Summary of Conclusions and Proposals

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SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS AND PROPOSALS

PART I. THE NEED FOR GREATER PARTY RESPONSIBILITY

1. *The Role of the Political Parties*

1. *The Parties and Public Policy.* Popular government in a nation of more than 150 million people requires political parties which provide the electorate with a proper range of choice between alternatives of action. In order to keep the parties apart, one must consider the relations between each and public policy. The reasons for the growing emphasis on public policy in party politics are to be found, above all, in the very operations of modern government.

2. *The New Importance of Program.* The crux of public affairs lies in the necessity for more effective formulation of general policies and programs and for better integration of all of the far-flung activities of modern government. It is in terms of party programs that political leaders can attempt to consolidate public attitudes toward the work plans of government.

3. *The Potentialities of the Party System.* The potentialities of the two-party system are suggested, on the one hand, by the fact that for all practical purposes the major parties monopolize elections; and, on the other, by the fact that both parties have in the past managed to adapt themselves to the demands made upon them by external necessities. It is good practical politics to reconsider party organization in the light of the changing conditions of politics. Happily such an effort entails an application of ideas about the party system that are no longer unfamiliar.

2. *What Kind of Party System Is Needed?*

The party system that is needed must be democratic, responsible and effective.

I. A Stronger Two-party System

1. *The Need for an Effective Party System.* An effective party system requires, first, that the parties are able to bring forth programs to which they commit themselves and, second, that the parties possess sufficient internal cohesion to carry out these programs. Such a degree of unity within the parties cannot be brought about without party procedures that give a large body of people an opportunity to share in the development of the party program.

2. *The Need for an Effective Opposition Party.* The fundamental requirement of accountability is a two-party system in which the opposition party acts as the critic of the party in power, developing, defining

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and presenting the policy alternatives which are necessary for a true choice in reaching public decisions. The opposition most conducive to responsible government is an organized party opposition.

II. Better Integrated Parties

1. *The Need for a Party System with Greater Resistance to Pressure.* There is little to suggest that the phenomenal growth of interest organizations in recent decades has come to its end. The whole development makes necessary a reinforced party system that can cope with the multiplied organized pressures. Compromise among interests is compatible with the aims of a free society only when the terms of reference reflect an openly acknowledged concept of the public interest.

2. *The Need for a Party System with Sufficient Party Loyalty.* Needed clarification of party policy will not cause the parties to differ more fundamentally or more sharply than they have in the past. Nor is it to be assumed that increasing concern with their programs will cause the parties to erect between themselves an ideological wall. Parties have the right and the duty to announce the terms to govern participation in the common enterprise. The emphasis in all consideration of party discipline must be on positive measures to create a strong and general agreement on policies. A basis for party cohesion in Congress will be established as soon as the parties interest themselves sufficiently in their congressional candidates to set up strong and active campaign organizations in the constituencies.

III. More Responsible Parties

1. *The Need for Parties Responsible to the Public.* Party responsibility means the responsibility of both parties to the general public, as enforced in elections. Party responsibility to the public, enforced in elections, implies that there be more than one party, for the public can hold a party responsible only if it has a choice. As a means of achieving responsibility, the clarification of party policy also tends to keep public debate on a more realistic level, restraining the inclination of party spokesmen to make unsubstantiated statements and charges.

2. *The Need for Parties Responsible to Their Members.* Party responsibility includes also the responsibility of party leaders to the party membership, as enforced in primaries, caucuses and conventions. The external and the internal kinds of party responsibility need not conflict. Intraparty conflict will be minimized if it is generally recognized that national, state and local party leaders have a common responsibility to the party membership. National party leaders have a legitimate interest in the nomination of congressional candidates.

3. *The Inadequacy of the Existing Party System*

I. Beginning Transition

1. *Change and Self-examination.* Marked changes in the structure and processes of American society have necessarily affected the party system. The prevailing climate of self-examination as well as the current tendencies toward change in the party system give point to inquiries like that represented by our report.

2. *Burden of the Past.* Formal party organization in its main features is still substantially what it was before the Civil War. Under these circumstances the main trends of American politics have tended to outflank the party system.

