ethnic group politics

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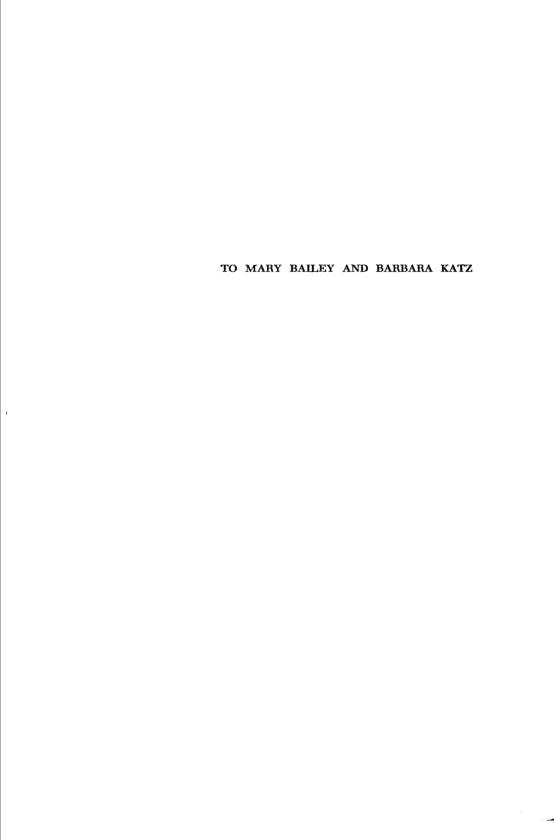
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Preface

Given the tremendous heterogeneity of Americans, it is not surprising that social scientists have developed a voluminous literature on ethnic groups. However, it is unfortunate that the best of this literature has not been readily available to undergraduate students. Indeed, in political science, there has been a curious reluctance to give the politics of ethnic groups more than fleeting concern in the classroom. One partial explanation for this is that Americans generally have been loath to admit that ethnic loyalties could exert any influence on the making of American public policy. While we have recognized the legitimacy of political interests based upon geography, occupation, and even income, we have conceived of political interest based upon ethnicity as "un-American" and have often sought to stamp out such influences. Yet, as Moses Rischin has succinctly put it: "Political accommodation to the multi-ethnic character of American society has a long history, and the balanced ticket has become an axiom of American party politics, a normal expression of the American system." In recent years, possibly because of an aroused interest in Negroes and civil rights and the election of a Catholic as President in 1960, political scientists have given more attention to the various political behaviors that characterize distinct ethnic groups.

We have brought together what we consider to be the best available literature in the social sciences on the ubiquity of ethnic group behavior and influence in American politics. Before we proceed, however, it is important to spell out what we mean when we speak of ethnic groups. First, men are separated from each other by

¹Moses Rischin, Our Own Kind: Voting by Race, Creed or National Origins (Santa Barbara, California: Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, 1960), p. 5.

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differences which are racial, religious or national in character as well as by real or assumed physiological and cultural traits.² The result of these differences is the continuity of groups whose members are seen as sharing a unique social and cultural heritage. In this book, then, ethnic group is used as the generic term to cover racial, religious, or nationality groups in the United States who are assumed to possess certain traits, real or affective, distinctive from those of the larger population.³ Nationality groups falling into this category usually, but not always, have their origins in other than Anglo-Saxon countries.⁴

It is not enough, however, for us to say that men are separated from each other solely because they are different racially, religiously, or nationally. A much more fundamental question is: do so-called ethnic group members identify along the lines which allegedly separate them? In short, is there such a thing as ethnic identification? The answer is an emphatic *yes*. There is substantial evidence that large numbers of people exhibit a propensity to use racial, religious or national affiliation to identify themselves and thereby to relate themselves to others. Indeed, studies of Negro children of nursery and primary school age, for example, indicate that identification on the basis of racial differences begins at that early age.⁵ Jewish children of the same age group are known also to identify in religious terms.⁶

That ethnic group identification is real can be seen in many additional forms. Numerous agencies in the United States are organized by nationality groups⁷ as well as by racial and religious

²See Peter I. Rose, They and We: Racial and Ethnic Relations in the United States (New York: Random House, 1964), p. 11; and Marian D. Irish and James W. Prothro, The Politics of American Democracy (Fourth edition; Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968), p. 194.

