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BY FRANKLIN L. BURDETTE

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by FRANKLIN L. BURDETTE

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POLITICAL PARTIES: AN AMERICAN WAY

By FRANKLIN L. BURDETTE

WHO has not heard the question, "What is the difference between the Democratic and Republican parties?" Or, again, "What do the political parties mean to me? Why not scrap them and vote for the man?"

Even the Fathers of the Republic were doubtful of parties. James Madison, one of the principal architects of the Constitution, feared that the growth of party faction would destroy good government. He believed, at first, that the Constitution by its carefully planned safeguards would serve to control factions.

George Washington as President suffered such partisan attacks that in his *Farewell Address* he warned his fellow countrymen "in the most solemn manner against the baneful effects of the spirit of party." Recognizing that "this spirit, unfortunately, is inseparable from our nature" and that "it exists under different shapes in all governments," he observed that "in those of the popular form it is seen in its greatest rankness, and is truly their worst enemy."

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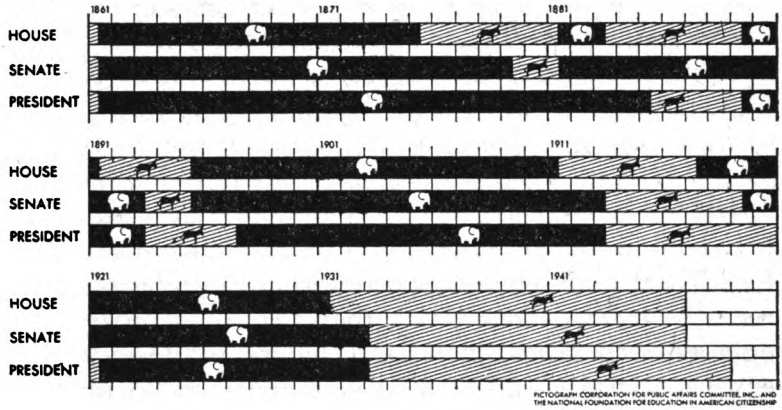
PARTIES IN POWER



the new Democratic party carried the support of agricultural and small business groups and now favored a strong national executive as a popular representative. The Whig party, organized in 1834 by Henry Clay and others, accepted the Jacksonian challenge on economic issues, defended a United States Bank, protective tariffs, and internal improvements at the expense of the federal government, and gained the support of commercial classes in the population.

The issue of slavery split both the Democratic and the Whig parties, and the latter vanished in the maelstrom of sectional politics. The Republican party, founded in 1854, took the firm stand against extension of slavery upon which the Whigs had not been able to agree. The election of Lincoln to the Presidency in 1860 as the Republican candidate resulted from the electoral strength of the nonslave states and from the split in Democratic ranks.

In the years after the Civil War the Republicans favored higher tariffs than did Democratic spokesmen, and the Republican party was usually more conservative in monetary policies. The Democratic party enjoyed the support of the South as well as of antitariff groups. With

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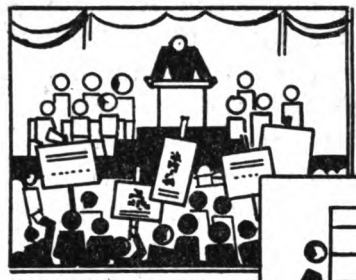
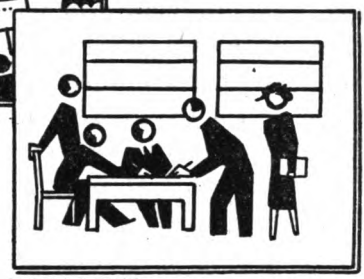