II. Some Basic Problems

1. *The Federal Basis.* The two parties are organized on a federal basis. The national and state party organizations are largely independent of one another, without appreciable common approach to problems of party policy and strategy. The real issue is not over the federal form of organization but over the right balance of forces within this type of organization. A corollary of the kind of federalism now expressed in the party system is an excessive measure of internal separatism.

2. *The Location of Leadership.* Party organization does not vest leadership of the party as a whole in either a single person or a committee. There is at present no central figure or organ which could claim authority to take up party problems, policies and strategy.

3. *The Ambiguity of Membership.* No understandings or rules or criteria exist with respect to membership in a party. Those who suggest that elections should deal with personalities but not with programs suggest at the same time that party membership should mean nothing at all.

III. Specific Deficiencies

1. *National Party Organs.* The National Convention, as at present constituted and operated, is an unwieldy, unrepresentative and less than responsible body. The National Committee is seldom a generally influential body and much less a working body. House and Senate campaign committees do not always have a good working relationship with the National Committee. Although interest in questions of party policy has grown, the national party organs are not so constituted nor so coordinated as to make it simple for them to pay enough attention to these questions.

2. *Party Platforms.* Alternatives between the parties are defined so badly that it is often difficult to determine what the election has decided

even in broadest terms. The prevailing procedure for the writing and adoption of national party platforms is too hurried and too remote from the process by which actual decisions are made to command the respect of the whole party and the electorate. The platform should be the end product of a long search for a working agreement within the party.

3. *Intraparty Democracy.* Too little consideration has been given to ways and means of bringing about a constructive relationship between the party and its members. In making the most of popular participation, the performance of American parties is very unsatisfactory.

4. *Party Research.* A party stands as much in need of research as does business enterprise or the government itself.

4. *New Demands upon Party Leadership*
I. The Nature of Modern Public Policy

1. *Broad Range of Policy.* The expanding responsibilities of modern government have brought about so extensive an interlacing of governmental action with the country's economic and social life that the need for coordinated and coherent programs, legislative as well as administrative, has become paramount. In a democracy no general program can be adopted and carried out without wide public support.

2. *Impact on the Public.* In a predominantly industrial society, public policy tends to be widely inclusive, involving in its objectives and effects very large segments of the public or even the whole country.

3. *Governmental Program Machinery.* On the side of government, in the administrative and the legislative spheres, the twin needs for program formulation and for program machinery have long been recognized. The governmental advance toward program formulation needs now to be paralleled in the political sphere proper—above all, in the party system.

II. Rise of Nation-wide Policy Issues

1. *An Historic Trend.* The changes in the nature and scope of public policy are the result of changes in the social structure and in the economy of the United States.

2. *Past and Present Factors.* There has been in recent decades a continuing decline of sectionalism. Party organization designed to deal with the increasing volume of national issues must give wide range to the national party leadership.

3. *New Interest Groups in Politics.* The economic and social factors that have reduced the weight of sectionalism have also resulted in the development of a new type of interest groups, built upon large membership. To a much greater extent than in the past, they operate as if they were auxiliary organizations of one or the other party.

5. *The Question of Constitutional Amendment*

1. *A Cabinet System?* A responsible cabinet system makes the leaders of the majority collectively accountable for the conduct of the government.

2. *Strong Parties as a Condition.* To amend the Constitution in order to create a responsible cabinet system is not a practicable way of getting more effective parties.

3. *Adaptation Within the Constitution.* The parties can do much to adapt the usages under the Constitution to their purposes.

PART II. PROPOSALS FOR PARTY RESPONSIBILITY

6. *National Party Organization*

I. Principal Party Bodies

1. *The National Convention.* We assume its continuation as the principal representative and deliberative organ of the party. The convention should meet at least biennially, with easy provision for special meetings. It should also cease to be a delegate convention of unwieldy size.

2. *The National Committee.* It is highly desirable for the National Convention to reassert its authority over the National Committee through a more active participation in the final selection of the committee membership. It is also desirable that the members of the National Committee reflect the actual strength of the party within the areas they represent.

