

## REVIEWS

Jerry F. Hough, *Changing Party Coalitions: The Mystery of the Red State–Blue State Alignment*

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### AMERICAN DUOPOLY

Amid fears of recession at home and disillusion in Iraq, the collapse of Karl Rove's once-acclaimed electoral strategy—mobilizing a 'red-state' alliance of Southern whites, Midwest Evangelicals and security moms around God, guns and the War on Terror—prompts a longer-term look at the bloc-building tactics of American political elites. The merit of Jerry Hough's recent *Changing Party Coalitions* is the rigorously estranging eye it casts on these processes. A comparative political scientist at Duke University, Hough is best known for his work on the USSR, in which he set aside then dominant 'totalitarian' interpretations to focus on the actual institutional workings of the Soviet polity. Far from the monolithic dictatorship posited by the likes of Richard Pipes, Hough revealed a complex system of factions and countervailing tendencies; nor did he hesitate to draw parallels between the USSR's one-party system and the practices of the US duopoly, including elite management of faction-ridden parties and interest-group capture of policy-making. Here, he brings a similar independence of mind to his discussion of American electoral processes and the emergence of what he sees as the deliberately anti-democratic red-state/blue-state paradigm; in the process, many of the central episodes of a familiar narrative appear in a new light.

Since Walter Dean Burnham's *Critical Elections and the Mainsprings of American Politics* in 1970, a set of landmark presidential contests have been held to signal tectonic shifts of social and ideological support for the two hegemonic parties: 1800, 1828, 1860, 1896, 1932, 1968 and, latterly, 1980

and 2000. Hough recasts both the number of realignments and their meaning: he tends to see both parties as constructed from the top down, rather than as substantiations of the people's will. Many features of the oligarchic polity of the 18th century were preserved by the parties that emerged in the 19th, who united to thwart the appearance of any populist alternative or party of labour—an almost unique achievement in the New World. Hough's account draws on intensive archival work to detail the processes by which the two parties contrived to limit electoral participation, gerrymander constituencies and divide up the electoral spoils within the ferociously competitive landscape of modern industrial America—greatly aided, although he does not spell this out, by the first-past-the-post system. At stake, for both parties, has been the problem of mobilizing maximum electoral support for policies that are not primarily conceived in the interests of the median voter. According to Hough:

both parties have structured their economic policy so as to try to maximize support in the upper class of the population—the 25 per cent of the population that makes above \$75,000 a year in family income. Without any meaningful choice on economic questions, voters have been forced to choose between the parties on cultural issues alone.

In his view, the recent withdrawal of the two parties behind the winner-takes-all ramparts of the red-state/blue-state division, leaving only a dozen states genuinely competitive, represents a further diminution of the real electorate, narrowing the already circumscribed space available for meaningful political participation.

*Changing Party Coalitions* starts with the Democratic-Republican Party constructed by Jefferson and Madison, tracing the logic of electoral calculation as land- and slave-owning elites manoeuvred to shore up their factions' votes within an Electoral College modelled on *ancien régime* lines. The arithmetic had been sealed in the compromise at the Constitutional Convention of 1787, which Hough describes as 'a velvet military coup d'état against the Articles of Confederation, led by the man who controlled the army'. George Washington presided over the Convention and used his two former aides-de-camp—Alexander Hamilton from the North and James Madison from the South—to put in place a mechanism that would restore elite order and guarantee a unified state for external affairs, without interfering in domestic social hierarchies at local-state level. Parity for North and South in the Senate and Electoral College was understood by the Framers of the Constitution as providing the plantation-owners with a veto over any legislation that would undermine the slave system; but broader alliances would be needed once political competition ensued. A distinctive element of Hough's book is its grasp of the dynamic nature of ethnic and

religious allegiances within a fast-growing settler state. Early 18th-century colonists, he argues, still clung to the confessional loyalties of the English Civil War: the small towns and villages of Puritan New England were rife with suspicion towards the Episcopalian planters of Virginia. Between mid-century and the Revolution, however, a fresh wave of immigration was dominated by non-English Protestants—Presbyterian or Baptist Scots and Irish, Lutheran or Mennonite Germans and Dutch—who brought their own sets of loyalties and enmities. Many would settle in New York, Pennsylvania and Virginia.

