain from good constituency work, but avoiding the negative consequences of not meeting those expectations. The stronger incentive, then, may be that "you can do yourself harm" if you fail to fulfill your duties as a good constituency man. As Mr. S. rose to higher positions in the party, he noticed that demands upon him seemed to slacken some. He is not sure whether this was because of a general trend across all constituencies in that direction as the problems of the war got resolved gradually, or whether this was because people were more hesitant to bring their problems to him as he became a national figure.

Even as a Minister, however, Mr. S. tries not to neglect his constituency duties. He recalls quite vividly one day a few years back when he concluded negotiations with Gromyko in Moscow during a Friday afternoon and then flew back to London in time for his Friday night surgery. Still, the pressures of holding a cabinet position force Mr. S. to involve himself less in constituency affairs than he had previously. His ministry duties frequently call him out

of the country, and his secretary has come to play an increasingly important role in his casework. She has acquired greater autonomy to deal with constituency matters in his absence. Mr. S. also gets help from local councillors and party officials in his constituency. There is usually a local councillor in attendance at his surgeries to handle the housing cases and purely local matters. By having local officials at his surgeries, Mr. S. demonstrates his interests in the things that often matter to his constituents the most, while he avoids having to deal with these problems personally.

Mr. S. believes that there is a "pride factor" working for the M.P. who becomes a Cabinet official. This "pride factor" enables him to have some measure of independence from his constituency: normal complaints diminish and criticism of the government's policies appear more frequently in his mail. At the same time, Mr. S. tries to stay close to his constituency. He has worked with local authorities to fight the closure of a local hospital. When he reads about a fire displacing a family in the constituency, he helps the family get relocated. His constituency chores may have slackened to a day or so a week, but they are not insignificant. His involvement is less than that of Mr. G., Mr. B., or Sir H., but it is greater than that of Mr. R. Mr. S.'s homestyle is influenced in part by contextual circumstances. His constituency is predominantly working class and he knows that many of his constituents care more about housing, pension checks and tax problems than they do the issues he deals with as a minister. Mr. S. is aware of the strategic implications of his constituency work and believes that it helps build

up a cushion of a 1,000 or so votes above and beyond the votes provided by the "pride factor." This blend of national prominence and local concern has worked well for Mr. S., and it is this sort of mixed strategy that younger, ambitious M.P.'s like Mr. B. look to as an example.

DISCUSSION

The preceding profiles reveal a diversity of orientations to the constituency, a diversity evident in our other interviews as well. We found some M.P.'s who strayed little from the "ideal type" M.P. characterized in the introduction, but others like Mr. G., closely resembled some of the congressmen that Fenno writes about in Homestyle. There is reason to believe, then, that the constituency orientations exhibited by M.P.'s are more varied than conventional wisdom suggests. But even more surprising than the variety is the fact that in some respects, the M.P.'s we interviewed were nearly unanimous in voicing their departure from the conventional image. We shall discuss several examples of departures drawn from the seventeen "complete" interviews in our pilot study.

First, nearly all our M.P.'s reported a considerable degree of personal attention to their constituencies. All but one of those interviewed went back to the constituency at least forty times a year. While distances in Great Britain are small compared to those in the United States, the frequency of trips to the constituency compares favorably with that found for House members by Glenn Parker [1979]. Furthermore, almost all the M.P.'s we interviewed do a lot of casework.

The reported number of "cases" per week runs from ten to one hundred and fifty with a mean of seventy-nine. All but five report receiving more than thirty new cases each week. The content of these cases varies with the nature of the constituency and probably with the receptiveness of the M.P. as well, but almost all of the M.P.'s reported receiving complaints about council housing and immigration. Virtually all of the members try to take some action on each case submitted to them, in the belief that constituents appreciate the show of effort even if the complaints are not resolved in their favor. Thirteen of the seventeen M.P.'s interviewed indicated that they maintain some kind of regular contact with local officials and try to work through them to do casework dealing with local issues such as housing. In other words, most of our M.P.'s do not restrict themselves to cases involving the national government. They work on cases relating to local government as well. Some of them even work actively with nongovernmental interests in their constituencies when a case demands it.

All but three of those interviewed reported that they maintain regular surgeries in their constituencies for the express purpose of receiving complaints from constituents. And two of the three who do not engage in this activity (like Sir H.) refrain from it because the rural character of their constituency makes the surgery an inefficient way for the M.P. to receive complaints from his constituents.