3. *The Party Council.* We propose a Party Council of 50 members. Such a Party Council should consider and settle the larger problems of party management, within limits prescribed by the National Convention; propose a preliminary draft of the party platform to the National Convention; interpret the platform in relation to current problems; choose for the National Convention the group of party leaders outside the party organizations; consider and make recommendations to appropriate party organs in respect to congressional candidates; and make recommendations to the National Convention, the National Committee or other appropriate party organs with respect to conspicuous departures from general party decisions by state or local party organizations. In presidential years, the council would naturally become a place for the discussion of presidential candidacies, and might well perform the useful function of screening these candidacies in a preliminary way. Within this Party Council there might well be a smaller group of party advisers to serve as a party cabinet.

II. Intraparty Relationships

1. *State and Local Party Organizations.* Organizational patterns of the parties are predicated on the assumption that a party committee is necessary for each electoral area. There is a growing dissatisfaction with the results of this system on the local level, especially the multiplicity of organizations. An increasing number of state legislators are noting the breakdown or lack of party responsibility and discipline and the growth of internal separatism in state government. It is necessary for both parties to reexamine their purposes and functions in the light of the present-day environment, state and local, in which they operate.

2. *Relations between National, State and Local Organizations.* Establishment of a Party Council would do much to coordinate the different party organizations, and should be pressed with that objective in mind. Regional conferences held by both parties have clearly been fruitful. Regional party organizations should be encouraged. Local party organizations should be imbued with a stronger sense of loyalty to the entire party organization and feel their responsibility for promoting the broader policies of the party. This can be done by fostering local party meetings, regularly and frequently held, perhaps monthly. The national organization may deal with conspicuous or continued disloyalty on the part of any state organization. Consideration should be given to the development of additional means of dealing with rebellious and disloyal state organizations.

3. *Headquarters and Staff.* Both parties are now aware of the need to maintain permanent headquarters, with staff equipped for research and publicity. A beginning has been made, but much still remains to be done. Staff development at party headquarters provides the essential mechanism to enable each party to concern itself appropriately with its continuing responsibilities.

7. *Party Platforms*

I. Nature of the Platform

1. *Alternative Purposes.* Should the party platform be a statement of general principles representing the permanent or long-range philosophy of the party? Or should it state the party's position on immediate issues? Actually, the platform is usually made up of both the more permanent and the more fleeting elements.

2. *Interpretation of the Platform.* As a body representing the various parts of the party structure, the Party Council should be able to give authoritative and reasonably acceptable interpretations of the platform.

3. *National-state Platform Conflicts.* What is needed is better coordi-

nation in the declaration of party principles. The Party Council would be the appropriate party agency to interpret the respective platforms and determine the right position in case of conflict. There is very little likelihood indeed for the Party Council to be inconsiderate of arguable claims of state autonomy.

4. *Binding Character.* In spite of clear implications and express pledges, there has been much difference of opinion as to the exact binding quality of a platform. All of this suggests the need for appropriate machinery, such as a Party Council, to interpret and apply the national program in respect to doubts or details. When that is done by way of authoritative and continuing statement, the party program should be considered generally binding.

II. Problems of Platform-making

1. *Method of Formulating Party Platforms.* Occasionally the state platforms are deliberately delayed until after the national platform has been adopted, in order to have a basis for conformity. Such practice is to be encouraged, and state legislation that prevents it ought to be changed. A method of platform-making that is closely related to the congressional as well as to the presidential campaign must be developed, and with more direct participation by the party members of Congress.

2. *Improvement of Platforms and Platform-making.* In both parties, the Platform Committee or a working part of it is now appointed some weeks in advance of the National Convention. The practice of holding public hearings on the policies to be incorporated into the platform has been fairly well established. This consultation is of importance, for it makes the parties aware of the interest in particular policies.

3. *Proposals.* Party platforms should be formulated at least every two years. National platforms should emphasize general party principles and national issues. State and local platforms should be expected to conform to the national platform on matters of general party principle or on national policies. To achieve better machinery for platform-making, the Party Council, when set up, should prepare a tentative draft well in advance of the National Convention for the consideration of the appropriate convention committee and the convention itself. Local party meetings should be held for the discussion and consideration of platform proposals.

8. *Party Organization in Congress*

I. Introduction

1. *External Factors.* A higher degree of party responsibility in Congress cannot be provided merely by actions taken within Congress. Nevertheless, action within Congress can be of decisive significance.