In the first contested presidential election of 1796, Hough suggests, Jefferson and Madison calculated that the support they would need from the mid-Atlantic non-slave states to add to their Southern base could not be leveraged by appealing to small farmers of upper New York or Pennsylvania to ally with plantation-owners on the basis of their own perceived class or economic interests. Instead, the early Republicans appealed to the Puritan and anti-English sentiments of Scottish and Irish immigrants against the ‘Anglo-Monarchical Tories’—i.e., Washington and the Federalists—and denounced Adams for wanting ‘an aristocratical form of government’; as Hough notes, ‘nothing was said about the truly aristocratic form of government in the South that Jefferson and Madison never tried to change.’ Though initially unsuccessful, Jefferson’s victory in 1800 formed the basis for the first party alignment. A decade later, Madison ‘deliberately’ provoked the War of 1812 against England on the same logic, to secure his own re-election, while the Federalists’ opposition to the conflict terminally damaged their credibility as a national party.

In the 1830s Andrew Jackson, ‘a Tennessee slave-owner of Ulster-Protestant stock’, and Martin Van Buren, ‘a Dutch-German New York’ politician, initially aimed to build a new Democratic Party that would mobilize the burgeoning electorate on the same basis as Jefferson’s Democratic-Republicans: that is, an alliance of Southern interests with Protestant Irish, Scots and Germans in the vote-rich mid-Atlantic states. Hough sees this coalition coming apart as the result of a third, mid-19th-century wave of immigration, from 1835–60, this time dominated by Catholic Irish and (to a lesser degree) Germans, fleeing famine, eviction and repression at home. They crowded the fast-expanding Northern cities and soon became fodder for, and then operators in, the clientelist Democratic machine, whereby jobs and favours were allocated in exchange for political loyalty. In Hough’s revisionist view it was the tensions produced by the annexation of the vast Catholic territory of the south-west in the 1845 Mexican–American War that led to the breakdown of the mid-century Democrat–Whig alignment. When the Whigs, magnates and manufacturers failed to offer a refuge to Protestant workers alienated by the Irish-run lower ranks of the Democratic machine in the 1850s, they were

swept away by the anti-Papist, anti-immigrant Know-Nothing Party in a revolt from below. The Republican Party, formed in 1854 as the first all-Northern party in the country's history, effectively rose to the task of consolidating 'the economic positions of the Whigs and, in a polite manner, the anti-Catholic themes of the Know-Nothings'—winning enough support among Northern German and Irish Protestants to take the presidency in 1860.

The Civil War itself is barely touched on in *Changing Party Coalitions*: the answer to the national question is assumed and the political-economic contradictions of the dual system go unexplored. In the view of this Sovietologist—shared, *mutatis mutandis*, by America's post-bellum leaders—the Civil War was an elite mistake, rendered irreversible by the destabilizing effects of 'premature democratization' in the rapidly industrializing republic. Black disenfranchisement, the poll tax, literacy tests, the 'Australian ballot', Federal rather than state control over granting citizenship, and complex registration and residency requirements duly circumscribed the electoral politics of the post-Reconstruction era. Hough's focus in this period is mainly on the out-of-office Democrats and the reasons for their failure. The DP's control over the South was now uncontested; but to accumulate sufficient support to win the Electoral College, Democratic presidential candidates had to focus their efforts either on the Midwest and Plains states, which would entail a campaign based on populist themes to appeal to hard-working farmers, or—less certain of success—on the Lutherans and Catholics of the Northern states. Viewed from the South, these choices presented themselves as 'left fork'—orientation to the Plains—and 'right fork': the minority, mainly working-class Catholic vote in the East. With one exception, the Democrats would opt for the right fork until the New Deal; populist appeals risked stirring up their own poor whites, while the Party machine could be guaranteed to deliver immigrant workers' votes in the big cities, whatever the platform. Hough quotes the editorial view of the *Charleston News and Courier* of December 1878:

Our fixed opinion is that *the permanent interests of the South lie with the East rather than the West*. The aim of the South being to . . . avoid whatever is revolutionary in politics, sociology or finance, the South must go with the East.

As a result, DP candidates were 'consistently more conservative than their Republican counterparts', the only Democrat in the White House between 1860 and 1912, Grover Cleveland, distinguishing himself by his tight-money policies and by sending Federal troops to crush the Pullman railway workers' strike of 1894.

