

## Constitutional Government

Woodrow Wilson

### Chapter 8: Party Government in the United States

In order to understand the organization and operation of parties in the United States, it is necessary to turn once more to the theory upon which our federal and, for that matter, our state governments, also, were constructed. They were, in their make-up, Whig inventions. At the time our national government was erected, the Whig party in England was engaged in a very notable struggle to curb and regulate the power of the Crown. The struggle had begun long before the revolution which cut our politics asunder from the politics of England, and that revolution itself was only an acute manifestation of the great forces which were at work among thoughtful Englishmen everywhere. The revolution which separated America from England was part of a great Whig contest with the Crown for constitutional liberties. The leaders of that revolution held Whig doctrine; the greater Whig statesmen on the other side of the water recognized them as their allies and gave them their outspoken sympathy, perceiving that they were but fighting a battle which must sooner or later be fought in England, whether with arms or with votes and the more pacific strategy of politics. Every historian now sees that the radical changes made in the government of England during the nineteenth century were quickened and given assurance of success by the changes which had preceded them in America; that the leader of the American Revolution had but taken precedence of the Whigs at home in bringing government into a new and responsible relationship to the people who were its subjects.

The theory of the Whigs in England did not go the length of seeking to destroy the power of the throne. It probably would not have gone that length in America if the throne had been on this side of the water, a domestic instead of a separate and distant power. The men in the old country, to whom the American revolutionists showed the way, sought only to offset the Crown with other influences,—influences of opinion acting through a reformed and purified representative chamber, whose consent not only should be necessary to the enactment of law, but the advice of whose leaders the king should find it necessary to heed; and the influences of judicial opinion acting through stable and independent courts. It was, as I have already pointed out, this theory of checks and balances, which I have called the Newtonian theory of government, that prevailed in the convention which framed the Constitution of the United States,—which prevailed over the very different theory of Hamilton, that government was not a thing which you could afford to tie up in a nice poise, as if it were to be held at an inactive equilibrium, but a thing which must every day act with straightforward and unquestionable power, with definite purpose and consistent force, choosing its policies and making good its authority, like a single organism,—the theory which would have seemed to Darwin the theory of nature itself, the nature of men as well as the nature of animal organisms. Dominated by the immediate forces and aspirations of their own day, ruled in thought and action by the great contest in which they had found themselves engaged, to hold the royal power off from arbitrary interference with their interests and their liberties, they allowed themselves

to become more interested in providing checks to government than in supplying it with energy and securing to it the necessary certainty and consistency of action. They set legislature off against executive, and the courts against both, separated the three in sphere and power, and yet made the agreement of all three necessary to the operation of the government. The boast of the writers of the Federalist was of the perfection with which the convention at Philadelphia had interpreted Whig theory and embodied Whig dynamics in the Constitution. Mr. Hamilton's theory, that government was an affair of cooperative and harmonious forces, and that the danger of coordinate and coequal powers such as the framers of the Constitution had set up was that they might at their will pull in opposite directions and hold the government at a deadlock which no constitutional force could overcome and yet many situations might render inconvenient, if not hazardous, the temper and circumstances of the time gave public men little inclination to heed. Checks and balances were then the orthodox gospel of government.

The most serious success of the convention in applying Whig theory to the government they were constructing was the complete separation of Congress and the executive which they effected. The English Whigs fought for long to oust the Crown from the power and intimate influence it had had in the House of Commons through its control of members' seats and its corrupting power of patronage: they succeeded only in placing the leaders of the Commons itself in executive authority in the stead of the Crown. The real executive authority of the English government is vested in the ministers of the day, who are in effect a committee of the House of Commons, and legislature and executive work together under a common party organization. The one is only an agency of the other: the ministers act for their part in the House. The separation of parliament and the Crown which the reformers of the early part of the last century finally succeeded in effecting was not, in fact, a separation of the legislature from the executive, but only a separation of the real from the nominal executive. They entirely succeeded in making the king a modern "constitutional" monarch,—a monarch, that is, who, notwithstanding the dignity with which he is still surrounded and the very considerable influence which he can still exercise by reason of his station, his personal force should he happen to have any, and his intimate access to the counsels of the executive ministry, merely "reigns" and does not govern. His choice of advisers the House of Commons dictates. But our constitution-makers did their work during the earlier part of the struggle, when it seemed merely a contest to offset the authority of the king with effectual checks, and long before it had become evident that the outcome would be the substitution of an executive which represented the popular house for one which did not. Having a free hand and a clean sheet of paper upon which to write, there was nothing to hinder the complete realization of their ideal. They succeeded in actually separating legislature and executive.

