

The Case for Political Patronage

by Nicholas Lemann

Lately *The Candidate*, the Robert Redford movie about a senate race in California, has been turning up on television. It's usually shown right after the public affairs shows on Sunday afternoon, which couldn't be more appropriate, because *The Candidate* is something of a public affairs show itself. Its theme is the evils of politics. It traces Redford's progress from idealistic young legal aid lawyer to photogenic young senator-elect. The more he compromises his ideals, the more he fudges his positions, the more he lets his advisors manipulate him like a product, the better Redford fares at the polls. At his victory party, the final step in his degradation, his father, an opportunistic ex-governor played by Melvyn Douglas, embraces him and says with a broad leer, "Well, son, you're a politician now." The implication is that there's no lower state to which a person of character can sink.

Nicholas Lemann is an editor of The Washington Monthly.

Every day the papers seem to carry some confirmation of that message. For instance, not long ago Michael Straight, the acting chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, told *The New York Times* that "the cancer of political interference has begun to undermine the credibility" of the arts endowment and its sister organization, the National Endowment for the Humanities. The cancer was manifesting itself, Straight said, in the appointments of the "political" Livingston Biddle to head the arts endowment and the "political" Joseph D. Duffey to head the humanities endowment. Furthermore, he said, the coordinator of the White House's arts policy is Joan Mondale, and "she's political." A few days later, Hilton Kramer, a *Times* critic, chimed in. "A specter," Kramer wrote, "is haunting the arts and humanities today." He went on to warn that "aggressive politicization of Federal cultural policy is now imminent." Against this barrage, all the White

House could do was protest lamely that the appointments were in fact non-political.

Then there's the case of the United States Attorneys, the 94 appointed lawyers who prosecute federal cases in the various states. Here too, respectable people want to get rid of politics, replacing it with merit. Whitney North Seymour Jr., a former U.S. Attorney in New York, is speaking for the legal establishment when he says, "the selection and tenure of U.S. Attorneys . . . must be removed from the political arena." It was taken as a hopeful sign when Jimmy Carter promised during his campaign that as part of a general cleansing of Washington, he would appoint U.S. Attorneys "without any consideration of political aspects or influence," and on "a strict basis of merit." Carter's attorney general, Griffin Bell, has repeatedly made a point of endorsing this view.

So when Carter went back on his word, the reaction was suitably bitter. When he fired the U.S. Attorney in Detroit, Philip Van Dam, solely because he is a Republican, Van Dam called it "politics as usual." When he fired Jonathan Goldstein, the U.S. Attorney in New Jersey, for the same reason, Goldstein said that evidently "my record of accomplishment on behalf of the United States must give way to the dictates of politics." Asked to explain the firings, all Griffin Bell could say was that "we had an election last year and the Democrats won." Where there had once been such hope, in short, politics again had its shabby way.

Politics today is widely seen as a senseless roadblock in the way of merit. This attitude is nothing new, of course. During the last century more than 99 per cent of the federal government has moved from the realm of politics to the realm of merit, a development roundly applauded at every step of the way. Jobs as U.S. Attorneys are among the few political ones left. Before they're changed too, it's worth looking at them—and

through them, at politics generally—a little more closely. Are political appointments really a bad thing? Are politics and merit wholly separate and opposite? I don't think so.

The idea of making U.S. Attorneys non-political grows out of experiences like Jonathan Goldstein's. Goldstein was the third in a series of tough, independent federal prosecutors who have gone quite a way towards cleaning up their legendarily corrupt state. They have convicted some twelve mayors, two congressmen, two state party chairmen (a Republican and a Democrat), the president of the state senate, and the speaker of the state assembly, among others.

Back in January, even before the Inauguration, Goldstein decided he would put Carter's promises to the test and steadfastly refuse to quit for political reasons. In February and March he told Bell he wanted to stay on and met with Bell and associate attorney general Michael Egan in Washington, from whom he heard encouraging words.

In August, following some hectic political maneuvering, Egan asked Goldstein to resign. He refused, and in September Carter fired him. Goldstein explains his fate this way: "The lawyers, the influence peddlers, the power brokers—they wanted a change in this office. They wanted to be able to pick up the phone and call this office about the handling of a case. They wanted to be able to place assistants in this office."