The sole Democratic candidate to attempt the left-fork strategy, promoting the 'free silver' bimetallic policy favoured by Midwest farmers over the big banks' gold standard, was William Jennings Bryan. The 1896 election and

the Battle of the Standards is seen as pivotal in most accounts of America's party system—the moment when the big-money Republican campaign succeeded in winning an important section of Northern industrial workers over to the party of their bosses, aided by aggressively negative advertising. Karl Rove claimed to have styled Bush's 2000 campaign on the 1896 contest and looked to McKinley's strategist Mark Hanna as his intellectual forebear. But McKinley is barely mentioned in Hough's text, which sees no major break in the party coalitions until the New Deal. He focuses instead on Bryan's inexperience and underfunding, suggesting that the Democratic leadership knew they had no chance in 1896 after the deeply unpopular Cleveland Administration and had nominated Bryan solely to co-opt a growing Populist vote. In 1912, when the Democrats once again had a chance to win, they nominated the conservative governor of New Jersey, Woodrow Wilson. The son of a Scots-Irish Virginia Presbyterian, Wilson had all the requirements necessary to triumph over the already splintered Republicans (Taft versus 'Bull Moose' Roosevelt); the ticket was balanced by selection of Thomas Marshall from Indiana as his running mate. Wilson's Polkian invasions of Nicaragua, Mexico, Haiti and the Dominican Republic returned the Democrats firmly to imperial mode.

Hough rightly stresses the numerical weight of German-Americans—roughly equal to that of British-Americans—among the many 'European races' that constituted much of the US electorate during the first half of the 20th century. (He himself is of mixed German-American and British-American stock rooted in Carolina.) But at times Hough's tenacity on this question leads him to overstate its explanatory importance for the impact of US foreign policy on electoral outcomes, and vice versa, between 1912 and 1950. The need to shore up the German-American vote for the 1916 election was surely only one reason why Wilson did not enter the Great War as soon as the first trench was dug. As it was, he soon put Democratic congressmen under strain with his vituperative attacks on critics of his foreign policy as having 'alien sympathies'. Wilson's 1902 *History of the American People*, as Hough drily notes, had favourably compared the 'sturdy stocks of the north of Europe' to more recent arrivals, describing the Ellis Island immigrants as 'men of the lowest class from the south of Italy and men of the meaner sort out of Hungary and Poland', as these countries 'disburdened themselves of the more sordid and hapless elements of their population.' But his 1915 State of the Union address was targeted at the many German-American opponents of the War: US citizens 'born under other flags but welcomed under our generous naturalization laws . . . who have poured the poison of disloyalty into the very arteries of our national life'—'such creatures of passion, disloyalty and anarchy must be crushed out.' Wilson narrowly won the 1916 election but lost the German-Irish states of Illinois, New York, New Jersey

and Indiana that he had carried in 1912. (In contrast, he picked up California after advocating the withdrawal of property-holding rights from Japanese-Americans.) Senators from states with large Irish and German-American populations refused to ratify the punitive Treaty of Versailles, and in the 1920 elections the Democrats lost miserably, having fielded anti-immigrant candidates. But Hough is wrong to say that when Wilson 'brought the war home' after the termination of hostilities with the Palmer Raids on radical immigrants, the targets were Germans; the assaults were directed almost entirely against Russians.

The Democrats returned to the Oval Office with the election of Roosevelt in 1932, which—here Hough agrees with the received wisdom—marked another major partisan realignment. In Hough's eyes, Roosevelt had effectively opted for a 'left-fork' strategy based on the South and West, to harvest the voters who had supported the 'collectivist' candidacy of Robert LaFollette in 1924, in place of the orientation to the urban Northeast of the belle-époque Progressives; yet the Keynesian stabilization policies that he then pursued had not been articulated in the 1932 campaign. Hough points out that many New Deal policies were directed at rural areas: electrification, increase in farm prices, the large-scale dam projects; equally, many benefited the South. As a Sovietologist, he is well placed to deflate excessive claims for Roosevelt's radicalism, charging that few commentators today are prepared to acknowledge 'how cautious the New Deal was in comparative terms, nor how far we have come from it since.' Once Roosevelt had secured a landslide re-election and forced the Supreme Court to back down, he did little to deepen the reforms. But the New Deal party alignment persisted: the Democrats stood as the party of the working class, new immigrants and Northern blacks, as well as the South; while the Republicans were relegated to a pan-Protestant Northern and Western strategy.

