

absence of any higher order statistical analysis. The empirical studies used in the book are satisfactory; they are used effectively to substantiate a point or call an issue into question. Still, Preston could have been more innovative in the management of his data bases and more creative in the presentation of his statistical evidence.

In sum, however, *The Politics of Bureaucratic Reform* is a superb case study. The book should very quickly find its way into the mainstream of the literature on administrative reform.

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Forecasting Presidential Elections. By Steven J. Rosenstone. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1983. Pp. xii + 211. \$20.00.)

Whether or not the problem of ecological inference is ever resolved, the analysis of voter decisions and election outcomes will each remain important subjects in the study of American politics. At this point, however, most research is exclusively about voters.

Through a careful analysis of state-level aggregate presidential election returns from 1948 to 1980, *Forecasting Presidential Elections* begins to correct this imbalance. Most of this book is a justification for and test of an econometric model of presidential election outcomes. Included as explanatory variables are changes in real disposable income, incumbency, secular political trends, friends and neighbors effects, "New Deal Social Welfare" and "Racial Liberalism" scales, percent catholic (1960 only), public opinion about the president's mismanagement of war (1952 and 1968 only) and about the party best for prosperity and for peace (1980 only), party factionalism, and candidate issue positions (measured by surveying "scholars of American political parties and elections," p. 174). One can disagree with choices of specific variables (particularly the latter) and with different functional forms, but it is unlikely that these would markedly change Rosenstone's substantive conclusions. Moreover, not only does the book provide an exemplary statistical analysis, but, as is rarely the case in political science, sufficient information is also reported so that the reader can understand precisely what analyses were conducted.

To evaluate the model, two types of forecasts are generated. First are "pre-election forecasts"—based only on information available before election day. Although these forecasts do universally better than those of other political scientists, they never surpass, and are therefore less useful forecasts than, last-day public opinion polls. The

second type of forecast used in the book is based on "perfect information." This means, for example, that second-quarter real disposable income was used to forecast the 1980 election even though this indicator was not announced until five days after Carter was defeated (p. 119). These forecasts almost always did better than even the last-day public opinion polls. Thus, what Rosenstone calls "perfect information forecasts" are not really forecasts at all, except in the sense that it was theoretically (although not practically) possible to have perfect information. These "ex post forecasts" are therefore useful in evaluating the model but are useless for forecasting elections. Because the models that perform better than the public opinion polls are derived from information available only after the election, the substantial contribution of this book is to "capture the essential features of presidential contests" (p. 112)—to explain rather than forecast presidential elections. This is a minor difference in practice, but a major difference in conceptualization.

Another point not mentioned in the book is that the model does well even by ignoring most of the factors journalists and politicians attribute to causing presidential election results; these include Ferraro's finances, Ford's "Soviet domination of Eastern Europe," Carter's "ethnic purity," and Reagan's "Are you better off today." It is possible that a "campaign detail" variable that is omitted from the model is correlated with some of the included variables, therefore biasing the results. But although this is statistically possible, it is theoretically unlikely. That Rosenstone does so well in forecasting and explaining presidential elections without these details is confirmation of the suspicions of some (Kathleen A. Frankovic, "The 1984 Election: The Irrelevance of the Campaign," *PS*, 1985, 18(1), 39-47) that the campaign (or at least most of the rhetoric of which it is composed) is indeed irrelevant.

Considering that in 1980 20% of voters changed their minds in the last few days of the campaign and 10% decided whom to vote for on election day (pp. 28-29), it would have been amazing if Steven Rosenstone were half as successful in forecasting or explaining presidential elections. Well-designed, well-written, and well-executed, *Forecasting Presidential Elections* is an important contribution that should be read by all who are interested in understanding electoral results or voting behavior.

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