This is how Goldstein thinks U.S. Attorneyships should be handled: In every state there should be a panel made up of non-political leaders of the bar, law school deans, judges, and maybe even laymen. When a U.S. Attorney vacancy opens up in a state, the panel would consider applications from one and all, on their merits, and then forward their recommendations to the attorney general, who would make the final decision. Merit plans typically sound like this. Seymour's, for instance, has judges (and perhaps

bar associations and governors) choosing nominating commissions that pass lists of candidates to the President, who must choose from the list. The idea is to have appointed officials—or people appointed by appointed officials—as the sole source of U.S. Attorney nominees.

Here and now, this is how the political appointment process functions:

The appointment of federal prosecutors and judges is one of those areas of the government's operations that doesn't work the way the civics textbooks say it does—in fact, it works exactly opposite from the way it's supposed to. According to the Constitution, the President appoints judges and prosecutors, with the advice and consent of the Senate. In practice, the Senate appoints them with the advice and consent of the President. If one or both of the senators from a state with a U.S. Attorney vacancy belongs to the President's political party, they nominate someone to fill the vacancy. The President and the attorney general then screen the nominee, and submit his name to the full Senate for confirmation. There is almost never a confirmation fight, as there often is for genuine presidential appointees. It's the executive branch that does the reviewing of the nominee. When both senators from the state in question are from the opposition party, then other officials—congressmen, mayors, local bosses—get into the act, but their nominations carry less weight.

So U.S. Attorneys usually come out of the culture of young, aggressive lawyers who, out of a combination of ambition and public-spiritedness and desire to be where the action is, participate in state and local politics. Take the case of Tommy Roberts, a lawyer in his thirties in a Western state who's at the moment running very hard for a U.S. Attorney's job and understandably doesn't want to see his real name in print. Roberts teaches at a law school in the city where he lives, helps run a legal clinic, and occasionally handles criminal

cases for wealthy clients. He regularly works in political campaigns. After ten or twelve years of practice, he knows a lot of people in town.

In Robert's town the U.S. Attorney is a Republican, appointed during the Nixon Administration, whose term expires early next year. Both senators from the state are Democrats. They have an informal arrangement governing the appointment of judges and prosecutors, which is that they'll take turns being the lead man on the appointment. The lead man can nominate the person he wants, assuming his colleague doesn't object. Earlier this year the senior senator appointed a new judge to the circuit court of appeals, so on the U.S. Attorney it is the junior senator's turn.

Unsavoury Connections

As soon as Carter took office, the junior senator started to press for the appointment of a man who had helped manage his last campaign. But besides being a loyal friend and supporter, the nominee didn't have much to recommend him. He wasn't highly thought of in the legal community, he had little directly related experience, and there were apparently a couple of unsavoury connections in his past. The Justice Department balked, which it does often in situations like this. It's important to the attorney general to have people he trusts as U.S. Attorneys—he has policies to carry out and he wants them carried out well, partly because they'll reflect on his department, and, ultimately, on Jimmy Carter's stature at election time. And a questionable appointment can be

... the motive to become a U.S. Attorney is a mixture of ambition and altruism.

very messy—the press raises a fuss, the public becomes aroused, and, again, it reflects badly in the end on Carter. There are two sets of self-interests at work in a U.S. Attorney's appointment—the senator's and the President's—and they work as countervailing forces.

The junior senator didn't press the point. He deputized a lawyer friend to call around and see who else was qualified and interested.

A couple of months ago, this friend called Tommy Roberts, and Roberts said he was interested in the job. The friend set up a meeting between Roberts and the junior senator when the junior senator was next in town. Roberts was apprehensive about the meeting because he had supported the senator's opponent in an election once, but it went well. It was time to start campaigning.

"What you do is—well, it's a situation where you let people know you're interested in the job, and if they see fit they'll write the senator about it," says Roberts. "You talk to local leaders. Senators have to please the public—they're accountable to the public. So they're interested in knowing if you're accepted by the bar, by the judiciary, by blacks, by labor, and so on. So I'll call a guy on the phone, I'll say if he sees fit to recommend me to the senator I'd appreciate it. I talk to people I've known ten, fifteen years who I know the senator thinks highly of. But it's best when—well, the senator might not know these people know me, you see. I've talked to dozens of people, and had dozens of letters written.

