

GROWTH OF MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES

The Founding Fathers saw no place for political parties in their vision of America. But, inevitably, competition for the presidency produced two political groupings that have survived occasional factionalism. Jeffersonian Republicans ultimately became Democrats preferring a strong chief executive. Federalists moved in the opposite direction as they became first Whigs, then Republicans. Leftists of a Communist or Socialist persuasion stood apart, pursuing self-defeating strategies of their own.



Party Politics in America

As the United States heads into its 1978 off-year elections for Congress and for state offices, the Democrats and Republicans seem as combative and vigorous as ever. On the national level, the two parties aren't quite what they used to be. Campaign reform, federal subsidies, television, more independent voting have all affected the parties' roles, especially in the election of Presidents. Yet, the United States' loose-knit two-party system endures, accommodating diverse interests and ideologies. Here, political scientist Howard Penniman assesses our "dual system" of electoral politics; sociologist Seymour M. Lipset analyzes the Socialists' political failure in America, even as a third party; and columnist David Broder notes a troubling gap between Presidents and their parties.



THE STATE OF THE TWO-PARTY SYSTEM

by Howard R. Penniman

Healthy two-party systems are in short supply in the world today. We may have seen an end to the time when a single party could win a majority of the seats in the British House of Commons and confidently form a government. The decline in the combined Labour and Conservative share of the popular vote in Britain (74.1 percent in 1974) may be part of a long-term trend aggravated by the rising strength of regional parties in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. The Labour Party is in power today only because 13 Liberal Party members bolster a government that lacks a majority. Political parties in Canada and

Australia have had comparable difficulty in consistently obtaining a majority of seats in their Parliaments.

If the two-party system is ailing elsewhere, the same cannot be said of the United States.

The Republicans and Democrats have not been polarized into two "ideologically pure conservative and liberal parties," as the *New York Times* suggested two days after the 1970 congressional elections. Nor has the two-party structure fragmented into ideological factions on the European model. But there is an uneasy feeling among politicians and academics alike that the American political party system is in a transition of some sort and that it may be headed in new and uncharted directions.

Insofar as third-party challenges are concerned, the Republicans and Democrats seem secure. Their grip on Congress has never been stronger. Since World War II, Democrats and Republicans have controlled a larger share of lower-house seats than have two parties in any other Western democracy. This phenomenon is all the more striking when one considers that, during these postwar years, civil rights turned into just the sort of regionally focused issue that often produced a third party in the past (as occurred during the 19th century when disgruntled farmers supported the Greenback and Populist Parties in the West). Protest presidential candidates like Strom Thurmond in 1948 and George Wallace in 1968 did emerge, but their effect on the two-party system was negligible.

Despite a growing tendency of American voters to identify themselves as Independents rather than as Democrats or Republicans, the dominance of the two major parties in the House is even stronger today than it was a hundred years ago. Although the membership of the House of Representatives was considerably smaller in the 19th century, 422 third-party candidates were elected to the House during the last 70 years of the century.* By contrast in the first 76 years of this century, all but

**Guide to U.S. Elections*, Washington: Congressional Quarterly, 1975, pp. 928-29.

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108 representatives were elected as Democrats or Republicans.

Why have third-party congressmen virtually disappeared in recent years, while presidential electors are chosen to support third-party presidential candidates (e.g., Robert LaFollette in 1924, George Wallace in 1968) almost as frequently as in the past? *

The answer is that two quite different political systems have existed side by side in the United States for much of this century. One system operates for elections of candidates for all public offices except that of President, while the other system is reserved for election to the highest office alone. What has differentiated the two systems has been the development of direct state and local primaries as the means of nominating candidates for the U.S. Congress, state governorships, and lesser offices.

The Umbrella Effect

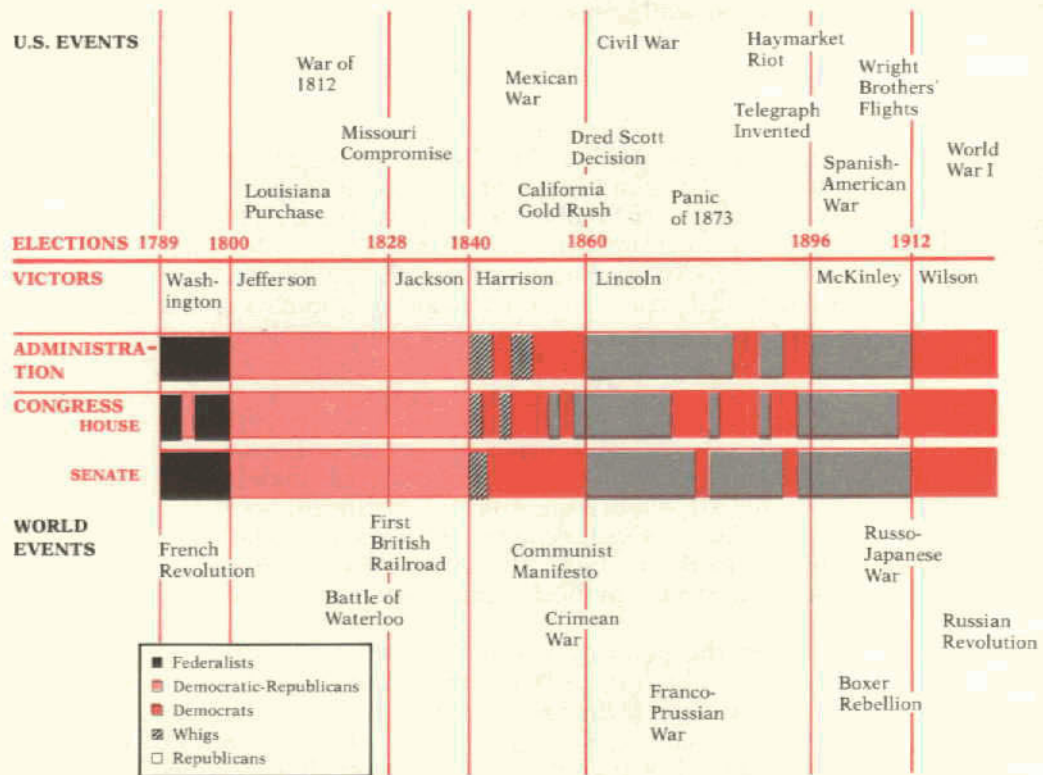
In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the direct primary became the most widely accepted means of choosing party candidates for all offices except President. In the Southern states, primary elections were conducted in and by the Democratic Party. In Northern states, the shift to the direct primary as a nominating device by both parties was accomplished by state law.

Under the primary system, anyone who registered as a Democrat could vote in Democratic party primaries to select Democratic candidates, and anyone registered as a Republican could join in naming Republican candidates. There were no effective national, state, or local tests other than personal voter choice to determine who were Republicans and who were Democrats. In states where one major party was much larger than the other, candidates and voters, regardless of their political views, naturally gravitated to the larger party, since its nominees were almost certain to be elected in the fall. Virtually everyone was a Democrat in the Southern states, while most people called themselves Republican in a few Northern states, such as Vermont. This umbrella effect permitted ideological diversity and the formation of what, in essence, became a coalition of varied interests in each major party, rather than a centralized national party on the European model.

Between 1940 and 1970, for example, it was not uncommon for Southern Democratic voters to nominate white supremacy