World War Two again divided German- and British-Americans. After Pearl Harbor, Roosevelt tried to tread more carefully than Wilson had done, and made sure that German-Americans—Dwight Eisenhower, Chester Nimitz, Carl Spaatz—were appointed to top military posts to lead the assault on the Axis powers. The 7,000 German-Americans arrested in 1942 as people of 'Foreign Enemy Ancestry' were treated very differently to the vast numbers of Japanese-Americans thrown into internment camps; yet FDR still lost votes from German-American precincts. The start of the Cold War and the division of Germany created further tensions. In 1949 a majority of senators in the band of eleven states from Pennsylvania to Nevada voted against ratification of the NATO treaty, institutionalizing Germany's partition. In general, Hough argues, Republican Administrations during the Cold War were more open to the détente policies favoured by the German-American component of their constituency, while Democratic presidents were more aggressively

anti-Communist: Truman in Korea, Kennedy planting missiles in Turkey, invading Cuba and sending US troops to Vietnam, while Nixon negotiated with Mao and Reagan with Gorbachev. He admits that the picture is blurred, however, by the fact that each side compensates by proclaiming an ideological stance that is the opposite of its actions.

Conventional wisdom usually sets the end of the New Deal coalition with Reagan's election in 1980, or with Carter's anti-inflation policy in 1979. But in the most radical and original section of his argument, Hough makes a strong case for placing the beginning of the end much earlier, with JFK. In his acceptance speech at the 1960 Democratic Convention, Kennedy defined himself not as a New Dealer but as a New Democrat and signalled that 'the old ways will not do'. Like Adlai Stevenson, another business-friendly Democrat, Kennedy needed to select a New Deal Southerner to balance the ticket. In office, his economic policy of balanced budgets and tax cuts for the rich was 'less liberal than Richard Nixon's', and he was 'quite cautious, perhaps even conservative, on cultural issues such as civil liberties and civil rights'. In the foreign-policy sphere, Hough suggests that 'those who think that [Kennedy] would have avoided Johnson's deepening engagement in Vietnam are taking a most improbable leap of faith. A more realistic question is whether he would have acted more boldly in threatening to send troops to overthrow the regime in Hanoi.' If it had not been for the 'accidental' presidency of Lyndon B. Johnson, he argues, the New Deal would have been a thing of the past.

Instead LBJ, the first Confederate president for 120 years, introduced a raft of radical domestic policies that would finally put an end to the autonomy of the South and, at the same time, open it to political competition. It also marked the end of the 'European races', now officially recast as 'whites'. The entry of the GOP into the South famously signals the next stage in party realignments. But Hough makes a plausible case for the fluke of the Johnson Administration obscuring the real evolution of Democratic strategy, which was otherwise moving, from Kennedy onwards, in the direction of a 'blue-state' approach, founded on appeals to the economic interests of better-off suburban voters in the North. Hough describes this as a return to the Progressive tradition of Wilson and a distinct shift to the right. McGovern's unsuccessful bid in 1972 represented the next stage in the process, according to this account. Although his campaign was radical on economic and anti-war issues, its ultimate effect was to help boost through Democratic Party ranks a layer of 1960s activists who would become the main trend-setters for the blue-state orientation once they entered Congress in 1974. Gary Hart is offered as the prototype of these upwardly mobile baby-boomers, who combined the right-wing economic policies and cultural liberalism characteristic of the New Democrats under Clinton. Ironically, however, the

strategy of the next Democratic president, Jimmy Carter (1976–80), would prefigure something closer to Rove and Bush. Carter was the first occupant of the Oval Office to declare himself a born-again Christian (although Hough detects a whiff of Elmer Gantry). He aimed to win back the South from George Wallace by mobilizing the Evangelicals, while at the same time implementing an aggressively right-wing foreign and economic policy: supporting Somoza and the Shah, funding the Islamists in Afghanistan; cutting social spending at home and implementing the interest hike of the ‘Volcker shock’. But Carter antagonized the Catholic component of his coalition, and his spending cuts alienated working-class voters who still embraced the ideology of the New Deal.

