Party Government *

Party Government. By E.E. Schattschneider. (New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston, 1942). Referred to in the text as PG.

Critical Elections and the Mainsprings of American Politics. By Walter Dean Burnham. (New York: Norton, 1970). Referred to in the text as CE.

Parties and partisanship, it is safe to say, are now regarded by those who are supposed to know as legitimate and necessary features of the democratic political process. So much is this so that we are prone to forget that until relatively recently they were condemned by statesmen and philosophers as either dangerous or unnecessary. Thus Hume, representing the prevailing view, said in one of his *Essays* that, "As much as legislators and founders of states ought to be honored and respected among men, as much ought the founders of sects and factions to be detested and hated." [1] Hume's harsh judgment was not an idle prejudice. Parties, he might have said, represent a partial view, but they disguise their partiality by appeals to nature or to God. Parties also create differences where none before existed, or maintain differences long after they might otherwise have disappeared. If these differences are deep, parties are dangerous; and if they are shallow, parties are useless.

This opinion has been rendered obsolete by the discovery and triumph of modern party government, which has tamed parties and factions by subordinating them to a peaceful system of competition. [2] "Party government" is a system of stable competition between two or more parties, both (or all) of which subscribe to common rules for deciding who will govern. Party government, which embodies those rules, thus commands a loyalty that transcends and disciplines partisanship. The loyalty to party government though is in a sense a

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1. David Hume, "Of Parties in General," in *Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects* (London: Cadell, Elliot, and Kay and Co., 1788), pp. **55-56.**

2. On the origins of party government, and its relationship to modern representative government, see Harvey Mansfield, *Statesmanship and Party Government* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965).

loyalty to the principles of liberal democracy or representative government, because these prescribe the standards of majority rule and individual right to which partisanship is subordinated. Once liberal democracy is established, and rests firmly on opinion, parties no longer represent contending regimes or ways of life. They can cease to be dangerous, though they may appear useless, as many say, because they are too much like one another to offer a clear choice. In this setting parties are not merely tolerated, but actually promoted as instruments of representative government.

The respectability of party government is shown by the fact that there are many writers who are now partisans of party government, and not simply partisans of particular organizations or coalitions. They advocate and defend the system of party competition, and point to its many good effects, without appearing to favor any particular party. This is a recent development in political commentary and analysis, at least in England and the United States. For more than two centuries following the Glorious Revolution, British historians were commonly divided into Whig and Tory camps, with Macaulay and Hume often considered as the representative figures. In the United States until the beginning of this century, historians were often described, or stigmatized, as Hamiltonians or Jeffersonians in order to identify them in relation to the two original American parties. This tradition of partisan scholarship is now utterly exhausted, replaced by a more abstract partisanship in favor of party government.

The modern defense of party government is, however, far different from that given by those statesmen in England and America who invented party government in the eighteenth century. It was originally established and defended for the purpose of limiting or checking the state, but it is now defended as an instrument for expanding the state for egalitarian or democratic purposes. Modern party government cannot in the end be adapted to these objectives, because the growth of the central state, at least in America, now destroys the conditions which in the past have maintained the party system. It will take some space to justify this conclusion, because we must first understand the current defense of party government.

II.

Schattschneider's *Party Government* comes down to us as one of the early classics of behavioral political science. Though much in the

book is still instructive, its enduring popularity stems from the way in which Schattschneider combined an empirical approach to politics with the advocacy of democratic reform. His book was at once a shrewd analysis of the actual workings of American party politics and a strong blow in behalf of the cause of "responsible" party government.[3] This mixture of analysis and advocacy continues to appeal to political scientists who want more than anything else to be hard-headed in their scholarship and democratic in their politics.

Schattschneider summarized his theme at the beginning of the book:

> It should be stated flatly at the outset that this volume is devoted to the thesis that the political parties created democracy and that modern democracy is unthinkable save in terms of parties. As a matter of fact, the condition of the parties is the best possible evidence of the nature of any regime. The most important distinction in modern political philosophy, the distinction between democracy and dictatorship, can be made best in terms of party politics. The parties are not therefore merely appendages of modern government; they are at the center of it and play a determinative and creative role in it. (PG, 1)

Schattscheider wanted to elevate the study of parties, and he wanted his readers to give parties the dignity they deserve. The institution that has subordinated the parties in our minds, and to which the parties are sometimes thought to be "appendages," is the Constitution. The distinction between dictatorship and democracy is usually made in terms of constitutionalism, but Schattschneider says it should be made in terms of parties because they implement freedom and opposition, while constitutions merely speak of them in the abstract. Because we worship the Constitution and its authors, we denigrate parties and party politicians. This is primarily a mental error, an "intellectual problem," which Schattscheider tried to correct.

The party system, he reminds us, has in fact transformed the American Constitution. It has "abolished the electoral College, created a plebiscitary presidency, and contributed powerfully to the extra-constitutional growth of that office" (PG, 2). The parties have thus both simplified and democratized the Constitution: "They took

3. Schattschneider later chaired the Committee on Political Parties of the American Political Science Association which produced the famous report, "Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System," published in 1950. Much of the argument of that report was anticipated in *Party Government.*

over an eighteenth-century constitution and made it function to satisfy the needs of modern democracy in ways not contemplated by the authors" (PG, 2-3). The Constitution could not have survived without being modernized, and it could not modernize itself through the processes it had established. A separate institution, the party system, was needed to modernize the Constitution. The survival of the Constitution through its own transformation must be credited to the party system, and in this sense it is as much a part of the American regime as is the Constitution. Yet these institutions work at cross purposes: the Constitution is archaic and undemocratic, while the party system is both democratic and in close touch with the changing currents in the society. Both the party system and the Constitution thus appear to be parts of a larger whole, though Schattschneider does not say what this is.

The fact that the party system and the Constitution are locked in intimate though hostile embrace means that constitutional crises are inevitably party crises. The collapse of a major party, or the shift of power within one of the parties, may produce the gravest consequences. This is illustrated, Schattschneider says, by the Civil War, which followed closely on the heels of the collapse of the Whigs and the splitting apart of the Democratic party. For this reason Schattschneider is especially contemptuous of "superficial students of politics" who "speak lightly of producing new alignments that would wipe out existing parties and substitute therefore other systems of antagonisms and tensions as if these explosive materials were mere sticks and stones to be tossed about as we like" (PG, 3).

He does not say who these "superficial students" are, but he was aware that after the 1936 election many New Dealers, including Roosevelt himself, spoke openly of re-organizing the party system along ideological lines by purging Southern conservatives from the Democratic party and by attracting liberal Republicans into it. The effort was made briefly in the 1938 "purge," and quickly abandoned thereafter, though the idea is now and again resurrected by those who believe their views would prevail if only the people were given a "clear choice." Schattschneider offers sound advice when he cautions reformers about the hazards of trying to re-arrange settled party alignments. But this was advice that he himself chose to ignore. Responsible party government was, after all, designed to reform the party system by producing new alignments that would replace existing ones, as if the parties were mere sticks and stones "to be tossed about as we like."

Schattschneider finds it strange that parties should occupy such a "dark continent" in the world of American politics. He understands why philosophers should disdain parties, because parties reorganize power within the regime and destroy its abstract symmetry. Tories too have every reason to dislike parties, because parties challenged the absolute power of the king, and stripped the monarch of his prerogatives. But why, he asks, have the friends of democracy failed to defend the parties? Turning Hume's comment upside down, he wonders why the "primitive experiments" in party government are not celebrated along with Bunker Hill and the Declaration of Independence. Finally, he asks, "How does it happen that the Constitution rather than the parties is described as the bulwark of American democracy?" (PG, 4). It is a curious fact that the literature of democracy is hostile to parties and party government, even though parties were essential to the triumph of democracy.

The Constitution itself, and the circumstances under which it was written, are partly responsible for this state of affairs. The framers of the Constitution relied heavily on theories formulated at the time of the Glorious Revolution, which were "legalistic and pre-party" in their assumptions. They relied in particular on the system of separated powers, which says Schattschneider, is "a legalistic concept incompatible with a satisfactory system of party government" (PG, 6). The framers "intuitively feared party government, and they designed the Constitution to frustrate it." We cannot see the value of party government because the Constitution keeps it submerged.

It seems odd that Schattschneider should criticize the theory of the Glorious Revolution for being "legalistic and pre-party" in content, and for emphasizing too strongly the separation of powers. The theory to which he refers we take to be that expounded by John Locke. True, the separation of powers was near the center of his theory. But for Locke it was a popular innovation, because it defended the rights of Parliament against the claims of the King. In this sense, Locke's theory, far from being "pre-party," was itself the instrument of a particular party-the Whigs. The separated powers that prevailed under the British Constitution before 1688 thus helped to shape the parties, for the parties arose in response to claims made on behalf of one or another of these powers. The separation of powers, in addition, assumes importance precisely in those regimes in which authority arises from the people, for in a mixed regime the different classes check one another, but in a popular regime the public must check itself. Since Schattschneider

does not investigate very closely the origins of party government, he does not see the separation of powers as an institution that helped to create modern party government. He understands the separation of powers as an anti-democratic relic of another era, when in truth it made democracy possible by making it defensible. He judges the separation of powers too harshly, even in his own terms.

The separation of powers in the American Constitution, in Schattschneider's view, is hostile to party government because it is designed to choke the parties in the machinery of government. The Constitution, he argues, is pro-party in the sense that it guarantees the liberty that permits parties to compete for power. But at the same time this complex system keeps parties from ruling. Madison, he says, saw the difference between an autocracy and a free republic to lie in the point at which parties are checked by government:

> In an autocracy parties are controlled at the source; in a republic parties are tolerated but are invited to strangle themselves in the machinery of government. The result in either case is much the same, sooner or later the government checks the parties but never do the parties control the government. (PG, 8)

Here Schattschneider collapses autocracies and republics into the same category because neither permits parties to govern ("The result in either case is much the same..."), and in so doing he distinguishes these forms from democracies, where parties do in fact govern. The framers never realized that parties could function as "beneficient instruments of government," a principle that is now better understood.

Madison's arguments in *Federalist 10,* besides standing as the main theoretical prop for the Constitution, also present, he says, the framers' theory of parties. He admires Madison's theoretical insight, but the continuing influence of his ideas has been detrimental to the cause of party government. In order to rescue parties, then, it is first necessary to overcome Madison. He tries to do so by pointing to a logical contradiction in Madison's theory. Schattschneider mistakenly reads the first part of *Federalist 10* as a defense of the separation of powers. He cites Madison's analysis of the origins and consequences of factions in a free republic, and his belief that factions comprising a majority of the society stand as the great challenge to the success of the republican experiment. Madison, he says, "then demonstrates that parties (factions') are inherently oppressive and must be frustrated by an elaborate system of separation of powers if liberty is not to become self-destructive" (PG, 9).

But, according to this reading, Madison immediately turns his attention to his justly famous argument for the extended republic, which purports to show that that diversity of interests in a continental system will keep tyrannical majorities from forming in the first place. Schattschneider now says that the second argument effectively destroys the first: "Madison's defense of federalism annihilates his defense of the separation of powers. If the multiplicity of interests in a large republic makes tyrannical majorities impossible, the principal theoretical prop of the separation of powers has been demolished" (PG, 9). If we really need not fear tyrannical majorities because of the diversity of interests in the society, we really do not need the kind of constitution that we have with its complicated system of separated powers. The same reasoning tells us that we can now have responsible party government without fearing a tyrannical governing party. If we can overcome our fear of the "tyranny of the majority," Schattschneider suggests, we can overcome Madison and the institutional system he devised.

This view of Madison, though wrong, has had a certain influence-for example, it was later developed as one of the themes in Robert Dahl's *A Preface to Democratic Theory.* Obviously Madison's views are not democratic enough for many modern theorists. Before we can agree or disagree with these theorists, however, it is necessary first to get straight what it is that they want to overcome in Madison.