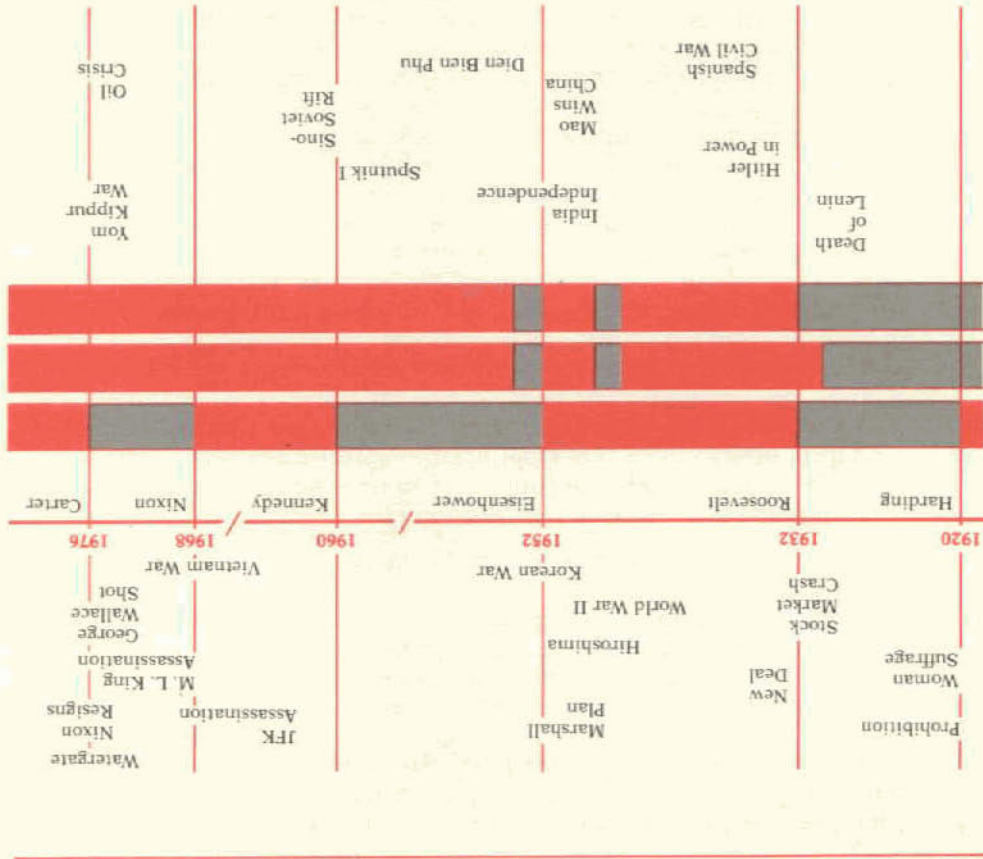
*In the six presidential elections preceding the Civil War, 6.9 percent of all members of the Electoral College voted for third-party candidates. In the eight elections since 1948, an average of 12.9 electors per election (2.4 percent) have voted for third-party candidates.

KEY AMERICAN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS AND PARTY DOMINANCE



candidates for the House of Representatives while Northern central city Democrats named black civil-rights candidates. Both the white supremacists and the black civil-rights supporters won in the general elections and served as Democrats together in Congress, each voting more or less as his constituents wanted him to vote on certain sensitive issues. At the same time, Southwestern Republican voters nominated conservative candidates and Northeastern Republicans named more liberal candidates. Both types won in the general elections and served together as Republicans in Congress; they, too, voted as their constituents expected. The same was true of the U.S. Senate, although senators, with their larger constituencies, tend to be more moderate in their voting patterns.

Since both Republican and Democratic nominees reflected



the general views of their districts, there was no reason to create new parties. The major parties became increasingly heterogeneous while third parties that once named candidates for offices at every level of government gradually disappeared.* After 1923, third parties, like the Progressives in 1924 and the States' Rights Party in 1948, still named presidential candidates, but they ran few if any candidates for other offices.

Thus, the Democratic and Republican Parties have become permanent fixtures of the loose, two-party system in Congress. It is, to be sure, a system that not everyone admires. Those who believe that a party's candidates should reflect uniform policy

* Short-lived political organizations like the Liberty Party in 1840 and the Free Soilers in 1848 were nondominant in the sense that they tried to appeal to a broad range of voters and lacked any overriding doctrine except in regard to the key issue, slavery.

positions, as in Britain, and that national party leaders should enforce such uniformity, consider the current system confusing and inefficient. But neither tradition nor the rules of the game encourage that sort of uniformity. Candidates are beholden to those responsible for their nomination, and today this means, first of all, the voters who bear the appropriate major-party label in the nominee's state or district. Only these voters can decide whether the prospective candidate's views are acceptable.

Undisciplined Dissidents

As every politician knows, a two-party system—and the stability it provides—can exist in this large heterogeneous country only because maverick officeholders and dissenters in both parties are virtually immune from reprisal by the national party leadership. To put it another way, when party discipline and the two-party system come into conflict in the United States, it is party discipline that loses and variety within the party that wins.

Presidential elections have had a quite different impact on the two-party system. Since only one man at a time can be President, he cannot reflect all views on divisive issues. When voters in one region are at odds with much of the rest of the country, they force major-party presidential candidates seeking a *national* majority into an especially difficult position. If both major-party candidates take roughly similar centrist positions on the critical issues—assuming, like Alabama's George C. Wallace in 1968, that there "isn't a dime's worth of difference between them"—then regional dissidents may look elsewhere for a presidential candidate whose views are more acceptable. These voters are not looking for a new *party*; they are generally pleased with the votes of their representatives in the House and Senate on the divisive issues, but they want to be represented in the presidential race.

The future of such Independent candidacies remains uncertain. Recent legislation in the states has increased the number of presidential preference primaries from 16 in 1968 to 30 in 1976, and Congress has voted federal subsidies to authorized presidential candidates who seek nomination by either of the major parties. One possibility is that more candidates who are both impecunious and campaigning on a single narrow issue will tend to enter a major party's primaries in order to gain the advantage of federal campaign subsidies. This is what anti-abortionist Ellen McCormack chose to do in 1976 when she ran as a candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination in 18 states. On the other hand, candidates with few financial prob-

lems and wide national appeal, such as George Wallace, will be able to choose between a personal presidential campaign effort and the major-party route. They will pick whichever strategy will best advance their political careers, block an electoral college decision on a major-party presidential winner, or "send the major-party candidates a message."

Of these two types of candidates, we may expect the McCormack version to crop up more frequently. Crises divisive enough to give a national candidate the electoral strength of a George Wallace just do not surface every four years. (Wallace received 9,906,473 popular votes and 46 of the 538 electoral votes in 1968.) The single-issue McCormacks will seek the February to August media coverage they garner by entering major-party primaries. The Wallaces will make their decisions to go outside their own major party only after weighing the alternatives as election year approaches.

The prospect of federally subsidized national exposure in 30 presidential primaries may entice some candidates, who would otherwise defect, back to one of the major parties. But at the same time, these primaries may create other problems for the national parties. For example, in 1968 and 1972, voters in Democratic presidential primaries did not constitute an accurate sample of Democratic voters, much less a cross section of the general public.* Primaries elect nearly three-fourths of the delegates to national party conventions, yet their candidate choices, as in the notable case of George McGovern in 1972, may be unacceptable to many members of the party and to the broader electorate as well.

As I see it, the two major parties will remain heterogeneous and undisciplined and will continue to dominate congressional, state, and local elections. More presidential primaries and the possibility, as yet remote, of direct election of the President make the future role of major parties in selecting occupants of the White House much less predictable.

* According to Georgetown University political scientist James I. Lingle, in a paper delivered at the 1976 convention of the American Political Science Association in Chicago.



MARX, ENGELS, AND AMERICA'S POLITICAL PARTIES

by Seymour Martin Lipset

The 1976 elections pointed up once again a singular fact about American politics: The United States is the only democratic industrialized nation in which not a single independent socialist or labor party representative holds elective office.

A study of the factors that have made this so offers some revealing insights into American society and the nature of our political parties.

Americans do not lack the opportunity to vote for socialists. On the ballot in various states in the 1976 elections were candidates of six different radical parties, ranging from the Socialist Labor Party, which has run presidential candidates since the late 19th century, to the Communist Party.* None of these parties, however, polled as many as 100,000 votes nationally out of a total of close to 80 million. Altogether, they received less than one-quarter of 1 percent of the ballots cast.

The 1976 tally of American voter support for socialism represents what is close to the lowest point in a century-long series of attempts by diverse political activists to build a socialist movement in the United States.

The most successful election effort was that of the Socialist Party. Before World War I, the Party counted among its 125,000 members the leaders of many trade unions, including the carpenters, mine workers, iron workers, and brewery workers. The Party had elected over 1,000 public officials (the mayors of Berkeley, Milwaukee, Schenectady, and a number of other cities), state legislators, and two congressmen (Victor Berger in Wisconsin, and Meyer London in New York). Its perennial presidential candidate and leader, Eugene V. Debs, captured about 6 percent of the vote in 1912.

*The others were the Socialist Party, a miniscule splinter of what was once a larger party of the same name; the U.S. Labor Party, an offshoot of a faction of the Students for a Democratic Society; the People's Party, a group calling themselves democratic socialists; and the Socialist Workers Party, a Trotskyist organization.

Socialist Party strength declined after World War I, partly because of government reprisals for its antiwar agitation (Debs was jailed for almost three years for violating the Espionage Act) and partly because the Communists split the Party, pulling out many left-wing members to form an affiliate of Moscow's Third International. For several decades thereafter, the Socialists and Communists competed for the support of organized labor and the general public. The Great Depression of the 1930s produced gains for both groups. The Socialists under Norman Thomas's leadership won close to a million votes for President (2 percent) against Franklin D. Roosevelt and Herbert Hoover in 1932. The Communists were weaker electorally, but during the late 1930s, they acquired considerable strength among intellectuals and in the growing labor movement, particularly in the CIO.

