Politics &

POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS IN AMERICA

POLITICS AND POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS IN AMERICA

BY

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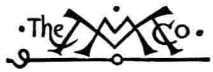

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To My Parents, My First Instructors
in Political Science

Preface

This is intended as a textbook for use in the usual college course in American Political Parties. As the topics involved, however, are of obvious importance to the citizen and have been presented without undue technicalities, it is hoped that the general reader will find here matter both useful and informative.

As much of the work as possible has been presented in narrative form. This includes not only the account of American parties but also large portions of the discussion of current American politics. The early part of the historical narrative is centered around the personalities of the great political leaders in view of the importance of a few individuals in the politics of that period. The later part is organized around issues and the movement of political factions and groups.

I have tried to work out a theory explaining the division of voters into parties which is broader than mere economic determinism. This theory of Vital Interests seeks to explain why party lines, which in the seventeenth century ran almost entirely along those of religious cleavage, later became so extensively political in theory, and more recently have been almost exclusively economic. It also explores the possibility of change away from the present economic interest basis in the light of the existing world situation.

In dealing with pressure groups, I have attempted to classify them according to their ultimate objectives. Under the heading of Other Factors Affecting Political Opinion appears for the first time in a book of this type a complete discussion of the effect on politics of such institutions as the school, the church, the movies and the radio. It also in-

cludes a detailed discussion of the press, bringing in magazine and book publishing and the modern revival of the pre-newspaper institution of newsletters. The account of newspaper influence pays separate attention to the topics, Columnists and Cartooning.

The history of American parties has been brought down through the election of 1940 and the account of the Tammany and Philadelphia Republican machines through the municipal elections of 1941. Effort has been made to bring the other material on current American politics down to 1942.

Tables are included giving information on three important subjects — the popular and electoral votes in every presidential campaign, the political distribution of every Congress and the growth of minor parties since the Civil War. A variety of other statistical data is likewise available, particularly on campaign expenditures.

This book does not pretend to an aloofness which places it wholly above the feelings of politics. It merely seeks to follow the facts rather than any particular "party line," criticizing any side freely where the occasion seems to demand it. The writer assumes entire responsibility for whatever is said in any part of the book and includes bibliographies in order that his statements may receive adequate comparison. Those at the end of chapters may be of most use to the student but his attention is also directed to the general bibliography which alone gives the publishers' names and places of publication.

Justice requires candid acknowledgment of assistance from numerous sources. Thanks are due to the National Committees of every national party, as well as to the State Committee of the American Labor Party of New York. Further courteous assistance was given by Messrs. Thomas and Babson, candidates of the Socialist and Prohibition parties respectively in the 1940 campaign. Numerous pressure groups supplied information among which particular mention is due to the American Civil Liberties League, the National Civil Service Reform League, and the New York Citizens Union.

Individuals also deserve thanks for information and advice. Congressman Francis E. Walter has generously afforded help by furnishing information most easily obtainable through his Washington office. Messrs. Morris Kemp and William W. Bryan, successive Associate Librarians in charge of research at the Lafayette College Library, have rendered willing aid whenever requested and Mrs. Eleanor Young of the Kirby Library of Government and Law has been unsparing in her assistance. My colleagues, Professors Miller D. Steever and Eugene P. Chase of the Department of Civil Rights, have from time to time afforded me the benefit of their ripe judgment and extensive experience. Thanks are especially due the former for freedom to devote research time to the present project.

In addition I should like to state my appreciation of the patience and efficiency of the secretarial workers who have prepared the manuscript of this volume. Miss Marion Fulmer and Miss Louise Monez upon whom the work of final typing has principally fallen deserve particular mention.

Finally, I wish to express my gratitude to my wife, Mildred Cousens, whose literary ability and keen insight have made her careful criticism of my work of the greatest possible value.

THEODORE W. COUSENS

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PART I

THE AGENCIES OF AMERICAN POLITICS

Chapter I

PARTIES

All man-made institutions, if they would endure, must furnish means both for the fulfillment of immediate human desires and for the accomplishment of long-range social objectives. This is especially true of politics and political organizations. These institutions supply a practical method of performing social functions of the utmost importance, yet they have their foundation in human nature, in the daily wants and passions of men.