Federalist 10 is the focus of much of this criticism because it supposedly makes a case for the separation of powers, even though this subject is barely mentioned at all in that famous paper. Madison takes up this question in numbers 47 through 51, and in the latter paper he joins the two issues of the tyranny of the majority and the separation of powers. *Federalist 10* occurs in the sequence of papers designed to show the utility of union, and here Madison tries to allay fears that union among states distributed over such a large land area would lead to a tyranny of one part over another. This does not of itself undermine Schattschneider's interpretation, for in later papers Madison does connect the separation of powers with the tyranny of the majority, but it does point to the carelessness with which he constructs it.

Throughout his analysis Schattscheider blurs the distinction Madison draws between a faction and a group or party. He wants to destroy in Madison two distinctions that Madison was careful to preserve-that between parties in general and factions, and that

between legitimate majority rule and the "tyranny" of the majority. Schattschneider treats "party" and "faction" as interchangeable terms, and even inserts "party" next to "faction" in a quotation from Madison[4] (PG, 7). For Schattschneider, we infer, any group organized for political ends is a faction, and this is what he has Madison saying. Madison, however, carefully defined faction as a number of citizens "who are united and actuated by some common impulse of passion, or of interest, adverse to the rights of other citizens, or to the permanent and aggregate interests of the community."[5] The definition implies that factions are to be distinguished from parties or groups whose aims are not "adverse to the rights of other citizens" or are consistent with "the permanent and aggregate interests of the community." It follows, then, that only factional rule will be tyrannical, and that this is not inevitable. Madison defended the Constitution, after all, because it promised to keep factions from ruling.

Madison does not give us any clear rule or standard with which we might draw the distinction between factions and other groups or parties, and between tyrannical majorities and legitimate ones. What are "the rights of other citizens" or "the permanent and aggregate interests of the community?" Madison gives only the roughest of answers, but he keeps the questions on the table, and thereby preserves the distinctions between legitimate and illegitimate government, and between the public good and the interests of a part. By eliminating these distinctions, Schattschneider has gotten rid of the problem of the "tyranny of the majority," because now all coalitions are equally tyrannical, or non-tyrannical.

Schattschneider's apparent objective is to deprive the term "tyranny" of substantive content, and to construe it entirely in procedural terms. On this construction tyranny occurs when a minority dominates a majority, but not when the majority dominates a minority. Since we cannot distinguish between "good" majorities and "bad" ones, it follows that the separation of powers does not check "bad" majorities while permitting "good" ones to govern. Its function, rather, is to frustrate majorities generally. In the process it also blocks responsible party government. If the "tyranny of the majority" is a phantom, then, we can replace the Madisonian system

4. *Ibid.*, p. 7. See also the quotation cited at note 11.

5. *The Federalist,* edited by J.E. Cooke (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1961), p. 57.

with party government-that is, government by disciplined majorities.

Now at some points Schattschneider suggests that disciplined majorities will not form in any case in the United States because the interests in the society are so numerous and diverse. But this in unsatisfactory, because responsible party government stands or falls on its capacity to create disciplined majorities. Having told us that we must give up the separation of powers in order to have responsible party government, Schattschneider now tells us that we cannot have it in any event. It is thus a nice question why he makes such an issue of this in the first place.

The separation of powers is a subject that always comes up in discussions of party government, and it will come up again in the course of this paper. Is the separation of powers designed primarily to limit majority rule, as so many of its modern critics argue? Madison himself pointed to a deeper justification in *Federalist 47* where, drawing on Locke and Montesquieu, he said that "The accumulation of all powers legislative, executive, and judiciary in the same hands, whether of one, a few or many, and whether hereditary, self-appointed, or elective, may justly be pronounced the very definition of tyranny."[6] This is so because the separation of powers is essential to the rule of law and is for this reason inimical to arbitrary power. Where powers are united in the same hands there can be no appeal from the body that makes laws to that which judges or executes them.

Madison quoted Montesquieu to this effect later in the same paper: "Were the power of judging joined with the legislative, the life and liberty of the subject would be exposed to arbitrary control, for the judge would then be the legislator. Were it joined to the executive power, the judge might behave with all the violence of an oppressor,"[7] The "rule of law" was the standard raised by republicans in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to challenge the arbitrary rule of monarchs, and sometimes of parliaments, but it was also raised here by Madison against the arbitrary power of majorities. Here a republican standard was applied to republicanism itself, and the "rule of law" applied in speech and deed. The separation of powers is a defense against tyranny, and was not designed primarily to frustrate majorities or to keep them from governing.

6. *Ibid.,* p. 324.
7. *Ibid.,* p. 326.

Schattschneider's objective in this is unclear, but he apparently wanted to revise political theory in a way that would both take account of political parties and pave the way for party government. The framers of the Constitution were aware of parties, and they even had a theory of party politics, according to Schattschneider, but it was left to later generations of writers to ignore political parties altogether. Why had this happened? Schattschneider claims that most of the writing on democracy and the Constitution has been done by lawyers and philosophers rather than by politicians. Since parties are outside the law, as they are "extra-legal," they are ignored by lawyers, who in any case dislike the politicians who control the parties. The lawyers want a legalistic constitution, while the parties bend the law and the Constitution in pursuit of partisan objectives. He says that "The parties and the law are nonassimilable," and that in a legalistic system like ours, "The parties seem to be a foreign substance" (PG, 11). We have a lawyer's theory of politics, but we need a politician's theory. Schattschneider says this even though he will later attack the politicians, whom he sometimes calls "bosses."

The philosophers, on the other hand, look to pre-modern models to understand democracy. Following Aristotle ("Greek concepts"), they take regime types to be definitive. Democracy is the "rule by the many," but philosophers do not investigate how this is implemented. They argue instead over the abstract merits of democracy in relation to other regimes. Thus, he says, "The nature of parties has not been the principal fighting ground of the controversy over democracy. A thoroughgoing debate on this point might have clarified the issues and promoted an understanding of the whole subject" (PG, 13). Both the lawyers and the philosophers have thus managed to avoid the subject. "The only way to discover parties," he says, "is to revise the definition of democracy" (PG, 13).

This new theory, Schattschneider suggests, must be based on experience and facts, on the real world of democracy. But it is not enough simply to take parties into account when we think about democracy; they must be assimilated into a new philosophy of government. The classical definitions of democracy, along with such terms as popular sovereignty and representation, "refer to no political processes that may be observed in the facts of an operating democratic system; they were formulated wholly without respect to political parties" (PG, 16). Schattschneider now draws out further the implications of his criticism:

> The entire theory of suffrage must be rewritten in the light of what we now know about political parties. For the same reason the meaning of civil rights must be redefined. Classical concepts, such as the tyranny of the majority and with it a large part of the theory of the separation of powers, must be discarded, The Aristotelian classification of government on the basis of the number of persons participating in power has been made meaningless by Robert Michels iron law of oligarchy. (PG, 16)

Schattschneider is, it seems, in revolt against the "classical" theory of democracy. He wants a theory that is at once more empirical, more practical, and-more democratic.

Previous theorists-the framers of the Constitution, the lawyers, the philosophers-have misunderstood democracy and have distorted our view of it with their abstractions and legalisms, their contempt for practice, and their hostility to true democracy. But these older theories have somehow shaped our experience, and the facts on which a new theory must be built. The older theories have, after all, kept us from implementing responsible party government. They may be abstract, but here abstractions have practical consequences, so they are not wholly abstract. Schattschneider claims that we must think about democracy differently if we are to have a new kind of democracy in practice. This new theory will be based on experience, but it will also provide a standpoint from which to criticize experience. A theory based solely on the facts or experience would simply recapitulate the existing world of democracy, which is itself a reflection of theoretical errors.

The real problem with the older theories, then, is not that they are too abstract or empirically wrong, but that they are not democratic enough. They are thus unjust, or morally wrong. It appears in this case, then, that even the most systematic empirical approach to politics is in the beginning based on an abstraction, but here it is one that Schattschneider does not begin to justify, or even bother to bring to the surface.

Once his theoretical intentions have been displayed clearly, Schattschneider then proceeds to offer an insightful account of the politics underlying the American party system. This part of the book, by far the strongest, is often forgotten because of the attention given the theme of responsible party government. He concludes that we need party government, but this conclusion is not required by

the arguments that precede it. In this sense his book owes its notoriety to its weakest feature.

Madison again appears here as a figure for both emulation and destruction. His *Federalist 10* demonstrates with admirable clarity that in a community with many conflicting interests it is unlikely that any single interest will be able to seize control. The task of building a majority out of these diverse elements is thus a process of compromise and moderation. Because of this theoretical insight, and in part because of the practical steps he took in relation to it, "Madison is the first American theorist to have a philosophy of pressure politics" (PG, 19).

Schattschneider considers the "multiplicity" of interests in the system to be the "raw materials" of politics, the foundations on which theory and practice must be built. He proceeds to test Madison's generalizations about the number and diversity of interests, though in relation to modern American society. "How many interests are there in the American nation?" he asks (PG, 19). Drawing on various statistical counts and estimates, he concludes that there are both a large number of groups and many different kinds of them. Not all or even most of these interests are economic, as he takes proper notice of the various racial and ethnic groups in American society and of the many voluntary associations with no obvious economic purpose. He does conclude, however, quoting Madison, that economic interests are "the most common and durable source of factions" (PG, 23).

This abundance of organization in America, this "prolific multiplication of interests," is the result of our freedom of association, and it is one of "the principal distinguishing marks of a democratic regime" (PG, 28). The pressure group system is at the heart of our system of politics, because citizen contacts with government are structured to a large extent through memberships in voluntary associations. This fact has long been ignored by theorists and philosophers, he suggests, ignoring (or forgetting) Tocqueville, since "it has required the rise of totalitarian dictatorships to awaken democratic philosophers to the political significance of free association" (PG, 28).

The friction and conflict that seem inevitable in a society of this kind is reduced by the fact that government can meet a high proportion of the demands that are imposed on it. Schattschneider offers no proof of this, nor does he distinguish between the kinds of "demands" that government can meet and those it cannot. But, he

says, sooner or later government must choose between or among the demands that arise from the pressure group system: it must formulate a policy that encourages some interests and discourages others. Government must inevitably discriminate among interests. The problem is that the pressure group system provides no basis for such a discriminating policy: "Government by organized special interests, without some kind of higher integration, must break down of its own weight" (PG, 31). This "higher integration" must be engineered in another way, through the process of forming majorities in the electoral system. The party system is thus a rival of the pressure group system, because "the parties and the pressure groups consist of two different syntheses of interests" (PG, 31). The majorities that are formed by the party system are different, and Schattschneider implies that they are more legitimate, than those formed by the pressure group system. It is in fact hard to say that the pressure group system forms majorities at all, for it permits well organized minorities to rule, or so Schattschneider seems to say.

Schattschneider seems to take Madison's theory as a defense or pressure group politics-but one that leaves the government in control as the interests exhaust themselves in the struggle. Though this accurately expresses Madison's belief that factions in the extended republic would "seldom" capture the state, it also tortures his views somewhat, because Madison understood that in a popular regime the government itself would be restrained by popular opinion. Schattschneider does not believe that Madison's prescription has proven to be true, because he presents a second, or rival, point of view which he thinks more accurately describes our situation. This one holds that interests simply register their strengths on the state in some mechanical way and receive benefits from it in rough proportion to their power. Here the interests control the state, instead of the other way around. Schattschneider both accepts and criticizes this description, for he seems to say that it is true in fact, but that it is not necessarily true. It is too deterministic, because though government by special interests may be a fact, it is not a necessary fact. Things could be otherwise, he suggests.

Schattschneider's objective here is to show that through politics we can shape and structure the interests that control us. If we are hostages to uncontrollable forces, it is because we have chosen to be hostages and mistakenly see those forces as uncontrollable. The interests that are presently organized in the system represent only a fraction of the potential interests that have yet to be organized or

brought into being. Moreover, those interests that now happen to be organized are only partially or imperfectly organized, because people have competing claims on their resources. New interests can arise and old ones can disappear very quickly. Apparently, this process of encouraging the discouraging interests can be engineered, perhaps by the state itself, but Schattschneider does not say which interests ought to be encouraged and which ones discouraged. He does suggest though that there is a common interest underlying all the particular ones, and that it is as yet imperfectly organized. There is nothing wrong with the "raw materials" of American politics-that is, with the existing or potential interests in the society-but there is something wrong with the way in which they are assembled into a functioning whole.

