By James J. Beinert

The midterm elections were the Republican party's "last gasp," unless it's motivated to do something," said Louis Menand III, Special Assistant to the Provost and Senior Lecturer in Political Science, in his lecture on the 1982 elections last Wednesday night.

The Lecture Series Committee (LSC) sponsored Menand's lecture, which about 75 people attended.

Menand offered a number of interpretations of the results of the 1982 election. Like the elections of 1932, '38, and '60, voters in the 1982 election were concerned with a single issue — the economy — and more specifically, "Reaganomics," he said. The voters intended to elect officers who would "pay attention to the issues," he continued.

The Republican coalition did not hold and was dented by the Democrats, he said. Most importantly, the election showed "what political party has been able to identify itself with the broad range of American people," he explained.

Menand began by pointing out there were a number of losers in the recent elections. He asserted the election of many new Democratic governors, who will pose serious opposition to President Reagan's policies, dealt a blow to the President's "New Federalism" doctrine.

The Republican party in Massachusetts was set back, he continued, by having the "unenviable record" of not having elected anyone to a state-wide single office since 1970.

The Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS), Menand said, lost credibility with its poor predictions of the election. CBS claimed the Republican party would suffer much greater losses in the US Congress than it actually did.

About the only real winner in the election was a dead Texas state senator who received 65 percent of the vote in his district, Menand quipped.

A greater percentage of people in Massachusetts went to the polls than the national average, he noted. Nationally, voter turnout was only about 40 percent of those eligible, the lowest since 1948, while in Massachusetts nearly 60 percent voted. Menand said the November turnout in Massachusetts was not expected to be so high because of the high turnout for the primary elections in September.

Menand also talked about the role of money in the outcome of the election. The big spenders in 1982 included Texas Governor William Clements, who spent almost $12 million on an unsuccessful reelection campaign, and New York Republican gubernatorial candidate Lewis E. Lehrman, who spent an estimated $12 million and also lost. Much of the campaign money went for television advertisements, he explained.

Mario Cuomo, Menand noted, made particularly good use of grassroots organization in his successful campaign for the New York governor's seat.

In the Federal government, Americans can look forward to a "government stalemate until the budget is made sense of," Menand said, adding that we should expect a $170 to $200 billion dollar deficit by next year. US economic problems are not isolated, they are related to the "changing climate of the international economy," he explained.

At the state level, Massachusetts governor-elect Mike Dukakis will have several problems to contend with when he takes office in January, Menand said, including that of enticing qualified people to public office.

The state will have to work on its finances, Menand said. The state budget is "slightly out of balance," he indicated, as a result of Proposition 13, which cut local property taxes. In California, Proposition 13 has resulted in the state's $500 billion dollar surplus becoming a $300 million dollar deficit, he noted.

In response to a question, Menand said a third party will probably never get off the ground, partly due to the electoral college system and also because "Americans are satisfied with the two party system," he said.

Menand concluded by saying, "Politics is a many-splendored thing. If you don't talk about politics, life is terribly dull."

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