It may be that circumstances rendered their success more complete than they had intended. There is no reason to believe that they meant actually to exclude the President and his advisers from all intimate personal consultation with the houses in session. No doubt the President and the members of his cabinet could, with perfect legal propriety and without any breach of the spirit of the Constitution, attend the sessions of either the House or the Senate and take part in their discussions, at any rate to the extent of answering questions and explaining any measures which the President might see fit to

urge in the messages which the Constitution explicitly authorizes him to send to Congress. But after a few brief attempts to institute a practice of that kind, in the early days of General Washington's administration, actual usage established another habit in respect of the intercourse between the executive and Congress, and later days have shown the houses very jealous of any attempt to establish such an intimacy. Their doors are shut against them. Only the door of a committee room here and there opens to receive them, and they enter only when they are invited.

In what I have said in a previous lecture of the remarkable and, in some respects, unexpected development of the President's influence and functions, I have already pointed out one of the most interesting and significant results of this absolute application of early Whig theory to the practice of our government. Its result has been that, so far as the government itself is concerned, there is but one national voice in the country, and that is the voice of the President. His isolation has quite unexpectedly been his exaltation. The House represents localities, is made up of individuals whose interest is the interest of separate and scattered constituencies, who are drawn together, indeed, under a master, the Speaker, but who are controlled by no national force except that of their party, a force outside the government rather than within it. The Senate represents, in its turn, regions and interests distinguished by many conflicting and contrasted purposes, united only by exterior party organization and a party spirit not generated within the chamber itself. Only the President represents the country as a whole, and the President himself is cooperatively bound to the houses only by the machinery and discipline of party, not as a person and functionary, but as a member of an outside organization which exists quite independently of the executive and legislature.

It is extraordinary the influence the early Whig theory of political dynamics has had amongst us and the far-reaching consequences which have ensued from it. It is far from being a democratic theory. It is, on the contrary, a theory whose avowed object, at any rate as applied in America, was to keep government at a sort of mechanical equipoise by means of a standing amicable contest among its several organic parts, each of which it seeks to make representative of a special interest in the nation. It is particularly intended to prevent the will of the people as a whole from having at any moment an unobstructed sweep and ascendancy. And yet, in every step we have taken with the intention of making our government more democratic, we have punctiliously kept to Whig mechanics. The process shows itself most distinctly and most systematically in the structure of our state governments. We have supposed that the way to make executive offices democratic in character and motive was to separate them in authority,—to prescribe each officer's duties by statute, however petty and naturally subordinate in kind those duties might be, to put it to the voter to elect him separately, and to make him responsible, not to any superior officer set over him, but only to the courts,—thus making him a law unto himself so far as any other official is concerned. So far have we carried the theory of checks and balances, the theory of the independence of the several organs of government.

The operation of the system is worth looking into more closely for a moment. Not very long ago a mob of unmasked men rescued a prisoner with whom they sympathized from the sheriff of a county in one of our States. The circumstances of the rescue made it very

evident that the sheriff had made no serious attempt to prevent the rescue. He had had reason to expect it, and had provided no sufficient armed guard for his prisoner. The case was so flagrant that the governor of the State wrote the sheriff a sharp letter of reprimand, censuring him very justly for his neglect of duty. The sheriff replied in an open letter in which he curtly bade the governor mind his own business. The sheriff was, he said, a servant of his county, responsible to its voters and not to the governor. And his impertinence was the law itself. The governor had no more authority over him than the youngest citizen. He was responsible only to the people of his own county, from whose ranks the mob had come which had taken his prisoner away from him. He could have been brought to book only by indictment and trial,—indictment at the instance of a district attorney elected on the same “ticket” with himself, by a grand jury of men who had voted for him, and trial by a petit jury of his neighbors, whose sympathy with the rescue might be presumed from the circumstances. This is Whig dynamics in its *reductio ad particulam*. It is a species of government in solution.