Schattschneider is searching for some process that will defeat and discipline the pressure group system, and he will find it in responsible party government. He thus stands against both the determinists, who regard pressure group politics as inevitable, and Madison, who designed a constitutional framework which accommodates and encourages it. Here as elsewhere Schattschneider takes the "multiplicity" of interests in American society far too much for granted, and does not consider sufficiently the extent to which the condition of which he approves is encouraged by the constitutional system he deplores. We need not fear a tyrannical majority, he suggests, because there exists a diversity of interests. But, one could reply, there exists a diversity of interests because the constitutional system gives these interests room to maneuver. It disperses political energy into the formation of many smaller groups, and diverts it away from the search for a single coherent majority. If the Constitution required such majorities, they would certainly form, and our politics would be notable for the weakness of its "pressure group" system. Madison is in effect taken to task for the very success of his enterprise: having solved in this way the problem of the tyranny of the majority, he is criticized because there are in fact no tyrannical majorities about which to worry.

Madison, like Schattschneider, entertained some notion of the common good, since such a notion is implied by the very act of establishing a Constitution. But Madison's view of the common good-"of the permanent and aggregate interests of the community"-was bound up with the idea of private rights, among which the right to property held a high rank. The "public" good, then, was not wholly public, but involved a separation between

public and private. Here a Madisonian view of groups diverges from Schattschneider's view, and from that of modern day pluralists. For Schattschneider, groups and associations function to transmit "demands" to the state, and the state responds by delivering "benefits" to the groups and associations in question. A Madisonian view, on the other hand, would stress the role played by groups and associations in defending private rights, and in defending the private sphere against invasion by the state. But Madison saw that certain groups, when organized and amounting to something close to a majority, could threaten private rights by demanding "benefits" through the state. Here he probably had in mind the permanent conflict between rich and poor, because of all the possible divisions in the society this one held the greatest potential for mischief.

The Constitution was designed in part to prevent this kind of conflict, and thus to discourage a "demand" oriented politics. Responsible party government, on the other hand, seems designed to organize precisely this kind of conflict, and to encourage this kind of politics.

Having drawn the distinction between the party system and the pressure group system, Schattschneider then proceeds to show why the party system as presently organized (in 1942) is not an effective alternative to pressure group politics, and is no longer an effective instrument of democracy. The main problem with the party system, it turns out, is that it is decentralized, and it developed in this way because the Constitution encourages decentralization.

Schattschneider says that parties originate in interest rather than in opinion. A political party "is an organized attempt to get power," and power is defined as "control of the government" (PG, 35). This objective distinguishes parties from interest groups, which are merely interested in shaping policy in areas of concern to them. Parties cannot be defined as Burke defines them-as associations of men agreed on some political principle-because people will want to achieve power for different reasons, and there may be as many reasons as there are people. When they agree to form or join a party, people simply agree to cooperate to get power. This is enough. They may in fact agree on questions of abstract principle, but it is not necessary to proceed to this point.

As an historical matter, Schattschneider argues, parties initially formed in the capital, or in the government, and then spread outward to the society, rather than vice versa. Parties began as groups of representatives in the legislative assembly who took their case to

the people when they could make no headway in that arena. The intensification of competition between the parties thus spread outside the assembly to the society at large as the contending groups tried to influence the selection of new members. This then led quickly to party organization in the electorate, and to the formation of mass based political parties. The electorate was gradually expanded by this process, as was the right to vote: "To assert that an indignant people wrested the right to vote from a reluctant government is a humorous inversion of the truth" (PG, 48). The expansion of the electorate, and of the right to vote, was a by-product of competition between the parties. The same pattern was worked out in England in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when a country party challenged the court, and in the United States when Jefferson and his allies challenged the political monopoly of the capital by taking their case to the people. This is presumably what Schattschneider means when he says that the parties "created" democracy. He does not say, however, why they created it.

Schattschneider also tells us what parties are not. They are not associations of voters, he says in opposition to many reformers who elevate the claims of voters over those of party officials. "Membership in a political party has none of the usual characteristics of membership in an association," he correctly notes (PG, 55). Parties have little control over their own members. Just about anyone can join a party, and members can leave whenever they wish. Members assume no obligations when they join a party, and they are not required to do anything, because the party has no control over them. It is thus difficult to speak of party "membership" in the United States where the organizational life of the party revolves heavily around electoral activities. Therefore, he says, direct primary legislation is based on a false image of parties, one which understands parties as associations of voters. Parties, in fact, consist of two entities, the organized politicians who have effective control, and a mass of passive "members" who merely vote for party nominees. Here Schattschneider lapses into the formalism that he criticizes in other theorists, for it makes little sense to insist on an abstract definition of party when parties in fact are being transformed by opinion and legislation.

Schattschneider echoes Schumpeter in his view of democracy as organized competition between rival teams of leaders. The party is a political enterprise supported by voters who are merely partisans. Internal democracy is not vital or even necessary. Democracy con-

sists in competition between the parties, not competition within them (see PG, 60). The real partisan is one who wants the party internally cohesive so it will be able to defeat the opposition. Partisanship, for Schattschneider, seems to take priority over opinion or ideology. But, if this is so, what are the ends to be served by responsible party government? What is it supposed to accomplish? Some end must be higher than partisanship in order to justify it, unless it is claimed that partisanship is good in itself.

IV.

Probably the most distinctive and important characteristic of American party politics is the two-party system. It is sufficiently long-lived, Schattschneider suggests, that we ought to regard it as among the most firmly established of American political institutions. Something so permanent must be explained by something deep and fundamental. The two-party system is a response to the Constitution, and, in particular, to the single-member districts it establishes. Under such a system, the majority party's proportion of legislative seats will be much higher than its proportion of the total vote across districts. This logic will disadvantage marginally the second party, perhaps by about the same amount as it advantages the first, but it absolutely disadvantages third, fourth, and fifth parties. In a "winner take all" system there is usually room for just two strong parties. Only third parties whose supporters are concentrated in one region can rise above this-which is why our strongest third parties at the national level have been regionally based. The second major party is able to stay in business because it monopolizes opposition to the first, and serves as a rallying point for disaffected voters.

Given his desire to reform it, it is surprising to find that Schattschneider has many good things to say about the two-party system. This is because, one assumes, responsible party government is most readily adapted to a system of two-party competition in which the winning party can impose the program on which it was elected. Multi-party systems produce programmatic or ideologically coherent parties, but such systems do not permit these parties to govern because ruling coalitions must be formed through negotiation in the post-election period. Schattschneider, and party government theorists generally, want elections to be decisive for government policy so that the majority can be said to govern, but this aim is just as effectively blocked in multi-party systems as it is in the

American system as it presently operates.

One of the virtues of the American system, according to Schattschneider, is that it creates majorities automatically, since the choice is structured to guarantee it. In this way the party system counters other disaggregating tendencies of American politics. In addition, the two-party system has a moderating effect on the political process as a whole: since the parties must appeal to many groups, no single group will be large enough or significant enough to dominate them. Because the parties are not internally homogeneous, they need not, and they cannot, meet every demand by every interest. The oratory of party conflict magnifies the degree of difference between the parties-that is, the form of the conflict accentuates the substance of the conflict, and exaggerates it. Thus the party system appears to structure and to centralize American politics, but in the end, Schattschneider implies, it only appears to do so.

Aside from the constitutional separation of powers, the main barrier to party government in America is political decentralization. This is reflected in the party system in any number of ways-in the inability of the congressional parties to hold their lines of important issues, in sectionalism, and in the control over the national parties by local "bosses." No one disputes that the American party system is decentralized, but Schattschneider says that the character of this decentralization is deceptive. He describes three possible patterns of "power relations" between local and national party organizations:

> First, there is the system of oligarchic centralization in which the local organization is stripped of all power and reduced to a role of a service agency of the central party. This is the English system. Second, there is the democratic system in which the local organizations participate by broadly representative processes in decisions made in a party conference acting with authority for the whole party. (PG, 171)

The latter, he says, is what the American system *seems* to be, but it is so only in theory. There is, finally, a third pattern: "The local organizations may seize power in the party, use this power for their own purposes, and refuse to recognize any superior party authority" (PG, 171). This, he says, is the American system in fact.

Thus our national politics consists of networks among local oligarchs, or "bosses." The "boss" is a peculiarly American phenomenon, unknown to other countries. In most countries local leaders are dependent on central party leaders, but here it is the local boss who controls the party apparatus. The boss is in no way an aberration

among American politicians, but is a characteristic product of the American political process. Schattschneider reminds us that "Every political system is responsible for the politicians it produces, and the politician himself is one of the best possible evidences of the nature of any regime" (PG, 109). We cannot then comfortably disavow the boss while maintaining intact the existing regime. Instead of concluding that we may have to put up with the boss in order to maintain the regime, Schattschneider implies that we should transform the regime in order to get rid of the boss.

Schattschneider uses the term "boss" carefully. It connotes one who has irresponsible power because he is accountable to no one. He is not accountable to the law because he either makes the law, or uses his powers to determine how it will be interpreted or enforced. He defends his turf by the claim of "local self-government," but the truth is that the boss is not responsible to the local public. "He exercises an authority out of all proportion to his public responsibility" (PG, 175). He is often not even an elected official. He has, in addition, a whole cadre of scapegoats to do his work, and who stand ready to take the blame if embarrassments arise. The boss exists to plunder the public instead of to serve it, and he stands as the most tangible symbol of the weakness of public authority in America.

Schattschneider tries to show how sectionalism in the American system is encouraged by the party "boss" (see PG, 111-23). He points out that national elections are usually won or lost on the basis of forces that transcend sectional boundaries-that is, the sections will often move together for or against a particular party or candidate. Sectionalism is thus a tendency in American politics, but not the dominating force. The obvious barriers to a purely sectional politics are, first, that the sections are not sufficiently homogeneous internally to present a united front to the outside world and, second, that no single section is strong enough to rule by itself. Hence, the sections must forge coalitions with one another.

Sectionalism is nonetheless an important force in American politics. The clearest alternative to sectional politics, Schattschneider suggests, is class politics. Why, then, do we have sectional politics rather than class politics? Part of the answer is that local party leaders prefer to unite their constituencies against external opponents, rather than have them internally divided. At the local level region and class are closely bound together in that there are rich sections of the city and poor sections. Local bosses tie these interests together through sectional politics by raising the threat of external

intervention. Sectional politics is also easier to manage than class politics in a system of territorial representation. A class system requires the mobilization by the parties of a large proportion of each class-a difficult task. But, on the other hand, a party needs only to mobilize 50 percent of a section in order to control it. Class politics requires almost perfect mobilization of the interests in question, while sectional politics can work very well at the lower level of mobilization. This makes sectional politics easier to control, and once in place it discourages class politics.

Both sectionalism and the boss exist because the American system is decentralized in a way that permits local forces to control the parties. Any successful attempt, then, to centralize the parties would be accompanied by a strengthening of class politics, and a corresponding weakening of sectional tendencies. If-to look at it from the other direction-class politics grows stronger and eventually displaces sectional politics, then presumably our decentralized party organizations will give way to centralizing tendencies (see PG, 118). Since Schattschneider clearly wants to see a more centralized party system, it follows that he prefers a system of class politics to one controlled by local "bosses" and influenced by sectional tendencies. Party government, then, is designed to bring class conflict to the surface in American politics. Here, obviously, Schattschneider's enterprise collides again with Madison's.

Decentralization also creates congressional and legislative parties that are unable to function in the disciplined way, and "are unable to hold their lines in a controversial public issue when the pressure is on" (PG, 131). Members of Congress respond first to local pressures and only thereafter to national ones. The parties struggle to win control of the government, but are unable to govern.

