PART I. THE NEED FOR GREATER PARTY RESPONSIBILITY

1. *The Role of the Political Parties*

1. *The Parties and Public Policy.* Throughout this report political parties are treated as indispensable instruments of government. That is to say, we proceed on the proposition that *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.* The party system thus serves as the main device for bringing into continuing relationship those ideas about liberty, majority rule and leadership which Americans are largely taking for granted.

For the great majority of Americans, the most valuable opportunity to influence the course of public affairs is the choice they are able to make between the parties in the principal elections. While in an election the party alternative necessarily takes the form of a choice between candidates, putting a particular candidate into office is not an end in itself. The concern of the parties with candidates, elections and appointments is misunderstood if it is assumed that parties can afford to bring forth aspirants for office without regard to the views of those so selected. Actually, the party struggle is concerned with the direction of public affairs. Party nominations are no more than a means to this end. In short, party politics inevitably involves public policy in one way or another. *In order to keep the parties apart, one must consider the relations between each and public policy.*

This is not to ignore that in the past the American two-party system has shown little propensity for evolving original or creative ideas about public policy; that it has even been rather sluggish in responding to such ideas in the public interest; that it reflects in an enlarged way those differences throughout the country which are expressed in the operation of the federal structure of government; and that in all political organizations a considerable measure of irrationality manifests itself.

Giving due weight to each of these factors, we are nevertheless led to conclude that the choices provided by the two-party system are valuable to the American people in proportion to their definition in terms of 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.* With the extraordinary growth of the responsibilities of government, the discussion of public affairs for the most part makes sense only in terms of public policy.

2. *The New Importance of Program.* One of the most pressing require-

ments of contemporary politics is for the party in power to furnish a general kind of direction over the government as a whole. *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.*

Only large-scale and representative political organizations possess the qualifications needed for these tasks. The ascendancy of national issues in an industrial society, the impact of the widening concern of government with problems of the general welfare, the entrance into the realm of politics of millions of new voters—all of these factors have tended to broaden the base of the parties as the largest political organizations in the country. *It is in terms of party programs that political leaders can attempt to consolidate public attitudes toward the work plans of government.*

Modern public policy, therefore, accentuates the importance of the parties, not as mere brokers between different groups and interests, but as agencies of the electorate. Because it affects unprecedented numbers of people and because it depends for its execution on extensive and widespread public support, modern public policy requires a broad political base. That base can be provided only by the parties, which reach people touched by no other political organization.

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.*

Moreover, in contrast with any other political organization today in existence, the major parties even now are forced to consider public policy at least broadly enough to make it likely for them to win elections. If public esteem of the parties is much less high than it might be, the depressed state of their reputation has resulted in the main from their past indifference to broadly conceived public policy. This indifference has fixed in the popular mind the idea of spoils, patronage and plunder. It is hence not astonishing when one hears a chosen representative assert for the public ear that in his state "people put principles above party." Much of the agitation for nonpartisanship—despite the impossibility of nonpartisan organization on a national level—is rooted in the same attitudes.

Bad reputations die hard, but things are no longer what they used to be. Certainly success in presidential campaigns today is based on broad national appeals to the widest possible constituencies. To a much greater extent than in the past, elections are won by influences and trends that are felt throughout the country. *It is* therefore *good practical politics to*

reconsider party organization in the light of the changing conditions of politics.

It appeared desirable in this report to relate the potentialities of the party system to both the conditions that confront the nation and the expected role of the parties. *Happily such an effort entails an application of ideas about the party system that are no longer unfamiliar.*

Consideration of ways and means of producing a more responsible party system leads into the hazards of political invention. This is a challenge that has usually been accepted with misgivings by political scientists, who are trained to describe what is and feel less well qualified to fashion innovations. We hope that our own effort will stimulate both other political scientists and participants in practical politics to attempt similar undertakings on their own account. Only by a continuous process of invention and adjustment can the party system be adapted to meet the needs of our day.

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

There is little point to talking about the American party system in terms of its deficiencies and potentialities except against a picture of what the parties ought to be. Our report would be lacking in exactness without an indication of the sort of model we have in mind.

Americans are reasonably well agreed about the purposes served by the two major parties as long as the matter is discussed in generalities. When specific questions are raised, however, agreement is much more limited. We cannot assume, therefore, a commonly shared view about the essential characteristics of the party system. But we can and must state our own view.

In brief, our view is this: *The party system that is needed must be democratic, responsible and effective*—a system that is accountable to the public, respects and expresses differences of opinion, and is able to cope with the great problems of modern government. Some of the implications warrant special statement, which is the purpose of this section.