It can be solidified and drawn to system only by the external authority of party, an organization outside the government and independent of it. Not being drawn together by any system provided in our constitutions, being laid apart, on the contrary, in a sort of jealous dispersion and analysis by the Whig theory enacted into law, it has been necessary to keep the several parts of the government in some kind of workable combination by outside pressure, by the closely knit imperative discipline of party, a body that has no constitutional cleavages and is free to tie itself into legislative and executive functions alike by its systematic control of the personnel of all branches of the government.

Fortunately, the federal executive is not dispersed into its many elements as the executive of each of our States is. The dispersion of our state executives runs from top to bottom. The governor has no cabinet. The executive officers of state associated with him in administration are elected as he is. Each refers his authority to particular statutes or particular clauses of the state constitution. Each is responsible politically to his constituents, the voters of the State, and, legally, to the courts and their juries. But in the federal government, the executive is at least in itself a unit. Every one subordinate to the President is appointed by him and responsible to him, both legally and politically. He can control the personnel and the action of the whole of the great “department” of government of which he is the head. The Whig doctrine is insisted on only with regard to dealings of the legislature with the executive, and of the legislature or the executive with the courts. The three great functions of government are not to be merged or even drawn into organic cooperation, but are to be balanced against one another in a safe counterpoise. They are interdependent but organically disassociated; must cooperate, and yet are subject to no common authority.

The way in which the several branches of the federal government have been separately organized and given efficiency in the discharge of their own functions has only emphasized their separation and jealous independence. The effective organization of the House under its committees and its powerful Speaker, the organization of the Senate under its steering committees, the consolidation of the executive under the authority of

the President, only render it the more feasible and the more likely that these several parts of the government will act with an all too effective consciousness of their distinct individuality and dignity, their distinct claim to be separately considered and severally obeyed in the shaping and conduct of affairs. They are not to be driven, and there is no machinery of which the Constitution knows anything by which they can be led and combined.

It is for that reason that we have had such an extraordinary development of party authority in the United States and have developed outside the government itself so elaborate and effective an organization of parties. They are absolutely necessary to hold the things, thus disconnected and dispersed, together and give some coherence to the action of political forces. There are, as I have already explained in another connection, so many officers to be elected that even the preparation of lists of candidates is too complicated and laborious a business to be undertaken by men busy about other things. Someone must make a profession of attending to it, must give it system and method. A few candidates for a few conspicuous offices which interested everybody, the voters themselves might select in the intervals of private business; but the multitude of candidates for offices great and small they cannot choose; and after they are chosen and elected to office they are still a multitude, and there must be somebody to look after them in the discharge of their functions, somebody to observe them closely in action, in order that they may be assessed against the time when they are to be judged. Each has his own little legal domain; there is no interdependence amongst them, no interior organization to hold them together. There must, therefore, be an exterior organization, voluntarily formed and independent of the law, whose object it shall be to bind them together in some sort of harmony and cooperation. That exterior organization is the political part. The hierarchy of its officers must supply the place of a hierarchy of legally constituted officials.

Nowhere else is the mere maintenance of the machinery of government so complex and difficult a matter as in the United States. It is not as if there were but a single government to be maintained and officered. There are the innumerable offices of States, of counties, of townships, of cities, to be filled; and it is only by elections, by the filling of offices, that parties test and maintain their hold upon public opinion. Their control of the opinion of the nation inevitably depends upon their hold on the many localities of which it is made up. If they lose their grip upon the petty choices which affect the daily life of counties and cities and States, they will inevitably lose their grip upon the greater matters, also, of which the action of the nation is made up. Parties get their coherence and prestige, their rootage and solidity, their mastery over men and events, from their command of detail, their control of the little tides that eventually flood the great channels of national action. No one realizes more completely the interdependence of municipal, state, and federal elections than do the party managers. Their parties cannot be one thing for the one set of elections and another for the other; and the complexity of the politician's task consists in the fact that, though from his point of view interdependent and intimately connected, the constantly recurring elections of a system under which everybody is elected are variously scattered in time and place and object.