The American party presents a public and a private face, according to Schattschneider. In private matters-patronage and plunder-the party speaks with one voice, but in public issues it is badly divided. The private party is decentralized among local party leaders, while the power of the public party is centralized in the office of the president. The party's private purpose is to distribute goods; its public purpose is to formulate and to act on public questions. It is well organized to accomplish the first, he argues, but poorly organized to accomplish the second.

The "bosses" control the private party, and it is in their interest to keep the public party weak. Hence, they are opposed to a strong president and to disciplined national parties. This is not because the

bosses have their own views on matters of policy that would conflict with those of the president. "Generally the bosses are not interested in public affairs; they read no books, have vague ideas on public business, and are indifferent to conflicts of policy..." (PG, 137). The real reason that the bosses want to keep national authority weak is that "a national leadership strong enough to control party majorities in Congress would also be strong enough to cut off the flow of patronage to the local bosses" (PG, 137). Here the public (national) and the private (local) party stand in real conflict. The parties have no alternative, however, but to emphasize the presidency as the institution where great public issues are addressed, for there is neither the inclination nor the authority to do it elsewhere. Schattschneider suggests that if this tendency goes far enough, "the tendency of the parties toward decentralization and an exclusive preoccupation with the private interests of the party bosses would necessarily become recessive and the party would perforce change its character" (PG, 136). A strong president, then, is the alternative to the boss.

The "boss," it seems, is also responsible for the peculiar kind of political integration found in the American system. The separation between national and local politics in America is another of those illusions propagated by theorists obsessed with mere forms of government. The boss, in fact, "thrives upon a permanent merger of national, state, and local politics" (PG, 178). He is active at all three levels, and thus he can play local interests against national interests as it suits his advantage. "He is attached to the locality, but only in the sense that the dog attaches himself to the manger" (PG, 178). The master of local politics is also a proprietor of the state and national parties. This accounts in large part for both his authority and longevity. If he loses a local election he can draw on his state and national patronage, and vice versa. He can lose local elections so long as he wins the primaries that permit him to keep control of his party. He introduces local considerations into national politics, and national considerations into local politics.

National and local politics cannot be separated until the boss is finally destroyed. When this happens local affairs will be truly localized, just as they are in centralized systems, because then no one will have an interest in mixing national and local questions. But, Schattschneider suggests, the boss is close to invincible because he capitalizes on public illusions about how the system actually works. Because the illusion persists that bosses are only interested in local politics, reformers try to organize revolts in their local constituen-

cies, forgetting that the boss has many weapons in his arsenal. The bosses are occasionally defeated by this maneuver, but they usually return within a few years stronger than ever.

The local opponents of the boss will succeed in defeating him only when they join hands with the leaders of the national organization, or when they succeed themselves in capturing the national organization. Once this happens the power of the national party, and of the national government, can be mobilized against the boss. This is not done, nor has it been attempted, because the boss is seen as the peculiar creature of local politics having no responsibility to or stake in the national party. Only when this illusion is abandoned will effective steps be taken against the bosses. Thus, Schattschneider says, bossism is not chiefly a "moral" problem, as the reformers suppose, but rather an intellectual problem having to do with the way our politics is understood (see PG, 181). He implies that we should reorganize our system of politics, rather than worry about throwing a few bosses out of office.

Just as the boss thrives on political decentralization, he also profits from administrative decentralization, which in Schattschneider's view is but another term for poor or loose administration. Local party leaders, and local officials generally, are empowered to administer state or federal laws with little or no supervision by state or federal authorities. This permits them to administer the law politically-that is, in a manner consistent with their local political objectives. This turns nearly every part of the public business into so many opportunities for plunder. Contracts, the police, taxes, purchases, licenses, welfare, the administration of justice-all are distorted to yield a profit to the boss and his party machine.

Professional administration under some central authority is feared by the bosses, and they oppose it because it subordinates politics to law. Thus, "every measure to improve public administration by simplifying and unifying control and fixing responsibility, or by providing for effective central supervision through audit, inspection, report, and so on, constitutes a menace to the survival of the boss." It is, he says further, a "corrosive agent that threatens to eat away the whole system of local politics by which the boss has been able to support himself" (PG, 177-178). Neutral administration will here serve a practical political purpose, because, he implies, it cannot be neutral until it is centralized. Party government and neutral administration are thus consistent enterprises.

The "boss" has now largely disappeared from the American scene,

and the centralization of policy and administration in the federal government has been partly responsible for his departure. Much of this has happened since Schattschneider's book was written, and so we must say that on this count he was right: the centralization of governmental functions was the solution to "boss" rule. Yet for all this the prospects for responsible party government are as remote now as they were when Schattschneider advocated it, and in fact there are many who say that American parties are presently weaker than they have ever been. Governmental centralization, whatever its compensating merits, does not necessarily encourage or nourish strong political parties. The truth rather seems to be that governmental centralization and party government are incompatible in the American system, so that the one must triumph at the expense of the other. But Schattschneider's objectives were not necessarily incompatible, for he apparently believed that the American system itself might be transformed in a manner that would make these two ends compatible.

V.

Schattschneider argues that the bosses and the pressure groups govern by default because of the lack of true public authority in the American system. The proximate cause of this is the American party system which, because it is decentralized, cannot organize effective majorities. Because there is no party discipline in Congress, individual representatives are at the mercy of pressure groups; and because the local bosses control the national parties, they are able to plunder the public treasury with scarcely any resistance from the public itself. Schattschneider does not believe that the American people are as badly divided as the political process makes them appear. There is a public purpose in America, but it presently lies inchoate and disorganized.

The ultimate cause of all this is, of course, the Constitution, which, Schattschneider finally concludes, has shaped the parties more than the parties have shaped it in return. He says that his book "is devoted to the thesis that the character of the American party system is profoundly influenced by the Constitution," and that "The Constitution is here singled out as the villain (or hero) of the piece..." (PG, 124). Since his book is a critique of the party system, we may safely infer that he regards the Constitution as the villain rather than the hero of this particular drama. The parties are not

harmonious spheres in orbit around the Constitution, but are rather its deformed or distorted offspring. "Having spent much time on the rack of the Constitution, the parties now assume a marvelous character" (PG, 125). He seems to entertain some ideal notion of parties of which the existing ones are but misshapen images.

This ideal is expressed through his program of party government, a program under which two disciplined parties contend to represent the majority. The virtue of party government is that it is democratic: it permits the majority to rule. It fills at the same time the vacuum of authority which up to now has been exploited by the bosses and the pressure groups. Party government is, he says, "the most practicable and feasible solution to the problem of organizing American democracy." The rivals of the party system are in any event incapable of governing the country. Thus, he asks, "Why not try party government?" (PG, 207-208)

The obstacle to this program is the Constitution, which Schattschneider has already said makes "real party government impossible in the United States" (PG, 126). But he does not advocate a new Constitution, nor any amendments to root out the most offensive provisions of the present one. He recommends instead an intellectual awakening:

> The greatest difficulties in the way of the development of party government in the United States have been intellectual, not legal. It is not unreasonable to suppose that once a respectable section of the public understands the issue, ways of promoting party government through the Constitution can be found. (PG, 209-210)

It is thus not the Constitution itself, but the way we think about it that is the main barrier to party government. If it is true, as Madison says in *Federalist 49,* that "all governments rest on opinion," we can change the Constitution by changing the way we think about it. [8]

How, then, ought we to think about it? Schattschneider does not say in so many words, but he suggests that modern opinions about the Constitution are too heavily influenced by Madison and his fears of the tyrannical majority. Schattschneider implies that we can change the Constitution if we overcome our fear of the tyranny of the majority long enough to permit the sovereign majority to govern. The majority does not now rule because it fears itself. The majority fears the tyranny of the majority. We thus have majority

8. *Ibid.;* p. 40.

rule, but it is turned against itself. Party government will help the majority overcome its fear of itself.

A strong president, administrative centralization, national parties, loose construction of the Constitution, class politics-this is Schattschneider's program of party government, but it sounds suspiciously like the institutional program of the Democratic party as it was reconstituted by Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Schattschneider does not specifically endorse Roosevelt's welfare state, and he only mentions Roosevelt long enough to endorse his attempt to "purge" conservative Democrats in the 1938 primary elections. This institutional formula is far from neutral, however, in relation to the political programs that have been advanced by the Democratic and Republican parties since the 1930s. It is in fact strongly linked to the welfare state, and to attempts to redistribute income from rich to poor. One would have to look long and hard to find an opponent of the welfare state who is not also opposed to administrative centralization, a strong president in domestic affairs, loose construction of the Constitution, and class politics. And it would be just as difficult to find a proponent of the welfare state who wants to decentralize further the political process.

Schattschneider's institutional formula, then, combined with his preference for class politics over its alternatives, suggests that party government is intended to organize and extend the American welfare state. He endorses class politics, but it is doubtful that he wants to see the rich dominate the poor. Majority rule and party government must involve in his mind the subordination of the rich to the poor. He does not say how party government is to be implemented in the United States, though a good part of its agenda has been accomplished through the agency of the Democratic party. In this sense party government is in practice the program of the Democratic party, though it cannot be acknowledged as such or it will become an issue between the two parties. This presents certain difficulties, because party government, in order to be effective as an organizing principle, must be endorsed by both political parties. This is unlikely to happen so long as the ends of party government are partisan in nature.

Schattschneider placed great confidence in the unrestrained will of the majority because he recognized no other standard of political legitimacy. Here he departs most radically from the views of James Madison. He certainly believed that there are limits on the claims of the majority, but he seems to say that they can only be imposed at

the expense of majority-rule itself. He is perhaps too confident that his scheme of party government will issue in peaceful competition between rich and poor rather than in something much worse-for example, open conflict between races, religions, or regions. Schattschneider was no ordinary reformer, but he shared the reformer's belief that the Constitution blocks many good things he wishes to accomplish, but prevents no evils he would like to avoid.

VI.

Because Burnham's book is more recent than Schattschneider's, it differs from that earlier volume in several obvious ways-for example, it carries more of the conceptual and statistical trappings of modern social science, it places the New Deal in historical perspective, and it does not advocate anything so old-fashioned as responsible party government. It would be a mistake, however, to read Burnham's book as a cold and dispassionate analysis of American party politics, for Burnham is a far more radical critic than Schattschneider of the kind of liberalism that shaped this country's political institutions.

Burnham is concerned in this volume, and in several companion articles, with the subject of electoral realignment, which he regards as the driving force in American political life. While many scholars, including Schattschneider, have recognized the importance of electoral realignments, few have set about "exploring these phenomena in terms of their implications for effective analysis of American politics across time and space" (CE, 3). He suggests that more theorizing is necessary, and thus his book is largely a theoretical tract, or one which tries to impose order on an assembly of facts already well known.

He recognizes that such a theory of electoral realignment will conflict with prevailing interpretations of American politics that lack an historical dimension or ignore the deep divisions that have always existed in America. This is because such a theory must "emphasize the elements of stress and transformation in our political life at the expense of the consensual, gradualist perspectives which have until recently dominated the scholar's vision of American political processes and behavior" (CE, 3-4). Those who emphasize the moderate temper of American politics forget the periods of conflict and abrupt change that are also part and parcel of the American system. The realignment phenomenon, he says, "reminds us that politics as usual

in the United States is not politics as always" (CE, 4).

Like the progressive historians of an earlier era who criticized the nationalist rhetoric of their predecessors, Burnham here takes to task those post-war historians and political scientists who emphasized consensus in American life at the expense of conflict. The parallel with the progressives is not at all far-fetched, for like Turner and Beard, for example, Burnham stresses the material or economic bases of politics, sides with democracy and the working man against big business, and sees American history not as a great experiment in free government, but as a long record of social group conflict. But the parallel fails at a critical point, because Burnham will go on to criticize the progressives for encouraging reforms that eventually led to the decline of the party system.