"Then, maybe the senator will talk

to, or have lunch with, a guy who's interested in seeing me get the job. The guy'll report back to me, tell me how it's going. Right now it looks pretty good." It takes a strong ego to do all this, but Roberts has one—and U.S. Attorneys need a strong ego, too. The present system does not often produce shrinking violets or time-servers.

People like Tommy Roberts aspire to U.S. Attorneyships for a mixture of reasons. The jobs are high in visibility in a field where public exposure (of great value for anyone thinking of running for office or expanding his practice) is desperately hard to come by. They involve legal work that's consistently more interesting than most of private practice. They're thought of as good stepping-stones to federal judgeships. The client—the federal government—is a prestigious one, and one that is more idealistic than most. It's easier for a lawyer to feel proud of what he does, to feel he's leading a significant life, when he's prosecuting the government's cases than when he's toiling away in the anonymity of private practice, helping corporations save some money on their taxes. In other words, the motive to become a U.S. Attorney is a mixture of ambition and altruism.

Auto Thefts and Bank Robberies

Once in office, U.S. Attorneys handle all the federal government's legal work in their districts, which makes them quite important officials. At its most mundane, the work involves auto thefts (because that's a federal crime) and bank robberies, and

A "political" appointee would be politically stupid for Schweiker.

this is most of what lazy U.S. Attorneys do. They also work on matters of federal policy, like civil rights and environmental cases, and on political corruption and white-collar crime. Some of a U.S. Attorney's workload is dictated by the priorities of the President and the attorney general; for instance, in the Nixon Administration drug prosecution was a high priority, and in the Carter Administration it's not. By far the most visible part of the work is the political cases, but Michael Egan of the Justice Department says that's misleading. The U.S. Attorneys who are famous are the ones in older, machine-run cities like Baltimore, Newark, Philadelphia, New York, and Chicago, but their experience, Egan says, isn't typical; mostly the work is less visible, more bread-and-butter.

Still, the political districts are the ones where the political appointment system is most under fire, so it's worth taking a closer look at how the system works there. In Baltimore, Carter and Bell are replacing Jervis Finney, the Republican whose chief assistant, Barnet D. Skolnik, prosecuted Marvin Mandel. Finney says that's okay with him. In Chicago, the administration, at the request of Senator Adlai Stevenson III, replaced Samuel Skinner with Thomas P. Sullivan after apparently rejecting the first choice of the Daley machine, former lieutenant governor Neil F. Hartigan. New York, ever since President Theodore Roosevelt appointed Henry Stimson U.S. Attorney there in 1906, has had an impeccable good-government reputation, and this year Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan asked that the Republican incumbent, Robert B.

Fiske, be kept on. Philadelphia and Newark have both been big deals, one of which the administration handled to its credit and the other not.

The Handwriting on the Wall

In the early seventies, Philadelphia was arguably the most corrupt jurisdiction in the country, and Nixon's U.S. Attorney there, a politically active Republican from the suburbs named Robert Curran, wasn't doing much about it. The Philadelphia papers, by 1975, were printing stories that implied Curran was not a man who would walk that last lonely mile to put crooked pols behind bars. Somebody—the Justice Department, some think—started leaking stories saying Curran was thinking of resigning. This seemed to Curran not to be fair play, but he saw the handwriting on the wall and, in early 1976, stepped down.

While the Curran controversy was raging, aspirants to the job were making it known to Pennsylvania's two Republican senators that they were available. One of them was Senator Richard Schweiker's own chief legislative aide, a 33-year-old lawyer named David W. Marston. Marston had joined Schweiker's staff three years earlier. He was then starting out in private law practice in Philadelphia, but he was a little restless. He had run twice, unsuccessfully, and against long odds, for the state legislature against a member of Mayor Frank Rizzo's city machine, and those races brought him to Schweiker's attention. About a year before the job opened up, Marston had started think-

ing about being a U.S. Attorney—"it's the best job in the country for a lawyer," he says.