2. *Continuous Evolution.* The materials for responsible party operations in Congress are already on hand. The key to progress lies in making a full-scale effort to use them.

II. Tightening Up the Congressional Party Organization

1. *The Leaders.* For more than ten years now the press has carried news about regular meetings between the President and the Big Four of Congress—the Speaker of the House, the Majority Leader of the House, the Vice President and the Majority Leader of the Senate, when the four are of the President's party. It would be an error to attempt to supplant the relationship between the Big Four and the President by some new body. Whenever it becomes necessary for the President to meet with the leaders of both parties in Congress, it is a simple matter for the Big Four to be expanded to six or eight. In the public eye a party leader like these is a spokesman for his party as a whole. It is necessary that there be broad consultation throughout the national leadership of a party before a party leader is elected in either house.

2. *The Leadership Committees.* We submit these proposals: In both the Senate and the House, the various leadership groups should be consolidated into one truly effective and responsible leadership committee for each party. Each of these four committees should be responsible not only for submitting policy proposals to the party membership, but also for discharging certain functions with respect to the committee structure and the legislative schedule. Each of the four committees should be selected or come up for a vote of confidence no less often than every two years. Occasion must be found reasonably often for the leadership committees of each party in the two houses to meet together. Furthermore, the rival leadership committees in each house should meet together on a more regular basis. A case can also be made for the four leadership groups to meet on specific occasions.

3. *Caucuses or Conferences.* More frequent meetings of the party membership in each house should be held. A binding caucus decision on legislative policy should be used primarily to carry out the party's principles and program. When members of Congress disregard a caucus decision taken in furtherance of national party policy, they should expect disapproval. The party leadership committees should be responsible for calling more frequent caucuses or conferences and developing the agenda of points for discussion.

III. Party Responsibility for Committee Structure

1. *Selection of Committee Chairmen.* It is not playing the game fairly for party members who oppose the commitments in their party's platform to rely on seniority to carry them into committee chairmanships.

Party leaders have compelling reason to prevent such a member from becoming chairman—and they are entirely free so to exert their influence. The task of party leaders, when confronted with revolt on the part of committee chairmen, is not easy. Obviously problems of this sort must be handled in the electoral process itself as well as in the congressional arena.

2. *Assignment of Members to Committees.* The slates of committee assignments should be drawn up by the party leadership committees and presented to the appropriate party caucuses for approval or modification. There is nothing sound in having the party ratio on the committees always correspond closely to the party ratio in the House itself. Committee assignments should be subjected to regular reexamination by the party caucus or conference with reasonable frequency.

3. *Committee Staff.* Staff assistance should be available to minority as well as majority members of a committee whenever they want it. Where all committee staff is controlled by the majority, a change in power threatens continuity of service.

IV. Party Responsibility for the Legislative Schedule

1. *The Need for Scheduling.* Schedules should be openly explained on the floor in advance. No committee should be in charge of legislative scheduling except the party leadership committee.

2. *House Guidance of Legislative Traffic.* A democratic approach would be to substitute open party control for control by the Rules Committee or individual chairmen.

3. *The Right to Vote in the Senate.* The present cloture rule should be amended. The best rule is one that provides for majority cloture on all matters before the Senate.

9. *Political Participation*

Widespread political participation fosters responsibility as well as democratic control in the conduct of party affairs and the pursuit of party policies. A more responsible party system is intimately linked with the general level as well as the forms of political participation.

I. Intraparty Democracy

1. *Party Membership.* As stress is placed by the parties upon policy and the interrelationship of problems at various levels of government, association with a party should become more interesting and attractive to many who hold aloof today.

2. *Machinery of Intraparty Democracy.* If the National Convention is to serve as the grand assembly of the party, in which diverse viewpoints are compounded into a course of action, it must be nourished from

below. To this end local party groups are needed that meet frequently to discuss and initiate policy.

3. *Toward a New Concept of Party Membership.* The existence of a national program, drafted at frequent intervals by a party convention both broadly representative and enjoying prestige, should make a great difference. It would prompt those who identify themselves as Republicans or Democrats to think in terms of support of that program, rather than in terms of personalities, patronage and local matters. Once machinery is established which gives the party member and his representative a share in framing the party's objectives, once there are safeguards against internal dictation by a few in positions of influence, members and representatives will feel readier to assume an obligation to support the program. Membership defined in these terms does not ask for mindless discipline enforced from above. It generates self-discipline which stems from free identification with aims one helps to define.