I. THEIR BASIS IN FUNCTION

A. IN GENERAL

The Alternative to Coercion. Politics in the modern sense is a method of laying down rules to govern the field of human relations. It is *a* method merely, not the only one. It is the method of determining these rules through peaceful governmental processes rather than by mere coercion, violent or otherwise. Coercion of some type still holds sway in the fields from which, rightly or wrongly, peaceful governmental processes have been withheld. It is still the principal force in the realm of international relations, ranging all the way from war to simple diplomatic pressure. It prevails in the field of capital and labor in all countries which have not provided for governmental determination of that class of economic questions. Strikes and lockouts are instances of coercion, nonviolent at least theoretically.

It does not follow, however, that because peaceful governmental processes extend to a certain field, other methods will

not be attempted. A people, group, or class dissatisfied with its political opportunities may turn to coercion as an alternative. Rebellion and revolution are age-old forms of coercion of the violent type. The annals of all nonfree governments from the earliest Oriental despotisms to the latest Fascist and Communist dictatorships are stained with bloody illustrations of the method. "The people that followed Omri prevailed against them that followed Tibni. So Tibni died and Omri reigned." [1] Thus Stalin slew Radek and Hitler slew Roehm. *Plus ça change, plus c'est le même chose.*

A dissatisfied group may also turn to nonviolent coercion. This, too, is a device of long standing. Perhaps the earliest recorded instance (a very effective one, incidentally) was the secession of the Roman plebeians in 495 B.C. By abandoning Rome and threatening to set up their own city in another place, the nonprivileged class obtained the first installment of their political rights. Three repetitions of the act in 450, 342, and 287 B.C. completed the process. Modern instances include the general strike for political objectives (frequently advocated by extreme socialist and communist elements) and Gandhi's system of noncooperation in his struggle for Indian independence.

The Need for Harmony. So much for politics. What, then, of parties? Theoretically, at least, parties perform the function of assuring that politics will follow a reasonably consistent and continuous course. The conduct of public affairs by a somewhat coherent group possesses obvious advantages. A government manned by the ablest statesmen in the world would be of little use if no two members of its legislative body agreed as to any measure, if the executive exercised no effective leadership, and if the courts treated as nullities all the actions of the other branches of authority. On the other hand, if all branches work in perfect unity; if the legislature, acting without dissension, carefully evolves the details of a general program thoroughly formulated under unquestioned executive leadership; if, once enacted, this is

[1] I Kings 16 : 22.

rigidly enforced as an expression of the national will, a maximum of opportunity might seem to be afforded for accomplishment by the political process. In a free government such unity can be only partially obtained. This is done by the device of political parties.[1]

Yet in the opinion of all believers in democracy, of all who prefer the method of politics to the method of coercion, this partial unity is preferable to the completely unified control attained by the various types of totalitarianism. Clearly the situations which they predicate have their risks as well as their advantages. The power to accomplish may also be the power to destroy. The loss of all the advantages of liberty seems too high a price to pay for completely unified control of government. In practice such control does not even assure consistent and continuous policy, as it puts new departures and sudden reversals of program within the power of a few leaders whose decisions must be slavishly followed.[2] It is doubtful even from the point of view of mere efficiency whether it is well to place absolute power, unchecked even by hostile criticism, in the hands of any leader or group. To do so is to ignore the wisdom of the Greek philosopher who first remarked that enemies are useful because they alone will freely tell us our faults. It also disregards the profound observation of the great English political scientists of the last century, that no one opinion usually contains more than half the truth.[3] Let those who are impatient of the methods and

[1] The psychological basis of the unity thus attained will be discussed later. See Section II of this Chapter, pp. 9 ff.

[2] *Vide* the Nazi-Communist rapprochement and rupture, both of which have occurred since this paragraph was first written.