We have made many efforts to separate local and national elections in time in order to separate them in spirit. Many local questions upon which the voters of particular cities or counties or States are called upon to vote have no connection whatever either in principle or in object with the national questions upon which the choice of congressmen and of presidential electors should turn. It is ideally desirable that the voter should be left free to choose the candidates of one party in local elections and the candidates of the opposite party in national elections. It is undoubtedly desirable that he should go further and separate matters of local administration from his choice of party altogether, choosing his local representatives upon their merits as men without regard to their party affiliations. We have hopefully made a score of efforts to obtain "nonpartisan" local political action. But such efforts always in the long run fail. Local parties cannot be one thing for one purpose and another for another without losing form and discipline altogether and becoming hopelessly fluid. Neither can parties form and re-form, now for this purpose and again for that, or be for one election one thing and for another another. Unless they can have local training and constant rehearsal of their parts, they will fail of coherent organization when they address themselves to the business of national elections. For national purposes they must regard themselves as parts of greater wholes, and it is impossible, under such a system as our own, that they should maintain their zest and interest in their business if their only objects are distant and general objects, without local rootage or illustration, centering in Congress and utterly disconnected with anything that they themselves handle. Local offices are indispensable to party discipline as rewards of local fidelity, as the visible and tangible objects of those who devote their time and energy to party organization and undertake to see to it that the full strength of the party vote is put forth when the several local sections of the party are called upon to unite for national purposes. If national politics are not to become a mere game of haphazard amidst which parties can make no calculations whatever, systematic and disciplined connections between local and national affairs are imperative, and some instrument must be found to effect them. Whatever their faults and abuses, party machines are absolutely necessary under our existing electoral arrangements, and are necessary chiefly for keeping the several segments of parties together. No party manager could piece local majorities together and make up a national majority, if local majorities were mustered upon nonpartisan grounds. No party manager can keep his lieutenants to their business who has not control of local nominations. His lieutenants do not expect national rewards: their vital rootage is the rootage of local opportunity.

Just because, therefore, there is nowhere else in the world so complex and various an electoral machinery as in the United States, nowhere else in the world is party machinery so elaborate or so necessary. It is important to keep this in mind. Otherwise, when we analyze party action, we shall fall into the too common error of thinking that we are analyzing disease. As a matter of fact, the whole thing is just as normal and natural as any other political development. The part that party has played in this country has been both necessary and beneficial, and if bosses and secret managers are often undesirable persons, playing their parts for their own benefit or glorification rather than for the public good, they are at least the natural fruits of the tree. It has borne fruit good and bad, sweet and bitter, wholesome and corrupt, but it is native to our air and practice and can be uprooted only by an entire change of system.

All the peculiarities of party government in the United States are due to the too literal application of Whig doctrine, to the infinite multiplication of elective offices. There are two things to be done for which we have supplied no adequate legal or constitutional machinery: there are thousands of officials to be chosen and there are many disconnected parts of government to be brought into cooperation. "It may be laid down as a political maxim that whatever assigns to the people a power which they are naturally incapable of wielding takes it away from them." They have, under our Constitution and statutes, been assigned the power of filling innumerable elective offices; they are incapable of wielding that power because they have neither the time nor the necessary means of cooperative action; the power has therefore been taken away from them, not by law, but by circumstances, and handed over to those who have the time and inclination to supply the necessary organization; and the system of election has been transformed into a system of practically irresponsible appointment to office by private party managers,—irresponsible because our law has not yet been able to devise any means of making it responsible. It may also be laid down as a political maxim that when the several chief organs of government are separated by organic law and offset against each other in jealous seclusion, no common legal authority set over them, no necessary community of interest subsisting amongst them, no common origin or purpose dominating them, they must of necessity, if united at all, be united by pressure from without; and they must be united if government is to proceed. They cannot remain checked and balanced against one another; they must act, and act together. They must, therefore, of their own will or of mere necessity, obey an outside master.

Both sets of dispersions, the dispersion of offices and the dispersion of functions and authorities, have cooperated to produce our parties, and their organization. Through their caucuses, their county conventions, their state conventions, their national conventions, instead of through legislatures and cabinets, they supply the indispensable means of agreement and cooperation, and direct the government of the country both in its policy and in its personnel. Their local managers make up the long and variegated lists of candidates made necessary under our would-be democratic practice; their caucuses and local conventions ratify the choice; their state and national conventions add declarations of principle and determine party policy. Only in the United States is party thus a distinct authority outside the formal government, expressing its purposes through its own separate and peculiar organs and permitted to dictate what Congress shall undertake and the national administration address itself to. Under every other system of government which is representative in character and which attempts to adjust the action of government to the wishes and interests of the people, the organization of parties is, in a sense, indistinguishable from the organs of the government itself. Party finds its organic lodgment in the national legislature and executive themselves. The several active parts of the government are closely united in organization for a common purpose, because they are under a common direction and themselves constitute the machinery of party control. Parties do not have to supply themselves with separate organs of their own outside the government and intended to dictate its policy, because such separate organs are unnecessary. The responsible organs of government are also the avowed organs of party. The action of opinion upon them is open and direct, not circuitous and secret.