Because almost all of our respondents feel that they are expected to do casework, most of them (13 of 17) favor an increase in

staff resources for this purpose. And, of those who do not favor such an increase, two included among their reasons that an increase in staff would induce even more of a constituency orientation than presently exists. Under the present circumstances the limited availability of staff and other resources means that the constituency oriented M.P. has to commit his or her own time to the servicing of requests from constituents. This fact, together with the possibility of attaining ministerial status if sufficient talent and expertise is exhibited in legislative matters, seem to be the principal factors which inhibit the rapid development of a more pronounced constituency service orientation by M.P.'s. To the average M.P. the opportunity cost of expanding constituency oriented activities is quite high.

Meager resources and high opportunity costs notwithstanding, the M.P.'s we interviewed report engaging in a considerable amount of constituency oriented activity. Why? Our interviews suggest that much of this constituency service orientation arises from M.P.'s perceptions that constituency service is electorally beneficial. All of our respondents believed that, for good or ill, doing well on cases could help protect them from national electoral swings. Of course, some M.P.'s fail to engage in such activity either because (like Mr. R.) they are located in a fairly safe seat, because they have national reputations sufficient (in their view) to offset such electoral advantages as they could gain from performing the welfare officer's job, or, sometimes, because they find the activity distasteful. No matter, for the present it suffices to say that M.P.'s see constituency service as an electorally beneficial activity,

and, mostly for that reason engage in a considerable amount of it, even though the opportunity cost is high given the relatively small amount of resources they control.

While our small, nonrandom sample of interviews should not be made to bear too great a weight, it is useful to give some indication of how actual orientations toward the constituency are related to beliefs about electoral benefits. We asked each of our seventeen M.P.'s to assess the extent to which doing casework was electorally beneficial. While all of them attributed some electoral effect to such activity, there was a distinguished subset who said that the potential payoff was very substantial. In Table 1 we compare the average number of cases handled per week by those who believed the electoral rewards of constituency service activity were great with those who believed the impact was less major.

TABLE 1

Average Number of Cases Per Week	Casework Electoral Payoff -- Large	Casework Electoral Payoff - Marginal
> 50	4	2
< 50	2	9

Not surprisingly those who believe that constituency service will have a large effect on their electoral fortune allocate more effort to it. Similar results occur when we relate beliefs about the electoral efficacy of constituency service to a question asking whether or not the M.P. actively solicits cases or simply reacts to those that arise "naturally." Four of the five M.P.'s who actively

solicit cases believe that such activity will yield substantial electoral rewards. The remaining M.P. indicates that he expects some electoral response. Furthermore, those who expect a substantial electoral benefit are much more likely than others to undertake "local" cases as opposed to restricting their activities to complaints dealing with the national government.

Given what appear to be important differences in the amount of effort devoted to constituency affairs, one might ask whether constituency work really does have a significant impact on the outcome of Parliamentary elections. We will try to answer this question properly in future studies, but, for illustrative purposes, compare the experiences of our five M.P.'s in the May 1979 election. Two of them -- Mr. G. and Mr. B. -- stood in the May election while the other three -- Mr. S., Mr. R. and Sir H. -- were all retiring at the time we interviewed them. Mr. G. won despite the fact that the Liberal candidate pulled out of the race (an event which caused Shirley Williams to lose her seat even though she had a previous majority of 9,000). The two party swing against him was 3.5 percent, which was considerably less than the national swing to the Conservatives of 5.2 percent and the regional swing of 6.3 percent. Mr. B. by comparison had one of the most marginal Labour seats in the country -- a majority of less than 1 percent -- and he was swept out of office in the election. Still, the two party swing against him was 2.3 percent as compared to a regional swing of 6.6 percent. In short, both of our constituency M.P.'s managed to reduce the swing against them, although with varying consequences.

Equally interesting is what happened to the seats of the retiring M.P.'s. In the case of Mr. S., a swing of 8.1 percent gave

his seat to the Conservatives for the first time in the postwar period. To be sure, there have been important demographic changes in the constituency in recent years, but the loss was quite unexpected and remarkable. The effect of not having an incumbent may also be evident in Sir H.'s Conservative seat, where his successor won with a swing of only 5.3 percent, slightly less than the regional swing to the Conservatives of 5.6 percent. Finally, in Mr. R.'s safe Labour seat, his successor managed to produce an 8.9 percent swing to Labour, when Scotland as a whole swung to Labour by only .1 percent. Perhaps this is a vivid indication of the "price" Mr. R. paid for his bad constituency relations.