I. A Stronger Two-party System

1. *The Need for an Effective Party System.* In an era beset with problems of unprecedented magnitude at home and abroad, it is dangerous to drift without a party system that helps the nation to set a general course of policy for the government as a whole. In a two-party system, when both parties are weakened or confused by internal divisions or ineffective organization it is the nation that suffers. When the parties are unable to reach and pursue responsible decisions, difficulties accumulate and cynicism about all democratic institutions grows.

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. In such a system, the party program becomes the work program of the party, so recognized by the party leaders in and out of the government, by the party body as a whole, and by the public. This condition is unattainable unless party institutions have been created through which agreement can be reached about the general position of the party.

Clearly *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.* One great function of the party system is to bring about the widest possible consent in relation to defined political goals, which provides the majority party with the essential means of building public support for the policies of the government. Democratic procedures in the internal affairs of the parties are best suited to the development of agreement within each party.

2. *The Need for an Effective Opposition Party.* The argument for a stronger party system cannot be divorced from measures designed to make the parties more fully accountable to the public. *The fundamental requirement of* such *accountability is a two-party system in which the opposition party acts as the critic of the party in power, developing, defining and presenting the policy alternatives which are necessary for a true choice in reaching public decisions.*

Beyond that, the case for the American two-party system need not be restated here. The two-party system is so strongly rooted in the political traditions of this country and public preference for it is so well established that consideration of other possibilities seems entirely academic. When we speak of the parties without further qualification, we mean throughout our report the two major parties. The inference is not that we consider third or minor parties undesirable or ineffectual within their limited orbit. Rather, we feel that the minor parties in the longer run have failed to leave a lasting imprint upon both the two-party system and the basic processes of American government.

In spite of the fact that the two-party system is part of the American political tradition, it cannot be said that the role of the opposition party is well understood. This is unfortunate because democratic government is greatly influenced by the character of the opposition party. The measures proposed elsewhere in our report to help the party in power to clarify its policies are equally applicable to the opposition.

The opposition most conducive to responsible government is an organized party opposition, produced by the organic operation of the two-party system. When there are two parties identifiable by the kinds of

action they propose, the voters have an actual choice. On the other hand, the sort of opposition presented by a coalition that cuts across party lines, as a regular thing, tends to deprive the public of a meaningful alternative. When such coalitions are formed after the elections are over, the public usually finds it difficult to understand the new situation and to reconcile it with the purpose of the ballot. Moreover, on that basis it is next to impossible to hold either party responsible for its political record. This is a serious source of public discontent.

II. Better Integrated Parties

1. *The Need for a Party System with Greater Resistance to Pressure.* As a consciously defined and consistently followed line of action keeps individuals from losing themselves in irresponsible ventures, so a program-conscious party develops greater resistance against the inroads of pressure groups.

The value of special-interest groups in a diversified society made up of countless groupings and specializations should be obvious. But organized interest groups cannot do the job of the parties. Indeed, it is only when a working formula of the public interest in its *general* character is made manifest by the parties in terms of coherent programs that the claims of interest groups can be adjusted on the basis of political responsibility. Such adjustment, once again, calls for the party's ability to honor its word.

There is little to suggest that the phenomenal growth of interest organizations in recent decades has come to its end. Organization along such lines is a characteristic feature of our civilization. To some extent these interest groups have replaced or absorbed into themselves older local institutions in that they make it possible for the government and substantial segments of the nation to maintain contact with each other. It must be obvious, however, that *the whole development makes necessary a reinforced party system that can cope with the multiplied organized pressures.* The alternative would be a scheme perhaps best described as government by pressure groups intent upon using the parties to deflect political attention from themselves.

By themselves, the interest groups cannot attempt to define public policy democratically. Coherent public policies do not emerge as the mathematical result of the claims of all of the pressure groups. The integration of the interest groups into the political system is a function of the parties. Any tendency in the direction of a strengthened party system encourages the interest groups to align themselves with one or the other of the major parties. Such a tendency is already at work. One of the noteworthy features of contemporary American politics is the fact

that not a few interest groups have found it impossible to remain neutral toward both parties. To illustrate, the entry of organized labor upon the political scene has in turn impelled antagonistic special interests to coalesce in closer political alignments.

In one respect the growth of the modern interest groups is exerting a direct effect upon the internal distribution of power within the parties. They counteract and offset local interests; they are a nationalizing influence. Indeed, the proliferation of interest groups has been one of the factors in the rise of national issues because these groups tend to organize and define their objectives on a national scale.

Parties whose political commitments count are of particular significance to interest organizations with large membership such as exist among industrial workers and farmers, but to a lesser extent also among businessmen. Unlike the great majority of pressure groups, these organizations through their membership—and in proportion to their voting strength—are able to play a measurable role in elections. Interest groups of this kind are the equivalent of organizations of voters. For reasons of mutual interest, the relationship between them and the parties tends to become explicit and continuing.

