

"without government,
under these
circumstances, is
coup



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" Without the party system," says Maclver, " the State has no elasticity, no true self- determination.

" Irresponsible and irresponsible government is based upon force rather than on the will of the people. The only method of securing a change of government, under these circumstances, is coup d'etat or revolution. But a party government lives and thrives on public opinion. Force is replaced by appeal. It regards " persuasion as more desirable than compulsion, and the conflict of ideas more creative than the clash of arms." The party system ensures sober and healthy criticism of government both inside and outside the legislature. Since it is a government by criticism, Opposition acts as a check on hasty, ill-considered, and class legislation. The party in power is amenable to the opinions of the Opposition and it is always eager to accept its reasonable suggestions, for the indispensable conditions of majority rule are forbearance, moderation and generosity.

Both the majority and the Opposition accept the principle of " live and let live" in the knowledge that the system of representative democracy allows to each in turn and in time its fair share of power. The party system was in particular the mechanism by which the class-State was transformed into the nation-State. All States at one stage of their development were class- States. Their government was controlled by and in the interests of the dominant classes.

" The decisive distinction is between the classes and the masses, the classes in this significance being generally two, the nobility and the clergy." The authority of the nobility rested upon the ownership of land, the leadership in

war and the prestige of birth and station. The authority of the priesthood rested on the prestige of culture and spiritual dominance. Government under these conditions of class rule was not amenable to public opinion. The masses had nothing to do with the policy of the government. They led a life of suppression, frustration and desperation. But party-rule is the antithesis of class-rule.

Party, in fact, begins as a protest against the vested interests and inviolable rights of the class in power. Party-rule " implies the alteration of power, a system of succession which gives each its opportunity." If the policy of the party in power is not approved by the people, it must necessarily give place to the party or parties in Opposition. Thus, party system has furthered the ends of democratic government by organising and directing public opinion. Political parties " make articulate the inarticulate desires of the masses.

" They act, in the words of Lowell, as the brokers of ideas. Furthermore, the party system promotes legislative excellence and makes elections easy by nominating candidates much in advance of the actual polling. It has two advantages. In the first place, the electorate comes to know the candidates and their labels.

They, accordingly, get sufficient time to consider their comparative worth as representatives and evaluate the policies of their respective parties.

Secondly, political parties help candidates to secure election through their collective strength. Party funds and party organisation help the election of poor and also able politicians who otherwise would have no chance of being elected. Political parties also bring harmony between the two wings of

government, the Executive and the Legislative. Under the Parliamentary system of government the party commanding a majority in the legislature forms the government and is answerable to it for all their public acts. In the oft-quoted words of Bagehot, Cabinet is a hyphen that joins, a buckle that binds the Executive and Legislative departments together.

The Fathers of the American Constitution put asunder the Executive and Legislative departments by rigidly adhering to the doctrine of the Separation of Powers and consequently established the Presidential system of government. But the political parties now join what the Fathers had scattered. A President, according to Theodore Roosevelt, combines in his person the two offices of King and Prime Minister. The President is chosen as a party man to lead a government operated under a party system. He surrounds himself with advisers of his own faith, consults usually with men belonging to his party in Congress for appointments, confers with his own men in the party in formulating policy, and he uses his power as chief legislator to push through the party's programme to a crowning victory. Then, by their election campaigns political parties arouse public spirit and influence the masses to take active interest in public affairs. In this way, they inculcate civic enthusiasm and help in the realization of the democratic spirit, that vigilance is the price of democracy.

Political parties help the people to feel that they are the masters of their own destiny. They determine for themselves the kind of government they wish to have. Bryce has cogently said, " Party strife is a sort of education for those willing to receive instruction, and something soaks through even into the less interested or thoughtful electors.

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The parties keep a nation's mind alive, as the rise and fall of the sweeping tide freshens the water of long ocean inlets." Moreover, political parties gather up the whole nation into fellowship and "they lead," as Herman Finer says, "in the sense of bringing to the individual citizen a vision of the whole nation, otherwise distant in history, territory and futurity." The party system, thus, broadens the horizon of voters and representatives alike by breaking sectional barriers and discounting local interests.

The political parties are really nationalising agencies. Finally, the party system involves discipline. It not only brings order out of the chaos of a multitude of voters, it trains the members themselves in loyalty and consistency. Loyalty and allegiance are its watchwords, and obedience its rigid demand. Without this no party can exist and more so succeed in its political objective.