Roosevelt's New Deal, however, made it impossible for either of these left-wing parties to build a permanent radical movement on the economic issues raised by the Depression. The Democrats supported a variety of planning and welfare measures designed to help the underprivileged and the unemployed and enacted legislation favorable to trade union growth, notably, the National Labor Relations Act. The Communist Party, following the international antifascist "popular front" policy laid down by Stalin, supported Roosevelt for re-election in 1936, as did many Socialists. Norman Thomas's presidential vote fell to well under 200,000 that year.

After World War II, neither the Communist nor the Socialist Party—nor any of the smaller splinter groups—was able to make much headway. The Communists rushed to join Henry Wallace's Progressive Party in 1948 and gained considerable organizational influence. Wallace received 1,150,000 votes, but in 1950 he resigned from the Party in protest against its pro-Soviet position on the Korean War.

The Socialist Party officially decided in the late '50s to

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stop fielding presidential candidates on the grounds that the electoral system—focusing on the Presidency rather than the election of members of Parliament—made success impossible. Instead, it began to cooperate with trade unions in working for progressive major-party candidates, generally Democrats. Once again factionalism plagued the Socialists. By the early 1970s the Party had split into three groups:

Socialist Party U.S.A. Frank P. Zeidler, former mayor of Milwaukee, is the present national chairman; Beatrice Hermann is vice chairman. The Party believes in running candidates for national office but after 1956 did not do so until 1976, when the Party got on the ballot in seven states with a slate consisting of Chairman Zeidler and J. Quinn Brisben, a Chicago schoolteacher.

Social Democrats U.S.A. Bayard Rustin is national chairman, Carl Gershman, executive director; noteworthy members include Sidney Hook, John P. Roche, and Paul R. Porter. The Party is anti-Communist. It is very close to the AFL-CIO and the Democratic Party and seeks to enhance the power of organized labor in American politics.

Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee (DSOC). Michael Harrington, a member of the Socialist Party national executive committee from 1960 to 1972, is chairman of the DSOC, which is identified with the dissidents of organized labor and with the leftist New Politics. Its members include Representative Ronald Dellums, Democrat from Berkeley; a number of elected state officials; and presidents of two large unions, Jerry Wurf of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, and William Winpisinger of the International Association of Machinists.

The last two groups, working within the Democratic Party, supported Jimmy Carter for President in 1976. The Communists, driven underground by the McCarran Internal Security Act of 1950 and the Communist Control Act of 1954, ran no candidates for national office from 1948 through 1964. In 1968, the Communist ticket, consisting of Charlene Mitchell and Michael Zagarell, received 1,075 votes. General-Secretary Gus Hall and Jarvis Tyner won 25,595 votes in 1972 and 58,992 in 1976.

The Socialist Workers Party of the Trotskyists ran national candidates throughout the 1960s and, though hardly a

significant minor party, consistently outdid the Communists at the polls, winning 41,388 votes in 1968 and 66,677 in 1972. In 1976, candidates Peter Camejo and Willie Mae Reid received 91,314. The current national secretary of the Socialist Workers Party is Jack Barnes. Barry Shepard is national organizational secretary.

The continued weakness of socialism in the United States, so manifest in 1976, has been a major embarrassment to Marxist theory. The theory assumes that the cultural superstructure, including political behavior, is a function of the underlying economic and technological structure. Thus, the class conflicts inherent in capitalism as a social system should inevitably lead to a working-class majority that achieves political consciousness as a revolutionary socialist party. According to Marx, in his preface to *Capital*, it follows logically that "the country that is more developed industrially only shows, to the less developed, the image of its own future."

In short, the most developed society—the United States—should have the most advanced set of class and political relationships. Indeed, until the Russian Revolution, a number of major Marxist theorists, adhering to the logic of historical materialism, believed that the United States would be the first country in which socialists would come to power.

American Exceptionalism

During the late 19th century, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels constantly looked for signs of class consciousness in the United States. Ironically, given the subsequent weakness of U.S. socialist and labor politics, Marx based his conviction—that the American working class would inevitably develop class-conscious politics dedicated to the abolition of capitalism—on his reading of "the first story of an organized political party of labor in the world's history."

Marx was referring to the Workingmen's Party, which won a good many votes in American cities in the late 1820s and early 1830s. Although the Party had disappeared by the mid-1830s, Marx and Engels, many decades later, were to remind deprecators of American radicalism that the Americans "have had, since 1829, their own social democratic school."

Yet, for close to a century and a half since the creation of the Workingmen's Party, the United States, almost alone among the industrial nations of the world, has frustrated all efforts to create a mass socialist or labor party—a fact that

has provoked a sizable literature by radical writers here and abroad, as well as by scholars seeking to explain "American exceptionalism" (the curious term that emerged in debates on the matter in the Communist International during the 1920s).

Paradoxically, in explaining the failure of Americans to support socialism, many socialists, like Marx and Engels themselves, suggest that the United States has been too progressive, egalitarian, and democratic to generate the massive radical or revolutionary movements found in European countries. Their explanations fall into two categories, not necessarily exclusive: One emphasizes societal factors, the other focuses on factors internal to the political system.

The societal factors are:

¶ The absence of a feudal tradition structuring politics along class lines.

¶ The predominant liberal tradition, which serves as a surrogate for socialism (Americans look upon their society as sufficiently egalitarian and democratic and see no need for drastic changes).

¶ The traditional emphasis on individualism and anti-statism, deriving from revolutionary values that imply support for decentralized radicalism, rather than for a strong collectivist state.

¶ A steady rise in living standards, particularly of the working class, in conjunction with the considerable increase in the proportion of the gross national product received by less-privileged classes in modern times (U.S. workers have lived better than workers elsewhere since the Civil War).

¶ The shift to large-scale economic organization that has accompanied growth in productivity, with the concomitant increase in middle-level positions and the resultant increase in upward mobility that followed the spread of educational opportunities.

¶ Inhibition of the formation of class-consciousness by the individual American's propensity for geographic movement and the resulting lack of stable community roots.

¶ Factors traceable to a multiethnic, multiracial immigrant society, including: ethnic, religious, and racial tensions within the working class; resistance to socialist appeals by the Catholic Church, to which a very large proportion of the white working class has belonged since the late 19th century; and

continued immigration, which encourages upward mobility by native-born whites (immigrants until the 1930s—and blacks, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, and new immigrants since then—have filled the least well-paid jobs, enabling native-born whites to occupy the more privileged positions).

The political factors that have prevented the development of socialism in the United States on a large scale are:

¶ Universal suffrage (the U.S. “masses,” unlike those of most of Europe, attained universal suffrage prior to efforts to organize them into class-conscious parties).

¶ The constitutional and electoral system (the concentration of executive power and leadership in a President rather than in a Cabinet responsible to Parliament, together with the primary system of nomination, encourages a two-party coalition system in presidential elections and the formation of ideologically heterogeneous congressional parties).

¶ The flexibility of this coalition system, which makes it possible for the major parties to respond to pervasive discontent by stealing the thunder and adopting some of the policies of socialists.

¶ The emergence of movements rather than a third party in social crises (almost invariably, the response of the major parties to such movements reduces the potential base for institutionalized radical parties).*

¶ Periodic government attacks on syndicalist, socialist, and communist movements, which have broken the continuity of radical protest.

Efforts to demonstrate the validity of many interpretations of American exceptionalism are based on comparative studies. The most influential such study, *The Liberal Tradition in America* (1955) by political theorist Louis Hartz, is historical and sociological. It places the United States in a category

*To a large degree, this predilection for movements is related to the Protestant character of the country, the majority of whose inhabitants adhere to Protestant sects as distinct from churches (such as the established state churches of Europe). From this flows the Protestant sectarian phenomenon of conscientious objection to war, not to mention anti-Catholic and Nativist crusades and moralist drives relating to drinking, gambling, and sex. Of course, there have been persistent minor parties, which seek to promote a particular doctrine (the Socialist Party, the Prohibition Party), as well as transient third-party movements that arise in response to economic problems (the Populists of 1892, the Progressives of 1924). In addition, secessionist forces have attacked both major parties (Theodore Roosevelt's Progressive Movement in 1912, the Dixiecrat or States' Rights revolt of 1948). In 1968, the American Independence Party, led by George Wallace, secured 13 percent of the vote by appealing, in part, to a white racial “backlash.”