To Schweiker, Marston's request was "a bolt out of the blue," says one person who was close to the situation. "The initial reaction was not very great enthusiasm; we felt it looked like a political appointment. But we quickly said, 'why penalize the guy?' We looked askance for 24, 48 hours and then said, 'it's pretty unfair to rule the guy out.' But certainly the appearance in public was not thrilling." The papers and Philadelphia's extremely vocal reform movement, after all, would scream for blood if a hack were appointed. A "political" appointee would be politically stupid for Schweiker.

'Philadelphia is a Cesspool'

Schweiker finally decided Marston was the best person for the job and sent his name to the Justice Department—but he made it clear, Marston says, that he wasn't going to push it hard: "I'm not going to die for you on this," he told me." After a few weeks, Marston got a call from Harold R. Tyler Jr., the deputy attorney general, asking him to come by for an interview. "He's tough, articulate, respected," Marston says. "I'll never forget it. He started by saying, 'Philadelphia is a cesspool, always has been. The reason is that it's controlled by politicians. How are you going to change that?' I said I would be the first U.S. Attorney without political ties. I'd be free to ignore the demands of politicians." Tyler was convinced.

In office, Marston, an eager beaver

above all, moved fast. He cleaned out the old clubhouse-approved assistants in the office and replaced them with the brightest young lawyers he could find, people whose politics, he says, are a complete mystery to him. He indicted and convicted Herbert Fineman, the Democratic speaker of the Pennsylvania house. He convicted Theodore Rubino, a state Republican power. He indicted 15 Philadelphia policemen on civil rights charges. He convicted the captain of a Liberian oil tanker that spilled its cargo into the Delaware River. Most recently, he got a 110-count indictment against Henry J. "Buddy" Cianfrani, a powerful Democratic state senator (and the man who bought *Philadelphia Inquirer* reporter Laura Foreman all those expensive gifts while she was covering him). People in Philadelphia wonder if Rizzo himself will be next.

At about the time Marston was maneuvering to get his appointment approved, Jimmy Carter was winning the Pennsylvania primary with no help from Frank Rizzo, who supported Henry Jackson. But by the time the fall campaign came around, Carter and Rizzo had buried the hatchet. Carter won Pennsylvania, a key state for him, largely on the strength of a handsome majority in Philadelphia that Rizzo played a major part in delivering. So when Carter came into office, the patronage situation in Pennsylvania was unclear. Both senators were Republicans. The congressional delegation had both pro- and anti-Rizzo elements. Even if Rizzo and Carter were now friends, the Philadelphia reformers would jump all over the new President if he began to seem too close to the mayor. And David Marston had become a very popular figure.

Carter had barely settled in when a group of Democratic congressmen from the Philadelphia area, close to Rizzo and led by Rep. Joshua Eilberg, began to push him hard to replace Marston with Joseph R. Glancey, the chief judge of Philadelphia's municipal court. By all accounts, Glancey is

competent and honest and not even that close to Rizzo, but a Marston he clearly wasn't. There was a note of desperation in the speed and urgency of Eilberg's requests, which continued unabated throughout the spring. Even sources unsympathetic to Rizzo say Eilberg was acting partly out of a sincere belief that to the victor belong the spoils, but there was also speculation that Eilberg was afraid he'd be Marston's next scalp.

In any event, because it was so ham-handed, the replace-Marston campaign was its own worst enemy. In February Eilberg sent a letter to Frank Moore, the White House chief of congressional relations, saying all the Philadelphia-area Democrats supported Glancey, which was not true. This so annoyed Reps. Peter Kostmayer and Robert Edgar, both anti-Rizzo Democrats, that they switched from neutrality to an actively anti-Glancey position. On June 17, James Free of Moore's staff gave a luncheon for aides to the Philadelphia congressmen; Eilberg's aides immediately brought up the Glancey issue and, according to one source, "the whole lunch degenerated into a shouting match about patronage." On September 1, Rep. Raymond F. Lederer, an ally of Eilberg's, wrote Michael Egan a pro-Glancey letter that contained this unbelievably inept statement: "For far too long we have seen persecutors rather than prosecutors in the U.S. Attorney's office . . . that has got to end . . . I want to see an end to harrassment by certain United States Attorneys."

