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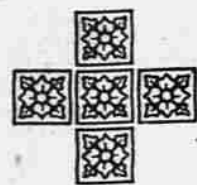
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## AMERICA NEEDS A NEW POLITICAL ALIGNMENT

By ALLEN McCURDY

"In politics," wrote John Stuart Mill, "it is almost a commonplace that a party of order and stability and a party of progress and reform are both essential elements of a healthy state of political life." Theoretically one would say at once that unless parties were opposed to each other they would not exist. The theory would be confirmed by observing the organization of parties in other constitutionally governed countries. Two major parties opposed to each other on principle insure the discussion of every issue which seriously affects the well-being of the people. Political campaigns become the most efficient educational institutions democracy can create. The voters have a real chance to participate in government, to hear both sides of the question discussed with equal freedom, enlightened and defended with equal talent and energy, and then to give an enlightened and convinced mandate whether, on the given issue, they desire order and stability, or progress and change. No matter which party wins the election, there is always an organized opposition which creates an opposition press. Neither party can go to extremes of policy. That suspicion of the people, upon which Hallam asserts the durability of liberty rests, is constantly alert. Discussion, by which alone democracy was created and by which alone it can be maintained, becomes habitual in the life of the nation.

Such is a healthy state of political life in a nation. But there is no symptom of this health in American politics. In 1891 Ambassador Bryce recorded in "The American Commonwealth" his astonishment that neither of our two major parties had any distinctive principles, tenets, or tendencies. "Neither has anything definite to say about any one of the twenty issues one hears of as seriously involving the people. All has been hope of it."

Charley Murphy," the speakers were dumb. Other political leaders are said to be more frank. Vice-President Marshall is reported to have offered a prize of five dollars to anyone who would tell him the difference between the Democratic and the Republican party. The latest word is from Mr. William Hard, in the Metropolitan magazine, May, 1919: "The truth is, in America, the major parties, the Democratic and Republican party, are not national parties at all."

Has America then no national party? Of course it has. It has one of the most reactionary parties of stability and order in the world. This reactionary party has two sections: the Northern, or Republican; and the Southern, or Democratic. In no other country is the party of stability and order so deeply and cleverly entrenched. Why raise issues, why promise discussion when by presenting personalities and keeping the public mind away from facts, you can keep control by means of the "Democratic-Republican" ballot-box? Consequently, for the last thirty years at least (except during the free-silver campaign, which raised a real issue such as every national election should raise), national elections have been huge Punch and Judy shows, Democratic Punches fighting Republican Judys, to the delight of the assembled multitudes. But no one gets out of the proceedings as the invisible reactionary ventriloquist who sits behind the curtain, as the deluded voters grasp him firmly, first by his right hand and then by his fist. Or has he been grasping them?

The Republican-Democratic party of order and stability is always in control. Neither section of this national party ever endangers its policy of reaction by presenting real issues to people, for discussion and debate are always dangerous to reaction. Instead of issues this party relies on personalities and the disgust of the progressive voters to maintain its unquestioned dictation of national policies. For example, Mr. Hard at present represents the Republican leaders as saying something with a policy. "What is it? Why try to be pro-Republican? It is anti-Democratic and watch the results put us in the

relationship. There is a contest about appropriations. One side succeeds another; each side to different action cares nothing for the checks so long as it controls the policies. The other cannot, under the present party dominance, in-

fluence national policies. He can only put the "outs" in and the "ins" out of office. There is only one national ballot-box. It is the Republican-Democratic box. The hyphen lies directly over Mason and Dixon's line. This box has one partition which rests on a removable slide placed somewhere near the center of the ballot-box. A majority of votes on the Republican side means merely that a Republican President is about to appoint a Cabinet controlled by Northern gentlemen whose principal business is to see that the bulk of Federal offices is given to Northern Republicans in order to tighten the Northern section of the Republican-Democratic machine. It also means that a Northern Congressman is elected chairman of the Appropriations Committee, whose principal business is to see that as little Federal money as possible goes south of Mason and Dixon's line, and as much as possible north of it. When a majority of votes is found on the Democratic side of the partition, the only real meaning is that the above process is reversed; the bulk of Federal offices and the bulk of Federal money flows to the South to build up the Southern section of the Democratic-Republican party of order and stability. When this momentous practical question which group of plunder seekers is to have the bulk of the spoils is decided, then reaction pulls the slide, and Republican ballots mingle intimately with Democratic ones in securing to the powers of reaction control of the entire nation, both North and South.