James W. Prothro, The Politics of American Democracy (Fourth edition, Engiewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968), p. 194.

30ur view coincides with that of E. K. Francis. See his "The Nature of the Ethnic Group," American Journal of Sociology, LII (March, 1947), 393-400. See also Daniel Glazer, "Dynamics of Ethnic Identification," American Sociological Review, Vol. 23 (February, 1958), 31; and Emmett S. Redford, et al., Politics and Government in the United States (Second National Edition; New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, Inc., 1965), p. 250.

⁴The Irish-Americans who were considered "ethnics" in an earlier day are a case in point.

⁵Mary É. Goodman, Race Awareness in Young Children (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., Inc., 1952), passim.

⁶Marian Radke Yarrow, "Personality Development and Minority Group Membership," in Marshall Sklare, ed., *The Jews* (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, Inc., 1958), p. 455.

⁷Y. J. Chyz and R. Lewis, "Agencies Organized by Nationality Groups in the United States," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*, 262 (March, 1949), 148-158.

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groups. Second, the existence of ethnic group identification can be seen in the large numbers of foreign language publications in the United States estimated to have a circulation of over ten million.⁸ Third, ethnic groups carry on a great many "separate" social activities. As Michael Parenti has said, "in a single weekend in New York separate dances for persons of Hungarian, Irish, Italian, German, and Polish extractions are advertised in the neighborhood newspapers and the foreign language press.⁹ Finally, as we intend to show, ethnic groups behave in distinctive ways in the American political system.

The articles brought together and presented here are based on the thesis that ethnic identifications do exist and that one cannot really understand the American political process without giving special attention to racial, religious and national minorities. More important, we assume that the American scheme provides an ample framework through which these ethnic minorities can conflict and compromise their differences both among the separate ethnic groups and the larger polity. Our final judgment is, despite the movement of the country toward what some social scientists term "the mass society," racial, religious and nationality identifications continue to be powerful influences on political behavior.

It is difficult to determine precisely what should be included in a "frontier" book of readings. In the final analysis our own understandings regarding the subject matter and considerations of representativeness of the materials and space determined the articles presented. While there are other examples of ethnic groups on the American scene, some of which are included in the book, it is our assumption that domestically, Negroes, Jews and Catholics are the most significant in American politics and thus of greater consequence for our purposes. The bulk of our effort is devoted to these groups.

The book is divided into four parts. Introductions are provided for each part to place the readings in meaningful perspective. Part 1 deals with the historical dimensions of the categories and identification of race, religion and nationality background. Part 2 is concerned with social and psychological forces at work which lead people of different ethnic groups to different patterns of political behavior and seeks to document the differential political behavior by the standard of voting in national elections. Part 3 is an effort to

⁹Michael Parenti, "Ethnic Politics and the Persistence of Ethnic Identification," American Political Science Review, LXI (September, 1967), 719n.

⁸Louis Gerson, The Hyphenate in Recent American Politics and Diplomacy (Lawrence: The University of Kansas Press, 1964), p. 23.

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determine to what extent people of different ethnic groups have been assimilated into the political process in the urban local framework. Finally, Part 4 deals with the extent to which ethnicity will continue to be an important variable in the explanation of political behavior.

For both of us, this was our first joint venture. As such it was remarkably free of conflict and frustration. Our names appear in alphabetical order, but the book is in every way a joint enterprise; a product of our common effort. Generally, both of us found ourselves in close agreement on theoretical positions and substantive concerns. The comments of the reviewers of the manuscript, Brett Hawkins, Matthew Holden, Jr., Maurice Klain, Allan P. Sindler, and John Wahlke, were very useful in our determination of the final product, but we are solely responsible for all errors of fact or interpretation that may appear in the book.

We wish to acknowledge the aid of Miss Linda Scherr for typing assistance and Mr. Hershel Kozlov and Misses Judith Ann Cole, Sarah Elpern, and Mary-Jane Roth who aided in the collection of material.

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Temple University Philadelphia, Pennsylvania July, 1969

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Part 1

Nationality, Religious and Racial Divisions in American Society

The view that politics involves the "authoritative allocation of values" involves the notion that there is conflict in the society over which values should be allocated. In the American political system this notion of conflict is well accepted, and one recognizes the legitimacy of individuals organizing into groups to defend and promote their interests. One question of major importance is, around what interests are individuals likely to organize for political action? Or, stated somewhat more broadly, what characteristics of individuals are likely to be perceived as relevant bases for political activity?