By comparison to the blue-state turn of the Democrats, the Republicans’ move to a red-state strategy started later and was more defensive, according to Hough. Nixon aimed to maintain the Northern-based liberal Republican coalition, while courting the South with attacks on ‘cultural radicals’. At the same time, the Evangelical churches were coming to play a more significant electoral role as genuine party competition in the South intensified. Desegregation had led to a rash of white Evangelical schools, which also increased their social leverage. For much of the postwar period they were ‘a swing group at the presidential level’, but they were to switch definitively to the Republican camp with Reagan—pushed, according to Hough, by the Democrats’ ‘move to the cultural left and economic right in the 1970s and 1980s’. Reagan is portrayed here as a rhetorician rather than an ideologue: though he spoke to conservatives’ values, he implemented little of their policy agenda. Hough thinks Reagan inveighed against the Evil Empire mainly to ‘relieve American anxieties about accepting compromise with the Soviet Union.’ (The withdrawal of Marines from Lebanon is taken as another sign of Reagan’s moderation; his continuation of Carter’s policies in Honduras, Nicaragua and El Salvador goes unmentioned.) Electorally, his major role was to draw in male voters, in flight from the Democrats’ feminist-oriented cultural liberalism, and shore up Evangelical support in the South. By 1984, the Civil War had been inverted: ‘Reagan won the former states of the Confederacy and the border states of Kentucky, Missouri and Oklahoma by a 7.4 million vote majority.’ Far from pursuing a red-state strategy, however, the Reagan Republicans aimed to compete country-wide.

The Democrats were faced once again with a left-fork or right-fork choice: to fight for middle America on an economically radical, if culturally moderate, line; or to withdraw from competition and focus on the Northern suburbs, as cultural liberals but economic conservatives. The decision was sealed by the capture of the party machine by the now ‘affluent liberal’ baby-boom activists and feminists, who picked up the Wilsonian baton of Adlai Stevenson and JFK. The anti-New-Deal direction was hardened by the

Democratic Leadership Council, formed in 1985, and embodied in Clinton: a presidential candidate from the South whose message was 'directed at the relatively well-to-do of the large industrial states'. Hough dismisses any suggestion that Clinton did not know what he was doing in the first two years of his administration: on the contrary, the team of economic super-hawks (Rubin, Summers) and strong cultural message (gays in the military) were entirely calculated, as was the unimplementable health-care programme entrusted to his wife and the decorative 'diversity' (labour, women, blacks) of the lower ranks. Clinton 'deliberately seems to have encouraged a misleading chaos to obscure a suburban strategy already chosen that he knew would be highly frustrating to many supporters and voters'. While the Democrats needed to maintain their traditional base among blacks, the working class and the unions, they had no intention of funding their promises. Once in office, Clinton reportedly told his economic team, 'We're all Eisenhower Republicans—we stand for lower deficits and free trade and the bond markets'.

By the early 1990s, then, lower- and middle-income voters were left 'with no perceived economic choice in either party'. The scale of their disenchantment is measured here in the 19.7 million votes for Ross Perot in 1992, which Hough interprets as a welling up of dissatisfaction, among white males above all, at the impending passage of NAFTA—a proxy for globalization, outsourcing of jobs and generic threats to national pride. Neither Clinton nor Dole, in 1996, sought to address or co-opt the concerns that had made Perot's third-party candidacy so successful. On the contrary, Clinton's pollster Mark Penn announced to the Cabinet that the President's re-election signalled 'the end of the old Democratic coalition of blacks, the elderly, and the downscale. It marks the emergence of a new coalition of women, Latinos and especially suburban married couples.' Meanwhile Al Gore's speech-writer Kenneth Baer applauded the 'profound change' that had brought a Democratic president who championed 'the reinvention of government, welfare reform, fiscal restraint, free trade and an internationalist foreign policy'. Under Clinton, Hough argues, the 'Democrats had basically returned to the [economic policies] of Grover Cleveland'.

The 2000 election was the first to show a clear 'red/blue' division: the richer, more urban and populous Northern and Pacific states voting for Gore, the poorer Midwest, plus the Sunbelt and the South, going for Bush. The popular vote was almost equally divided and the turnout was only 51 per cent of those of voting age. Hough suggests that it was probably Gore's choice of running-mate that lost him the election: while Joe Lieberman did well in eastern Florida, he may have cost Gore votes among Midwestern German-American retirees on the west side of the state. Had Gore balanced his ticket with Dick Gephardt, 'a German-American Protestant from

Missouri who favoured a New Deal strategy', he might have won both there and in West Virginia. By choosing the hawkish Lieberman, 'from a coastal state and with very close ties to the Connecticut insurance industry', the DP were effectively withdrawing from the competition in what would now become the red states.