The Justice Department got the message. On September 22, Egan announced that Glancey was out of the running. Right now Marston looks safe; besides his popularity, any appointment that's seen as either pro- or anti-Rizzo is likely to alienate a significant portion of the Philadelphia electorate. "A lot of people would like to be U.S. Attorney," says Marston. "A lot of politicians would be happy to see me replaced. But my performance is respected by the

Justice Department. If my performance nose-dives, then I'm extremely vulnerable." Marston is one of the few federal employees of whom that's true, because with the concept of merit usually comes the concept of tenure, and any pressure to perform quickly evaporates.

A Democratic Senator

In New Jersey, there was one important difference: one senator, Clifford Case, is a Republican, but the other, Harrison Williams, is an important Democrat. Williams didn't support Carter in the New Jersey primary, and Carter lost New Jersey in November, but nonetheless, as the story shows, his opinion carries weight with the administration.

In 1969, after Nixon was inaugurated, a politically active Republican lawyer from Newark named Frederick Lacey approached Case about a federal judgeship. Case said that would be fine, but first he wanted Lacey to put in a little time as U.S. Attorney, where he would replace David M. Satz, a Williams appointee who hadn't done much about political corruption during his eight-year tenure. Case's father died when he was in his teens, and he was raised by an uncle who was a prosecutor and state senator. After law school, Case clerked for the uncle, who was then trying to investigate corruption in Hudson County. But the courts ruled that he had no right to look into it. He was stymied. Ever since then, Case has had a passion about cleaning up the government. It's been his cause in the Senate for 20 years. With the admiring voters

“A lot of people would like to be U.S. Attorney,” says Marston.
“A lot of politicians would be happy to see me replaced. But
my performance is respected by the Justice Department.
If my performance nose-dives, then I’m extremely vulnerable.”

of New Jersey, he’s known as an unimpeachable Mr. Clean. So appointing an aggressive U.S. Attorney was very important to him.

In the late sixties, Fred Lacey had come to know two young Justice Department lawyers who were in New Jersey prosecuting the Colonial Pipeline case, a complicated bribery-and-kickbacks affair that involved, among others, the Bechtel Corporation, whose lawyer in New Jersey was Fred Lacey. Lacey’s first move as U.S. Attorney was to appoint as his number-one and number-two assistants those two federal prosecutors, Herbert Stern and Jonathan Goldstein. They quickly turned the office into one of the best in the country, and when in 1971 Lacey finally got his judgeship, Case, at his urging, nominated Herb Stern to replace him. In 1974 Case appointed Stern to a federal judgeship, and made Goldstein his replacement. Shortly after the Inauguration this year, Senator Williams made it clear that he wanted Goldstein out.

Williams, whose conduct throughout has been just plain shameful, still won’t say why he wanted to get rid of Goldstein. There are obvious bad reasons for it—a man who has spent the last eight years putting Democratic politicians in jail isn’t likely to be popular among Democratic politicians. Also, people familiar with the situation say, Williams feels it’s his right to appoint a U.S. Attorney now, just as it was Case’s right in 1969. And Goldstein isn’t a saint. He’s arrogant and abrasive. He has zero empathy for politicians. His critics say he’s a publicity-hound and a leaker, that he doesn’t get along with the FBI, that

he and Judges Lacey and Stern constitute a political gang of their own, that he speaks out on legislative matters that are none of his business. “Maniacal,” one person called him. A typical Goldstein performance came in late April, when a federal judge let former Newark Mayor Hugh Addonizio out of jail after serving five years of his ten-year sentence. He marched into court and got Addonizio sent right back to jail. This won Goldstein the enmity of Rep. Peter Rodino of Newark, the chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, and Rodino joined Williams in strongly pressuring the Carter Administration on the Goldstein issue. Williams’ candidate for the job was Joseph Nolan, a former president of the state bar but not, apparently, an ideal U.S. Attorney. One person who knows Nolan calls him an “unreliable pressure artist,” and the Justice Department apparently agreed—it refused to okay Nolan’s appointment.

But Justice said yes to the idea of replacing Goldstein if someone equally qualified (this is the general standard of the Carter Administration could be found. Eventually the department chose—from a list Williams had submitted—Robert Del Tufo, the 44-year-old first assistant attorney general of the state.