A stronger party system is less likely to give cause for the deterioration and confusion of purposes which sometimes passes for compromise but is really an unjustifiable surrender to narrow interests. *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.* There is every reason to insist that the parties be held accountable to the public for the compromises they accept.

2. *The Need for a Party System with Sufficient Party Loyalty.* It is here not suggested, of course, that the parties should disagree about everything. Parties do not, and need not, take a position on all questions that allow for controversy. The proper function of the parties is to develop and define policy alternatives on matters likely to be of interest to the whole country, on issues related to the responsibility of the parties for the conduct of either the government or the opposition.

Needed clarification of party policy in itself *will not cause the parties to differ more fundamentally or more sharply than they have in the past.* The contrary is much more likely to be the case. The clarification of party policy may be expected to produce a more reasonable discussion of public affairs, more closely related to the political performance of the parties in their actions rather than their words. *Nor is it to be assumed that increasing concern with their programs will cause the parties to erect between themselves an ideological wall.* There is no real ideological division in the American electorate, and hence programs of action presented

by responsible parties for the voter's support could hardly be expected to reflect or strive toward such division.

It is true at the same time that ultimately any political party must establish some conditions for membership and place some obligations on its representatives in government. Without so defining its identity the party is in danger of ceasing to be a party. To make party policy effective the *parties have the right and the duty to announce the terms to govern participation in the common enterprise.* This basic proposition is rarely denied, nor are precedents lacking. But there are practical difficulties in the way of applying restraints upon those who disregard the stated terms.

It is obvious that an effective party cannot be based merely or primarily on the expulsion of the disloyal. To impose discipline in any voluntary association is possible only as a last resort and only when a wide consensus is present within the association. Discipline and consensus are simply the front and rear sides of the same coin. *The emphasis in all consideration of party discipline must be,* therefore, *on positive measures to create a strong and general agreement on policies.* Thereafter, the problem of discipline is secondary and marginal.

When the membership of the party has become well aware of party policy and stands behind it, assumptions about teamwork within the party are likely to pervade the whole organization. Ultimately it is the electorate itself which will determine how firmly it wants the lines of party allegiance to be drawn. Yet even a small shift of emphasis toward party cohesion is likely to produce changes not only in the structure of the parties but also in the degree to which members identify themselves with their party.

Party unity is always a relative matter. It may be fostered, but the whole weight of tradition in American politics is against very rigid party discipline. As a general rule, the parties have a basis for expecting adherence to the party program when their position is reasonably explicit. Thus it is evident that the disciplinary difficulties of the parties do not result primarily from a reluctance to impose restraints but from the neglect of positive measures to give meaning to party programs.

As for party cohesion in Congress, the parties have done little to build up the kind of unity within the congressional party that is now so widely desired. Traditionally congressional candidates are treated as if they were the orphans of the political system, with no truly adequate party mechanism available for the conduct of their campaigns. Enjoying remarkably little national or local party support, congressional candidates have mostly been left to cope with the political hazards of their occupation on their own account. *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. Discipline is less a matter of what the parties do *to* their congressional candidates than what the parties do *for* them.

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.*

Responsibility of the party in power centers on the conduct of the government, usually in terms of policies. The party in power has a responsibility, broadly defined, for the general management of the government, for its manner of getting results, for the results achieved, for the consequences of inaction as well as action, for the intended and unintended outcome of its conduct of public affairs, for all that it plans to do, for all that it might have foreseen, for the leadership it provides, for the acts of all of its agents, and for what it says as well as for what it does.

Party responsibility includes the responsibility of the opposition party, also broadly defined, for the conduct of its opposition, for the management of public discussion, for the development of alternative policies and programs, for the bipartisan policies which it supports, for its failures and successes in developing the issues of public policy, and for its leadership of public opinion. The opposition is as responsible for its record in Congress as is the party in power. It is important that the opposition party be effective but it is equally important that it be responsible, for an irresponsible opposition is dangerous to the whole political system.

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. Again, unless the parties identify themselves with programs, the public is unable to make an intelligent choice between them. The public can understand the general management of the government only in terms of policies. When the parties lack the capacity to define their actions in terms of policies, they turn irresponsible because the electoral choice between the parties becomes devoid of meaning.

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. When party policy is made clear, the result to be expected is a more reasonable and profitable discussion, tied more closely to the record of party action. When there is no clear basis for rating party performance, when party policies cannot be defined in terms of a concrete

program, party debate tears itself loose from the facts. Then wild fictions are used to excite the imagination of the public.

