

Political the parties is
to supply the
majorities



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Political parties, therefore, bring order out of chaos by putting before a multitude of people their programmes and securing their approval on vital issues of policy. They plan and contest elections and endeavour to win by taking up positions on policy matters and presenting them as choices between parties. By raising issues, selecting from them, taking sides and generating political heat they educate the public and clarify opinion.

As a consequence of this ordering of competing men and measures political parties create and keep open lines of communication between governors and governed, through which government may work more effectively. Opposition opposes and the public reacts. In this way, political parties are responsible for maintaining a continuous link between the public and those who represent them either in the government or in the Opposition. The first role of the political parties is to sort out the issues for the electorate.

They select candidates for election, plan and execute the election campaign and present them with alternatives to the people between which they may choose. Parties are alternatives and the programmes which they put before the electorate; represent a selection made by each party out of the numerous possible issues of the moment. Herman Finer remarks that without parties " an electorate would be either impotent or destructive by embarking on impossible policies that would only wreck the political machine." The second role of the parties is to supply the majorities without which government cannot remain in power. If there were no parties, if members of legislatures were completely disorganised and formed only a mass of men voting one way today and another way tomorrow, the government could not be sure how long it could stay in power. It would, consequently, have no

stability and no power to plan a coherent policy, national or international. In fact, it would be difficult to form a government under such chaotic conditions.

Parties hold the representatives together subjecting them to the party whip and party discipline. The legislatures cannot work smoothly without party whip and party whip is necessary for party solidarity and for carrying out a coherent policy or programme. Parties provide alternative teams to run the government. They prevent the same people remaining in power too long and looking on an office as a matter of right. A party system guarantees to the electorate that change in government can be effected if they wish it. It is always wholesome to know that no one is indispensable in politics and you can be replaced tomorrow.

A party system always reminds the rulers that the ultimate appeal rests with the people, and they must remember those to whom they will have to account in the future as well as those who entrusted them with power. Under a representative government you hold your job on good behaviour only finally, where considerable separation and division of powers exist, as under the Presidential system, political parties serve as the necessary unifying agency. In the United States political parties have united what the Constitution had put asunder.