Critical elections, or critical periods, are those in which a durable realignment of electoral forces takes place. These realignments are associated with, or caused by, "short-lived but very intense disruptions of traditional patterns of voting behavior" (CE, 6). The balance of strength between the parties is so changed in critical periods that the minority party suddenly becomes the majority, and vice versa, as competitive areas become uncompetitive, or uncompetitive ones become competitive. The reason such changes are durable is that "large blocks of the active electorate-minorities to be sure, but perhaps involving as much as a fifth to a third of the voters-shift their partisan allegiance" (CE, 6). These voters do not abandon their party's candidate for just one election, but they abandon their party permanently. Such disruptions in voting patterns are also accompanied by a growing "intensity" of political conflict which is reflected in many ways-in battles over nominations and platforms within the parties, in ideological polarization between the parties, in third party movements protesting against conditions that the major parties cannot address effectively, and, often, in the growth of voter participation in elections in response to the growing importance of the issues at stake.

Electoral realignments inevitably lead to great changes in policy and politics as new coalitions are formed and come to power. The political parties in the United States, he points out, are "constituent" parties, which means that they take their character from the interests of the groups that compose them. The parties, and political leaders generally, are thus preoccupied with integrating many groups into workable coalitions. Their work is complicated by the fact that in America these groups are in continual flux. As Burnham

puts it, awkwardly, "the political party sub-system is sited in a socioeconomic system of very great heterogeneity and diversity" (CE, 9). The conflicts that occur during realigning periods reflect the stresses and strains among the groups composing the society. Realignments resolve these tensions for the time by bringing into power new combinations of groups that can settle issues that could not be settled before. Thus we see associated with electoral realignments significant changes in policy and in the rules of political practice.

Critical elections, at least at the national level, have not occurred randomly, but rather, as Burnham says, "There has been a remarkably uniform periodicity in their appearance" (CE, 8). He suggests at the outset, and then goes on to show, that realignments have occurred about once per generation, or roughly, every thirty-six to forty years. This, he says, "is one of the most striking historically conditioned facts associated with the evolution of American electoral politics, and...it is of very great analytical importance" (CE, 8). It seems to suggest that underlying its apparent stability the American political system has a built-in tendency to crisis, and that the party system has evolved as the institution that first reflects and then settles these periodic crises of the regime.

Much of the rest of Burnham's book is given over to attempts to demonstrate these generalizations, or at least those that are susceptible to proof. The first step in this effort is to demonstrate the "periodicity" of critical realignments in American electoral history. We must note here, as does Burnham, that many others have discussed the "realignment phenomenon," and that they are in general agreement over when these realignments have occurred. The standard list includes five realignments or "critical" periods: Jefferson's election in 1800, Jackson's re-organization or re-founding of the Democratic party in the late 1820s, the slavery crisis from 1854 to 1860, the McKinley-Bryan showdown in 1896, and the New Deal realignment in the 1930s.[9] Burnham's generalizations about realignments are in considerable part abstractions from these landmark events in American history. His own statistical analysis of the

9. See, among others, the following: E.E. Schattschneider, *The Semisovereign People* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1960); V.O. Key, "A Theory of Critical Elections," *Journal of Politics,* 17 (1955), pp. 3-18; or Harry Jaffa, "The Nature and Origin of the American Party System," in Robert A. Goldwin (ed.), *Political Parties,* U.S.A. (Chicago: Rand-McNally, 1964), pp. 59-83.

"periodicity" of realignments offers more precise measurements of a landscape that is already well mapped.

He suggests that party systems can be understood as either "voting systems" or as "organizational systems," though his own emphasis on electoral realignment requires that they be understood as voting systems. In organizational terms there has been little change in the American party system, at least since the Republican party was formed in 1854. This continuity, however, is more apparent than real, for the Democratic parties of 1884, or 1924, or 1968 bear little resemblance to one another. The organizational system, in fact, is shaped by electoral patterns, and here there has been much change, both in the balance of strength between the parties and in the composition of the party coalitions. These changes, Burnham says, should be measurable: "The prime characteristic of realignment in the voting or the electoral politics system is a basic and measurable transformation in the shape of that voting universe." These transformations vary in form or size, but whatever the form, "measurable universe change at a temporal cutting point, or points, ought to be present" (CE, 12-13). Voting statistics, he says, enable us to locate these points.

Burnham locates these "temporal cutting points" through a statistical analysis of the partisan division of the vote in national elections from 1828 through 1968. The statistical procedures he uses are far more complicated than those actually required to arrive at his conclusions. Since he neither tests nor measures causal relations, his investigation boils down to a search for statistically significant departures from the norm in the 140-year series. The statistically untutored reader may get the impression from this that Burnham's subsequent generalizations about the meaning of electoral change are somehow verified by this array of numbers. All that he shows here, and all that he wants to show, are those elections in which there occurred clear and long-lasting changes in the party distribution of the vote. Since realignments require such long-lasting changes in voting patterns, however, we can never be certain that they have happened until long after the fact. This makes realignments singularly difficult to predict.

On the basis of his statistical tests, Burnham identifies four realigning periods centering about the years 1854, 1874, 1894, and 1930. This means that the party distributions of the vote in the national elections following these years were sharply different from those that prevailed in the elections immediately preceding them.

The presidential elections immediately following these "mid-point" years-those of 1856, 1876, 1896, and 1932-were obviously important ones, and have often been designated as "critical elections." The importance of the sequence of elections centering about 1874 was unexpected, but Burnham explains it away by noting that the Democratic party's share of the national vote was "artificially depressed" through 1872, presumably because of the Civil War and reconstruction policy, after which it was able to recapture the South and compete on even terms nationally with the Republicans (CE, 17). If this period is excluded, then, as not qualifying as a true realigning period, we are left with three realignments-one occurring in the 1850s, one in the 1890s, and a final one in the 1930s. Burnham says that a "striking periodicity" is visible in the election figures: "from 1854 to 1894 is a period of forty years, between 1894 and 1930 thirty-six years" (CE, 15). This fact suggests to him that realignments occur in a regular pattern roughly once per generation, though a statistical purist, or a skeptic, might attribute the pattern to chance or coincidence.

Burnham also analyzes national turnout rates in presidential elections, and discovers that although changes in turnout rates were more gradual than those in the partisan distributions, "they were nonetheless massive for all that, and they were temporally associated with the realignment cutting points..." (CE, 18). National turnout increased as the slavery crisis escalated in the 1850s, and remained high well into the 1890s, after which it began a secular decline that continued through the first seven decades of this century. Turnout rates reaches their lowest points during the 1920s, following the entry of women into the electorate, but increased again temporarily during the realigning elections of the 1930s. It is a striking fact, Burnham suggests, that participation in American elections should have reached a peak in the years between the Civil War and the turn of the century, when, on the average, about 77 per cent of the eligible voters cast ballots. By the late 1920s the figure was down to about 55 or 56 per cent, and though turnout has since gone higher than this, it has never come close to reaching the levels that prevailed in the late nineteenth century (see table, CE, 21).

Burnham's concern with statistical precision is admirable, though many of his points could have been made just as well through simple presentations of the raw voting and turnout figures. The statistical presentation, indeed, runs counter to the spirit of the book as a

whole, because the substantive consequences Burnham imputes to electoral realignments go far beyond any statistical property, and are at some points scarcely disciplined at all by facts, records, or data. Once free of the restraints of his statistics, Burnham begins to generalize freely and creatively about the meaning of realignments in America. His statistics may tell us when realignments occurred, but Burnham himself must tell us what they mean.

Burnham pursues his topic by examining voting patterns in Pennsylvania, which are of interest, he says, because of Pennsylvania's "early and massive industrialization." The first of the realignments began in Pennsylvania in 1854 in response to the Kansas-Nebraska Act, and was largely completed by 1860. Surprisingly, Burnham does not find wholesale voting shifts in this realignment. Before the slavery crisis came to a head, the Democratic party held a slim but consistent advantage in the state; after the realignment, and until 1896, the Republicans held a slim advantage. The major shifts-from Democratic to Republican-occurred in a group of northern counties into which there had been considerable migration from New York. Otherwise, the Republican party inherited the old Whig base, and the Democratic party survived nearly intact. A great political shift was thus built in a narrow electoral swing.

The realignment of the 1890s, on the other hand, was much different, because here there were "across the board" changes in voting patterns. It was "triggered," he says, by the depression of 1893, and solidified by the Bryanite capture of the Democratic party in 1896. This event imposed powerful cross-pressures on the "New England rural-Yankee diaspora," because though the Republican party had once been the vehicle of Protestant opposition to slavery, the Democratic party was now captured by a leader of evangelical Protestantism (CE, 45). But the greatest voting shifts in Pennsylvania occurred in the heavily urban counties, and this helped to build into the party system a "center-periphery" conflict, about which we shall hear more in a moment. Pennsylvania was transformed by this realignment into a solidly Republican state: of 96 statewide elections from 1893 to 1931, candidates endorsed by the Democratic party won just once (CE, 50). What conflict there was in Pennsylvania was between groups associated with the urban commercial system and those most distant from that commercial network, with the most rural counties staying in the Democratic camp. The Republican party, its work against slavery now completed, became the political instrument of the expanding industrial system.

Burnham believes that this realignment guaranteed the political supremacy of industrial interests. By destroying effective opposition to the Republican party, it provided a "highly efficient insulation of the metropole's controlling industrial-financial elite from effective or sustained countervailing pressures from below" (CE, 51). The growth of industrial capitalism was, in effect, accompanied by one-party rule. The Democratic party after 1896 degenerated into the vehicle of colonial, periphery-oriented dissent against the industrial system by the groups and regions that were exploited by it. "The United States was so vast," Burnham says, "that it had little need of economic `colonies' abroad, since it had two major colonial regions within its own borders" (CE, 53). Any serious attack against the industrial system had to arise from these "colonies," but, Burnham suggests, interests favored by the "colonies" were already "obsolescent." In the period from 1896 to 1930, then, the more industrial a state, the more heavily Republican it was inclined to be. Because competition was eliminated in the industrial states, this tended to rule out any kind of politics based on class.

The third realignment seems to have occurred suddenly in 1930 or 1932, immediately following the economic collapse that discredited the Republican party. But this economic shock, and the elections immediately following it, did not of itself create a new governing coalition. As Burnham puts it, "That coalition did not come into being until business rule had collapsed and until Roosevelt and his advisers had made the key decisions which redefined the subject matter of American domestic politics" (CE, 57). Unlike earlier realignments, the New Deal realignment took some time to complete, and the composition of the victorious coalition depended heavily on the content of Roosevelt's programs. When the realignment was at last completed, the Democratic party had become the party of the large cities, blacks, the foreign born, labor, and, importantly, the South. Now the Republican party represented native Protestants, the wealthy, and the "traditional" or "obsolescent" views of religious fundamentalism and small town life.

Burnham's narrative is one part fact and two parts interpretation, and because of this it is at once informative and seductive. He has succeeded in building a large interpretive edifice on a limited foundation of fact. This edifice is informed by a general view of history, the assumptions of which are never clearly spelled out in Burnham's writings. Despite the references to "ruptures" and "periodicities," he is much impressed by the apparent developmental logic of American

politics, with its small town and agrarian beginnings, its transition to industrialism and industrial rule, and its change to a welfare state, which will in turn give way to something else either historically "progressive" or "obsolescent." The latter two terms, which serve both descriptive and evaluative functions, suggest clearly enough that Burnham communicates an historical understanding through his theory of realignment. Yet Burnham does not adhere to a simple dogma of historical progress, for he suggests that those economic interests that are historically "obsolescent" are democratic, or "progressive" politically, while those which are economically "progressive" are politically reactionary. Thus the industrial interests revolutionized the American economic system, at the same time that they dismantled its system of party democracy. History, according to this account, manifests a growing contradiction between developments in the economic sphere and developments in the political sphere.