II. Nominating Procedures

1. *United States Senator and Representative.* Nominations for United States Senator and Representative are governed largely by state laws that vary radically in their provisions. National regulation would overcome the disadvantages of so much variety. But one must face the practical objections to national regulation. The direct primary probably can be adapted to the needs of parties unified in terms of national policy. The closed primary deserves preference because it is more readily compatible with the development of a responsible party system. The open primary tends to destroy the concept of membership as the basis of party organization. Cross filing is bound to obscure program differences between the parties, and to eliminate any sense of real membership on the part of the rank and file. The Washington blanket primary corrupts the meaning of party even further by permitting voters at the same primary to roam at will among the parties. The formal or informal proposal of candidates by preprimary meetings of responsible party committees or party councils is a healthy development. Quite appropriately the Party Council might become a testing ground for candidates for United States Senator or Representative.

2. *Presidential Nomination.* In the National Convention, delegates representative of the party membership should be chosen by direct vote of the rank and file. The Party Council naturally would concern itself with platform plans and the relative claims of those who might be considered for presidential and vice presidential nominations. In time it may be feasible and desirable to substitute a direct, national presidential primary for the indirect procedure of the convention.

III. Elections

1. *Election of the President.* The present method of electing the President and Vice President fosters the blight of one-party monopoly and results in concentration of campaign artillery in pivotal industrial states where minority groups hold the balance of power. In the persistent agitation for change in the Electoral College system, stress should be placed both upon giving all sections of the country a real voice in electing the President and the Vice President and upon developing a two-party system in present one-party areas.

2. *Term of Representative.* It appears desirable to lengthen the term of Representatives to four years.

3. *Campaign Funds.* Existing statutory limitations work toward a scattering of responsibility for the collecting of funds among a large number of independent party and nonparty committees. Repeal of these restrictions would make it possible for a national body to assume more responsibility in the field of party finance. The situation might be improved in still another way by giving a specified measure of government assistance to the parties. Everything that makes the party system more meaningful to all voters leads incidentally to a broadening of the base of financial support of the parties.

4. *Apportionment and Redistricting.* It is time to insist upon congressional districts approximately equal in population.

IV. Barriers to Voting

1. *Registration.* The system of permanent registration should be extended. Properly qualified newcomers to an area should be permitted to register and vote without undue delay.

2. *Access to the Polls.* Legislation establishing National Election Day would in all probability bring to the polls large numbers of people who would otherwise never come. Holding elections on Saturdays or Sundays would probably also help to increase the size of the vote. Adequate voting time should be provided by opening the booths in the earlier morning hours and keeping them open into the late evening hours. There is room for much elaboration in laws governing absentee balloting.

3. *Undemocratic Limitations.* Intentionally limiting devices should be overcome by a combination of legal change and educational efforts. Action is indicated to extend the suffrage to the inhabitants of the District of Columbia.

4. *The Short Ballot.* Adoption of the short ballot would concentrate choice on contests with program implications and thus shift attention toward issues rather than personalities.

10. *Research on Political Parties*

I. Basic Facts and Figures

1. *Election Statistics*. We propose the publication of an election year-book by the Bureau of the Census. The arrangement of the yearbook should probably be by states. In addition, a summary booklet for presidential and congressional elections should be issued.

2. *Party Activities*. Compilation and regular publication of information on party activities are no less urgently needed.

3. *Compilation of Party Regulations*. A third task is the collection of all major regulations relating to national parties and elections.

II. More Research by the Parties

1. *Party Research Staffs*. What is needed is a stronger full-time research organization adequately financed and working on a year-in, year-out basis.

2. *Areas of Work*. There are two fields of research that should always be of immediate interest to the national organization of every party. The first is the analysis of voting trends and voting behavior. A second research field is analysis of proposals dealing with changes in election methods.

III. More Studies of the Parties

1. *Types of Research Needed*. In a field in which much still remains to be done, specific priorities have little meaning. The basic need is for a combination of creative hypotheses and realistic investigations.