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.* To this end the internal processes of the parties must be democratic, the party members must have an opportunity to participate in intraparty business, and the leaders must be accountable to the party. Responsibility demands that the parties concern themselves with the development of good relations between the leaders and the members. Only thus can the parties act as intermediaries between the government and the people. Strengthening the parties involves, therefore, the improvement of the internal democratic processes by which the leaders of the party are kept in contact with the members.

The external and the internal kinds of party responsibility need not conflict. Responsibility of party leaders to party members promotes the clarification of party policy when it means that the leaders find it necessary to explain the policy to the membership. Certainly the lack of unity within the membership cannot be overcome by the fiat of an irresponsible party leadership. A democratic internal procedure can be used not merely to test the strength of the various factions within a party but also to resolve the conflicts. The motives for enlarging the areas of agreement within the parties are persuasive because unity is the condition of success.

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. Intraparty conflict is invited and exaggerated by dogmas that assign to local party leaders an exclusive right to appeal to the party membership in their area.

Occasions may arise in which the parties will find it necessary to apply sanctions against a state or local party organization, especially when that organization is in open rebellion against policies established for the whole party. There are a variety of ways in which recognition may be withdrawn. It is possible to refuse to seat delegates to the National Convention; to drop from the National Committee members representing the dissident state organization; to deny legislative committee assignments to members of Congress sponsored by the disloyal organization; and to appeal directly to the party membership in the state or locality, perhaps even promoting a rival organization. The power to take strong measures is there.

It would be unfortunate, however, if the problem of party unity were thought of as primarily a matter of punishment. Nothing prevents the

parties from explaining themselves to their own members. The party members have power to insist that local and state party organizations and leaders cooperate with the party as a whole; all the members need is a better opportunity to find out what party politics is about. The need for sanctions is relatively small when state and local organizations are not treated as the restricted preserve of their immediate leaders. National party leaders ought to have access to party members everywhere as a normal and regular procedure because they share with local party leaders responsibility to the same party membership. It would always be proper for the national party leaders to discuss all party matters with the membership of any state or local party organization. Considering their great prestige, wise and able national party leaders will need very little more than this opportunity.

The political developments of our time place a heavy emphasis on national issues as the basis of party programs. As a result, the party membership is coming to look to the national party leaders for a larger role in intraparty affairs. There is some evidence of growing general agreement within the membership of each party, strong enough to form a basis of party unity, provided the parties maintain close contact with their own supporters.

In particular, *national party leaders have a legitimate interest in the nomination of congressional candidates*, though normally they try hard to avoid the appearance of any intervention. Depending on the circumstances, this interest can be expressed quite sufficiently by seeking a chance to discuss the nomination with the party membership in the congressional district. On the other hand, it should not be assumed that state and local party leaders usually have an interest in congressional nominations antagonistic to the interest of the national leaders in maintaining the general party policy. As a matter of fact, congressional nominations are not considered great prizes by the local party organization as generally as one might think. It is neglect of congressional nominations and elections more than any other factor that weakens party unity in Congress. It should be added, however, that what is said here about intraparty relations with respect to congressional nominations applies also to other party nominations.

3. *The Inadequacy of the Existing Party System*

The existing party system is inadequately prepared to meet the demands now being made upon it chiefly because its central institutions are not well organized to deal with national questions. The sort of party organization needed today is indirectly suggested by the origin of the traditional party structure. This structure developed in a period in which

local interests were dominant and positive governmental action at the national level did not play the role it assumed later.

I. Beginning Transition

1. *Change and Self-examination.* Having outlined the kind of party system we accept as our basic model, we are now able to list briefly some of the principal deficiencies of the existing national party institutions. At the same time we can identify some of the conspicuous failings that show up in the operations of the two parties, in particular their failure to bring about adequate popular participation in politics and to develop satisfactory relations between the central and the local party organizations.

Marked changes have occurred *in the structure and processes of American society* during the twentieth century. Their general effect upon the political scene will be indicated in the following section. Here it will be enough to point out that most of these changes *have necessarily affected the party system.* In many respects the party system is today far from what it was fifty years ago, even though there has not been as yet a conscious and planned adjustment. When a party system is undergoing such a slow transformation, it is difficult to describe its operation accurately or to enumerate its deficiencies precisely as they now exist. The Democratic party is today almost a new creation, produced since 1932. Some of its leaders have given much thought to its present-day characteristics. On the opposite side, the Republican party has been the subject of extensive and repeated self-examination for nearly two decades. It is *the prevailing climate of self-examination as well as the current tendencies toward change in the party system* that *give point to inquiries like that represented by our report.*

2. *Burden of the Past.* Despite these tendencies toward change, however, *formal party organization in its main features is still substantially what it was before the Civil War.* Aside from the adoption of the direct primary, organizational forms have not been overhauled for nearly a century. The result is that the parties are now probably the most archaic institutions in the United States.

Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that *the main trends of American politics,* especially the emphasis on effective national action, *have tended to outflank the party system.* Until rather recently neither of the two parties has found it necessary to concern itself seriously with the question of adequate party organization at the national level. The familiar description of the parties as loose confederations of state and local machines has too long remained reasonably accurate.

II. Some Basic Problems

Party institutions and their operations cannot be divorced from the general conditions that govern the nature of the party system. Before we focus specifically on the deficiencies of existing party institutions, we must account for some of the more important factors that impress themselves upon both major parties.

What are the general features of party organization that have cast up continuing problems?

1. *The Federal Basis. The two parties are organized on a federal basis,* probably as a natural result of our federal type of government. In Charles E. Merriam's words, "The American party system has its roots in the states. Its regulation and control is conducted almost wholly, although not entirely, by the states acting separately."[1] This means that *the national and state party organizations are largely independent of one another,* each operating within its own sphere, *without appreciable common approach to problems of party policy and strategy.*

Such independence has led to frequent and sharp differences between state and national organizations. Antagonisms are illustrated by such terms as national Republicans and Wisconsin Republicans, national Democrats and Dixiecrats. Moreover, state party organizations too often define their interests quite narrowly. This does not merely mean substantial disregard of national needs or matters of national interest, but it also means piecemeal as well as one-sided use of state power and state resources. As John M. Gaus has put it, "In many states—probably in almost all—the party systems are inadequate as instruments for reflecting the needs of our citizens for carefully thought-out, alternative programs of public housekeeping."[2]

It is not being argued here that the party system should be cut free from its federal basis. Federalism is not a negative influence in itself; it is equally capable of positive accomplishments in the public interest. Whether it works in the one or the other direction depends in large part on how well the balance of forces within a federal organization accords with the needs of society. In the case of the American party system, *the real issue is not over the federal form of organization but over the right balance of forces within this type of organization.*

On that score, the party system is weighted much more heavily toward the state-local side than is true today of the federal system of government in the United States. The gap produces serious disabilities in government. It needs to be closed, even though obviously our traditions

[1] Charles E. Merriam, "State Government at Mid-Century," *State Government,* Vol. 23, p. 118 (June, 1950).

[2] John M. Gaus, "The States Are in the Middle," *ibid.,* p. 140.

of localism, states rights and sectionalism will inevitably affect the pace of progress that can be expected.

A corollary of the kind of federalism now expressed in the party system is an excessive measure of internal separatism. The congressional party organization is independent of the national organization, and the House and Senate organizations of the same party are independent of each other. As a result, cooperation between these parts of the national party structure has not been easy to secure.

2. *The Location of Leadership.* In part because of the centrifugal drives that run through the party system, *party organization does not vest leadership of the party as a whole in either a single person or a committee.* The President, by virtue of his conspicuous position and his real as well as symbolic role in public opinion, is commonly considered the leader of his party. If he has a vigorous personality and the disposition to press his views on party policy and strategy, he may become the actual leader during his presidential term. But even the President has no official position within the party organization, and his leadership is often resented and opposed. The presidential nominee of the defeated party is generally recognized as the "titular leader" of his party, yet the very title implies a lack of authority.

The National Chairman is most nearly in the top position, but if he tries to exercise initiative and leadership in matters other than the presidential campaign, his authority is almost certain to be challenged. Ill feeling, rather than harmony of policy and action, is likely to result. In sum, *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.* The vagueness of formal leadership that prevails at the top has its counterpart in the vagueness of formal membership at the bottom. *No understandings or rules or criteria exist with respect to membership in a party.* The general situation was well put by Senator Borah in a statement made in 1923:

> Any man who can carry a Republican primary is a Republican. He might believe in free trade, in unconditional membership in the League of Nations, in states' rights, and in every policy that the Democratic party ever advocated; yet, if he carried his Republican primary, he would be a Republican. He might go to the other extreme and believe in the communistic state, in the dictatorship of the proletariat, in the abolition of private property, and in the extermination of the bourgeoisie; yet, if he carried his Republican primary, he would still be a Republican.

It is obviously difficult, if not impossible, to secure anything like harmony of policy and action within political parties so loosely organized as this. On the other hand, it is easy to see that the voter's political choice

when confined to candidates without a common bond in terms of program amounts to no more than taking a chance with an individual candidate. *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

So much for the most conspicuous consequences that stem from the general features of existing party organization. Now let us consider some more specific aspects pertinent to a reorganization of the national party structure.