Just as the American experience does not conform to the laws of progressive history, neither does it conform to patterns of development found in other industrial nations. America was once celebrated for its uniqueness in relation to Europe, but Burnham regards this as a problem rather than as a virtue. He tells us why America has developed as it has, but lurking behind this theme is the question: Why is America not more like Europe, with its class politics and its socialist parties? Like Schattschneider, who admired British party government, Burnham looks to Europe for his models of democratic politics. His answer to this question, as we shall see, is found in the influence of Locke in America, an influence that Burnham is certainly not the first to have pointed out. But Burnham believes that this influence is increasingly "obsolescent" or contradictory in the face of the economic and social changes that are presently occurring.

Having identified the major realignments, Burnham now turns more explicitly to the task of discovering their meaning. Realignments, he says, signify "the intrusion of major crises in society and economy with which `politics as usual' in the United States cannot adequately cope" (CE, 26-27) . These intrusions occur at such regular intervals that the "normal" structure of American politics is found in precisely this "dialectical polarization between long-term inertia and concentrated bursts of change in this open system of action" (CE, 27). American political institutions do not respond in timely fashion to stresses and strains in the society. They are so organized that "they have a chronic, cumulative tendency toward

underproduction of other than currently `normal' policy outputs." The leaders in charge of our institutions tend to disregard "emergent political demand of a mass character until a boiling point of some kind if reached" (CE, 27). A realignment is triggered when such a boiling point is reached.

Realignment is thus a deeply ingrained feature of the American system, because its archaic political structure cannot respond quickly to changes in socio-economic life. Burnham's formulation strongly brings to mind the distinction drawn by Marx between the economic "infrastructure" and the political "superstructure," the contradictions between which he said would lead to revolution. The American political system is underdeveloped, Burnham suggests, because it does not respond to demands until tensions have reached a point of crisis. Once matters have been brought to this point, "The triggering mechanism occurs, and the universe of policy and of electoral coalitions is broadly redefined." Realignments are in this sense our "surrogates" for revolution; they have been "the chief means through which an underdeveloped political system can be recurrently brought again into some balanced relationship with the changing socioeconomic system... " (CE, 181). But why is the political system underdeveloped? Because, as we shall hear in a moment, it was organized and still functions according to the "Lockian political formula."

The phenomenon of third parties sheds further light on the meaning of realignments. Third parties function, he says, as "protorealignment phenomena," signalling tensions in the society to which the major parties cannot respond. Burnham suggests that when third parties gain more than 5 percent of the popular vote they are likely to be associated with a realignment, or with the tensions that arise about mid-way through the "life cycle" of an electoral era. Third parties telegraph "the basic issue clusters which would dominate politics in the next electoral era" (CE, 30). "Protorealignment" third parties organize the discontented and "the outsiders" on the basis of "democratic-humanistic universals." They attack an established elite perceived to be corrupt, undemocratic, and selfish.

Burnham lists several such parties-the Anti-Masons, the Free Soil Party, the Greenback Party, the Populists, Socialists, Progressives, and George Wallace's American Independent Party. His generalizations here are sound and sensible, though they seem to say more than they actually do. Significant third parties arise almost by definition because the major parties do not address their concerns.

Members of such movements are bound to feel powerless for the same reason. In a democratic society every significant political movement, even the most reactionary, will appeal to democratic symbols. "Insiders" do not organize protest movements because they do not need to. There was no pro-slavery third party before the Civil War because the pro-slavery forces controlled the Democratic party.

All of this leads Burnham to observe that third parties express "acute center-periphery" tensions in the society. This is a rather technical term referring, not to battles along the left-right dimension, but to those between urban, secular, and cosmopolitan interests ("the center"), on the one hand, and rural, religious, and territorial groups ("the periphery") on the other. He suggests that significant third party movements organize the periphery against the center, or the capital, and for this reason many have been rural and religiously fundamentalist in outlook.[10] Since such parties "telegraph" realignments, it follows that center-periphery tensions are part and parcel of the realignment process, and Burnham suggests that they were "probably dominant" in all but the most recent one. The party system, at critical times, organizes excluded groups, and permits them to challenge those in power.

Burnham does not see this as a virtue, but rather as a sign of weakness in the American system. He says that "Such horizontal segmentation corresponds to a political system in which a sense of common nationhood may be much more nearly skin deep than is usually appreciated" (CE, 31). The term "horizontal segmentation" apparently refers to conflicts that are territorial or spatial rather than hierarchical, class conflict being a prime example of the latter type. Horizontal conflicts are clear signs that the polity is weakly integrated and not highly developed. Here political subcultures and "colonial" areas not only continue to exist, but continue to be important politically. America is in this sense hardly a modern nation at all, because the political ties that connect its different parts are so weak. America's archaic political system stands in sharp contrast with its dynamic economic system.

Burnham here develops, though in a much subtler way, many of the themes raised earlier by Schattschneider-the archaic Constitu-

10. The Socialists were the obvious exception here, but Burnham says that Debs' party gained significant support from such areas as Oklahoma and the mountain states. Still the Socialist party in 1912 received the great share of its votes from the cities of the East and Midwest.

tion versus the dynamic society, territorial conflict as a retrograde alternative to class conflict, and the party system as a blunt, though necessary, instrument of democracy and progress. But Burnham does not harp on Schattschneider's theme of party government, because he knows that it is pointless to do so, given the obstacles to it, and because he recognizes that we have had party government of a certain kind-a kind that permits occasional showdowns between the parties, and one that permits party regimes to govern for long stretches of time."

The theory that Burnham develops is as readily grasped through the descriptive terminology it employs as through the phenomena it purports to describe or explain. The reader cannot help but notice that the operation of the party system is frequently illustrated by geological or physical terms and metaphors, such as "seismic," "political seismicity," "horizontal fault lines," " detonator," "triggering mechanism," "rapid, compressed jumps in universe state," "oscillation between the normal inertia of mass politics and ruptures of the normal," and many others. The terminology is fitting, however, for Burnham seems to understand the American system as a deceptively placid surface beneath which lies a tense and precarious foundation of social relations. The groups in the system resemble nothing so much as great formations of rock and earth in imminent collision, grinding and scraping against one another until at some point the accumulated pressure ruptures the surface. The language alone is nearly enough to convince us that American politics rests on no ordinary fault line. It communicates a sense of impending disaster.

One is reminded here of Tocqueville's observation that historians in democratic ages "attribute hardly any influence over the destinies of mankind to individuals, or over the fate of a people to its citizens. But they make great causes responsible for the smallest particular events." This is in part because "General causes explain more, and particular influences less, in democratic than in aristocratic ages." In aristocratic ages great events turn on the humors of particular men, while in democratic ages they are caused by great aggregations of people. Individual causes have not ceased to exist in democratic times, however, but they are now much harder to see. The historian

11. This point is made well also by Harry Jaffa in "The Nature and Origin of the American Party System," *op. cit.*

is easily lost or confused, and "unable clearly to see or to explain individual influences, he ends by denying that they exist."[12] Tocqueville was troubled more by the effects of such descriptions than about their accuracy-for if men often enough hear themselves described as so many blocks and stones, soon they will begin to act as they are described.

Political parties are great democratic institutions, and so it is fitting that Burnham should describe them in such fully democratic terms, with scarcely a mention of those leaders-Jefferson, Lincoln, Roosevelt-who now stand as their symbols. Because parties do organize large aggregations of people, they must be accounted for in terms of large or comprehensive causes. The theoretical laws of electoral politics identify these causes. They necessarily apply to aggregations of people, and they have little meaning in relation to the intentions of a few important leaders. Burnham has discovered some of these laws and has formulated them well. His theory is an impressive construction by the standards of social science. But this theory, like most such theories, does not probe the question of whether or not the reality to which its laws apply might be accounted for by something to which they do not apply.

VII.

The second major theme of Burnham's book, in addition to electoral realignment, is that of the "decline of parties" in the twentieth century. He claims that we have entered a new era in the history of American politics, one in which electoral realignments can no longer occur because the parties are no longer significant institutions in the polity. The story of electoral politics in this century is one of "the onward march of party decomposition."

Burnham locates the source of this trend in the realignment of 1896, or in what he calls, borrowing a term from Schattschneider, the "system of '96." Profound changes occurred around this time, not merely in voting patterns or in the balance of forces between the parties, but in the character of the party system itself. During the forty or so years prior to 1896, party conflict was intense, emotional, and, particularly from 1876 through 1896, closely competitive. Party conflict had helped to bring on the Civil War and kept the War

12. *Democracy in America,* translated by George Lawrence and edited by J.P. Mayer. (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1969), Volume II, Part I, pp. 493-496.

alive as a political issue for thirty years after the war itself was over. The electoral system also organized religious and cultural questions, and turned them into partisan issues. The threat that such a system posed to the capitalist order was not lost on the men who controlled it, and Burnham suggests that the settlement of 1896 permitted them to set about dismantling the party forms that had developed in the preceding era.

American politics in the latter half of the nineteenth century was notable, as Burnham points out, for many practices that had largely disappeared by 1920. Among these were the control of nominations by party leaders, partisan control of the printing and distribution of ballots, patronage as the means of filling appointive positions, and "an extremely full mobilization of the potential electorate which was closely related to the intensity and rigidity of party competition" (CE, 72). The style of political campaigns in this era was "militarist," he says, citing the work of Richard Jensen, a style[13] emphasizing the drilling and mobilization of rival partisan forces. The parties did not appeal to independent voters because there were very few of them in the electorate. Such voters were not in any event regarded as independent and rational citizens, as they are so regarded today, but as turncoats and traitors. Trade in the buying and selling of votes was apparently widespread, encouraged both by the close balance of forces between the parties and by the fact that party officials, since they controlled the distribution of ballots, could determine how their clients actually voted.

This system, or style, of politics was rapidly dismantled in the early years of the present century. This was, in part, the work of the Progressive movement, which here combined with the more patently reactionary forces that engineered the realignment of 1896. Many of the "best men," Burnham says,-those "associated with progressivism and deeply imbued with traditional old-stock American middle-class values"-regarded the party organizations with distaste and contempt (CE, 74). What is more, they saw the parties as anti-democratic institutions. The reforms of this period were expressed in terms of democratic or egalitarian rhetoric, but Burnham says that they were designed to achieve conservative ends.

He groups these reforms into two categories-those which

13. Burnham cites an unpublished paper by Jensen. But see Jensen's subsequently published book, *The Winning of the Midwest* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), pp. 165-177.

stripped the parties of their functions, and those which manipulated voting requirements. The direct primary was a leading example of the first type of reform, because it took nominations out of the hands of party leaders and turned them over to disorganized voters. Similarly, the introduction of the Australian ballot stripped the parties of their control over the printing and distribution of ballots, and turned this function over to the state. Burnham also places in the same category those reforms directed against the urban "machine"-among them, non-partisan and at-large elections, the city-manager form of government, and the civil service system as the alternative to patronage.

Laws relating to the suffrage were also substantially altered during this period. Not all of these reforms were democratic in content and most, according to Burnham, were anti-democratic in their consequences, as he reminds us that turnout in American elections declined steadily after 1896. He suggests that this trend was at least partly caused by two "reforms"-the disfranchisement of blacks in the South between 1890 and 1904, and the introduction of personal registration requirements. Women's suffrage was a reform of a much different stripe, but despite its obvious egalitarian character, it had many conservative aspects, as Burnham notes the moralistic and anti-immigrant motives behind the movement to give women the vote. Women's suffrage, he implies, was used by middle-class Protestants to depress the immigrant vote in relation to their own, and to add strength to the crusades against liquor and unrestricted immigration. Burnham does not now want to take the vote away from women, but he merely questions the motives of those who gave it to them, thus finding a way to criticize a reform that he is now obliged to endorse.

