

Party Allegiance as Good Citizenship

By ROBERT VON MOSCHZISKER, Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania.

GAMBETTA truly said, "Parties are formed by ideas, groups are formed by interests," and this statement is pregnant with meaning for our America of today. More than twenty years have seen us giving way to, if not actually encouraging, a studied effort on the part of some of our people to break down the influence of political parties in the United States. The time has come to consider whether this is a wise course to pursue.

The inquiry appears particularly appropriate just now, when a large and almost totally inexperienced addition is on the eve of being added to the national electorate; for these new voters are entitled to instruction, which they cannot hope to get from those who have no convictions upon the all-important problem of whether the organized party system or the independent, or group, method of political activity is the better plan for America.

That the first-mentioned system most surely meets the requirements of this country seems obvious to the writer, who will endeavor to show that the political party has occupied a place in the life of the nation so long and, on the whole, with such success that it should now be accepted as an established institution, to be guarded and perfected for immediate and future service; and that its power for usefulness, which is inestimable, ought not to be worn down by constant destructive attacks at a time when social and economic questions, probably more momentous than ever before faced the world, are either up for decision or are about to appear on our political horizon.

At the inception of this nation, after the Constitution was finally adopted, two ideas as to its construction prevailed: one that it should be strictly interpreted and the Federal Government given no more nor greater powers than could be found in the very letter of the written instrument; the other that it ought to be liberally construed and the Government afforded every opportunity to maintain itself and grow in strength and stature. These fundamental ideas, differing in principle, gave rise to two parties, and through them American politics assumed a form which still obtains.

Notwithstanding its alleged faults, most wonderful have been the achievements which may be accredited justly to our political system; for under it a mighty empire of individual States has been kept together and increased in number, wealth and influence, their people all the while enjoying the right to the pursuit of happiness and a degree of civil and religious liberty not afforded elsewhere in the world.

The plan by which all this has been accomplished is worthy of preservation; and that the political party is an essential part thereof cannot be denied; our leading officials, as well as the National Congress and State Legislatures, are not only chosen according to party sponsorship, but the latter are, and for many years have been, organized under that system. Moreover, election and other laws have been passed, and are in force all over the country, regulating the system for the public good; so it is now the recognized means of political expression and control.

The scheme of government through parties may well be classed as an Anglo-Saxon device, for it prevails not only in this country but also, even to a larger extent, in England and the British colonies, which several parts of the world, we like to think, have made the greatest strides for liberty and democratic self-rule.

The extent to which the party system is cherished by our English cousins was vividly brought home to me some years ago when the guest of a Scottish member of Parliament.

I was present at a session of the House of Commons when a most important bill, guaranteeing a loan for the Transvaal, which had just been made a self-governing colony, was up for final passage. I asked my host what he thought of the proposition. He replied that it did not meet with his approval, since the guaranteeing of a loan for a free or self-governing colony represented a radical departure from previously established policy; but that the party in power, to which he belonged, having introduced the measure, of course he would vote for it. I asked, why "of course"? My host responded that the party stood for general principles of much more importance than the matter of guaranteeing a loan, which was merely a question of expediency; that if he and other members were to break away on every point of expediency as to which they could not agree the party would soon fall to pieces and its power for greater usefulness be destroyed. I cite the incident as exemplifying the English sense of the importance of party fealty.

To my mind, the maintenance of

of every group in the country. With the legislative and executive functions more widely separated than in any other democracy, the whole process of constructive government will come to an end if we have more than two dominant parties; should we come to this position, there will be no possibility of the American people securing the will of the majority, and we shall be entirely ruled by log-rolling minorities or sterile political coalitions."

In a country such as ours great parties or associations of electors, amalgamated by like convictions and sustained by loyalty to a common cause, are the natural vehicles for carrying into practical effect the mass ideas of any considerable number of people. As these organizations by age and accomplishment gather traditions, they beget in their membership an instinctive feeling of adherence closely akin to patriotism; and when such loyalty is engendered the party has reached a stage of development which under proper guidance makes it a valuable instrument for the public weal.