Similarly, the Republicans took the decision to concede the coastal states and the industrial north. Hough suggests that, looking ahead from 1998, GOP strategists had seen 2000 as a losing year: the economy was booming and the Vice President was a well-connected contender. The electoral trend had marked a fall-off in Republican votes from Reagan's high of 55 million in 1984 to just over 39 million in 1992 and 1996, whereas the Democrats had steadily risen from 38 million to over 47 million in the same period. The party's high-level Brock Commission Report published in May 2000 suggested that the Republicans were facing an unacceptably large loss of Northern suburban voters. Produced after Bush's nomination, and based on the implicit assumption of a third straight loss, the Brock Commission called for reforms to the party's nomination procedure. The 'front-loaded' system, privileging the least populous states, had produced two candidates from Texas and one from Kansas. The Commission wanted a bigger role for the urban North; a Republican red-state strategy was assumed to have a limited future.

Faced with this unpromising situation, Rove chose to focus on intensive mobilization of the 239 Electoral College votes of the Southern, Prairie and Mountain states, with hopes of 33 more from Indiana and Ohio; Bush's running-mate Dick Cheney was from Wyoming. The aim was to bring out the disaffected Ross Perot vote through a strong emphasis on cultural conservatism. Hough suggests that Bush had not said much about religion before 1999: as with Carter, Jesus came late to his political life, along with brush-clearing on the ranch and other homespun themes. Again, Hough sees a strong Perot factor in Bush's hawkish national-security appointments—in 1992 Perot had excoriated Bush Senior's conduct of the Gulf War—and in his anti-foreigner rhetoric on Kyoto and the ABM Treaty. In 2004, Bush even adopted as his slogan the title of Perot's 1992 campaign book, *United We Stand*. The Democrats were unlikely to win the 2004 election; but here too, Kerry repeated the errors of Gore and failed to engage with economic issues, helping Bush to make inroads even into the blue states with tax cuts and post-9.11 nationalist bluster.

After taking readers as far as the 2004 election, *Changing Party Coalitions* ends with a call for two rather minor reforms. First, popular presidential elections, thus doing away with the Electoral College machinery which can no longer have 'any positive role' now that North and South are effectively homogenized; second, a single national primary for each party, both to

reduce the role of party activists and to reverse the ‘front-loading’ of the nomination process. The first would certainly be positive, though the second risks handing still more power to the party bosses. Hough’s main concern, however, is to ensure the stability of US political institutions and the continuation of the duopoly. ‘Let us hope’, he writes, ‘that one or both parties find a way to represent the economic interests of the middle income in a sustainable way. Let us hope a major third party is not necessary.’ The framework of his analysis could, however, be used to argue for the opposite—a multi-party system based on different classes, value-interested segments of the population and disparate regions.

Hough argues that the large-scale disenfranchisement effected by the red/blue alignment—connived at by both parties, so that neither need offer an economic policy that would answer to the interests of the great mass of median voters—is unsustainable. He fears that unbalanced deficits, unprecedented inequality and high personal indebtedness could make for serious instability in the event of a major shock. In the longer term, the undermining of the US polity by the disappearance of its structuring matrices—the North–South question, and the compensatory effect of the many ‘European races’—has yet to be seriously addressed. Unstated, but strongly implied in his argument, is the need for a more equitable, probably protectionist, economic policy; nor does he ever spell out whether he would also support tougher limits on immigration. A new edition of *Changing Party Coalitions* would surely point out that neither question will be up for debate in the 2008 election.

An important feature of Hough’s account is the generational remaking, or refabrication, of ethnic allegiances. Anglicans and Puritans were redefined—and redefined themselves—as English, in face of a new wave of Irish and German immigrants; Ulstermen and Lutherans became Protestants with the arrival of the mainly Catholic wave of Irish and Germans in the mid-19th century. The latter differentiated themselves from the Ellis Island immigrants from the 1890s on: *mezzogiorno* farmworkers and East European Jews. In the 1960s came the fabrication of the ‘European races’ of English-, German-, Irish-, Jewish- and Italian-Americans into the ‘white’ race, not least by immigration and civil-rights legislation. This amounted, as Hough points out, to a *de facto* acceptance of the South’s formulation of ‘race’ as a black–white dichotomy. (On this question, it is strange that in such a well-referenced work there is no mention of Alexander Saxton’s *The Rise and Fall of the White Republic*.) Hough estimates that today, ‘blacks are where the Irish were in 1910, or Italians, Jews and Poles in 1950—not ideal, but a long way from the original prejudices and discrimination’.