1. *National Party Organs. The National Convention, as at present constituted and operated, is an unwieldy, unrepresentative and less than responsible body.* In 1948 the Republican convention was composed of 1,094 delegates, and the Democratic convention of 1,234, with an equal additional number of alternates in each case. Both conventions are expected to be still larger in 1952.

The unrepresentative character of the convention has been recognized in both parties by changes in the apportionment of delegates. Yet no one would maintain in either case that the party's rank-and-file strength in the several states is truly represented. The apportionment of delegates to the Democratic National Convention is based, not on the number of Democratic voters in the various states, but on the apportionment of presidential electors. Theoretically, therefore, the delegates represent simply population—Republican voters and nonvoters as well as Democratic voters. Because the rural population is greatly overrepresented in Congress, the urban centers, though virtually the party's backbone, are strongly discriminated against. The following table illustrates the extent of this distortion in eleven states.

Democratic National Convention, 1948

State	Democratic voters per delegate
Maine	11,191
Vermont	7,443
Connecticut	21,164
New York	28,960
Pennsylvania	26,955
Illinois	33,245
Wyoming	8,725
Nevada	3,129
Texas	15,014
South Carolina	1,721
Louisiana	5,680

In spite of a number of attempts to reduce the overrepresentation of southern Republicans in the Republican National Convention it is clear from the next table that much remains to be done.

Republican National Convention, 1948

State	Republican voters per delegate
New York	29,290
Pennsylvania	19,021
Ohio	27,277
Kansas	24,884
South Carolina	894
Georgia	5,478
Alabama	2,923
Mississippi	630
Louisiana	5,589

This lack of balance in representation, together with the peculiar atmosphere within which the Convention operates, makes it very hard for such a body to act in a deliberative and responsible manner. The moral authority of the National Convention to act in the name of the whole party would be greatly strengthened if more care were used to make the convention really representative of the party as a whole.

It can be said equally well of other institutions at the national level that they are not very well suited to carry today's burdens of an effective party system. *The National Committee is seldom a generally influential body and much less a working body.* Indeed, it rarely meets at all.

In *House and Senate,* the *campaign* committee of each party is concerned with aiding in the reelection of members of its chamber. These *committees do not always have a good working relationship with the National Committee.* They do not plan joint election strategy for both chambers and traditionally accept little responsibility for party leadership. Only in the past generation have the parties shown signs of developing a continuous working organization at the national level. *Although* their *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.* The growing importance of national issues in American politics puts weight into the formulation of general statements of party policy. Of course, no single statement of party policy can express the whole program of the party in all of its particulars, including questions of timing. But it is obvious that a serious attempt to define the propositions on which the parties intend to seek the voter's support would serve both party unity and party responsibility.

One of the reasons for the widespread lack of respect for party platforms is that they have seldom been used by the parties to get a mandate from the people. By and large, *alternatives between the parties are defined so badly that it is often difficult to determine what the election has decided even in broadest terms.* Yet unused resources are available to the parties in the democratic process itself if they learn to use a statement of policy as the basis for the election campaign. Platforms acquire authority when they are so used.

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 drafting of a platform ought to be the work of months, not of a day or two; it ought to be linked closely with the formulation of party policy as a continuing activity. Party policy—in its bricks and straws—is made, applied, explored and tested in congressional and presidential decisions, in the executive departments, in the work of research staffs, in committee hearings, and in congressional debates. No party convention can pull a party program out of the air. *The platform should be the end product of a long search for a working agreement within the party.*

3. *Intraparty Democracy.* One of the principal functions of the parties —in terms of the concept of party we elaborated in the preceding section—is to extend to the fullest the citizen's participation in public affairs. Measured by this standard, the existing parties are painfully deficient. Direct primary legislation offers opportunities for the creation of a broad base on which to build the party structure, but these opportunities have rarely been fully utilized.

Too little consideration has been given to ways and means of bringing about a constructive relationship between the party and its members. Indeed, any organization really concerned about this relationship does a multitude of things that American parties generally do not do to maintain close contact with the membership. Party membership ought to become a year-round matter, both with constructive activities by the members and with mechanisms by which the party organizations can absorb the benefits of wider political participation.

If we take the total vote cast in elections as a crude measure of the effectiveness of the parties *in making the most of popular participation, the performance of American parties is very unsatisfactory.* In the 1948 presidential election, approximately 47,000,000 citizens of voting age did not vote. In the congressional election of 1946 only a little more than one-third of the potential vote was cast. This is evidence of low-grade performance, compared with the record of the parties in other democratic countries.