A Merit Appointee

There’s an irony to the Del Tufo appointment, which is that in this most political of U.S. Attorney situations he is a genuine merit appointee—that is, he seems to be the kind of person that the widely advocated

merit selection process for U.S. Attorneys would produce. He wasn't anywhere near Williams' first choice, and might indeed have been put on the list only to lend it a meritocratic luster. After he wasn't appointed Williams could have said to his critics, "How can you say my list wasn't a merit list when Bob Del Tufo's name was on it?" Del Tufo was appointed because the Justice Department had to come up with top-quality goods in order to replace Goldstein and save any kind of face. He is universally praised (including by Goldstein) as a man of total integrity and dedication, a hard worker, rich in prosecutorial and administrative experience, only vaguely political. In person he is friendly and very cautious, the kind of person who insists on going "way, way off the record" in order to say bland things about merit selection. "He's very good," says one source, "but he doesn't have the same drive as Lacey, Stern, and Goldstein."

Further Toward Caution

The merit appointee is a hard person to judge, since he doesn't exist yet. Del Tufo is probably an example of the best kind of appointee a merit system would produce, and from him the spectrum would likely run even further in the direction of caution. One merit name thrown around in Philadelphia as a possible replacement for Marston is Alan J. Davis, a 40-year-old, impeccably credentialed (Penn, Harvard Law School, Harvard Law Review, a circuit court clerkship) member of a big corporate firm. When I set up, through his secretary, an appointment to see Davis, he quickly called back to cancel it. He explained that he could only say one thing now, and that was something he wanted to make very clear: he had not sought this job—the Justice Department had sounded him out for it, rather than vice versa—and he certainly wasn't interested in campaigning for it.

I suspect the kind of person who's going to go out and get the crooks as a

U.S. Attorney is likely to be the kind of person who's going to go out and get the job—the way Marston did, against long odds. A life of accumulating credentials and waiting to be offered positions isn't the best possible incubator of the aggressive talent a U.S. Attorney needs.

Also, political patronage, maligned as it is, is a way of encouraging high-quality people to get involved in local politics. Most people aren't saints. Pure idealism isn't enough to entice them to disrupt their lives in order to help someone get elected. People in their twenties find it easy to make the time to work in a campaign, especially if there's a possibility of a staff job in Washington down the road, but for people in their thirties and forties, with families to support, the incentives are precious few. A U.S. Attorney's job is one of them.

Jobs That Exciting

Back in 1961 John F. Kennedy took a lot of heat for his political removal of Elliott Richardson as the U.S. Attorney in Boston, perhaps well deserved. But it's partly the possibility of being rewarded with jobs that exciting when power changes hands that lures the Richardsons into politics in the first place. And sometimes the U.S. Attorneys who use their jobs most obviously for personal political gain—like Governor James Thompson of Illinois, who got his start as a tough federal prosecutor—are also the best. Goldstein himself came to us indirectly through the courtesy of the reward system. The record shows that political appointees at the federal level have a

. . . the kind of person who's going to go out and get the crooks as a U.S. Attorney is likely to be the kind of person who's going to go out and get the job.

drive and a sense of adventure that makes them far closer than their brethren in the civil service to the beau ideal of a government employee.

But the best quality of patronage appointees—and the worst short-coming, because of its absence, in merit appointees—is that there's a check on them, in the form of the electorate. There are few political appointees who feel the disinterest in the voters that it's possible for a meritocrat to feel, few who don't undergo some quickening of the pulse as election day approaches, knowing that their performance is going to be evaluated. The officials in the position to appoint feel the same pressure, which is why there are no brazen crooks in the ranks of U.S. Attorneys. Even the errant senator who wants to appoint an unqualified campaign manager or a hack to a U.S. Attorneyship, as has happened several times this year, runs straight up against the political interests of the Justice Department, which is afraid it would be made to pay for its sins by the voters. And Senators like Case, who takes a strong interest in cleaning up government, are usually well served by that interest on election day. What the Michael Straights of the world call politics is also known in some circles as democracy, and it has several well-known virtues.