The hypotheses about the prevalence of constituency service, the motivation for service, and variations in service as a function of political perceptions are strongly suggested by our interviews. In addition we can suggest a number of more tentative hypotheses about similarities and differences between representatives in the United States and the United Kingdom. First, Fenno's fourfold distinction between geographical, reelection, primary and personal constituencies seems to have cross-national utility. All of those M.P.'s interviewed had what Fenno called a "geographical, space and place perception of their constituency." Sir H., for example, was very much aware of the rural, homogenous nature of his constituency, and even believed that it was his duty to protect its distinctive character. Mr. G., to take another example, could easily identify the hostile and friendly neighborhoods in his heterogenous constituency, and planned his

constituency strategies accordingly. Fenno's concept of perceived layers of support may also be relevant in Great Britain. At the most intimate level -- the personal constituency -- are the M.P.'s agent, secretary, spouse, and devoted friends. The primary constituency usually consists of party activists, local government officials of the same party, and local trade unionists or Chamber of Commerce officers. At the outermost edge is the reelection constituency, often seen in class terms, but for the service oriented M.P. it may also include anyone who has benefited from a service.

Our interviews suggest several additional points about Fenno's classification scheme. One is that the personal and primary constituencies, contrary to what one might expect in a political system with disciplined parties, do not always correspond with the local party organization. Mr. G., for instance, built an independent personal organization precisely because he believed the local party to be moribund and inefficacious. Secondly, it appears from Mr. R.'s experience that disagreement with one's primary constituency can be as important to an M.P. as disagreement with one's reelection constituency. Indeed, an important difference between the American and British cases which needs further exploration is the seemingly greater importance of the primary constituency in Great Britain. This raises the question of whether constituency activity is dictated by activists and others in the primary constituency rather than by the larger reelection constituency. Some have suggested to us that the expectations of the primary constituency may be an important reason for the increasing emphasis on constituency work in recent years in Britain.

A third similarity between the United States and United Kingdom constituency strategies lies in categories of "presentation of self" or homestyle, though we hasten to add that differences in style may be as important and interesting as similarities. In Figure 1, we show the English equivalents to Fenno's six types of congressmen, including one we did not discuss -- Mrs. J. -- who worked her way up through the ranks of local government and stayed active in local government commissions during her tenure in Parliament. The only type we did not find in our small sample was Fenno's "popular local boy."

Lastly, the cases of Mr. B. and Mr. S. point to a fourth similarity in British and American constituency styles: namely, that representatives in both countries face hard choices about how to allocate their time and resources. Mr. B.'s dilemma -- whether to maximize local support or influence in the House -- is also evident among the congressmen Fenno interviewed. In his words, "no matter how confident members may be of their ability to pursue their Washington and constituency careers simultaneously, they all recognize the potentiality of conflict and worry about coping with it." Of course, the sensitivity of Members to this dilemma seems to vary significantly. For Mr. B., Mr. S. and Mr. R., it was quite acute: for Mr. G. and Sir H., it was less so. However, as Fenno found with congressmen, there can be linkage between the home and House styles of M.P.'s. Constituency work can be used to offset the severe policy constraint of belonging to disciplined and increasingly unpopular parties. In the end the policy constraint was too severe for Mr. B., but the low swing against him suggests that he was partly successful in offsetting national forces.

FIGURE 1

CONSTITUENCY TYPES IN GREAT BRITAIN AND THE UNITED STATES

	United States Example	United Kingdom Example
"Person to Person"	Congressman A	Sir H.
"Popular Local Boy"	Congressman B	-----
"Issue Independence Plus Personal Contact"	Congressman C	Mr. B., Mr. S.
"Articulating the Issues"	Congressman D	Mr. R.
"Servicing the Districts"	Congressman E	Mr. G.
"Political Leader"	Congressman F	Mrs. J.

However tentative we must be about particular hypotheses, our preliminary investigations at least show that the "electoral connection" exists in Great Britain. The House of Commons may not be the M.P.'s true home: M.P.'s seem to spend a great deal of time on constituency matters and believe that these are important. We hope our future studies will reveal more about systematic variations in constituency activities and the effects these have on the decisions of British electors.

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