What the downbreak of Russian Czarism would be for the great military monarchies of Europe—the snapping of their mainstay—that is for the bourgeois of the whole world the breaking out of class war in America. For America after all is the ideal of all bourgeois: a country rich, vast, expanding, with purely bourgeois institutions unleavened by feudal remnants of monarchical traditions, and without a permanent and hereditary proletariat. . . . And because there were not, *as yet*, classes with opposing interests, our—and your—bourgeois thought that America stood above class antagonisms and struggles. That delusion has at last broken down, the last Bourgeois Paradise on earth is fast changing into a Purgatorio.

Friedrich Engels, Letters to Americans 1848–1895

of overseas “fragment” societies formed in the Americas and Australasia by European settlers. The fragment concept is based on the fact that the groups that emigrated from European countries to settle abroad were only parts—or fragments—of the mother cultures.*

The Anti-State

These new societies developed very differently. They were not affected by many important European values and institutions, usually those associated with the privileged classes, the aristocracy, and the monarchy. Each immigrant group left behind in Europe an age-old source of conservative ideology in the form of its traditional class structure.

Some light on the relevance of this analysis may have been cast by British Socialist H. G. Wells 70 years ago in his book *The Future in America*. In discussing the weakness of socialism and class-consciousness in the United States, Wells noted that the country not only was without a strong socialist party, but it lacked a true national conservative or Tory party as well. The Democratic and Republican Parties both resemble the middle-class Liberal Party of England, which he called

*Hartz argued that it was impossible to build an ideological Left in the liberal fragment cultures because there was no hereditary aristocracy against which to rebel and because the philosophical bases on which an ideological Left might be founded were already institutionalized as part of the liberal and radical tradition of America.

the party of industrialism and freedom. "There are no Tories to represent the feudal system," he wrote, "and no Labor Party. . . . All Americans are, from the English point of view, Liberals of one sort or another." Moreover, America was pure 18th century, and 18th-century liberalism was "essentially the rebellion of the modern industrial organization against the monarchial and aristocratic State—against hereditary privilege, against restrictions on bargains. . . . Its spirit was essentially Anarchistic—the antithesis of Socialism. It was the anti-State."

The argument that socialism is weak here because the United States is the purest example of a non-European, nonaristocratic society—a pure "bourgeois," pure liberal, born-modern society—is, of course, not limited to the work of Louis Hartz and other contemporary analysts of U.S. and Canadian politics. One may find a variant of this thesis in the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and the Italian Communist Antonio Gramsci, all of whom considered the United States to be the product of the most modern, most purely bourgeois, and most democratic of world cultures. However, as the American socialist theoretician Michael Harrington has noted, they seemed to argue that one of the difficulties was that "America was too socialist for socialism."

Friedrich Engels believed that socialism was weak in the United States "just *because* America is so purely bourgeois, so entirely without a feudal past and therefore proud of its purely bourgeois organization."

Lenin also stressed the freedom and high status of workers in the United States. He described the country in 1908 as "in many respects the model and ideal of our bourgeois civilization . . . (without rival in) the extent of political freedom and the cultural level of the masses of the population."

The Bourgeoisie Triumphant

A year earlier, Lenin had pointed out that the weakness of socialism in America stemmed from "the absence of any big, nationwide *democratic* tasks facing the proletariat." Political freedom in America had produced "the complete subjection of the proletariat to bourgeois policy; the sectarian isolation of the (socialist) groups . . . not the slightest success of the Socialists among the working masses in the elections." American socialism was weak precisely because it was dealing with "the most firmly established democratic systems, which con-

front the proletariat with purely socialist tasks.”

To reverse Lenin's phrase, European socialism was much stronger because it could appeal to the workers for support, not only on purely socialist but also on democratic issues.

In the 1920s, Antonio Gramsci, one of the founders of the Italian Communist Party and perhaps the most important non-Russian theoretician of the communist movement, cited America's unique origins and resultant value system as the source of its exceptional political and technological systems. Despite his Marxist credentials, Gramsci placed more emphasis on the role of America's values—than on its “so-called natural wealth”—in producing a society that differed so much from that of Europe.

During the decade he spent in Mussolini's prisons (1927–37), he produced a broad patchwork of writings that must be considered a major contribution to post-Leninist Marxist philosophy. A significant portion of these writings were subsequently translated into English and published as *Prison Notebooks* (1973) and *Letters from Prison* (1973). Essentially, Gramsci explained in *Prison Notebooks*, American society had been formed by

pioneers, protagonists of the political and religious struggles in England, defeated but not humiliated or laid low in their country of origin. They import in America . . . a certain stage of European historical evolution, which, when transplanted . . . into the virgin soil of America, continues to develop the forces implicit in its nature but with an incomparably more rapid rhythm than in Old Europe, where there exists a whole series of checks (moral, intellectual, political, economic, incorporated in specific sections of the population, relics of past regimes which refuse to die out).

According to Gramsci, America's unique sociological background resulted in what he called Americanism—pure rationalism without any of the class values derived from feudalism. Americanism, he claimed, was not simply a way of life but an ideology. Americans, regardless of class, emphasized the rewards and virtues of hard work and the need to exploit the riches of nature.

Since 1929, other analysts,* like Gramsci, have put forth

*Among them, Hermann Keyserling, the conservative German aristocrat; Leon Samson, the American socialist intellectual; Sidney Hook, the socialist philosopher; Michael Harrington, former Socialist Party leader; and Carl Degler, American historian.

or accepted the argument that socialism as a political movement is weak in the United States because the ideological content of Americanism, apart from questions of property ownership, is highly similar to socialism, and Americans believe they already have most of what socialism promises.

Electoral Systems

The Canadian academic socialist Kenneth W. McNaught recently argued that explanations of the differences between the United States and Canada or Europe that are based solely on sociological and specific historical factors are incomplete. He would stress, instead, the political consequences of the American Constitution and its evolution.

The thesis that the Constitution has helped ensure the failure of third parties of any stripe in the United States is a very old one. It was the first item on a list of factors preventing the growth in America of a third, workers' party, drawn up by Engels in 1893. The U.S. Constitution, he stated, "causes any vote for any candidate not put up by one of the two governing parties to appear to be *lost*. And the American . . . wants to influence his state; he does not throw his vote away."

After more than half a century of disappointments at the polls, two recent leaders of the Socialist Party of the United States, the late Norman Thomas and Michael Harrington, also came to accept electoral factors as an explanation of the general failure of third parties.

In 1938, Thomas, recognizing the weakness of the Socialist Party, suggested that U.S. Socialists hurt their cause by running Independent candidates for President. By the '50s and '60s he had reluctantly come to the conclusion that his Party's experience demonstrated the futility of third parties in America, a view that a majority of Socialist Party members eventually accepted.

The alternative strategy for American socialists and other radicals, given the electoral difficulties, has been to operate as a faction within one of the major coalition parties. The absence of any strong party discipline in Congress and the system of nominating candidates in state primaries clearly makes this possible.

This strategy was tried with considerable success by A. C. Townley, a leader of the Socialist Party in North Dakota. Believing that wheatbelt farmers were ready to accept socialist policies, Townley formed the Non-Partisan League in

1915. It called for a farmers' alliance "to grapple with organized 'big business' greed."

The League proposed government ownership and control of various enterprises. Townley and his colleagues decided to capture the region's dominant, farmer-based Republican Party by entering a League slate of candidates in the primaries.

In 1916, in its first election contest, the League was instrumental in electing Lynn J. Frazier governor of North Dakota. They also backed the winning top state officials, all of whom ran on the G.O.P. ticket. After winning control of both houses of the state legislature in 1918, the League enacted a large part of its program into law, establishing a state bank, a home-building association to loan money at low rates of interest, a graduated state income tax that distinguished earned from unearned income, and a state hail insurance fund. They also passed a workmen's compensation act that assessed employers for support and acts establishing an eight-hour day for working women and regulating working conditions in the coal mines.

Many Socialists thought that Townley had betrayed them by discarding the party label, but others openly supported him and looked on the Non-Partisan League as a bona fide socialist organization.

Socialism in The Dakotas

Later, by organizing the wheat farmers who shipped grain to Minneapolis and St. Paul, the League was able to enroll more than 200,000 members. In Minnesota, after losing in the Republican primary, Non-Partisan League candidates ran successfully as Independents and helped found the Farmer Labor Party, which elected many state officials, including governors and U.S. senators until it merged with the Democrats in 1944.

The Non-Partisan League never had the electoral success elsewhere that it had in North Dakota, but in South Dakota the Republican Party adopted much of the League's program, setting up a state rural credit system, a state-owned coal mine, and a state cement plant, and promising that if state-owned flour mills and packing plants were successful in North Dakota, South Dakota would adopt them as well. An offshoot of the Non-Partisan League won power in Oklahoma in the early 1920s, electing a governor and many legislators on the Democratic ticket. It, too, had been established largely by former members of the Socialist Party.