This development cannot be reached, nor can the influence of

party's candidates; but, if he still believes in its controlling ideas, or principles, the protestant is none the less of the faith, and therefore of the flock, albeit by voting another ticket he may temporarily disqualify himself from actively participating in party affairs.

I take it that the majority of Americans—while feeling we have weak spots in the body politic which must be cured—are not prepared to abandon our fundamental ideas of government for any other known form. The serious question is, Shall we, in conducting the Government, adhere to the party system of politics or adopt what is practically the only alternative, the group plan—which is fraught with manifold weaknesses and dangers?

It is unnecessary to discuss wholesale independent voting; for, obviously, a numerous electorate cannot choose intelligently even minor officers, much less determine great political issues, without forming themselves into either temporary or permanent groups for the purpose. When these are composed according to differences in opinion on controlling questions of general import,

is best for the unregenerate majority. Finally, members of these political groups, who are usually brought together to secure some special object, ordinarily lack that feeling of loyalty entertained by party members, who supposedly are united upon the basis of a common attitude toward public questions in general; and all men of experience in politics know that this kind of loyalty is the most dependable incentive to actual participation at the polls—which, after all, is essential to our continued existence as a democracy.

Governor Cox in a recent speech well stated that "there is, and always will be, a useful place for parties in the conduct of a free government." With this thought before us, it seems to me a survey of all that has happened in connection with and since the war must bring an unprejudiced mind to the conclusion that nothing appears which would warrant the displacement of the political party from what has become its traditional and, to a certain extent, legally recognized position in our scheme of government.

While agitating against parties as the means by which to reach political ends, I very much fear we have failed to give due consideration to other matters of more immediate importance. All recent occurrences show that the real underlying dissatisfaction of our people is not with the instrumentalities of government, but rather with what they consider the unfair social and economic differences that have been permitted to grow up during the period of our great industrial expansion. This ground of discontent presents problems upon which we must concentrate our attention so that they may be solved in such a way as to give opportunity for a fairer distribution of the good things of life to all who are willing to do their share of work. If we even approximately accomplish that result, the purely political questions about which we have been perplexing ourselves will soon appear of minor importance.

There are many schools of thought in the world today, with sincere teachers, preaching the advisability of not only political activity by groups, but of group systems of government; and, when looked at in an isolated way, without regard to the complexities of organized society or the interdependence of each group upon every other, they all present points of apparent strength; but when these elements, together with the selfish instincts and natural frailties of man, are taken into account, no scheme of government has yet been brought to light which justifies its substitution for the existing order, although, by just discrimination, we may borrow from time to time new ideas for the betterment of our existing institutions.

It is unnecessary for present purposes, however, to consider the merits or demerits of other governmental systems, for, as previously said, I assume that the vast majority of Americans still believe in the Constitution; but there is a great difference between placidly accepting and being ready, if necessary, aggressively to support the institution in which one believes. That we should be thus prepared is apparent; for, in the words of Governor Coolidge, "No one in public life can be oblivious to the organized efforts to undermine the faith of our people in their Government . . . and ultimately to stir up revolt."

The day will probably arrive when these separately "organized efforts" will be brought together on some common ground, and present themselves for solution at the polls; at least, we must hope they will so present themselves, rather than in some other way. When this time is upon us, the need for strong political parties, composed of those who have faith in our American institutions, will plainly appear; in

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"Too many cooks spoil the broth."

the present system and the development of party fealty are matters of prime importance at this time in America. How, with our vast electorate, scattered over a wide domain, can any issue of general interest be determined other than by a systematic method of educating, and registering the will of, the people? If democratic government, by majority rule under constitutional restrictions, is accepted as right, then it is almost incomprehensible how the scheme can be carried out in any really big and intelligent way other than through party sponsorships. If we abandon that system, and divide into political groups according to special interests, or our liking for or antipathy to candidates, on our acceptance or rejection of their personal views on minor issues, it will become practically impossible for a multitudinous people like ourselves intelligently to determine at the polls any issue which requires consideration by the whole electorate.

