

CAL THOMAS

Want to work for the new Republican majority on Capitol Hill? You may first have to take a test that shows your prospective boss if your philosophy matches his or her own.

The GOP questionnaire covers 152 issues and includes questions ranging from the applicant's opinion of Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Rush Limbaugh and Pope John Paul II to views about the anti-abortion group Operation Rescue and the tabloid TV show "Hard Copy."

There are statements one is asked to respond to, such as "liberals are more compassionate toward the plight of the poor" and "AIDS is more of a civil rights issue than a public health matter" and "busing of schoolchildren to achieve racial balance is wrong."

Some complaints are being heard that this is a form of "litmus testing," which it is. Litmus paper tests whether a solution is acidic or alkaline, turning red in acid and blue in alkaline solutions. Just so, the Republican litmus test reveals the ideological "content" of the applicant. It also shows that the new Republican majority is serious about hiring those with a philosophy that matches what the voters indicated they wanted in the Nov. 8 election.

Congressional staffs wield considerable power, sometimes more than their bosses, who are so overwhelmed with work and information that they cannot keep up with every bill and committee hearing. So they must rely on their staffs. If the staff have agendas that differ from their boss', they can cause havoc with the objectives of the Congress member and the will of the voters.

Hill staff litmus tests

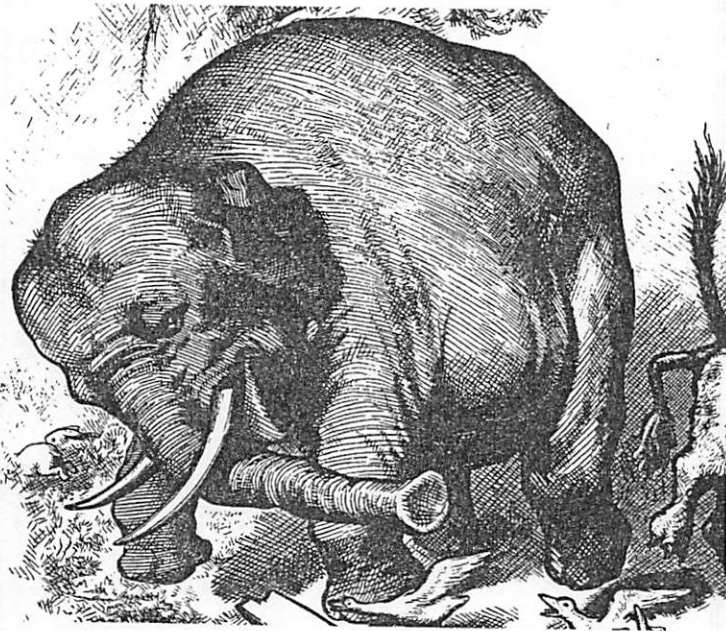
John Jackley, a former congressional aide, writes about the damage an aide can do if he or she does not work in accord with the wishes of the member. In his book "Hill Rat," Mr. Jackley tells the

mittee without the knowledge of the members."

Rep. Chuck Douglas, New Hampshire Republican, issued a statement titled "Section 89: What Staff Hath Created, Congress Should Take Away." Mr. Douglas deplored what these Hill rats had done because they had simply added the measure to legislation on their own during closed sessions of the tax-writing committee. "They are virtually invisible," said Mr. Douglas, "[and] they are unassailable — being unelected and beyond recall even if identified by a victimized citizenry. They are all-powerful — deferred to as 'experts' by Congress, they are licensed to act in its name as the law of the land."

The largely unaccountable staff, which numbered around 10,000 before the election, indicates the magnitude of the problem. And the ideological survey shows that the new breed of Republicans in Washington understands what the war is about. It is about the way people think.

The questionnaire will keep a pro-life member from hiring a pro-choice staffer or prevent a member who believes in a strong national defense from hiring a pacifist who believes in unilateral disarmament. It will go far to ensure that people with a clear vision of the Republican agenda will be hired, allowing rapid advances in that agenda. So rapid that the Democratic minority may not be able to keep pace.



story of Section 89, which was added to the 1986 Tax Reform Act, forcing businesses to prove they did not discriminate between management and labor in providing benefits.

Businesses complained about the large amounts of paper work and costs Section 89 entailed. "After some investigation," writes Mr. Jackley, "it turned out that Section 89 had been inserted into the bill solely by a few staffers of the House Ways and Means Com-

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