The strategy of building a socialist faction to run a slate

of candidates in a Democratic or Republican primary was followed with some success in the 1930s on the West Coast. Upton Sinclair, who had been active in the Socialist Party since the turn of the century, had run as a Socialist for governor of California in 1932 and had received 50,000 votes. He decided to try his luck within the state's Democratic Party and formed the independent EPIC (End Poverty in California) movement, which ran a full slate in the Democratic primaries in 1934.

Sinclair won the Democratic nomination for governor, and EPIC candidates were nominated for both houses of the U.S. Congress and for the state legislature. In the ensuing general election, Sinclair received close to 900,000 votes but was defeated by the extremely well-financed Republican opposition. However, Sheridan Downey, the EPIC candidate for U.S. senator, was elected.

In nearby Oregon and Washington, groups calling themselves the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation, the name used by Canadian socialists, entered the Democratic primaries and scored some successes; several Federation congressmen were elected as Democrats from the state of Washington. No comparable efforts, however, were organized elsewhere, and these movements gradually disintegrated with the coming of World War II.

During the late 1930s, the U.S. Communist Party, under orders from Moscow to cooperate with all left-of-center elements to build an antifascist "popular front," worked within the Democratic Party. Earl Browder, Communist leader at the time, has since pointed out that the Socialists did not believe that it was possible to participate as an organized group within the heterogeneous Democratic coalition and that they failed to learn any lessons "from the spectacular capture of the [California] Democratic Party primary in 1934 by Upton Sinclair's EPIC Movement."

Lessons of the Thirties

As a result, the Socialist Party, which had been stronger than the Communists while both were operating as conventional third parties, lost ground steadily. By the middle of the '30s, Browder wrote, "the positions of the two parties were reversed, the Communists had the upper hand in all circles that considered themselves left of the New Deal."

Michael Harrington, Thomas's successor (in 1968) as leader of the Socialist Party, in discussing the success of the

Communists in the 1930s and again during World War II, noted sadly that if the Socialists had only followed a similar policy, they might have built the largest and most successful socialist movement in American history.

The considerable strength the Communists obtained within the labor movement and the Democratic Party was, of course, destroyed by their great handicap—fealty to the international Communist line, whose changes were dictated by Moscow. In 1939, the Hitler-Stalin Pact isolated the U.S. Party, and it lost much of the support it had won from 1936 on, particularly among intellectuals. Again in 1948, renewed hard-line tactics dictated by the emerging Cold War broke the Party's links to the Democrats that had been revived during World War II and forced many adherents, especially labor leaders, to choose between a loss of their influence in unions and in the Democratic Party and their membership in, or ties to, the Communist Party.

Thus, American radicals have occasionally succeeded in building up socialist and communist influence *within* one of the two-party coalitions. These successes underscore the fact that one must examine the ideological forces within the Republican and Democratic parties for traces of the political tendencies that commonly exist as separate parties in other countries.

In recent years, a number of scholars have suggested that the welfare-state, pro-labor politics adopted by the Democratic Party since the 1930s constitutes a U.S. equivalent of the Social Democratic and Labour Parties of the British Commonwealth and those of Northern Europe. As historian David Shannon puts it:

The British and Scandinavian political arms of labor pay homage to socialism in the abstract, but they in fact have put their main emphasis on welfare state features such as unemployment insurance, old-age pensions, and national health plans. American labor, with only a few exceptions, has failed to pay homage to socialism in the abstract, but it has, in fact, put a major political emphasis on gaining welfare state objectives.*

In *Labor in American Politics* (1969), labor historian J. David Greenstone noted that "in their support of the

*David Shannon, "Socialism and Labor," in C. Vann Woodward, ed., *The Comparative Approach to American History*, New York: Basic Books, 1968, p. 241.

Democrats as a mass, pro-welfare state party, American trade unions have forged a political coalition with important—although hardly complete—structural and behavioral similarities to the Socialist Party—trade union alliances of Western Europe.”

The turning point in the emergence of what Michael Harrington has described as America’s “invisible mass movement” was, of course, the alliance of the New Deal with Big Labor, which, as Richard Hofstadter wrote in *Age of Reform: From Bryan to F.D.R.* (1967), “gave the New Deal a social democratic tinge that had never been present in American reform movements.”

Since the 1930s, the alliance between labor and the Democrats has grown; the national Democratic Party has become a supporter of state intervention and planning in economic affairs, and the AFL-CIO officially calls for federal policies resembling those advocated before World War I by the Socialist Party, policies which the AFL rejected at the time. In his book *Socialism* (1972), Harrington states that labor, through its political action committees had “created a social democratic party, with its own apparatus and program, within the Democratic Party.” Indeed, AFL-CIO President George Meany on several occasions has accepted the description of his organization’s political program as socialist.

Harrington is careful to distinguish between *social democracy*, which he perceives as “an independent, class-based political movement with a far-ranging program for the democratization of the economy and the society” and *socialism*, which involves the elimination of private capitalism. As he sees it, America now has a powerful social democracy comparable to those in other Western industrialized countries, but no effective socialist party or movement dedicated, even in theory, to the radical transformation of the economic order.

The key question then is not “Why does socialist ideology exist in Europe, but not in the United States?” but “Why does labor representation take on an explicitly *class* form in northern Europe and a populist, *multiclass* form in the United States?”

In one sense, the answer has been given: The United States does have a mass social democratic movement in the form of the liberal, trade union, welfare-state wing of the Democratic Party. This assumes that the constitutional and electoral systems inhibit the formation of viable third parties, while permitting factionalism within the major parties.

Yet it is clear that however grandly one describes the social democratic force in American politics, it is much weaker than the social democratic, labor, or communist parties of Europe and Australasia. In Canada, which sociologically is somewhat similar to the United States, we also find a relatively weak social democratic party (the New Democratic Party, known as the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation from 1932 to 1961). Both countries are also low on other indicators of class-consciousness and conflict. In every other Western democratic nation, except possibly France, the percentage of the nonagricultural labor force belonging to trade unions is much higher. The figures for Canada and the United States are about 28 and 24.5 percent; for Britain, 48 percent; for Germany, 38; for Denmark, 58; for Australia, 53; for Austria, Belgium, Israel, and Sweden, over 65 percent. The low rates for the Latin countries, particularly France and Italy (23 and 33 percent), appear to be the result of a quite different format of unionism, characterized by ideologically competitive union centers.

In both Canada and the United States, relatively egalitarian status structures, achievement-oriented value systems, affluence, the absence of a European aristocratic or feudal past, and a history of political democracy prior to industrialization have all operated to produce cohesive systems that remain unreceptive to proposals for major structural change. As M.I.T. political scientist Walter Dean Burnham has emphasized, "No feudalism, no socialism: with these four words one can summarize the basic sociocultural realities that underlie American electoral politics in the industrial era."*

The evidence indicates that H. G. Wells and Louis Hartz were correct in their evaluation of the impact of North America's unique history and culture on the prospects for socialism and class solidarity. The environment has simply not been supportive of ideological and class-oriented politics any less broad or more focused than those now offered by the two major coalition parties. Whether those two parties can retain the inner discipline and cohesiveness necessary for the performance of their traditional roles is another matter.

*"The United States: The Politics of Heterogeneity," in Richard Rose, ed., *Electoral Behavior: A Comparative Handbook*, New York: Free Press, 1974.



OF PRESIDENTS AND PARTIES

by David S. Broder

Four months after Inauguration Day, President Carter invited his party's congressional leadership to the White House for a breakfast-table briefing on the economic policies of the new administration. Charles L. Schultze, chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers, displayed charts showing that, with full cooperation from business, labor, and consumers, it might just be possible to generate enough economic growth to balance the federal budget by 1980, as the President had promised.

Bert Lance, as director of the Office of Management and Budget, followed with a sermon on the stiff discipline that would be required to meet that goal, pointing out that many past Democratic programs would have to be pared in the process. As the climax to the briefing, the President introduced Arthur Burns, chairman of the Federal Reserve Board and living symbol of a cautious, conservative economic policy, and Burns gave his heartfelt blessing to the whole Carter approach.

That was just a little too much for House Speaker Thomas P. (Tip) O'Neill (D-Mass.) to swallow with his coffee and Danish. "Something has changed around here," O'Neill growled, "and I don't think it's me."

Indeed it had. The Democrats' jubilation over their first presidential victory since 1964 was quickly tempered by the realization that, as *New York Times* columnist Tom Wicker noted, they had nominated and elected the most conservative Democratic President since Grover Cleveland.