2. *Professors and Politics*. The character of political research cannot be dissociated from the general approach of academic institutions to politics as a whole. Increased faculty participation in political affairs would mean more practical, realistic and useful teaching as well as research in the field of political parties.

3. *Role of Research Foundations*. The private foundations should actively solicit new ideas and proposals for research on political parties.

4. *Role of American Political Science Association*. The presentation of this report is but one instance of the interest shown in the subject of political parties by the American Political Science Association. In making specific suggestions for the kinds of research projects that today appear most promising in this field, the Association could exert a further welcome influence.

PART III. THE PROSPECT FOR ACTION

11. *Sources of Support and Leadership*

Readjustments in the structure and operation of the political parties call for a widespread appreciation, by influential parts of the public

as well as by political leaders and party officials, of the kinds of change that are needed in order to bring about a more responsible operation of of the two-party system.

1. *The Economic Pressure Groups.* Highly organized special interests with small or no direct voting power are best satisfied if the individual legislator and administrative official are kept defenseless in the face of their special pressure. Organizations with large membership are not in the same category. It is reasonable to expect that those large-membership organizations with wise leadership will generally support the turn toward more responsible parties.

2. *The Party Leaders.* Leaders who represent divergent sectional or other special interests within each party will look with disfavor upon any reforms that hit specifically at their personal vested interests. Most of the forward-looking leaders in each party are convinced that changes should be made.

3. *The Government Officialdom.* Greater program responsibility at the level of the political parties is likely to appeal to administrators and the career officialdom.

4. *Congress.* It cannot be expected that all congressional leaders will be sympathetic to the concept of party responsibility. As leaders of national opinion, influential members of each party in Congress can give strong support to the idea of party responsibility.

5. *The President.* The President can probably be more influential than any other single individual in attaining a better organized majority party, and thus also prompting the minority party to follow suit. With greater party responsibility, the President's position as party leader would correspond in strength to the greater strength of his party.

6. *The Electorate.* The electorate consists of three main groups: (1) those who seldom or never vote; (2) those who vote regularly for the party of their traditional affiliation; and (3) those who base their electoral choice upon the political performance of the two parties, as indicated by the programs they support and the candidates they succeed in putting forward. The rank and file in each party want their party so organized that the views of the party majority will be respected and carried out. It may well be the members of the third group who, in making their choices at election time, will decide the question of our country's progress in the direction of a more responsible party system. It is this group that occupies a place of critical importance in supporting a party system able to shoulder national responsibility.

12. *The Dangers of Inaction*

Four dangers warrant special emphasis. The first danger is that the inadequacy of the party system in sustaining well-considered programs

and providing broad public support for them may lead to grave consequences in an explosive era. The second danger is that the American people may go too far for the safety of constitutional government in compensating for this inadequacy by shifting excessive responsibility to the President. The third danger is that with growing public cynicism and continuing proof of the ineffectiveness of the party system the nation may eventually witness the disintegration of the two major parties. The fourth danger is that the incapacity of the two parties for consistent action based on meaningful programs may rally support for extremist parties poles apart, each fanatically bent on imposing on the country its particular panacea.

1. *The Danger of an Explosive Era.* The political foundation of appropriate governmental programs is very unstable when it is not supplied by responsible party action.

2. *The Danger of Overextending the Presidency.* Dependable political support has to be built up for the governmental program. When there is no other place to get that done, when the political parties fail to do it, it is tempting to turn to the President. When the President's program actually is the sole program, either his party becomes a flock of sheep or the party falls apart. This concept of the presidency disposes of the party system by making the President reach directly for the support of a majority of the voters.

3. *The Danger of Disintegration of the Two Parties.* A chance that the electorate will turn its back upon the two parties is by no means academic. As a matter of fact, this development has already occurred in considerable part, and it is still going on. American political institutions are too firmly grounded upon the two-party system to make its collapse a small matter.

4. *The Danger of an Unbridgeable Political Cleavage.* If the two parties do not develop alternative programs that can be executed, the voter's frustration and the mounting ambiguities of national policy might set in motion more extreme tendencies to the political left and the political right. Once a deep political cleavage develops between opposing groups, each group naturally works to keep it deep. Orientation of the American two-party system along the lines of meaningful national programs is a significant step toward avoiding the development of such a cleavage.