Men and women who believe in stability and order ought to have a party and a ballot-box through which to ex-

press their honest convictions. The mischief in the United States has been, and is, that they have had both ballot-boxes, and have obtained the votes of those who believe in change and progress under false pretences perpetuated under these different names, Republican and Democratic. They have not, therefore, been compelled to defend their order and their stability. There has been no opposition press, because there has been no opposition party. Public discussion of questions vitally affecting the welfare of the people has fallen so far into disuse as to have reached the point of being considered, by pulpit, press, and university alike, either dangerous or wicked. Lacking the knowledge of facts which free and honest discussion alone makes universal, the American Tory is said to be the most ignorant person in the world.

This lack of public discussion threatens the intellectual life of the whole nation. It has produced at least one deplorable and disquieting result: one-half of this people does not know what the other half thinks. Uninfluenced by that public discussion which is necessary to enlist the intelligent co-operation of a convinced people, not only prohibition, but all other issues, are taken away from the consideration of the voters and settled by legislative committees and caucuses, which decide, never on the merits of the issue, but always on the "politics" of the issue. The laws may be good or bad. Merits of the laws thus made are not involved in this question at all. But as the democratic English bishop remarked: "It is better to have a people free than to have a people sober." This method of law-making is evil through and through. Of such stuff is despotism made and by such stuff is liberty destroyed. Democracy is concerned primarily, not with the making of good laws, but with the making of good people. Germany gave good streets to Berliners. America gives bad streets to New Yorkers. But democracy is willing to wait until the experience of bad streets creates voters who demand good streets. To conceive fine laws and superimpose them from above is not the method of democracy; it is the method of autocracy and despotism.

The need for the construction of a new ballot-box is evident. The voters who believe in progress and reform have their honest opinions; but they have neither party nor ballot-box through which to express them. They are practically disfranchised. They are forced at present either to choose between the Republican-Democratic game in which they do not believe, and the Socialist ballot-box, in which likewise, they do not believe, or to stay at home. The necessity for this new ballot-box is rapidly becoming imperative. The Republican-Democratic game is well-nigh played out. Reaction might as well unite its forces and become open, outspoken, and honest. This plan has, indeed, been considered as a national policy, and has actually been practiced in congressional districts when reaction over sectionalism is dead. The great war wiped away its last vestige. The economic and industrial problems that

create the vital political issues of the present divide into two honest opposing camps the voters of every city, town, village, and agricultural district throughout the entire nation.

Unless the voters who believe in changes and reforms are given the opportunity to make those changes through constitutional discussion and political decision, the forces of unrest and discontent will widen and deepen, until at some future day they break forth in violent revolution. Reaction becomes insane when it strives to suppress the discussion of the vital problems of life. It places itself squarely against those impalpable forces of the human spirit which know no opposition. "Idiot," said Sir Charles James Napier, "talk of agitators; there is but one in existence, and that is injustice." Nor dare we forget in this day of national crisis the wise word of Sir Robert Peel, who defined discussion to be "the marshalling of the conscience of a nation to mould its laws."

Hitherto believers in progress and change have been trusting souls, knowing the situation, but standing, like Micawber, waiting for something to turn up to right matters:

Foiled with hope, men favor deceit; Trust on, and think tomorrow will repay.

Tomorrow's falser than the former day; Lies worse, and while it says we shall be blest With some new joys, cuts off what we possessed.

The time has come for them to cease hoping and go to work. No real issue is going to break through the stone-wall of Republican-Democratic control. No European convulsion is to re-align American political life. Congress is not "going to restore liberty to American people." Liberty comes by no such easy "pill-taking method." Liberty comes to men who seize it and by eternal vigilance keep it. The creation of a new ballot-box means the constructive will and the steady work of those who need it in order to assert their right of participation in the government of their own nation. How many are they? No one knows. The forces of progress and reform have never had an organized identity. They have been scattered and concealed within the supporting ranks of this reactionary Democratic-Republican organization. Let them be separate themselves from an organization that stands against their convictions and defeats their hopes, and they will discover their power, at the same time forcing their opponents into the open to defend that order and stability in which they have secretly believed.

Wanted—a ballot-box! The party of order and stability has one. The Socialist has one. The terrorist does not want one; he seeks a bomb, and in the wicked stupidity of violence plays into the hands of the party of order and stability and discredits the forces of peaceful progress and change. The Bolshevik pours his bitter scorn upon such an infantile idea as a new ballot-box; he wants a new world and he wants it quick; he would manufacture a revolution, or—what to his foolish

## Clean - Up - Week

July 21st

To

July 26 Inclusive

All residents of Elizabeth City are urged to "Clean Up" their grounds and homes and deposit all refuse of any and all description on the sidewalk line on the day of the regular collection for their district.

The City will be glad to take this material away without charge.

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(Concluded on page 10)