Part of their shock, of course, reflected little more than the belated recognition that the American public had grown weary of the liberal federal programs that were the meat and potatoes of the Democratic Party and had nurtured Tip O'Neill in the Irish wards of Cambridge and Boston. The ideas that had sustained most Democrats from the New Deal through the days of the Great Society had lost their allure, if

not their relevance. And no new ideas had replaced them.

The new President had grown up in an environment largely untouched by traditional Democratic ideals, even when they possessed vitality. An Annapolis graduate, a south Georgia farmer-businessman, he was as far removed from the Northern urban Democratic coalition of labor, ethnic, and racial blocs as could be imagined. He ran for President as a critic of Big Government—bureaucratic Washington, but he was more of an outsider than even his own rhetoric suggested.

Such a man could have emerged to lead the Democratic Party only after its presidential-selection process had undergone a thoroughgoing transformation. The new procedures allowed Mr. Carter to reap great advantage from the early support of a plurality of Democratic activists in primary elections in such relatively conservative states as Iowa, New Hampshire, and Florida. Traditional Democratic power-brokers—leaders of organized labor, big city mayors, governors, and congressional leaders—were late and, in some cases, reluctant boarders of the Carter bandwagon.

Tax funds, available for the first time in significant amounts for a presidential campaign, provided sustenance for Carter's homebred campaign organization (of the \$13.2 million he spent to win the nomination, \$3.5 million was in matching federal funds); and the legislated limits on individual financial contributions prevented his chief rivals (Henry Jackson, Birch Bayh, Morris Udall, Jerry Brown, Frank Church, and Henry Jackson) from fully exploiting their potential advantage in soliciting large-scale individual or interest-group contributions.

The whole meaning and role of national political parties had changed in the quarter century since O'Neill was elected to Congress in 1952. Being a Democrat or a Republican means less today than it did then to almost everyone from the candidate down to the average voter.

The current decline of national political parties got under way just about the time Jimmy Carter left the Navy in 1953

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and began the career that was to take him to the White House. After 1955, the symptoms could be found in the sorry record of unimplemented and underfunded government programs, of uncompleted reforms, of political careers ended abruptly in violence or frustration.

There has been general agreement on what a responsible two-party system means and what has caused it to erode over the past generation. As early as 1950, the American Political Science Association had catalogued a lengthy list of reforms to achieve "a more responsible two-party system." "An effective party-system," the Association's report stated, "requires first, that the parties are able to bring forth programs to which they commit themselves, and, second, that the parties possess sufficient internal cohesion to carry out these programs." The test of an effective party, in other words, would be its capacity to give the voters a credible pledge to pursue a plausible agenda and to achieve the consensus and discipline required to act on it, once the party was in office.

The American Superstate

The last time such a two-party system existed on any kind of a durable basis was the period of Democratic dominance from 1932 to 1952. Franklin D. Roosevelt had his difficulties with Democrats in Congress and suffered political setbacks along the way, but for a full generation, under Roosevelt's New Deal and Truman's Fair Deal, the Democrats mounted major attacks on America's social and economic ills and led the nation through World War II and the Korean crisis. In helping to establish the Atlantic Alliance and the United Nations, they also created the American superstate, with its enduring military and welfare bureaucracies that even today, a generation later, consume 90 percent of the federal budget. Moreover, they did this as Democrats, provoking from the Republican Party a challenge to almost every major policy decision, foreign and domestic. During that long period, despite each party's regional differences and factional splits, American voters were rarely in the dark about what was at stake in national elections.

To political scientists, the New Deal realignment, or Roosevelt Coalition, was the dominant force in the fifth major-party system since the birth of the Republic. Before 1932, four other critical elections inaugurated a new party system.

The first was the victory of Thomas Jefferson in 1800,

**CARTER'S 1976 VOTE AS A PERCENTAGE OF VOTES CAST
FOR TOP DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATES FOR STATEWIDE OFFICE**

Alabama 101%	Louisiana 153%	Ohio 103%
Alaska 129%	Maine 79%	Oklahoma 78%
Arizona 65%	Maryland 98%	Oregon 81%
Arkansas 82%	Massachusetts 82%	Pennsylvania 107%
California 105%	Michigan 93%	Rhode Island 104%
Colorado 101%	Minnesota 82%	South Carolina 89%
Connecticut 115%	Mississippi 103%	South Dakota 201%
Delaware 125%	Missouri 102%	Tennessee 109%
Florida 90%	Montana 76%	Texas 94%
Georgia 105%	Nebraska 74%	Utah 65%
Hawaii 90%	Nevada 72%	Vermont 105%
Idaho 77%	New Hampshire 102%	Virginia 136%
Illinois 141%	New Jersey 86%	Washington 82%
Indiana 109%	New Mexico 114%	West Virginia 88%
Iowa 87%	New York 99%	Wisconsin 74%
Kansas 137%	North Carolina 85%	Wyoming 89%
Kentucky 131%	North Dakota 88%	

Source: *Guide to 1976 Elections*, Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly, July 1977.

An analysis of voting data from the November 1976 election shows that in 27 of the 50 states President Carter drew fewer votes than the most popular Democratic candidate for statewide office.

which ended Federalist Party dominance of the young Republic. The second was the election of Andrew Jackson in 1828, a triumph for frontier democracy. The third was the election of Abraham Lincoln in 1860, bringing the new Republican Party to power and precipitating the Civil War. The fourth was the election of Republican William McKinley in 1896, in which industrialism won a victory over the agrarian-populist forces that had captured the Democratic Party with the nomination of William Jennings Bryan. The fifth was the Depression-induced victory of Roosevelt and the New Deal Democrats.

Each of these realignments saw millions of voters shifting allegiance in response to what they perceived as new and vital issues and making the kind of emotional commitment to their new party that could be eroded only over a long period of time.

Because that process of erosion—and realignment—has occurred at fairly regular intervals, many scholars have formulated a cyclical or generational theory of party realignment. According to that theory, America should have had another critical presidential election in 1964 or 1968. Nothing like that happened. Instead, we have seen a series of random movements during the last two decades, in which near land-

slides for one party or the other (1956, 1964, 1972) alternated with near dead heats (1960, 1968, 1976), all the while granting the Democrats a comfortable congressional majority.

The old pattern began breaking up in 1952. The immediate catalyst was the personality of Dwight D. Eisenhower. As a war hero and a national figure, "above party," Eisenhower played a major role in breaking the habit of party-voting. He, more than any other individual, introduced ticket-splitting into American politics. An analysis of the 1952 election made by the University of Michigan Center for Political Studies found that "three out of five of those Democrats and Independents who voted for Mr. Eisenhower in 1952 were not willing to support the rest of the Republican slate."

The Broken Link

That lack of support was underlined two years later when the Republicans lost control of Congress despite Eisenhower's vigorous campaign efforts, thus inaugurating a long era of divided government. During 14 of the 22 years between 1954 and 1976, Republicans controlled the executive branch while Democrats reigned on Capitol Hill. No such lengthy period of divided party control can be found in America's previous history.

The 1952 election was notable for another reason. It marked the rise of Lyndon B. Johnson to leadership of the Senate Democrats. Johnson shared Eisenhower's belief that partisanship is the enemy, not the servant, of responsible and effective government. For eight critical years the two men managed to divorce party labels from pertinent issues and to practice what Johnson liked to call "consensus" government. It was during this period of Eisenhower-Johnson hegemony that the vital links that joined the public to government through the political party mechanism were broken. Once broken, the links were not repaired. John F. Kennedy, invoking the memory of Franklin Roosevelt, made a start at restoring party government but died before much had been achieved. None of the later Presidents cared much, or tried.

At the same time, other factors were influencing U.S. voting patterns. Four of these are important enough to be identified:

Television. In the last 20 years, television has established itself as the prime medium of political communication. The

most significant point to be made about television, as compared to printed media, is that it is personality dominated. It deals with political figures, not political institutions. It is first and foremost the President's instrument, but it is available to any politician with wit and flair, as George Wallace and Ronald Reagan have demonstrated.

Political parties as such have almost no role in television's portrayal of the political drama. Efforts by the opposition party to gain access to television to respond to presidential statements have been frustrated more often than not by the networks, the Federal Communications Commission, and the courts.

Television cameras focus on the parties only at convention time; then, they move in so massively that they almost overwhelm the convention, making it impossible for professional politicians to conduct the kind of negotiations that formerly characterized convention week. Under the gaze of the television cameras, party conventions have been largely transformed into carefully scripted theatrical productions for the ratification of decisions already made elsewhere. It is no accident that no convention has gone beyond one ballot in the selection of a President during the television era.