This seems optimistic. According to 2006 US Government data, the new-fabricated ‘whites’—198 million of a total of just under 300 million—earned on average \$52,000 a year, compared to a national median of \$48,000,

and had an unemployment rate of 4 per cent, compared to a national average of 4.6 per cent. 'Hispanic-Latinos', the largest 'minority' at 43 million, earned \$38,000 on average, with an unemployment rate of 5.3 per cent. 'Asians', another fabricated quantity, numbered 14 million, earned an average \$64,000, and had a 3 per cent unemployment rate. 'Black' Americans, many of whom may trace their US ancestry to the time of the Founding Fathers or before, constituted 40 million, earned an average \$32,000, and suffered an unemployment rate of 9 per cent. Yet it would be in line with Hough's analysis if both 'black' and 'white' Americans were to be refabricated, or refabricate themselves, as 'Christians' or the yet-more artificial 'Judeo-Christians', in the context of a new generation of mainly Muslim Subcontinental immigrants and an international situation not incomparable to that of Wilson's; or as 'English-speakers', in face of a much larger number of 'Latino-Hispanic-Americans'. The huge wave of protests in Spring 2006 against the iniquitous treatment of the mass immigrant population has highlighted the possibility that the circle cannot be squared within the current system.

*Changing Party Coalitions* offers a ruggedly idiosyncratic take on the American political system, deeply researched and widely read. Hough has been well served by his publisher, Agathon Press: footnotes are helpfully placed at the bottom of each page and the list of archives alone should make it essential reading for serious students of the country's political history. That said, the book also suffers from the weaknesses of its strengths. There is no detailed treatment of the parties' corporate funding, which is the real determinant of their economic policies. The author more than overstates his case in suggesting that domestic electoral concerns largely motivate, rather than deflect, America's foreign policy, and there is no attempt to correlate the different relationships between domestic groups and their homeland lobbies. Programmatically, no serious discussion of US electoral reform can avoid the question of the winner-takes-all system and the possibilities of more proportional forms of representation.

A more fundamental analytical problem is that Hough's institutionalist approach, in which party elites organize factions on a sectoral and geographical basis, ignores any dynamic from below. His reliance on ethnicity and religion as explanatory determinants tends to occlude class from his account of the US political system. Yet this was a major factor in several of the realignments he discusses. The attempt by 19th-century Republicans to develop a national manufacturing and infrastructure base behind high tariff barriers entailed an ongoing battle with agricultural-commodity producers in the South and West, organized through the Democrats, who wanted low tariffs. These positions broadly overlapped with geographic, confessional and ethnic divisions for much of the century, but by its end the

economic and political landscape had been transformed, with agriculture secondary to the industrial sector. In the 1896 election much of skilled labour, including many German and Irish workers, formerly part of the Democrat coalition, voted for 'solid money' and McKinley. Thereafter the Democrats had to remodel their coalition according to the new realities of an urban industrial society.

Much more starkly, Roosevelt's leftward shift in 1932 was not simply a matter of seizing the electoral opportunities generated by the Great Depression, but also a response to a significant challenge from below. The pressures on capital from a hungry and radicalized working class that led to the New Deal are absent from Hough's analysis. Nor is there any real explanation for the North's abrogation of Southern autonomy in the 1960s, the major turning point in his account, or of the changing shape of the American economy since then: the industrializing South, the expansion of the Sunbelt suburbs, decline of the rustbelt and financialized self-gratification of the coastal elites. The internal tensions resulting from the increasing integration of the US with the world economy are gestured towards rather than evaluated. Hough notes the unravelling of the New Deal and the rightward movement of both parties in economic policy, but leaves out the social, economic and ideological transformations of which these are symptoms, and the dramatic alteration in the balance of forces in favour of capital that has accompanied them. Against this backdrop, Hough's hope that the parties will henceforth 'represent the economic interests' of the median mass of voters seems like whistling in the wind. Certainly, neither of the Democratic contenders in 2008 has plans to do so.