4. *Party Research.* An unimaginative attitude is shown by party organizations in their reluctance to develop party research to the full level of its potentialities. In view of the complexity and difficulty of the problems with which the parties must deal, it can hardly be denied that *a party stands as much in need of research as does business enterprise or the government itself.*

It is a remarkable indication of small party interest, for instance, that politically useful research by government agencies is being carried on to a very limited extent. Thus the United States Census Bureau does not collect and publish comprehensive election statistics, and much of the raw statistical data for party research is not produced by government. Relatively little use has been made by the parties of social survey techniques as a basis for political campaigns. Nor have the parties shown much interest in the study of the social, economic and psychological factors that influence the results of the election contests. At a time when the discussion of public policy is necessarily becoming the focus of party business, the parties have not yet established research staffs adequately equipped to provide party leaders with technical data and findings grounded in scientific analysis.

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.* Formulating and executing such general programs involves more than technical knowledge. *In a democracy no general program can be adopted and carried out without wide political support.* Support must be strong enough and stable enough to guard the program as far as possible against such drives as come forth constantly from a multitude of special interests seeking their own ends. This kind of political support can be mobilized on a continuing basis only by stronger parties.

Broad governmental programs need to be built on a foundation of political commitments as written into the programs of adequately organized parties. This is true today also of governmental programs erected on bipartisan backing. In that respect the political requirements to sustain American diplomacy are very different from those of the period before World War I, for example. As Walter Lippmann has recently written of the requirements of bipartisan foreign policy, "It

takes two organized parties, each with its recognized leaders in the field of foreign affairs. Today neither party is organized. Neither party has leaders in the field of foreign affairs. In this chaos no Secretary of State can function successfully."[1]

2. *Impact on the Public.* What is said here about the need for an adequate political base for foreign policy applies equally to such other large sectors of public concern as national defense and economic policy. In each area, the problems are so interrelated that the activities of the government must be integrated over a very wide front. *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.*

This is true of a great many fields, such as labor relations, credit regulation, social security, housing, price support, aid to veterans, and even revenue administration. To quote the Bureau of Internal Revenue, ". . . the Bureau . . . reaches into every town and hamlet throughout the United States and directly affects the finances of some 65 million people in the form of one or more levies."[2] Mark Sullivan has described the activities of the United States Department of Agriculture in language strikingly similar, if with a bit of poetic license: "It enters every home in the country, stands beside every citizen as he eats his meals, and every member of his family. It determines or conclusively influences the price of nearly every form of food. In doing this the department goes a second time into the homes of a large class of citizens, the farmers. To them it in many cases pays large amounts of money to buy large quantities of their crops and keep them off the market, in order to support the price."[3]

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.* A series of laws has aimed in this direction. The Budget and Accounting Act of 1921, with its emphasis on the government's financial program and thus on the government's work plan in its entirety, including the legislative program of the President; the Employment Act of 1946, in its concern with a program to sustain high-level production and employment; the Legislative Reorganization Act of the same year, giving added strength to Congress in the exercise of its function of review of programs proposed by the executive branch; the National Security Act of 1947,

[1] *New York Herald Tribune,* March 27, 1950.
[2] *The Budget for the Fiscal Year 1951,* p. 1033.
[3] *New York Herald Tribune,* March 24, 1950.

creating the National Security Council as policy coordinator for national defense—these acts illustrate the trend.

The governmental advance toward program formulation needs now to be paralleled in the political sphere proper—above all in the party system. Without mobilization of political support the best-conceived programs of modern government come to naught.

II. Rise of Nation-wide Policy Issues

1. *An Historic Trend.* Even if the international scene did not look as it does, *the changes in the nature and scope of public policy* here indicated would press upon the political process. For they *are the result of changes in the social structure and the economy of the United States.* The long-range transformations expressed in industrialization and urbanization and the revolution in transportation and communication were bound to create a truly national economy and to affect significantly the bases of American politics.

After the experience of the great depression in the thirties, the public has become particularly conscious of the need for economic stability. It is now regarded as obvious by large groups of voters that only the national government has the span of jurisdiction and resources adequate to cope with this problem. On the same grounds many of the other anxieties which people feel living in the uncertain conditions of the modern world stimulate demands on the national government.

2. *Past and Present Factors.* It is much the same thing to say that *there has been in recent decades a continuing decline of sectionalism,* first noted by Arthur N. Holcombe nearly twenty years ago. Statistical evidence such as is available for the last generation shows that the most significant political trends in the country have been national, not sectional or local. This is not to say that sectionalism is likely to drop to insignificance as a factor in American politics. Here as elsewhere in the political system, change is a matter of degree. The relative decline of the strength of sectional alignments is nevertheless a matter of great consequence. Elections are increasingly won and lost by influences felt throughout the land.