The rapid decline in turnout after 1896 is so much more grist for the mill for those who, like Burnham, regard America as a curiosity among modern nations. In just about every other advanced, or industrial, country, participation in elections increased with industrialization, but in America precisely the opposite happened. The usual explanation for this pattern holds that registration laws eliminated corruption, cleaned up the electoral process, and caused a marginal, though on the whole beneficial, drop in turnout. Burnham investigates this explanation in some detail by comparing turnout figures between counties that were covered by registration laws and those that were not. Though turnout declined more in counties that were covered by the laws than in those that were not,

he observes a general decline after 1896 in all areas. He concludes that registration laws contributed to the decline, but do not fully explain it. Something else, he suggests, must have encouraged the large scale de-mobilization of voters after 1896, something that goes much deeper than mere changes in electoral rules. In a characteristic inferential leap, Burnham claims that these rules were in any event "devices by which a large and possibly dangerous mass electorate could be brought to heel and subjected to management and control within the political system appropriate to `capitalist democracy' " (CE, 90). The party system was thus adapted to the needs of the industrial system: rural protest was isolated, voters were cut loose from organizational ties, and class conflict was suppressed by the collapse of party competition.

The industrial system itself, then, and the class of men controlling it, was at the bottom of this political transformation. When capitalism and democracy came into conflict, democracy was sacrificed to the requirements of capitalism. As Burnham says elsewhere, "The take-off phase of industrialization has been a brutal and exploitative process everywhere, whether managed by capitalists or commissars."[14] During this phase "industrializing elites" must be insulated from mass pressures in order to prevent the formation of coalitions that might dismantle the new system. Lenin and Stalin achieved this in the Soviet Union by turning complete control over to leaders of the Communist party. Something similar occurred in the United States after 1896-only here capitalist elites assumed control after dismantling the democratic forms of the nineteenth century. Burnham strongly implies that the pattern followed in the United States was no more legitimate than that followed in the Soviet Union.

These changes in the "rules of the game" were quickly reflected in changes in campaign practices and in voting behavior. Burnham notes, again citing Jensen, that by 1916 election campaigns had taken on an "advertising" style in contrast to the "military" style that had prevailed before 1896. Now candidates appealed to independents and the floating voter; they relied on advertising; and many candidates ran on their own "merits," cut loose from parties and partisan feeling. This new style reflected the changes that had taken place in the electorate. It was a style "adapted to a political

14. Walter Dean Burnham, "The Changing Shape of the American Political Universe," *American Political Science Review,* 59 (1965), p. 24.

world of shrunken electorates, direct primaries, and steep declines in public response to partisanship... " (CE, 96). There were now more "independents" in the electorate and, as Burnham shows, split-ticket voting increased sharply *in* the early years of this century. These are clear signs of increasing "disaggregation" or disorganization in the electorate.

Burnham's view of this period has been criticized by many who rightly say that he has not proven his more sweeping claims. Their criticisms are sometimes deflected, however, because Burnham has set himself up as a moving target. He seems at times to say that the general requirements of the industrial system dictated these reforms in the political system, and at others to suggest that the industrialists themselves, in collaboration with some intellectuals, actually dismantled those democratic forms that threatened the industrial order. The former is perhaps not far from the truth, but the latter is clearly wrong, for most of these reforms were engineered by bipartisan coalitions and, save for the disfranchisement of blacks, most continue to have broad support down to the present time. Who now wants to eliminate the Australian Ballot or the civil service system, or to restore the spoils system? Some are now found to speak against the direct primary, particularly in presidential elections, but few of these do so in order to mount attacks against big business.

Burnham plainly endorses the conspiratorial view in his book, and in an earlier article, but he rejects or modifies it *in* a subsequent paper.[15] Others have, of course, claimed that big business really orchestrated the Progressive movement in its own interests, and the evidence cited in support of this is usually some letter or scrap of paper in which an important businessman is found to have supported one or another of the progressive reforms. The inference here is that because some industrialists endorsed a measure, such as the Interstate Commerce Commission, they were responsible for it, and others who supported it did not understand the hidden intention. Burnham wisely repudiated this view, but he remains in some sense committed to it, for if the industrialists were not responsible for this transformation, it must have been engineered by a broad political movement. He cannot say that it was required by the logic of industrial development, because other nations have not followed this

15. The earlier article is "The Changing Shape of the American Political Universe," *op. cit.,* especially pp. 23-25. The subsequent paper is, "Theory and Voting Research," *American Political Science Review, 68* (1974), especially p. 1022.

path. The alternative to the conspiratorial view, then, if it is not unfair to so characterize it, is one that attributes these changes to a broad coalition of forces, which is not that far from the standard interpretation. Once this is conceded, though, it is harder to attack them as "undemocratic."

Some have tried to show that changes in levels of turnout and split-ticket voting in this period were largely caused by two structural reforms-the introduction of the Australian Ballot and personal registration requirements-and that these changes were on the whole desirable from any responsible standpoint. [16] Turnout rates, as reflected in the official figures, were exaggerated before 1896 by corrupt voting practices. When registration laws were introduced in the 1890s, turnout declined, but not nearly so much as the official figures suggest because much of the decline consisted of the elimination of corrupt voting. Split-ticket voting increased because the Australian Ballot easily accommodated it, in contrast to the old party ballots which made it difficult for voters to split their tickets. The changes that Burnham laments, and out of which he makes so much, are here defended and reduced to significance. Burnham subsequently responded to this criticism by again affirming that while structural reforms accounted for some of the change in turnout and split-ticket voting, they did not nearly account for all of it." That part of the change that remains unexplained by the structural reforms, he suggests, was caused by systemic or "behavioral" factors, such as widespread alienation from the political process caused by the collapse of meaningful competition. Here he appears to take as evidence for his own interpretations all that variation left unexplained by rival accounts. In addition, he suggests, these reforms were themselves put in place by systemic forces, here apparently referring to the industrial coalition, so that even the variation explained by the structural reforms may be enlisted in support of his theory.

It is curious, and in many ways inconsistent, that Burnham should praise so highly the system of electoral politics that prevailed in America between the Civil War and the turn of the century. It is praiseworthy, apparently, because of its high levels of electoral

16. See Jerrold Rusk, "The Effect of the Australian Ballot Reform on Split-Ticket Voting: 1876-1908," *American Political Science Review,* 64 (1970), pp. 1220-1238, and "Comment: The American Electoral Universe," *American Political Science Review,* 68 (1974), p. 1028-1048.

17. See Burnham, "Theory and Voting Research," op. *cit.*

mobilization. But what were the causes of this mobilization?-rivalries growing out of the Civil War, ethnic and religious conflicts, patronage and preferments, an unstable economy, and the drilling of voters by party organizations. Most have since approved of those adjustments made at the turn of the century that buried the earlier system, but Burnham laments its passing. He seems to want things both ways-he praises the system of local democracy that prevailed in the earlier period, but he also endorses, later in his book, attempts to impose central control over the economy, an objective that cannot be achieved, as Schattschneider recognized, without dismantling the decentralizing organizations of the pre-1900 party system. As things stand, the American welfare state could not have been created without the centralizing reforms that were put into place at the turn of the century. It may also be said that the chief modern opponents of the old party system are the architects and proponents of the modern welfare state.

This brings us to the New Deal realignment, which Burnham says wa unlike its predecessors in many ways because of the electoral disaggregation that had taken place in the preceding thirty years. It did not occur, for example, at a single "flash point," as did the realignments of the 1850s and 1890s. Large parts of the electorate-the South, parts of the Midwest-were untouched by it. National and local trends did not converge all that closely in several elections after 1932. And, he suggests, dubiously, that the New Deal realignment did not reach deeply into the operation of political institutions, as did the realignment of 1896. The Roosevelt realignment, in short, did not reverse the trend toward electoral disaggregation that had begun around the turn of the century. Roosevelt himself probably recognized this after the failure of his "purge" in the 1938 elections. By this time, Burnham says, "the Democratic party and electoral politics in general had become very blunt instruments for governing or for generating the power links needed to coordinate the presidency and Congress as component parts of the national policy-making process" (CE, 111). The New Deal replaced industrial rule with "disaggregated welfarism," but the changes it introduced fell far short of radical innovation.

Since the consolidation of the New Deal the trend toward electoral disaggregation has accelerated, picking up particular speed in the 1960s. He notes as evidence of this trend the great increase in the number of independents, the (George) Wallace candidacy, the fact

that split-ticket voting has again grown in frequency, the anti-partisan feeling among younger voters, and the failure of the Great Society to solve the distributional problems of late capitalism. Had this book been written a few years later, he might also have mentioned the "Watergate" episode. With all this in mind, he concludes that, "The political parties are progressively losing their hold on the electorate." This, he says further, may well point toward "the progressive dissolution of parties as action intermediaries in electoral choice and other politically relevant acts" (CE, 130). The consequences of such *a denouement* would be profound, for, as he says, the political parties, for all their shortcomings, "are the only devices thus far invented by the wit of Western man which...can generate countervailing collective power on behalf of the many individually powerless against the relatively few who are individually-or organizationally-powerful" (CE, 133). We have thus come to the end of an era in America: with the collapse of the parties, critical. realignments can no longer occur, and so the American system has lost that element that has kept its different parts working in rough harmony.

Burnham's conclusions about the New Deal, and the period following it, are based on the elevation of form over substance, and of the obscure over the obvious. He suggests that no great change occurred during the 1930s, in part because Roosevelt did not embrace genuine socialism, and in part because there were few changes in the standard voting indicators, save for that measuring the percent Democratic. Yet according to any substantive measure of politics or policy-sizes of government budgets, programs and regulations enacted, the content of judicial doctrines, groups organized or mobilized, the division of functions between levels of government-significant changes occurred as a result of Roosevelt's first two administrations. But Burnham brushes these aside because his attention is directed elsewhere. To be sure, the parties, or the party system, were not in this period restored to their pre-1900 form and vigor, but the New Deal agenda was inconsistent with such an aim, for it depended on the centralization rather than the decentralization of political forces. The New Deal agenda required more centralized parties, while the ones then in existence reflected the decentralization of the American political structure. The modern welfare state does not require strong parties anyway, because once in place such a state can organize its own clients, while a strong opposition party could at some point capture the state and dismantle the

welfare apparatus. A strong state rarely requires countervailing organizations in the society.

The contemporary "decline" of parties, then, is not the result of anonymous historical forces or of conspiracies led by businessmen. It is rather a partisan project, one sponsored by the reformed Democratic party. This party stands opposed to decentralizing organizations, and so it is bound to attack those state and local organizations that once formed the backbone of the party system. Nearly every reform of the past half-century that has weakened the existing parties-more primaries, public financing of campaigns, quotas for constituent groups in the national conventions, the supervision of local practices by federal courts and agencies, the elimination of patronage, and the organization of public employee unions-has been sponsored by the Democratic party, and within that party by its most liberal wing. The same is true of various anti-party proposals still not enacted into law, such as national presidential primaries and the abolition of the Electoral College. It is more plausible to believe that the New Deal was one of the great watersheds in American history, and that the "decline" of parties is encouraged by those forces allied with the welfare state. When looked at this way, it appears that the changes that occurred after 1896 were necessary conditions for the welfare state, and ones which, for the most part, supporters of the welfare state cannot condemn without contradiction.

The contemporary collapse of parties, Burnham argues, poses a grave threat to a state built on a foundation of "Lockian" values. Most Americans seem to accept the assumptions of "bourgeois individualism," along with the political arrangements accompanying them-decentralization, dispersion of power, and a "high wall of separation" between public and private and between the political system and the economic system. Realignment is a peculiar feature of such a "Lockian" polity, for it periodically reasserts balance between two spheres that ordinarily move along different tracks. Burnham makes it clear that he regards these "Lockian" arrangements as hopelessly outdated relics of an age of early capitalism. They survive in America, he says, again awkwardly, "because no very large group within the society is normally motivated to organize for the capture of state power in order to inaugurate central control over and transformations of the socioeconomic system" (CE, 177). They survive, in other words, because few people want a socialist system, though Burnham seems

to believe that they ought to want one. But the costs of the "Lockian" system have been very high. Burnham, here obviously grasping at straws, lists among these costs the "immense population transfers of the past generation," urbanization, and growing population now well past the 200 million mark (see CE, 187-188).