[3] "Popular opinions, on subjects not palpable to sense, are often true, but seldom or never the whole truth. They are a part of the truth; sometimes a greater, sometimes a smaller part, but exaggerated, distorted, and disjoined from the truths by which they ought to be accompanied and limited. Heretical opinions, on the other hand, are generally some of these suppressed and rejected truths, bursting the bonds which kept them down, and either seeking reconciliation with the truth contained in the common opinion, or fronting it as enemies, and setting themselves up, with similar exclusiveness as the whole truth. The latter case is hitherto the most frequent, as, in the human mind, one-sidedness has always been the rule, and many-sidedness the exception. Hence, even in revolutions of opinion, one part of the truth usually sets while another rises.

delays of democracy undertake to name any person or organization to which they would be willing to commit the government of the nation without reserve or check. If not completely blinded by prejudice, they will speedily realize the reasons for avoiding a complete concentration of power.

In parliamentary countries such concentration is thought to be sufficiently avoided by maintaining free public discussion and the right of minority parties to criticize and oppose the government. In this country we go farther. The American system of government was originally framed with great safeguards against unlimited control by any one group. This was one of the arguments used for the adoption of the Federal Constitution.[1] While not as extreme in this respect as the old constitution of Poland, under which the opposition of a single member of the diet (the so-called *liberum veto*) served

Even progress, which ought to superadd, for the most part only substitutes one partial and incomplete truth for another; improvement consisting chiefly in this, that the new fragment of truth is more wanted, more adapted to the needs of the time, than that which it displaces. Such being the partial character of prevailing opinions, even when resting on a true foundation; every opinion that embodies somewhat of the portion of truth which the common opinion omits, ought to be considered precious, with whatever amount of error and confusion that truth may be blended. No sober judge of human affairs will feel bound to be indignant because those who force on our notice truths which we should otherwise have overlooked, overlook some of those we see. Rather, he will think that so long as popular truth is one-sided it is more desirable than otherwise that unpopular truth should have one-sided asserters too; such being usually the most energetic, and the most likely to compel reluctant attention to the fragment of wisdom which they proclaim as if it were the whole." John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, 2nd ed. (London, John W. Parker & Son, 1859), Chap. II, pp. 83–84.

"To wish to be a despot, 'to hunger after tyranny,' as the Greek phrase had it, marks in our day an uncultivated mind. A person who so wishes cannot have weighed what Butler calls the 'doubtfulness things are involved in.' To be sure you are right to impose your will, or to wish to impose it, with violence upon others; to see your own ideas vividly and fixedly, and to be tormented until you can apply them in life and practice, not to like to hear the opinions of others, to be unable to sit down and weigh the truth they have, are but crude states of intellect in our present civilization. We know, at least, that facts are many; that progress is complicated; that burning ideas (such as young men have) are mostly false and always incomplete. The notion of a far-seeing and despotic statesman, who can lay down plans for ages yet unborn, is a fancy generated by the pride of the human intellect to which facts give no support." Walter Bagehot, *The English Constitution* (Boston, Little, Brown & Co., 1873), Chap. IV, pp. 144–145.

[1] See *The Federalist*, No. X, written by Madison.

to defeat a measure, or as that of the United Netherlands (whereby the States General could legislate only with the assent of every province, which in turn required the consent of every municipality therein), the American system is still, of all existent forms of government, the hardest to control and to direct in any consistent policy. The incomparable strength of American party organizations is largely attributable to the necessity of controlling in some degree three different departments, both of the national government and of forty-eight lesser units, in order to carry into effect any general program.

B. UNDER VARIOUS PARTY SYSTEMS

Two-Party Rule in America. America has always had the two-party system. Attempts at organizing major third parties have either failed quickly or resulted in the rapid destruction of one of the existing major organizations. This again may be a result of our difficult political setup, especially of the constitutional provision which, in fault of a majority in the electoral college, throws the election of a President into the House of Representatives. With three strong parties this would happen most of the time.

Adherence to the two-party system, however, is also an evidence of the nation's strong political sense. Failure of other countries to adopt or preserve this system has had more than a little to do with the current downfall of democracy. Even a three-party setup may have the most vicious effects, as recent English experience has shown. The Conservative Party in Great Britain has enjoyed a long lease of nearly unhampered control, regardless of the quality of its administration, largely because the opposition vote has been so divided between Liberal and Labor allegiances as to be utterly ineffectual. The effects of seven- and eight-party systems are sufficiently shown by the fate of the French and German republics.

It would seem that there is a reason for this which goes