The measurable shift from sectional to national politics cannot fail to have a corresponding effect on party organization and the locus of power within the parties. *Party organization designed to deal with the increasing volume of national issues must give wider range to the national party leadership.* With sectionalism in steady if slow decline, a change of the rules of politics is taking place. Long-range political success is likely to come to those leaders and that party quickest to go by the new rules.

As long as sectional alignments were dominant in American politics, strong party organization was not needed. As a matter of fact, sectionalism has long been the great enemy of true party organization. In its extreme form, sectionalism tends to eliminate the opposition party altogether. In the one-party areas so often linked to sectional alignments, the opposition party is a mere shadow.

Without effective party opposition, strong organization becomes very difficult to attain even for the dominant party. Illustrative of this condition has been the Solid South, where as a rule neither of the parties has produced strong state and local organizations, but only rather informal groupings built around individual leaders.

On the other hand, a stronger national party organization tends to play down sectional differences. The transition from predominantly sectional to primarily national politics generates a trend toward appropriate reorganization of the parties. It is in the main this trend that forms the practical base for the revision of party structure and procedures contemplated in our report.

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.* These new interest groups, found principally in the areas of industrial labor and agriculture, are pursuing a novel political strategy. *To a much greater extent than in the past, they operate as if they were auxiliary organizations of one or the other party.* The growing conversion of most of the labor movement to party action is a case in point. Labor organizations now participate energetically in election contests. They register voters, take part in the nominating process, raise campaign funds, issue campaign literature and perform other functions once on the whole reserved for the parties.

Thus the old local monopolies of the regular party organizations have been broken by new large-membership groups. To a very considerable extent the regular party organizations are now so yoked into a partnership with the newcomers that they have lost much of their old freedom of action. The successful political leader in the future is likely to be one who is skillful in maintaining a good working alliance between the older and the newer types of political organization. This applies partly even to conditions today.

The emphasis of the new large-membership organizations is on national rather than sectional issues. What is no less significant, the interests of the membership are not identified with any single product or commodity. Farmers, for instance, cannot hope to prosper in an ailing economy. Workers must measure their pay against the level of prices as

well as the value of social security. Hence the large-membership groups are inevitably pushed into consideration of all of the factors that affect the national well-being. How parties stand on programs designed to bring about stability and healthy expansion in the economy as a whole is therefore of great concern to most of the new groups in American politics.

5. *The Question of Constitutional Amendment*

1. *A Cabinet System?* It is altogether clear that party responsibility cannot be legislated into being. Not a few Americans have argued, however, that something like the British system of responsible cabinet government would have to be grafted to ours before an effective party system could come about in the United States. Usually this idea takes the form of proposals to amend the Constitution to give the President the right to dissolve Congress and to call a new election at any time, besides certain other changes in the Constitution.

A responsible cabinet system makes the leaders of the majority party in the legislature the heads of the executive departments, *collectively accountable* to their own legislative majority *for the conduct of the government.* Such a relationship prompts close cooperation between the executive and legislative branches. The legislative majority of the cabinet forms a party team which as such can readily be held responsible for its policies. This governmental system is built around the parties, which play the key role in it.

2. *Strong Parties as a Condition.* We do not here need to take a position on the abstract merits of the cabinet system. On the question whether it could be successfully fitted into the American scheme of congressional-presidential government, opinions are widely divided. Even if it were conceded to be desirable *to amend the Constitution in order to create a responsible cabinet system,* it should be plain that this *is not a practicable way of getting more effective parties.* Such an amendment, if it offered likelihood of being adopted at all, would make sense only when the parties have actually demonstrated the strength they now lack. When they show that strength, a constitutional amendment to achieve this end would be unnecessary.

On the other hand, the experience of foreign countries suggests that adoption of the cabinet system does not automatically result in an effective party system. Cabinet systems differ in their results and affect the party system in different ways. Moreover, it is easy to overestimate not only the expected benefits of a constitutional amendment but also the rigidity of the existing constitutional arrangements in the United States. Certainly the roles of the President and Congress are defined by

the Constitution in terms that leave both free to cooperate and to rely on the concept of party responsibility.

3. *Adaptation within the Constitution. The parties can do much to adapt the usages under the Constitution to their purposes.* When strong enough, the parties obviously can furnish the President and Congress a political basis of cooperation within the Constitution as it stands today.

Actually the parties have not carefully explored the opportunities they have for more responsible operation under existing constitutional arrangements. It is logical first to find out what can be done under present conditions to invigorate the parties before accepting the conclusion that action has to begin with changing a constitutional system that did not contemplate the growing need for party responsibility when it was set up.