As the foregoing stories show, the present way of appointing U.S. Attorneys is an extremely inefficient and error-prone means of institutionalizing the wants of the people, but roughly it does so. Merit selection wouldn't. Patronage provides hustlers like David Marston who know that if they don't

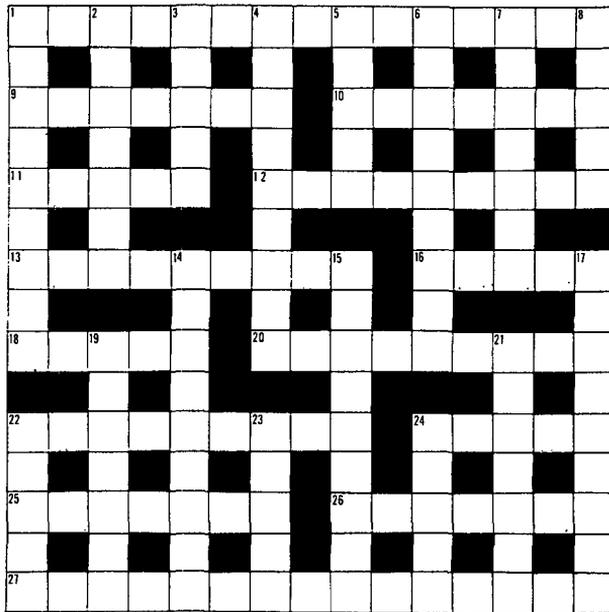
deliver they'll be fired post-haste. Merit selection, experience with the civil service shows, provides people who feel no pressure to perform, and who can't be gotten rid of if they don't. Even an exalted group like law school deans and judges is neither a representative nor a disinterested one, and its errors in merit selection would be on the side of kid-glove treatment of the establishment and lack of fresh ideas. In rough analogy, we'd have Foreign Service Officers for United States Attorneys.

Of course, there's one big disadvantage to political appointees. The considerable debts that people like Tommy Roberts accumulate in the process of getting their jobs can later stand in the way of top-flight performance. So it's worthwhile to temper the flaws of political appointees by bringing in a reasonable number of civil servants to work along with them, just as it's worthwhile to temper the civil servants with political appointees. Mixed, the two groups can play to each other's strengths and make for the best possible government.

But a mix isn't what we have in the federal government today. Because filling jobs through non-political means has been presented for so long as a shining, unflawed ideal, practically all government jobs are filled that way. It's time we realized that what's called merit has many drawbacks, and that real merit is by no means absent in politics. The notion that politics and merit are polar opposites is just plain wrong, and running the government according to that notion is a grave error. ■

the political puzzle

by John Barclay



Across

1. South African doctrine hid a police party confusion . . . (9,6)
9. . . . and its leader is right in voters assembly. (7)
10. A dish of gold found on high? (7)
11. Water which divides? (5)
12. Display of affection where troubles chant. (9)
13. Accusing it in D.C. gin mixture. (4)
16. Joint around North Lake. (5)
18. Salts composed poems. (5)
20. Gang in red arranged outside pastime. (9)
22. Swings fangs here wildly. (5,4)

24. Comes out neath Green Mountain boy. (5)
25. Pit brat comes out with very little to do. (3,4)
26. Blue rot makes things difficult. (7)
27. Chessmen subject to 1 Across? (6,3,6)

Down

1. Starve and die somehow to make public. (9)
2. A wild stream found in our time there. (7)
3. He taught us specially to rut around. (5)
4. Turbulent African river around facial feature leads to improvement. (9)
5. Roped work for race fixer. (5)
6. Have opals taken over

Carter's office feature. (4,5)

7. Bruins or Rangers, for example? (3,4)
8. What Andy and the Turks have in common. (5)
14. Returns from Bok's Mecca. (5,4)
15. Clothed in disarray met danger. (9)
17. Sex in three directions causes something. (9)
19. Star in a star grouping. (7)
21. Where a nun can live? (7)
22. Man of state almost has protective cloth. (5)
23. *I.e.*, art produced for networks. (5)
24. Methuselah's father in green, ochre and red robes. (5)

The numbers indicate the number of letters and words, e.g. (2,3) means a two-letter word followed by a three-letter word. Groups of letters, e.g. USA, are treated as one word. Answers to last month's puzzle are on page 54.