

EFFECTIVE POLITICAL ACTION--PARTY OR NON-PARTISAN

"By a faction, I understand a number of citizens, whether amounting to a majority or minority of the whole, who are united and actuated by some common impulse of passion, or of interest, adverse to the rights of other citizens, or to the permanent and aggregate interests of the community" Fed 10 N.Y. Packet 11-23, 1787. Ever since those famous words were written in the celebrated federalist papers back in 1787 there has been an enduring suspicion and hostility toward political parties or factions in America. Added to this suspicion and hostility is a tradition of contempt and condescending tolerance of politics itself. Anyone in politics is disparaged. Politics is generally regarded as a necessary evil that attracts self-motivated cigar smokers of degenerate character and sinister intrigues. Thus when one undertakes to defend and extoll political parties and party loyalty and responsibility in a gathering such as this of high minded intellects, he is indeed venturing into perilous parts.

Yet I must plead guilty to being a politician of a sort. Apart from being president of the Fifth Ward Y.D.'s and vice-president of the Y.D.'s of the Second Congressional District, I am also a job holding precinct captain. (Don't feel too much debased; this discussion is to last only two hours.) Before I undertake the particular modest contribution I hope to make in this discussion this evening there is a little background to the composition of the Fifth Ward Y.D.'s selection of speakers on this subject.

The Fifth Ward Y.D.'s is blessed with a wealth of forensic talent. However, knowing the common suspicion toward people engaged in political activity, we felt, if we presented consummate rhetoricians to a gathering like this, some might think we had hired polemical mercenaries so as to present us in a better mien than we deserve. Thus the speakers from the Fifth Ward Y.D.'s were chosen because they are incontestably representative of the Fifth Ward Y. D.'s. Mr. Kahn and I both are precinct captains and he is a former Y. D. president of this Ward. In other words though we

may not be putting our best feet forward we certainly are putting our real feet forward. Now to shift from our feet to political activity.

In the estimable form of Adam Smith's Capitalism Mr. Kahn and I have decided upon a division of labor. I am to approach the subject from a more theoretical and discussive standpoint and Mr. Kahn from a more down to earth practical perspective. Let me first platonically define our terms.

By effective it is simply meant political operations that get results. I believe, we mean further good and positive results. Politics is that operation or activity in society that has to do with electing and influencing persons who are designated to govern us. I don't think there is any need for further refinement of that part of the subject. Lest next we come to party. I have already mentioned Madison's description or definition of a party or faction. I think if we cut off the latter part about "Adverse to the rights of other citizens, or to the permanent and aggregate interest of the community," we have a fairly good definition. However, I would add that this "Number of citizens" are seeking to get control of the government. This is not to say that Madison's definition is always incomplete or an overstatement. In a Weberian analysis it would probably fit one particular kind of party, though Weber would be very reluctant to use such value-loaded phrases as the latter part of Madison's definition. A political party is a number of citizens tied together for various reasons or motives for the purpose of obtaining power. The reasons, motives, or interests may be ideological (which Weber would label a Weltanschauung Party), reverence or adoration for a man or particular individuals (which Weber would call a Charismatic Party), jobs and the perquisites of power for the leaders and their coterie (which Weber would call a patronage party). It is not my intention to give a survey of Weber's analysis of the Problem. These remarks are only to suggest the copious complexity of the kinds and types of parties.

Non-partisan political activity is an Anachronism and contradiction in terms. Before I go into this I will at least essay an abstract definition. A non-partisan is one who has no rigid political ties, loyalty, or responsibility; but rather a person or collection of selfless persons set on promoting the common good and public interest, unbiased by party intanglements. In short they are angels who are interested only in electing angels no matter what their seraphic affiliations.

Now I should give a caveat here. "Our discussion will be adequate if it has as much clearness as the subject-matter admits of; for precision is not to be sought for alike in all discussions, any more than in all the products of the crafts." (Book I Ethica Nicomachea) we have mentioned Plato and quoted Aristotle, as should always be done on this campus so we can now continue with our discussion. Politics is not a discipline of black and white in bold relief. It is a practical discipline and subject-matter where compromise and accommodation are absolutely necessary in practice at times. Self-righteous charges and insinuations will not answer the problem of how to get effective political action. Nor will heavenly intentions and motivations get concrete results.

Party implies a free political association of men ostensibly with common interest, goals, or aims. Party is a fact of the political situation. Power in America is held by the Republican and Democratic parties. This is the critical situation of American politics. Burke says of such a situation: "But where duty renders a critical situation a necessary one, it is our business to keep from the evils attendant upon it; and not to fly from the situation itself." Robert E. Merriam and Rachel M. Goetz, say Going Into Politics, A Guide for Citizens: "We believe therefore that the role of the Political independent, however important in any particular set of circumstances, must for the long pull take second place to dedicated work within the parties themselves." It is a sociological, as well as, a political fact that there is more strength in numbers than in dispersed individuals. Party alignment and affiliation are necessary for effective political action and responsibility.

It might be a more profitable topic for discussion to ask what significant or effective contribution can be made to political action by non-partisan pressure groups. Of course, we know pressure groups are almost always partisan about something. They usually have some pet peeve. They want to lower taxes, enhance big business, protect the workers, or save womanhood, God, and country. Their concern tends to be parochial, narrow, and overly-self-centered. They can make a contribution. They can bring all their resources to bear on one phase or problem in the body politic. It is the party alone that has a comprehensive program which touches the interests of all pressure groups and citizens. As purveyors of information pressure groups can be helpful. Even as peddlers of cure-all political pills and programs these frustrated outsiders can render a service-there is usually a grain of reason and truth in these outsiders madness. Groups like the League of Women Voters can be peculiarly helpful in educating the electorate in the political process and even sometimes the various candidates.