Herbert Hoover, in a letter published June 17, writing upon the point at present under discussion, wisely said: "Nothing could be more disastrous than the development of several parties or organizations representing the complexion

parties be maintained, unless faith in them as instrumentalities for public good is constantly fostered. Those of mushroom growth usually lack safe guidance and lasting qualities; and in these days, when the organization and conduct of such associations are so largely controlled by statutory regulation, the formation of a new party in season to meet novel but none the less important political conditions which suddenly present themselves for consideration oftentimes proves legally impossible. In short, a party, like an army, should be a well organized, disciplined and educated fighting force, possessed of morale—an attribute which cannot be improvised.

Of course, the system is not perfect, and evils must constantly be eliminated; it requires care and attention from party members—the eternal vigilance which is the price of liberty. Times may come when, after consideration, one finds himself so out of harmony with the professed views of his party on fundamental issues that he is obliged to sever his connection therewith; but this step should never be lightly taken. Again occasions may arise when, as a rebuke to inefficient or corrupt leadership, a member is justified in refusing support to his

they, in essence, are parties, and rapidly become organized as such; when not, they are mere transitory political expedients—for use or abuse.

If the organization and operation of real political parties are discounted or made difficult, then all recent experience shows that, in seeking some basis on which to secure group formation for political action, either sectarian beliefs, secret society affiliations or selfish interests are successfully appealed to by those who desire to establish their own political ideas or who seek personal preferment. Furthermore, leaders of such groups almost invariably show a willingness to compromise their convictions in order to form blocs for the purpose of gaining power. While at times these combinations serve a proper end, yet there is always a question whether, in the long run, their moral effect is not bad, as resulting in a general laxity of adherence to what ought to be controlling principles. Then, with the Russian example before our eyes, we cannot but see that, when a minority group gains political power, knowing it lacks votes, the temptation is to hold sway by autocratic force, on the plea that its rule

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the meanwhile it is important that we make ready for the battle, either by adhering to and strengthening our existing organizations or forming others, prepared to take up the fight.

Unless all signs fail, a school of extremists, who know the propensity of the masses to respond to propaganda, will undertake, in due course, to unite our dissatisfied groups under one common standard. They will come, no doubt, like the Bolsheviks, in the cloak of liberators of labor; but their real mission will be to overthrow the existing order in favor of what, being inspired by hatred and founded on social and economic fallacies, is bound to bring in its wake failure and misery for all concerned. We must anticipate that day; let us not close our eyes to the obvious, but form our ranks for the battle at the polls.

It is time for Americans to awaken to the disturbing questions which confront the world, and to determine that, so far as we are concerned, they shall be settled in an orderly way, according to the duly registered will of the majority. We should prepare the instrumentalities wherewith to instruct the electors and ascertain their will; to my mind, the political party is the chief of these.

The party system is most suitable to our form of government; our best thought and utmost effort should be given to its perfection, rather than destruction, and we must see to it that ultra-radicals do not get control of either of the leading parties. We need educated and wise, self-sacrificing—and not self-seeking—political leaders, men with vision and creative minds, who ap-

prelate the realities of life, but we are not likely to satisfy our need in these respects until the attitude of many of our people toward those who aspire to occupy such positions, and toward politics in general, is radically changed. If this article contributes to that end, if it brings to the readers of the great journal for which it is written, who have not given serious thought to or who lack convictions upon the subject in hand, a realization of the necessity for actually associating themselves with some established party that believes in the constitution, or of seriously participating in the activities of the one to which they already belong, then, by thus helping to build up safe political organizations, of which we as citizens of a great democracy may be proud, it will serve what, I am sure, on proper reflection all must concede to be a worthy purpose.

The Glass Collector

Four volumes of a series of collectors' manuals, which had their original publication in England, have been brought out in this country by Dodd, Mead & Co. In one of these volumes, entitled "The Glass Collector," Maciver Percival presents a guide to old English glass; in another volume, "The China Collector," H. William Lower deals with the porcelains of the English factories; another volume, entitled "The Earthenware Collector," contains a survey of English pottery by G. Wolliscraft Rhoad; in the fourth volume, "The Silver and Sheffield Plate Collector," the story is told by W. A. Young of the development of England's domestic metal work in silver and Old Sheffield. Each of these books is an authoritative work and each of them is generously and admirably illustrated.