It is interesting to observe that, as a consequence, the distinction we make between “politicians” and “statesmen” is peculiarly our own. In other countries where these words or their equivalents are used, the statesman differs from the politician only in capacity and in degree, and is distinguished as a public leader only in being a greater figure on the same stage, whereas with us politicians and statesmen differ in kind. A politician is a man who manages the organs of the party outside the open field of government, outside executive offices and legislative chambers, and who conveys the behests of party to those who hold the offices and make laws; while the statesman is the leader of public opinion, the immediate director (under the politicians) of executive or legislative policy, the diplomat, the recognized public servant. The politician, indeed, often holds public office and attempts the role of statesman as well, but, though the roles may be combined, they are none the less sharply distinguishable. Party majorities which are actually in control of the whole legislative machinery, as party majorities in England are, determine party programs by the use of the government itself,—their leaders are at once “politicians” and “statesmen”; and, the function being public, the politician is more likely to be swallowed up in the statesman. But with us, who affect never to allow party majorities to get in complete control of governmental machinery if we can prevent it by constitutional obstacles, party programs are made up outside legislative chambers, by conventions constituted under the direction of independent politicians,—politicians, I mean, who are, at any rate, in respect of that function, independent of the responsibilities of office and of public action; and these independent conventions, not charged with the responsibility of carrying out their programs, actually outline the policy of administrations and dictate the action of Congress, the irresponsible dictating to the responsible, and so, it may be, destroying the very responsibility itself. “The peculiarities of American party government are all due to this separation of party management from direct and immediate responsibility for the administration of the government.”

The satisfaction of power must be very great to attract so many men of unusual gifts to attempt the hazardous and little honored business of party management. We have made it necessary that we should have “bosses” and that they and their lieutenants should assign offices by appointment, but it is a very difficult and precarious business which they undertake, it is difficult and hazardous not only because it is irregular and only partially protected by law, but also because the people look askance at it and often with a sudden disgust turn upon it and break it up, for a little while rendering it impossible. The reason for these occasional outbursts of discontent and resentment is evident and substantial enough. They come when the people happen to realize that under existing party machinery they have virtually no control at all over nominations for office, and that, having no real control over the choice of candidates, they are cut off from exercising real representative self-government,—that they have been solemnly taking part in a farce. But their revolt is only fitful and upon occasion. Reform associations arise, committees of fifty or seventy or a hundred are formed to set matters right and put government back into the hands of the people, but it is always found that no one can successfully supplant the carefully devised machinery of professional politicians without taking the same pains that they take, without devoting to the business the time and the enthusiasm for details which they devote to it, or supplant the politicians themselves without forming rival

organizations as competent as theirs to keep an eye on the whole complicated process of elections and platforms, without, in short, themselves becoming in their turn professional politicians. It is an odd operation of the Whig system that it should make such party organizations at once necessary and disreputable, and I should say that in view of the legal arrangements which we have deliberately made, the disrepute in which professional politicians are held, is in spirit highly unconstitutional.

There can be and there need be no national boss like the local bosses of States and cities, because federal patronage is not distributed by election. Local bosses commonly control the selection of members of Congress because the congressional districts are local, and members of Congress are voted for by local ticket; but they cannot control federal appointments without the consent of the President. By the same token, the President can, if he chooses, become national boss by the use of his enormous patronage, doling out his local gifts of place to local party managers in return for support and cooperation in the guidance and control of his party. His patronage touches every community in the United States. He can often by its use disconcert and even master the local managers of his own party by combining the arts of the politician with the duties of the statesman, and he can go far towards establishing a complete personal domination. He can even break party lines asunder and draw together combinations of his own devising. It is against this that our national civil service laws have been wisely directed.