But most of these non-partisan groups do not content themselves merely with giving information and promoting certain programs. Sanctimoniously shielded behind such euphemistic labels as Independent or Non-Partisan So and Sos, these groups traduce high minded citizens into believing that they alone wear a gold gadge of integrity and honor. That the candidates they recommend, indeed, that only their candidates merit the vote of freedom and clean government loving citizens. They would have you believe that they are the guardians of good government: They are the watchdog of venal politicians: They are above political skull-duggery: In short they are men of the highest honor.

I submit this is a sham and a farce. We have masquerading in our community such a group with such a high sounding label. They would have you believe they are not a political part and pressure group at the sametime. Yet their actions and practices very much belie this claim. Don't think I have a quarrel with them. On the whole I find my sentiments and ideals very close to theirs. It is a question of means where I differ. After all everyone is for clean government, efficient government, and sound, progressive government. Well, almost everyone.

My roots sink very deep in the University of Chicago community. I consider myself one the Old Hutchins Votaries. I meandered in and out whimsically the stimulating classes of Profs. Meikle John, Meyer, Grodzins, Reisman, and even our advisory Mr. Kreuger. I drank deeply the independent spirit of this campus in the proverbial "Good Old Days" of crackpot deviationists who held an idea of no worth if it was not either shockingly and outrageously novel or classically gleaned from Plato, Aristotle, or St. Thomas Aquinas. I have carried from these halls a certain Aristotelian outlook that I believe is worth noting. The quote above has already referred to it.

Politics is a practical art that does not admit of too much theoretical or operational precision. Good intentions and high ideals are well and good, but the common good requires common sense and plain practical action. To stand aloof from politics unless you are an ivory tower scholar is fanciful soft-headed thinking and acting. To even pretend to be an independent, though it sounds noble in theory is very often ignoble in fact for two reasons.

First, theoretically it indicates overly fastidious fear of committing oneself to a single large group or organization. The time for incohesive irresponsible hop-skip-and-jump politics is out? The challenge of world leadership, yes, even of local leadership requires the clear placing of responsibility with definitive party groups. David Truman's *Vector Analysis of American Politics* may be accurate; but the time for coherent leadership and clearly assignable responsibility are very much at hand in need. You have your chaos of independents, and splinter parties in France and you have there also anomie and governmental confusion. As has once been suggested we have survived so well thus far because our enormous wealth, resources, relative isolation and in spite of our lack of rational party organization and alignment and meaningful leadership. The maverick is yet to be respected and even encouraged as a gadfly and bovine source of new pricking, hooking ideas. But we are here on the horns of a dilemma: for though independents are needed stimulants and must be nourished, the exigencies and problems of government and leadership go on prevail. If we linger too long on the independent horn our vitals may be eviscerated. There

must be many men working in concert with leaders directing the symphony of discordant interests and individuals according to a comprehensive score that recognizes the limitations, capabilities, and resources of the constituents of the body politic. It is a tragic fact of our atomic age that individuals alone and separated can accomplish very little. This is even true in the higher theoretical sciences. That an organization may stifle independence, originality, and initiative is true. However, real stature is shown when one can work within the framework of a big organization according to the rules of the game, and yet lift the whole organization to a higher plane of efficiency, service and integrity. I think Burke's remarks again are very fitting on the supercilious-stiff shirted self-righteous men who desire to be above parties or partisan politics. He said: "When the public man omits to put himself in a situation of doing his duty with effect, it is an omission that frustrates the purposes of his trust almost as much as if he had formally betrayed it. It is surely no very rational account of a man's life, that he has always acted right, but has taken special care to act in such a manner that his endeavors could not possibly be productive of any consequence."

Second, to pretend to be independent is usually a veneer. There are those who are dependently independent. Any organization that smells power wants it. Once tasted, it is held on to for dear life. Independent organizations act like parties though they sheath their scimitor in a non-partisan scabbard. They have their own kind of patronage. Those in the higher echelons are paid off with power, offices and influence. The rank and file are paid off with opportunities for ideological self-righteous masturbation by means of which their pent-up parental rebellion and enmity are vented off against so-called grotesque political machines and father-like strong political organizations. These are not the only emoluments. Incidentally, "machine" is a bugabear word which is used as a war cry to scare the unmechanical minded into indignant terror.

I am going to have to draw my discursive remarks to a close. Apart from pointing out the necessity of political parties for concerted effective action, apart from pointing out the limited but needed service of giving information to the public and parties by independents and non-partisan pressure groups, and apart from pointing out that in fact, independent non-partisan organizations are myths, we in this community must be mindful of a crucial fact. Most of us are liberals. The Democratic Party is the liberal party in America and certainly in the state of Illinois. Any group that helps a Republican get elected in Chicago, Cook County, Illinois, or the nation is helping on the whole the forces of reaction and conservatism which the Republican Party stands for. I am a Democrat because I believe in the liberal principles of the Democratic Party. I believe in the men of the Democratic Party who manifest those principles such our States' Representatives Abner Mikva and Nathan Kinnally, Senator Marshall Korshak, Congressman Barret O'Hara, Sheriff Joseph D. Lohman, Richard Deley, and Senator Paul Douglas. Most independents organizations only sap democratic strength. Any Republican helped to office by any organization in Illinois is giving the Republicans the wherewithall to defeat such outstanding men. Liberals, would you regard such action as effective political action in the liberal and good sense of the words?