

# Politicians Snapping Up Book That Most Publishers Rejected

By Robert Reinhold Special to The New York Times

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BOSTON, March 13—New American Library would not touch the manuscript. Neither would Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. It was a clever idea, several big New York publishers all agreed, but there wasn't enough production time and no one would buy it anyway.

Undeterred, three young recent Harvard graduates found a small Boston publisher for their unwanted book, which is rapidly becoming one of the most closely read pieces of political literature in the 1972 campaign.

The book is "The Almanac of American Politics," a kind of political scorecard that combines 1,030 pages of detailed voting and political data with trenchant and often irreverent profiles of every Congressional district.

Published last month, the book has already sold 34,000 copies, mostly in Washington, where they are being snapped up by reporters, lobbyists and political campaigners of all stripes.

"We've worn out three copies," said Joseph E. Mohbat, press secretary to Lawrence F. O'Brien, chairman of the Democratic National Committee. Mr. Mohbat added that the book was "the chief reference work" for the committee.

#### Authors Met at Harvard

The almanac, priced at \$4.95 in paperback, is published by Gambit. The authors, who met during their days as reporters for The Harvard Crimson, are: Michael Barone, a 27-year-old lawyer from Michigan who, friends say, has an encyclopedic knowledge of every Congressional district and its voting patterns; Grant Ujifusa, 28-year-old son of a Japanese-American sugar beet farmer from Wyoming, and Douglas Matthews, 29, a Harvard law student and a former reporter.

The idea for the almanac grew out of an aborted handbook for students helping antiwar candidates in the campaign of 1970. In an interview, Mr. Ujifusa, who doubles as publicity director for Gambit, agreed that "it comes out as a liberal document."

"We are much more sympathetic to liberals in California than very rich Upper East Side liberals," he said. "We take a kind of anti-Beautiful People stance."

#### Took a Year to Write

The book, compiled from newspapers, books, interviews, Government documents and the elastic memories of its authors, was written in about 12 months and is expected to need revision every two years.

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Despite its success, the authors don't expect to get rich. Divided three ways, royalties' amount to only about 25 cents a copy each or something under \$10,000 apiece. "We could have made more money driving a cab," said Mr. Ujifusa.

In the book are brief, smoothly written profiles of the 50 states and 435 Congressional districts. They are spiced with much intimate detail, economic and sociological background, historical perspective, literary allusions and sharp irony.

From the section on New York: "Political allegiance is a badge of cultural style in New York, and so long as liberal politics remains a plaything of the rich, liberal politicians will have a tough time winning elections in places like Suffolk County, Queens and the blue collar suburbs of Utica. In states where there is not such a voluble liberal elite there is less likely to be a conservative reaction."

The Mayoralty race in 1969 exemplified the new alignment, they say. "The Beautiful People (and their poor allies) versus the dutiful people; Manhattan versus Queens; radical chic versus Joe."

In analyses of the state's 41 districts, one learns that the First District (eastern Suffolk) is "very conservative: people worry about crime and about the puzzling habits their children seem to be learning from somebody." And that in the 17th, or Silk Stocking, district of Manhattan, enthusiasm for liberal causes "seems to grow as the objects of sympathy grow more distant. There are no 'radical chic' parties for the garbage collectors or doormen whose strikes make life on the Upper East Side more uncomfortable."

Not every legislator is likely to be flattered. Representative Harold D. Donohue of Massachusetts, the authors remark, "used to spend long afternoons dozing in front of the Speaker's platform."

The prose is bolstered by a systematic listing of vital statistics. Each district is described in terms of census, share of Federal spending, economic base, ethnic makeup and voter registration. The entry for each legislator includes such key data as committee assignments, ratings by lobbying groups, votes on major issues and election results.