But what really restrains him is his conspicuous position and the fact that opinion will hold him responsible for his use of his patronage. Local bosses are often very obscure persons. To the vast majority of the voters they are entirely unknown, and it is their desire to be as little in evidence as possible. They are often not themselves office-holders at all, and there is no way in which, by mere elective processes, they can be held responsible. But the President's appointments are public, and he alone by constitutional assignment is responsible for them. Such open responsibility sobers and restrains even where principle is lacking. Many a man who does not scruple to make, in private, political arrangements which will serve his own purposes will be very careful to be judicious in every act for which he is known to be singly responsible. Responsible appointments are always better than irresponsible. Responsible appointments are appointments made under scrutiny; irresponsible appointments are those made by private persons in private.

The machinery of party rule is nominally representative. The several assemblies and conventions through which the parties operate are supposed to be made up of delegates chosen by the voters of the party, to speak for them with a certain knowledge of what they want and expect. But here again the action of the voters themselves is hardly more than nominal. The lists of delegates are made up by the party managers as freely in all ordinary circumstances as are the lists of the candidates in whose selection they concur. To add the duty of really selecting delegates to the duty of selecting men for office already laid upon our voters by law would be only to add to the impossibility of their task, and to their confusion if they attempted to perform it. When difficulties arise in the process, rival bodies of delegates can always be chosen, and then the managing committees who are in charge of the party's affairs—the county committee, the state committee, or the national committee—can dictate which of the contesting delegations

shall be admitted, which shall have their credentials accepted. It is to this necessity we have been brought by farming the functions of government out to outside parties. We have made the task of the voter hopeless and therefore impossible.

And yet, at the best, the control which party exercises over government is uncertain. There can be, whether for the voter or for the managing politician himself, little more than a presumption that what party managers propose and promise will be done, for the separation of authority between the several organs of government itself still stands in the way. Government is still in solution, and nothing may come to crystallization. But we may congratulate ourselves that we have succeeded as well as we have in giving our politics unity and coherence. We should have drifted sadly, should much oftener have been made to guess what the course of our politics should be, had we not constructed this singular and, on the whole, efficient machinery by which we have in all ordinary seasons contrived to hold the personnel and the policy of our government together.

Moreover, there is another use which parties, thus thoroughly organized and universally active, have served among us which has been of supreme importance. It is clear that without them it would hardly have been possible for the voters of the country to be united in truly national judgments upon national questions. For a hundred years or more we have been a nation in the making, and it would be hard to exaggerate the importance of the nationalizing influence of our great political parties. Without them, in a country so various as ours, with communities at every stage of development, separated into parts by the sharpest economic contrasts and social differences, with local problems and conditions of their own which seemed to give them a separate interest very difficult to combine with any other, full of keen rivalries and here and there cut athwart by deep-rooted prejudices, national opinions, national judgments, could never have been formulated or enforced without the instrumentality of well-disciplined parties which extended their organization in a close network over the whole country, and which had always their desire for office and for the power which office brings to urge as their conclusive reason,—a reason which every voter could understand,—why there should be agreement in opinion and in program as between section and section, whatever the temptation to divide and act separately, as their conclusive argument against local interest and preference. If local and national politics had ever been for long successfully divorced, this would have been impossible.

Students of our politics have not always sufficiently recognized the extraordinary part political parties have played in making a national life, which might otherwise have been loose and diverse almost to the point of being inorganic, a thing of definite coherence and common purpose. There is a sense in which our parties may be said to have been our real body politic. Not the authority of Congress, not the leadership of the President, but the discipline and zest of parties, has held us together, has made it possible for us to form and to carry out national programs. It is not merely that the utmost economic diversity has marked the development of the different parts of the country, and that their consciousness of different and even rival and conflicting interests has rendered the sympathy between them imperfect, the likelihood of antagonism very great indeed. There have been social differences, also, quite as marked. These social differences were no doubt themselves

founded in economic diversity, but they cut much deeper than mere economic diversity of itself could have cut and made real sympathy unnatural, spontaneous cooperation between the portions of the country which they had offset against one another extremely difficult, and, in the absence of party discipline, extremely unlikely. The social contrast between the North and South before the Civil War will occur to every one,—a contrast created, of course, by the existence of the slave system in the South and deepened and elaborated by many another influences until the political partnership of the two regions became at last actually impossible. And yet there was no exclusive Southern party, no exclusive northern party, until the war itself came. Until then, each national party had a strong and loyal following both North and South, and seemed to be conscious of no sectional lines which need prevent cordial cooperation. The very interest which a section with peculiar needs and objects of its own had in maintaining its proportional influence in the direction of the policy of the general government, in order both to protect itself and general government, in order both to protect itself and to further such measures conceived in its own interest as it could induce the partners to concede, made it eager to escape actual political isolation and keep its representation in national party councils.