Education. As mass education has grown and spread, the behavior of voters has changed. In my own interviewing, I have found a significant difference between the political perceptions of those with at least a high school education and those who left school before eighth grade.

Educated voters are not content merely to vote the party ticket. They consider themselves capable of making sophisticated judgments on the individual worth of the candidates they have seen on their living-room screens. They tell you proudly, "I don't vote for the party; I vote for the man" (or, if their consciousness has been raised, "for the person"). And they do. The percentage of ticket-splitting voters has risen significantly in the last quarter century.

Affluence. Prosperity has blurred the economic issues that once served to differentiate the two parties. The New Deal was essentially a class realignment, with important racial, religious, and ethnic elements. For the most part, Republicans represented the affluent classes and the Democrats the less well-off—except in the South, where it was many years before better-off whites were willing to ally themselves with the party of Lincoln.

Post-World War II prosperity and the industrialization of

PERCENTAGE OF TICKET SPLITTERS

	<u>1952</u>	<u>1964</u>	<u>1968</u>	<u>1972</u>	<u>1976</u>
Pres./Gov.	26.1	18.1	25.9	28.0	24.8
Pres./Sen.	10.8	20.6	28.6	29.0	25.4
Pres./Gov./Sen.	22.0	28.3	37.0	42.9	43.1
All of the above	19.6	22.3	30.5	33.3	31.1

Source: Howard L. Reiter, assistant professor of Political Science, University of Connecticut, based on data from the Survey Research Center, University of Michigan.

The chart shows the growing trend of voters to support the Presidential candidate of one party and the Governor and/or Senate candidate of another. The highly partisan 1976 election slightly reversed the trend.

the South have taken many Americans far from their economic origins and thereby blurred old party allegiances. Overall, the country has become more inflation-conscious and conservative in the past decade—but not more Republican.

Participation. With education and affluence came an ideological demand—not confined to any single sector of the populace but led by the college-educated—for a greater direct voice in decisions that affect people's lives. The activism of the civil-rights movement (not to mention the peace movement, the environmental movement, the consumer movement, the equal-rights movement, the right-to-life movement, and all the opposition movements they have spawned) has carried over into the political parties, where it is expressed largely as a demand for participation, for "opening up the system." One result has been a great rush of rule-writing, designed to bring the informal processes of political brokering under prescribed and publicized codes, so that everybody, not just the insiders, can understand how the game is played.

Another result has been the sudden proliferation of state primary elections—from 16 in 1952 to 31 today—as a device for increasing public participation in the party's most important decision, the choice of its presidential nominee. Since 1952, the key to nomination has been performance in the primaries, and as a result, the role and influence of party cadre, the professionals, has steadily declined.

Most of these trends were evident at the time I wrote *The Party's Over* in 1971. The tone of that book was gloomy, for in the Washington of that day a policy stalemate between a President and a Congress of opposing parties was frustrating effective action on crises ranging from Vietnam to Detroit and Newark. That stalemate was duplicated in almost half the states, where divided governments were also struggling to cope.

I quoted—but did not sufficiently heed—the words of Stephen K. Bailey, the Syracuse University political scientist, who had written that “as long as we lack strong national parties operating as catalysts in the Congress, the executive branch, and the national government as a whole, and between the national government and state and local governments, power will continue to be dangerously diffused, or, perhaps what is worse, will whipsaw between diffusion and presidential dictatorship.”

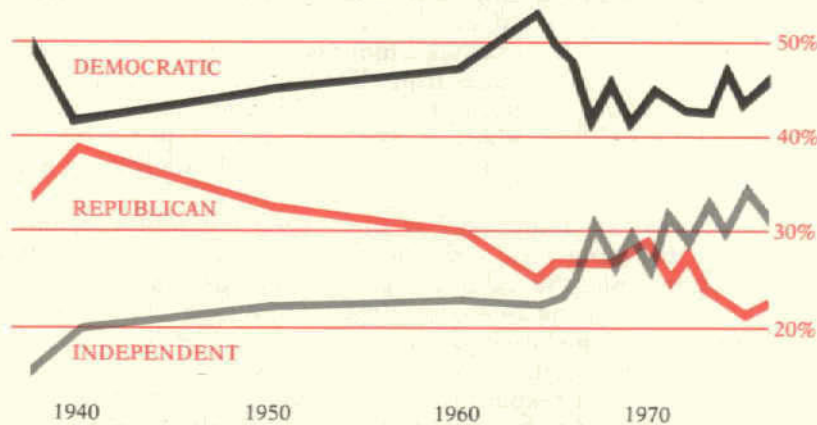
I commented, “We have been through that dreadful cycle once . . . from diffusion of power under Eisenhower to the excessive concentration under Johnson . . . and with Nixon, we may be starting on a second run through that frustrating course.” Obviously, I did not anticipate that shortly after *The Party's Over* was published, the Watergate scandals would reveal the covert, illegal steps Richard Nixon had taken, partly to relieve his frustration and gain the power he and his party had failed to win legitimately in the election of 1968.

Ebbing Party Strength

Unfortunately, there is little sign of a revival of the two-party system. Watergate decimated the Republicans on both national and state levels. When Nixon was forced to resign in August 1974, they lost the only card-carrying, life-long Republican President in two generations. They also lost most of their carefully cultivated reputation as the party of law and order and the party of America's “respectable people.” In the 1974 Watergate-year election, they approached their all-time Depression low, losing 43 House seats, 4 Senate seats, and 5 governorships.

While the Republican party has been badly weakened, the Democrats have barely held their own. In Maine, public disillusionment with both parties was so great in 1974 that James Longley was able to become the first Independent governor in 38 years. Fundamentally, the Democrats have been losing strength as markedly as Republicans. In 1976,

HOW VOTERS IDENTIFY THEMSELVES



Source: Gallup Opinion Index, March 1973; June 1976.

both parties were 8 points below their peak strength of the previous decade, measured by voters' self-identification. The Democrats had dropped from 53 to 45 percent; the Republicans, from 30 to 22 percent. It was the Independents who gained strength.

Institutional changes are also weakening the grip of the political parties. It is a remarkable irony that the single most important "reform" legislation stemming from Watergate, the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1974, may severely damage both political parties. Its framers rejected the opportunity to strengthen the parties by making them the conduits for public subsidy of presidential candidates. Instead, it gave money directly to candidates (\$67 million in 1976), while allocating only a few million to the parties for convention expenses (\$2 million to the Democrats, \$1.6 million to the Republicans), thus further widening the breach between presidential candidates and their parties.

At the same time that the share of the parties in financing candidates is being minimized, their role in the choice of nominees is being significantly reduced. The result of changes in the Democratic delegate-selection rules has been a proliferation of primaries. The Republicans, who have dabbled with minor rules reforms of their own, have been carried along in the Democrats' wake to a primary-dominated presidential-selection system. In 1976, more than 70 percent of the dele-

gates to both conventions were chosen in the primaries, not in state caucuses and conventions, where party cadres normally dominate the proceedings and often produce a sharper definition of what the party stands for.

Instead, we have what amounts to a national primary conducted state by state from late February to early June, with television amplifying the (generally inconclusive) results of early tests into giant waves of personal publicity that drown out almost any other consideration of qualifications for the office.

Only inside Congress has there been a bit of a counter-trend. Party caucuses, party leadership, and party discipline have been strengthened in the past decade, as first the Republicans and then the Democrats sought leverage with which to protect their legislative jurisdiction against the inroads of an unchecked President.

Advocates of responsible party government must welcome the reassertion of these party functions in the Congress, but they do so with bittersweet recognition that so long as the President remains largely outside the party system, this development is almost certain to result in greater conflict between the White House and the legislature. To many people, the greatest surprise of the early months of the Carter administration was the spectacle of frequent battles between the White House and the Democratic majorities in Congress. But those who understood that Carter truly was an outsider, the product of a selection process in which the party cadre, including many senior congressmen, had little voice, were not surprised.

Such analysts understand that the party system has now deteriorated to the point where it is possible for a President to face an "opposition" Congress organized and run by members of his own party.

In 1971, in *The Party's Over*, I argued that the result of the decline of our parties was stalemate in government. With the advantage of hindsight, I would now amend that to read: Lacking a responsible party system, we can anticipate more stalemates—or more Watergates.