Karl Marx saw all politics as class struggle. For him, the only meaningful division in industrial society was between the owners of the means of production and those who labored at the machines. Thus, for Marx, the only valid basis for political activity was an

¹The phrase is David Easton's. See his *The Political System: An Inquiry Into the State of Political Science* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1963), pp. 129-135.

individual's relationship to the means of production; he was either a member of the bourgeoisie or of the proletariat. Other characteristics of individuals—such as race, nationality, etc.—were false bases of organization which hindered the polarization of society along class lines. In other words, for Marx, and probably for many others, class politics were normal; any other kind of politics were abnormal.²

While Marxian analysis has certainly never been widely accepted in the United States, many social philosophers do seem to make a similar assumption concerning the "normalcy" of class politics. For example, James Madison (who wrote almost sixty-five years before Marx) seemed to consider the economic division in society as the most important. In the *Federalist No. 10*, where he developed his notion of "factions" most explicitly, he wrote that "... the most common and durable source of factions has been the various and unequal distribution of property. Those who hold and those who are without property have ever formed distinct interests in society." For Madison, politics was the process by which these two basic factions conflicted and compromised their differences.

The reported findings of modern political scientists would seem to support both Marx and Madison. For example, it is often noted that in any given election, a majority of those high on the socio-economic scale support one candidate while those on the bottom of the scale tend to support the other. Thus, elections in the United States tend to reflect a basic economic division in society.

However, while an election might tend to reflect economic divisions in society, it is by no means a mirror image. After all, all businessmen do not vote Republican and all labor union members do not vote Democrat. In fact, one often finds large blocs of high income people voting Democrat and large blocs of low income people voting Republican.⁵ Crude economic determinism, which maintains that one's economic situation is the only causal factor relating to political behavior is not able to capture the complexity and subtlety of American politics. To fully understand the American political system, one must turn to non-economic divisions in the society, which might themselves be independent variables in the explanation of political behavior.

James Madison was not a crude economic determinist. While he did not deny the primacy of economics, he did recognize the existence of

[&]quot;See, for example, Seymour Martin Lipset, Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics (Garden City: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1963), pp. 270-278; and Hugh Bone and Austin Ranney, Politics and Voters (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1963), p. 32.

Company, 1963), p. 32.

"Edward Mead Earle (ed.), The Federalist (New York: Random House, Inc., 1937), p. 56.

⁴Bone and Ranney, op. cit., p. 25.

⁵Ibid.

other schisms in society that would lead to the creation of factions. Again in the *Federalist No. 10*, he wrote:

The latent causes of faction are thus sown into the nature of man; and we see them everywhere brought into different degrees of activity, according to the different circumstances of civil society. A zeal for different opinions concerning religion, concerning government, and many other points, as well of speculation as of practice; an attachment to different leaders ambitiously contending for pre-eminence and power; or to persons of other descriptions whose fortunes have been interesting to the human passions, have, in turn, divided mankind into different parties, inflamed them with mutual animosity, and then rendered them much more disposed to vex and oppress each other than to co-operate for their common good.⁶

Thus, Madison's concept of politics was actually broader than mere class conflict. For him, politics could be understood as the constant and normal conflict that took place among all the major factions that made up society.

Madison suggests that while "the latent causes of faction are sown into the nature of man," they may or may not be relevant to political activity "according to the different circumstances of civil society." In other words, at different times, and under different conditions, different characteristics of individuals will become relevant for political activity. In the United States, three such characteristics have proven to be of great importance. National origin, religion and race continue to provide categorizations of major significance as characteristics that influence much of American politics.

Taken together, the concepts of nationality, religion and race form what is generally conceived of as ethnicity. Thus broadly conceived, there can be little doubt that ethnic groups constitute a shaping force for both the historical development and contemporary processes of American society and politics.

This broad concept of ethnic groups, which includes classifications based upon nationality, religion and race, is considerably more useful than one which would include only nationality groupings. Not only is this broader notion more in keeping with contemporary usage, but it also provides one with a framework to compare the experiences of different types of groups. For example, one question of great contemporary significance is the extent to which the situation of Negro-Americans can be compared with the experiences of other ethnic groups in an earlier day. The readings in this section, and throughout

⁶Earle, op. cit., pp. 55-56.