And, though the contrast between the South with slavery and the other portions of the country without it was the sharpest and most dangerous contrast that our history has disclosed, many another crises in our affairs has been accentuated by differences of interest and of point of view almost as great. The feeling of the communities beyond the Alleghanies towards the communities by the Atlantic seaboard throughout all the time when foreign powers owned the southern outlet of the great valley of the Mississippi; the feeling of the communities of the plains towards the communities to the eastward which seemed to grudge them their development and to prefer the interest of the manufacturer to the interest of the farmer; the feeling of the mining camps towards the regions of commerce and of all the old order which got their wealth but did not understand or regard their wishes in matter of local regulation and self-government; the circumstances in which Territories were set up and the heats in which States were forged,—these have been the difficulties and hazards of our national history, and it has been nothing less than a marvel how the network of parties has taken up and broken the restless strain of contest and jealousy, like an invisible network of kindly oil upon the disordered waters of the sea.

It is in this vital sense that our national parties have been our veritable body politic. The very compulsion of selfishness has made them serviceable; the very play of self-interest has made them effective. In organization was their strength. It brought them the rewards of local office, the command of patronage of many kinds, the detailed control of opinion, the subtle mastery of every force of growth and expansion. They strove for nothing so constantly or so watchfully as for the compact, cooperative organization and action which served to hold the nation in their hands.

But we have come within sight of the end of the merely nationalizing process. Contrasts between region and region become every year less obvious, conflicts of interest less acute and disturbing. Party organization is no longer needed for the mere rudimentary task of holding the machinery together or giving it the sustenance of some common object, some

single cooperative motive. The time is at hand when we can with safety examine the network without imperiling its strength. This thing that has served us so well might now master us if we left it irresponsible. We must see to it that it is made responsible.

I have already explained in what sense and for what very sufficient reasons it is irresponsible. Party organizations appoint our elective officers, and we do not elect them. The chief obstacle to their reform, the chief thing that has stood in the way of making them amenable to opinion, controllable by independent opposition, is the reverence with which we have come to regard them. By binding us together at moments of crisis they have won our affectionate fealty. Because the Republican party "saved the Union," a whole generation went by, in many parts of the country, before men who had acted with it in a time of crisis could believe it possible for any "gentleman" or patriot to break away from it or oppose it, whatever its policy and however remote from anything it had originally professed or undertaken. Because the Democratic party had stood for state rights and a power freely dispersed among the people, because it had tried to avoid war and preserve the old harmony of the sections, men of the same fervor of sympathy in other parts of the country deemed it equally incredible that any man of breeding or of principle could turn his back upon it or act with any other political organization. The feeling lasted until lines of party division became equally fixed and artificial. But with changing generations feelings change. We are coming now to look upon our parties once more as instruments for progressive action, a means for handling the affairs of a new age. Sentimental reminiscence is less dominant over us. We are ready to study new uses for our parties and to adapt them to new standards and principles.

The principle of change, if change there is to be, should spring out of this question: Have we had enough of the literal translation of Whig theory into practice, into constitutions? Are we ready to make our legislatures and our executives our real bodies politic, instead of our parties? If we are, we must think less of checks and balances and more of coordinated power, less of separation of functions and more of the synthesis of action. If we are, we must decrease the number and complexity of the things the voter is called upon to do; concentrate his attention upon a few men whom he can make responsible, a few objects upon which he can easily centre his purpose; make parties his instruments and not his masters by an utter simplification of the things he is expected to look to.

Every test of principle or of program returns to our original conception of constitutional government. Every study of party must turn about our purpose to have real representative institutions. Constitutional government can be vital only when it is refreshed at every turn of affairs by a new and cordial and easily attained understanding between those who govern and those who are governed. It can be maintained only by genuine common counsel; and genuine representative institutions. A people who know their minds and can get real representatives to express them are a self-governed people, the practiced masters of constitutional government.