BACKGROUND BOOKS

PARTY POLITICS IN AMERICA

"The American Revolution was made by a party, the Patriots [Whigs]," D. W. Brogan reminds us in his acerbic **POLITICS IN AMERICA** (Harper, 1954, cloth; 1969, cloth & paper). "It had its origin in party meetings, caucuses* . . . in 'committees of correspondence' linking the party members from state to state, and it had its governing body in the various Congresses of which the most famous, in 1776, published the Declaration of Independence. The Founding Fathers . . . knew a great deal about parties and party organization."

Yet Thomas Jefferson, co-founder with James Madison of America's first modern political party (the Republicans), paradoxically had no use for parties, as Richard Hofstadter points out in **THE IDEA OF A PARTY SYSTEM: The Rise of Legitimate Opposition in the United States, 1780-1840** (Univ. of Calif., 1969, cloth; 3rd ed., 1972, paper). Both Madison and Alexander Hamilton, founder of the rival Federalists, discussing parties in *The Federalist* (especially Papers 9 and 10) did so "only to arraign their bad effects."

Were these Founders indulging themselves hypocritically in the antiparty cant popular in 18th-century America? Or were they from the start feeling their way toward the creation of a mechanism "by which men," in Hofstadter's words, "could put together what God, in the shape of the Constitution, had sundered"? His view is that without parties functioning as a part of the machinery of government, it is doubtful if the Constitution,

devised in part as a *barrier* to party rule, could have been made to work.

William N. Chambers, in **POLITICAL PARTIES IN A NEW NATION: The American Experience, 1776-1809** (Oxford, 1963, cloth & paper), discusses the role of the emerging two-party system in the election of 1801, when Jefferson succeeded his old Revolutionary friend, Federalist John Adams. This "first . . . grand, democratic, peaceful transfer of power in modern politics" was, Chambers writes, "an example of a procedure which many . . . nations have yet to experience, which many defeated factions or parties have found it difficult or intolerable to accept, but one which 1801 did much to 'fix' on the American scene."

These complementary basic books on the shaping of the American two-party system vary widely in style and detail. Hofstadter soars imaginatively, while Chambers is more definitive. Both are good reminders of how the despised "factions" (a word used interchangeably with "parties" in the 18th century) began to grow into the durable, often disparaged, but widely respected U.S. political "system."

V. O. Key, Jr.'s classic **SOUTHERN POLITICS IN STATE AND NATION** (Knopf, 1949, cloth; Vintage, 1962, paper) is an examination of the causes and consequences of one-party politics in the once "Solid South," based on the situation extant in the 1940s, but digging up old roots that go back to Civil War and Reconstruction days.

His monumental general textbook, **POLITICS, PARTIES, AND PRESSURE GROUPS** (Crowell, 1942; 5th ed., 1964, cloth & paper), has been rated by leading political scientists as the most stimulating of all texts on the operation of the

*The word, according to Brogan, is one of Boston's contributions to the vocabulary of politics. Supposedly, the Colonial city's convivial Caucus Club took its name from the Greek *kaukos* (drinking vessel).

American two-party system.

Key regards the emergence of "episodic" third parties in American politics as essential to the system. They have a short life span because their issues are quickly adopted by at least one of the major parties; they get a large portion of the total vote; and they frequently are tied to important party realignments. Doctrinal third parties, such as the Socialists, generally have a long life but attract comparatively few voters—those purists more interested in issues than in power (i.e., winning elections).

Another analysis of third-party activity as it affects major parties comes from James L. Sundquist in **DYNAMICS OF THE PARTY SYSTEM: Alignment and Realignment of Political Parties in the United States** (Brookings, 1973, cloth & paper). Sundquist describes the turning-point elections of the 1850s, in which the two major parties, temporarily split by the Know-Nothings and others, re-established themselves; the 1890s, when the populist uprising in the frontier states polarized the Democratic Party and set the East against the West; and the 1930s, when the Great Depression caused Republicans and Democrats to move to opposite poles on economic and social policy.

Ray Allen Billington's **THE PROTESTANT CRUSADE: A Study of the Origins of American Nativism** (Macmillan, 1938; Quadrangle, 1964, paper) remains the standard work on the early manifestation of the radical right in American politics. Billington holds that hatred of Catholics and "foreigners" was endemic for more than two centuries before it erupted in the Native American outburst of the 1840s and the Know-Nothingism of the 1850s. In **STRANGERS IN THE LAND: Patterns of American Nativism 1860-1925** (Rutgers, 1955; Atheneum, 1963, cloth & paper), John Higham argues that whenever there is strong sectional or class cleavage or when war confronts an

unprepared nation, men desperate for national unity rally against "the symbols of foreignness . . . appropriate to their predicament."

The contributors to **THE RADICAL RIGHT: The New American Right Expanded and Updated**, edited by Daniel Bell (Doubleday, 1963, cloth & paper), originally published in 1955 shortly after the crest of the McCarthy era, are concerned with more recent responses to severe strains in American society. The later edition has essays added in the early '60s on the John Birch Society.

On the other side, **THE CONCEPT OF JACKSONIAN DEMOCRACY: New York as a Test Case** by Lee Benson (Princeton, 1961, cloth & paper) assesses the impact of the egalitarian movements—the Anti-Mason Party, Liberty Party, Barnburners, and Locofocos—associated with what Benson considers to be the misnamed Age of Jackson. To him, it was not the Jacksonian Democrats who moved the country away from political elitism but these splinter groups challenging the already dug-in local parties. Joseph G. Rayback in **FREE SOIL: The Election of 1848** (Univ. of Ky., 1970) analyzes the rise and impact of the small, leftist Free Soil party, which brought the slavery issue into both the Whig and Democratic 1848 presidential campaigns.

In **THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF AMERICA: A History** (Macmillan, 1955; Quadrangle, 1967, paper), David Shannon argues that the Socialist Party's failure was "due less to its errors than to basic traditions and conditions in American society which the Socialists could do little or nothing to change." But he cites the SP's faults, especially its failure to decide "whether it was a political party, a political pressure group, a revolutionary sect, or a political forum. It tried to play all these roles at the same time."

THE ROOTS OF AMERICAN COMMUNISM by Theodore Draper (Viking, 1957, cloth; 1963, paper) is the first vol-

ume of a history of the Communist Party USA, with later volumes by other authors. Draper's account goes through the 1920s. His thesis is that when the infant party failed to build a real base in the United States "it was transformed from a new expression of American radicalism into the American appendage of a Russian revolutionary power."

DISCONTENT AT THE POLLS: A Study of Farmer and Labor Parties 1827-1948 (Columbia, 1950; Russell & Russell, 1967) by Murray S. Stedman, Jr. and Susan W. Stedman is a data-filled, long-range treatment of third-party growth. The Stedmans trace the political effect of one social movement—the agrarian revolt that began in the Western states in the 1870s and '80s and simmered right through New Deal days.

On the populist/progressive movements, Richard Hofstadter, again, has provided one of the most cogent studies. In **THE AGE OF REFORM: From Bryan to F.D.R.** (Knopf, 1965, cloth; Vintage, 1961, paper) he analyzes the People's Party (1891) and the Bull Moose Party of 1912, in particular. He points out that populism was a rural movement, progressivism largely urban and middle class. He sees both movements as tending toward extremism and expressing a romantic yearning for the past, and arising less for economic reasons than out of sentiments of class and status.

For an overall summary of third-party effects and a strong statement of the value of new parties in American democracy, Daniel A. Mazmanian's study **THIRD PARTIES IN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS** (Brookings, 1974, cloth & paper) is recommended.

Mazmanian's conclusion: "To restrict the free development of third parties . . . is to rely exclusively on the Democratic and Republican parties to represent the wants and needs of all Americans. The interests of the American people are too diverse for two parties to do this adequately all the time."

It is hard to find a contemporary American scholar or political journalist who is not critical of the state of the two major parties. Interestingly enough, however, when D. W. Brogan, the English author of *Politics in America* (above) wrote a new preface to the 1968 edition of his 1954 book, his admiration of the two-party system remained unchanged.

The two major parties, he wrote, are "the least integrated, the least national, of the numerous organizations that the Americans have invented for holding the country together." Yet they alone make it possible for "the formal political institutions" to work, preserving "in the days of supersonic flight . . . the methods and the spirit of the politics of the rural America of the age of Lincoln, if not quite of Jefferson or Jackson."

EDITOR'S NOTE. Many of the above titles were suggested by Austin Ranney, former president of the American Political Science Association, currently resident scholar for public policy at the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research and member of the Democratic National Committee Commission on the Role and Future of Presidential Primaries. His books include **CURING THE MISCHIEFS OF FACTION: Party Reform in America** (Univ. of Calif., 1975). Additional recommendations were made by John Ellwood, special assistant to the director, the Congressional Budget Office. Ellwood is working on a book about the George Wallace movement.