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Foreword

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## FOREWORD

This is the proper place to answer four questions: What is the purpose of this publication? What is its thesis? How were its conclusions arrived at? And on whose authority are they offered?

The *purpose* of this publication is to bring about fuller public appreciation of a basic weakness in the American two-party system. In other words, this is not a research document aimed at professional readers only. It seeks the attention of every one interested in politics. It is therefore written without regard for the customary form in which scholars present their scientific findings. It does not line up and evaluate every pertinent fact. It sums up the main facts.

At the same time, this publication is a summation of professional knowledge. Its authors are students of politics. Each has previously examined in separate studies various aspects of the broad subject here discussed. Although this is a summation of knowledge, it rests on the results of scientific analysis that have come from the research activity of a great number of specialists.

Of course, if the American two-party system suffers from a basic weakness, the most important thing is effective remedy. Remedy requires not only understanding of the ailment but also willingness to try a likely cure. Both understanding and willingness, in turn, must be fairly widespread. It is not enough for a few people to know about ailment and cure. Before action has a chance, knowledge must first become sufficiently common. The character of this publication is explained by the conviction of its authors that the weakness of the American two-party system can be overcome as soon as a substantial part of the electorate wants it overcome. Hence it is essential to reach the ears of many citizens.

And the *thesis*? It can be put quite briefly. Historical and other factors have caused the American two-party system to operate as two loose associations of state and local organizations, with very little national machinery and very little national cohesion. As a result, either major party, when in power, is ill-equipped to organize its members in the legislative and the executive branches into a government held together and guided by the party program. Party responsibility at the polls thus tends to vanish. This is a very serious matter, for it affects the very heartbeat of American democracy. It also poses grave problems of domestic and foreign policy in an era when it is no longer safe for the nation to deal piecemeal with issues that can be disposed of only on the basis of coherent programs.

Can anything be done about it? Yes, a good many things can be done about it. In presenting suggestions, however, this publication confines itself to showing concrete lines of approach. Its authors do not believe in panaceas. Nor do they believe that organizational and procedural rearrangements by themselves work lasting changes. Real change comes from an appreciation of its need, by ordinary citizens as well as by political leaders. Such proposals for readjustment of the party machinery as are offered here are meant to meet the perfectly sensible complaint that purely negative criticism is of little use.

In *arriving at the conclusions* embodied in this publication, its authors have relied upon the methods of analysis they are familiar with through their training and work as political scientists. Though scientific knowledge about the American party system is by no means complete, it was found practicable here to build upon available data and insights. The most important thing appeared to be to present the available knowledge in the perspective of its principal inferences.

To this end, the authors, working together over almost four years as the Committee on Political Parties of the American Political Science Association, have gathered ideas and information in various ways. They have written and exchanged a considerable number of professional papers and memoranda on individual parts of the large subject before them. They have sought and obtained professional contributions and recommendations from other political scientists with specialized knowledge. They have consulted with many people engaged practically in different segments of the political process, both individually and in special sessions as far apart as New York and Seattle. And they have held open and closed meetings for the purpose of joint consideration of difficult problems and crystallization of conclusions. A conscientious effort has been made to get hold of every strand of thinking on the American two-party system.

In approaching its task in this way, the Committee on Political Parties was necessarily influenced by the degree of financial support it was able to secure for its activity. Initially, it had been hoped to obtain funds for an extensive fresh study of a subject as vital to democratic government as the party system. These hopes proved futile. As a result, the Committee on Political Parties had to live on a shoestring. The American Political Science Association made available a sum of money, which covered the larger part of the Committee's travel and duplicating costs. Without this grant the Committee could hardly have begun to take up its work. Even so some of the essential costs had to be met out of the pockets of individual members and to some extent by the institutions they are serving.

This publication has gone through several stages and more than one draft. A fairly complete preliminary draft, based upon the work done during the preceding years, was finally developed in the spring of 1950. The preliminary draft was circulated widely among men and women whose knowledge of the political process the Committee was eager to bring to bear upon the emerging report. These included members of Congress, staff assistants to legislators, civic leaders, legislative representatives of interest groups, members of the press, officers and staff aides in the executive agencies, experts associated with private research foundations and teachers of political science. The preliminary draft was also taken up with the National Committees of the two major parties.

Valuable comments on the preliminary draft were received formally and informally from various party officials as well as from individual members of Congress. Congressman Joseph W. Martin, Jr., Minority Leader of the House of Representatives, was especially generous in giving the Committee the benefit of his great experience. The Committee owes a similar debt to members of the staff of the President.

