

Note from the Editor

Ballard Campbell's presidential address, "Economic Causes of Progressivism," which begins this issue, represents a tendency in recent writing on the political history of the period covered by this journal that will manifest itself in several essays over the coming months. The explanatory structure that prevailed in political history from around 1970 until a few years ago—the New Political History of party systems, realignments, critical elections, and ethnocultural patterns—seemed to set electoral politics in a geological time frame that interacted with events, governance, and public policy mainly in moments of great upheaval, such as the Sectional Crisis or the depression of the 1890s. Twenty-five years ago, historians such as Richard L. McCormick began to notice the problem posed by this conceptual separation between electoral politics and the substance of government.¹ Gradually, writings have appeared that attempt to reconnect elections and governance, resulting in a more fluid political history, contingent on policy decisions and on medium-term and short-term events. Perhaps the detour through the New Political History will result in political history that is more sensitive to entrenched voting patterns but still attentive to personalities and situations.

During the 2004 American Historical Association convention, SHGAPE president Donna Gabaccia noticed with enthusiasm the large number of impressive papers presented by graduate students in sessions organized mainly by Shannon Parsley, the SHGAPE council's graduate representative. This issue proudly presents revised versions of three of these papers, winners of a juried competition that the journal sponsored last year. While their topics vary, the essays by Theresa Jach, R. Todd Laugen, and Michael Mezzano all exhibit the requisite combination of solid research, complex analysis, and vivid writing. The presence of younger scholars already capable of such work bodes well for SHGAPE and the fields of inquiry that concern the society and its journal.

Alan Lessoff

P.S. Subscribers should make certain to read the call for papers on page 117 for the special conference to be sponsored this October by our sister organization in England, the British American Nineteenth Century Historians (BrANCH), which publishes the fine journal, *American Nineteenth Century History*. BrANCH chair Donald Ratcliffe and I are looking forward to receiving paper and session proposals from interested SHGAPE members.

¹See for example McCormick's 1979 essay, "The Party Period and Public Policy: An Exploratory Hypothesis," reprinted in *The Party Period and Public Policy* (New York, 1986), 197-227.