These circumstances point to a sharp conflict between the political interests and views of the middle classes and "the emergent need to employ central allocative and public authority to direct the future course of socioeconomic transformation" (CE, 188). But the prospects of such a transformation are dim, given Burnham's argument, in part because the party system, which might have organized it, is now in an advanced state of decay, and in part because the great middle class remains committed to "Lockian" pieties. A left-wing revolution is thus unlikely in America. The most likely scenario, Burnham concludes with some regret, is a right-wing realignment sponsored by an anxiety-ridden middle class. This could be a "vague and ambiguous affair," like so many other developments in American history, or, if the pressures on the middle class accumulate, it could lead to an authoritarian state, "perhaps somewhat analogous to the German regime under Wilhelm II" (CE, 193).

Burnham's fanciful and distorted account of contemporary politics can be dismissed without much comment. It reminds one of the man who stood on his head, and concluded that the world is upside down. Having adopted a Marxist view, he finds a Lockean order outdated or obsolescent, or increasingly at odds with reality. Similarly, he sees in every achievement of capitalism signs of its decay, or decomposition. Where everyone else sees improvement, he sees only deterioration; and where he must acknowledge improvement, as in the case of women's suffrage, he challenges the motives that brought it about. There are perhaps as many contradictions in his own theory as there are in the American system it purports to describe.

This is because, at bottom, Burnham wants to defend the party system while condemning Lockean institutions, without fully acknowledging that the party system is a prime example of Lockean arrangement. The parties are majoritarian institutions, he says correctly, but he then takes the unwarranted step of concluding that the parties, or at least one of the parties, may be used to centralize power in order to seize control over the means of production. American parties have never had this capacity because they are

themselves decentralizing institutions, in part because they reflect the wishes of most Americans. Burnham has said as much in other places, but he has not incorporated it into his view of American politics, for to do so would be to abandon his admiration for nineteenth century political parties. The political ends that he endorses cannot finally be achieved by the political forms that he so strongly praises.

VIII.

Both Schattschneider and Burnham eventually return to the fundamental causes of the American party system-Schattschneider to the Constitution, and Burnham to "Lockian" values. Yet both, in the end, leap beyond their own carefully drawn conclusions to hope that the party system can overcome and defeat the cause that has shaped it. Schattschneider wants the party system to reform the Constitution, and Burnham wants it to overthrow Locke. Neither is very likely, for the American party system was first organized in order to block the kinds of political objectives that both Schattschneider and Burnham here endorse. The parties are popular institutions, but they were first organized at a time when popular rule meant the limitation of government power. "Their force was suited rather for opposition than for action," says Gibbon of the Roman tribunes, but the description might apply as well to American political parties.

Schattschneider says that we have never had a debate on the value of parties, and that Madison was a great anti-party theorist, but there was once such a debate, Madison participated in it, and there he endorsed in theory and practice the formation of the first modern political party in America. The occasion was brought about by the growing opposition by Jefferson and his allies to Hamilton's commercial and financial policies. Madison was eventually persuaded by Jefferson to take up his pen in opposition to Hamilton. In a series of papers published in *The National Gazette* in 1791 and 1792 Madison explained why republicans opposed Hamilton's program, and why their opposition justified the formation of a Republican party.[18] A few words about Madison's party papers, then, may have

18. See *The Writings of James Madison,* edited by Gilliard Hunt, (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1906), Volume VI, pp. 67-123. Harry Jaffa is one of the few modern writers who have called attention to Madison's party papers, and to the importance of this debate about party government. The following discussion draws on his unpub-

some bearing on the subject of party government.

Hamilton's commercial and international objectives presupposed executive leadership in formulating policy, and a strong administrative role in carrying it out. He wanted to encourage the development of a commercial republic, which required the government to encourage the formation of commercial interests in the society at the expense of those interests that had arisen "naturally"-that is, without assistance from the state. His overall program was designed to strengthen the nation, and thus the national government, at the expense of the states. This required an elastic interpretation of the Constitution, and some discretion for the judiciary in drawing the boundary between state and national power. The powers of the more democratic and decentralizing institutions-Congress and the state governments-were necessarily subordinated in this enterprise. Hamilton's program did not require for its success a strong party in the society, for the state itself might organize its supporters through the disbursement of bounties, licenses, and tariffs. Hamilton thus seemed to be organizing a "government party," one based on the distribution of political advantage. The politics on which such a party was based were necessarily centralizing and administrative, at least from the standpoint of the time.

Given their collaboration on *The Federalist,* and given Madison's statements there about property and majority rule, Hamilton perhaps had good reason to believe that Madison would join in support of his program. But Madison was in time convinced, perhaps by Jefferson, that Hamilton's project was anti-republican in spirit. In a not so thinly veiled reference to Hamilton and his supporters, Madison attacked those who believed "that government can be carried on only by the pageantry of rank, the influence of money and emoluments, and the terror of military force." They hope, he continued, "that by giving such a turn to the administration, the government itself may by degrees be narrowed into fewer hands, and approximated to an hereditary form."[18] This was a theme that came up again and again in the writings and speeches of Madison and his associates, and so the distinction between monarchy and

lished paper, "A Phoenix from the Ashes: The Death of James Madison's Constitution (Killed by James Madison) and the Birth of Party Government," prepared for delivery at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Washington, D.C. 1977.

19. "A Candid State of Parties," *ibid.,* pp. 116-118,

republicanism was in some way fundamental to their view of the party conflict just then forming.

This distinction seems to hinge, in part, on the relationship between government and society. In *The Federalist* Madison had described monarchy as a government operating through "a will independent of society," while republican government depends on the will of society itself-though a will informed and limited by a constitution.[20] Earlier in *Federalist* No. 10 he had implied that a republic differs from a democracy in that the one enforces through the scheme of representation a separation between government and society, while the other cannot enforce such a separation.[21] This theme was then picked up again in his papers, where, after noting that "No government is perhaps reducible to a sole principle of operation," he proceeds to reduce the different forms to a single principle. After briefly describing the rival forms of "government by permanent military force" and "government operating by corrupt influence," he says that republican government is one "deriving its energy from the will of the society, and operating by the reason of its measures, on the understanding and interest of the society."[22] The alternative to such a system, he said in another paper, is one which leaves "the whole government to that *self directed course,* which, it must be owned, is the natural propensity of every government."[23]

The answer to Hamilton's attempt to consolidate the government was, Madison suggested, to encourage a consolidation of opinion against it. Here Madison seemed to reconsider his emphasis in *The Federalist* on conflict of interest, for he now says, "But if a consolidation of the states into one government be an event so justly to be avoided, it is not less to be desired, on the other hand, that a consolidation should prevail in their interests and affections."[24] To the extent that "uniformity is found to prevail in the interests and sentiments of the several states," it will be possible to accommodate legislative regulations to them, and thus to withhold "new and dangerous prerogatives from the executive." In addition, the greater the harmony of interests among the states, "the more seasonably can they interpose a common manifestation of their sentiments, the more certainly will they take the alarm at usurpation or oppression,

20. See *Federalist* No, 51, in Cooke (ed.), *op. cit.,* p. 351.
21, See *Federalist* No. 10, in Cooke (ed.), pp. 61-62.
22. "Spirit of Governments," *Writings, op. cit.,* pp. 93-94.
23. "Consolidation," *ibid., p.* 67 (emphasis Madison's).
24. "Consolidation," *ibid.,* p. 68.

and the more effectually will they *consolidate* their defence of the public liberty."[25]

Madison here drew the further distinction between governmental and political centralization, or consolidation. Political consolidation seems to involve the organization of opinion, or of the society, as a way of defending the real interests of the society against the state. Governmental consolidation occurs, then, where political consolidation of the society is weak: "All power has been traced up to opinion," says Madison. "The stability of all governments and the security of all rights may be traced to the same source."[26] It follows, then, that in republican systems public opinion should be both enlightened and organized. Public opinion may be enlightened, he suggests, by attaching it to the public charters of liberty-the constitutions of the states, and that of the United States. "In proportion as government is influenced by opinion, it must be so, by whatever influences opinion. This decides the question concerning a Constitutional Declaration of Rights, which requires an influence on government, by becoming a part of public opinion."[27] Republican opinion, once formed and disciplined by republican constitutions, may in turn be organized by a Republican party.

Madison's party, and his vision of party government, was in no way hostile to the Constitution, nor to the separation of powers it established. His Republican party sought to put into practice a particular understanding of the Constitution, one not entertained by Hamilton and other Federalists. Yet the Republican enterprise required the elevation of the Constitution to the level of a near sacred article, for if opinion was to discipline government, something then had to discipline opinion by becoming part of it. Hamilton's program did not rely so heavily on the organization of opinion, and for this reason party government was not required by his program, nor was it even congenial to it. Party government was, rather, more congenial to Madison's plans, and since he helped to organize the first American party, it became part of the program of that party.

Out of this original clash there developed in America the tension between party politics, on the one hand, and governmental centralization and bureaucracy, on the other. It is thus no accident that the contemporary collapse of parties has gone hand-in-hand with

25. "Consolidation," *ibid.,* p. 68 (emphasis Madison's).
26. "Charters," *ibid.,* p. 85.
27. "Public Opinion," *ibid.,* p. 70.

governmental centralization and the accumulation of bureaucracy. The leaders of the original Republican party attacked Hamilton's program, and the politics on which it rested, by organizing voters, and by appealing to them on the basis of republican principles, which were inherently decentralizing and hostile to administration, as was the very process of party politics. Though it sought to decentralize government, the party managed at the same time to provide political organization for the society-though it did so on the basis of decentralizing doctrines. There were thus conflicting and compensating aspects of the Republican program: it tried to decentralize politics by organizing the society; it attacked executive power, but in some ways increased it by turning the president into a party leader; and it provided a vehicle for majority rule, and thus for majority tyranny, but this was tempered by its own doctrine of strict construction of the Constitution, which, because it was a party doctrine, became a popular doctrine.

Political parties in democratic system are commonly understood to "link" government and society by organizing and representing private interests. There are those, as we have seen, who are dissatisfied with American parties because they have not sufficiently organized support to extend public control over the economy. The party Madison helped to found was organized to block this kind of enterprise by establishing a "wall of separation" between government and society, a wall enforced, in turn, by the opinion that the two are in fact separate spheres. This "wall of separation" was the Republican party itself. That party not only stood for the abstract principle, but it helped to establish it in practice by "standing between" government and society, and by making the one responsive to the other. The philosophical program of Madison's party was in this sense similar to the purposes or functions of parties generally as they are now understood. Our very definition of "party" is thus an abstraction from the program of the first successful American party. What is now regarded as an analytical definition was at one time a party proposition.

Madison argued, along with his fellow Republicans, that the majority should govern, and that the state should be subordinated to society. The victory of his party over the Federalists eventually made those claims true in fact. It is now commonplace to observe tht the state is subordinated to the society, and that politics reflect social interests, but this subordination required an original political act that is found in the creation of the modern party. From all this it ap-

pears, then, that party government in America was designed, and to a large extent has functioned, to preserve the separation between public and private, or between the state and the society. This is why those who would destroy these distinctions must in the end destroy or reconstitute the party system.

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Curing the Mischiefs of James Madison*

Political scientists are a variegated lot, but one experience that most of us share is that of being dragooned more or less regularly to teach the introductory course in American government. And while the glut of textbooks attests to the multiplicity of approaches that might be taken to such a course, not many of us fail to pay our respects to James Madison-usually by including the tenth *Federalist* on our syllabi. Nevertheless, Madison's thought remains elusive, especially as it pertains to the study of political parties.

There are among us those (the descendents of Charles Beard[1])

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1. *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States* (New York: Macmillan, 1913). By this reference I merely mean to summarize Martin Diamond's point in the following passage:

> Unlike modern "value-free" social scientists, the Founding Fathers believed that true knowledge of the good and bad in human conduct was possible, and that they themselves possessed sufficient knowledge to discern the really grave defects of popular government and their proper remedies. The modern relativistic or positivistic theories, implicitly employed by most commentators on the Founding Fathers, deny the possibility of such true knowledge and