A complete list of all those to whom the Committee is indebted for counsel and criticism in improving the preliminary draft would take much space. Here it must suffice to name only some of those who have been particularly helpful. They include: William Anderson, University of Minnesota; Stephen K. Bailey, Wesleyan University; Louis Bean, Department of Agriculture; Donald C. Blaisdell, Department of State; Richard S. Childs, National Municipal League; Kenneth Colegrove, Northwestern University; Edwin A. Cottrell, Haynes Foundation; Frederick M. Davenport, Federal Personnel Council; John A. Davis, Lincoln University; H. Schuyler Foster, Department of State; George B. Galloway, Library of Congress; Joseph P. Harris, University of California; Arthur N. Holcombe, Harvard University; Avery Leiseron, University of Chicago; Norton E. Long, Western Reserve University; Lewis Meriam, Brookings Institution; Charles E. Merriam, University of Chicago; Harold W. Metz, Brookings Institution; Don K. Price, Public Administration Clearing House; Floyd M. Riddick, Congressional Daily Digest; Lloyd M. Short, University of Minnesota; Harold Stein, Committee on Public Administration Cases; and John A. Vieg, Pomona College.

The Committee owes a special debt of gratitude to James K. Pollock, University of Michigan, and Peter H. Odegard, University of California, for their strong support of the Committee's work as President and President-Elect, respectively, of the American Political Science Association. Thanks are also due Taylor Cole, Duke University, who as Man-

aging Editor of the *AMERICAN POLITICAL SCIENCE REVIEW* undertook to have this report printed and distributed as a supplement to the fall issue.

Finally, *whose voice is heard* in this publication? Its conclusions stand solely on the professional judgment of the members of the Committee on Political Parties. The American Political Science Association, with its large membership, does not put itself on record as a body behind findings agreed upon among groups of political scientists, including its own committees. The American Political Science Association, through its chosen organs, has approved the publication of this report as the work of its Committee on Political Parties. Such approval means no formal endorsement of the substance of the report.

And who are the members of the Committee on Political Parties? They are: Thomas S. Barclay, Stanford University; Clarence A. Berdahl, University of Illinois; Hugh A. Bone, University of Washington; Franklin L. Burdette, University of Maryland; Paul T. David, Brookings Institution; Merle Fainsod, Harvard University; Bertram M. Gross, Council of Economic Advisers; E. Allen Helms, Ohio State University; E. M. Kirkpatrick, Department of State; John W. Lederle, University of Michigan; Fritz Morstein Marx, American University; Louise Overacker, Wellesley College; Howard Penniman, Department of State; Kirk H. Porter, State University of Iowa; J. B. Shannon, University of Kentucky; and E. E. Schattschneider, Wesleyan University, as chairman.

The drafting committee was composed of: Clarence A. Berdahl, Bertram M. Gross, Louise Overacker, E. E. Schattschneider, and Fritz Morstein Marx, as chairman.

How does a committee of this kind get under way? To make a long story short, the Committee on Political Parties was organized on the model of an earlier committee of the American Political Science Association, the Committee on Congress. This committee, under the chairmanship of George B. Galloway, had made a large and widely acknowledged contribution toward the strengthening of Congress and the passage in 1946 of the Legislative Reorganization Act. On the other hand, the efforts of the Committee on Congress had dealt only indirectly with the party system. It was therefore logical to raise the question of further ways and means of increasing the Federal Government's capacity for coping effectively with the momentous problems of our times. The more thought was given to this question, the clearer became the pivotal character of the party system.

On the strength of these considerations, the American Political Science Association created the Committee on Political Parties at its annual

meeting in Cleveland in December, 1946. From the outset, however, it was made quite explicit that the new committee should center its attention on the condition and improvement of *national* party organization. This emphasis has governed the work of the Committee from its inception. The same emphasis is manifest in the Committee's report.

In presenting this report, the Committee on Political Parties is impressed with its own limitations, with the areas that have remained inadequately illuminated, and with the rich opportunities for research that challenge the imagination of the student of political parties. It is gratifying that the work of the Committee has not only aroused much new interest but also proved useful as a stepping stone for several recent contributions to the literature on the American party system. Nothing would be more satisfying to the whole committee membership than to know that its report has served as a starting point for constructive public debate, creative political action, and more intensive scientific studies.

*August, 1950*