NOMINATIONS

CONVENTIONS



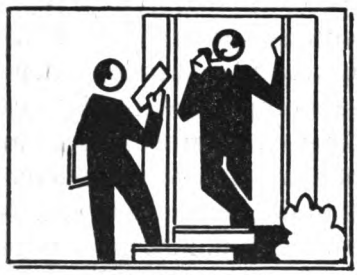
PRIMARIES



ISSUES



PARTY RESPONSIBILITY



EDUCATION OF VOTERS



SERVICE TO CITIZENS

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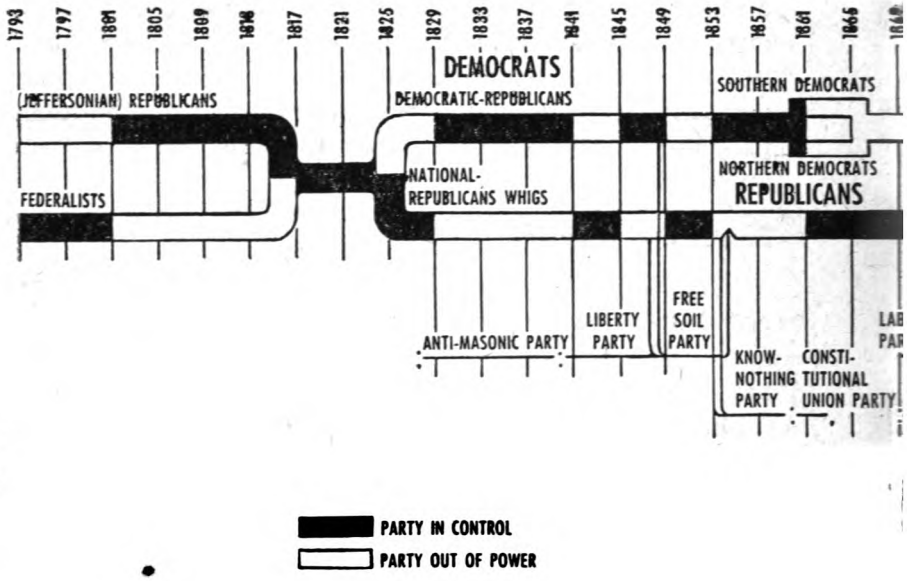
AMERICAN PARTIES



tions is based fundamentally on the work of a multitude of politicians who make contact and friendliness a business with a purpose. Primary elections, which operate within a single party, are especially subject to their control. Activity by citizen groups in preparation for primary elections is therefore especially important.

Citizens who are willing to share fully in the responsibilities of parties in making decisions about nominations will not only vote; they will work actively in party affairs and will support able candidates. Because nominations are likely to determine the nature of future governmental policies, the citizen who participates fully in the nominat-

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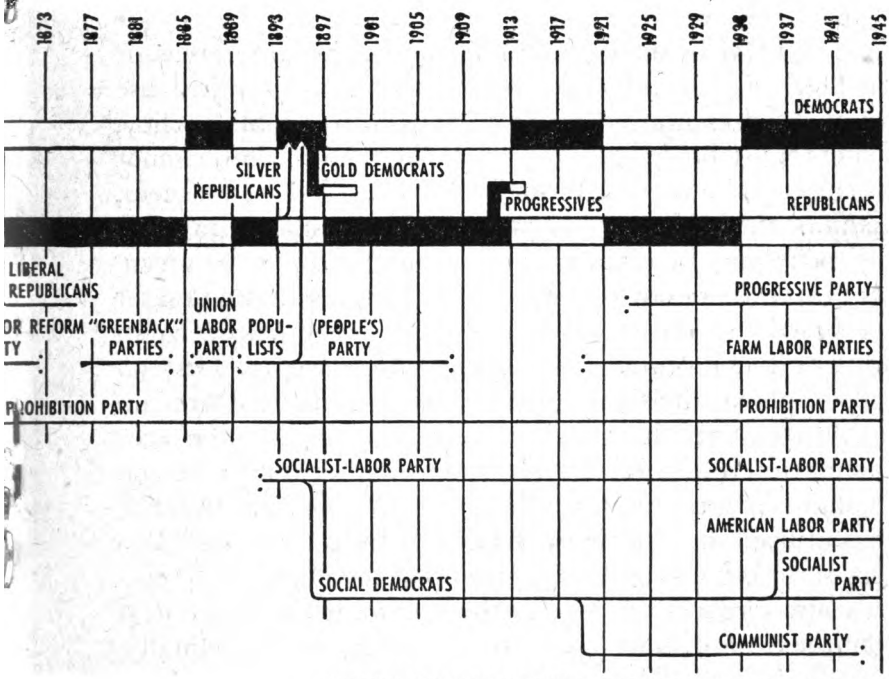

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ing role of a strong political party has a vital share in the government of his community.

Whenever upright citizens take an active part in politics, the organizations which they build reveal in their methods and policies the character of their supporters. A spirit of public service, instilled in every citizen as a civic responsibility, is important in political progress. Such service may become both the motive and the stimulus of great citizen activity. Even one able individual who is willing to work hard can immensely influence the political trend of his community. No citizen can reform politics by devoting thirty minutes a month to it.

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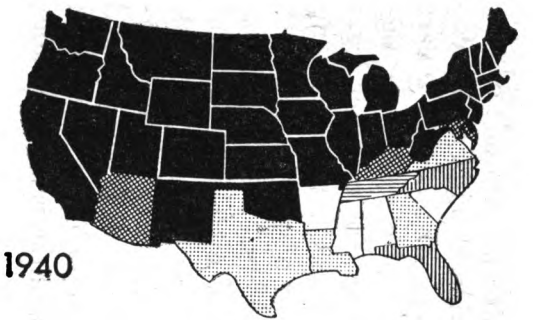
RATIO OF ACTUAL TO POTENTIAL VOTERS

UNDER 20% | 20%–29% | 30%–39% | 40%–49% | 50%–59% | 60% & OVER



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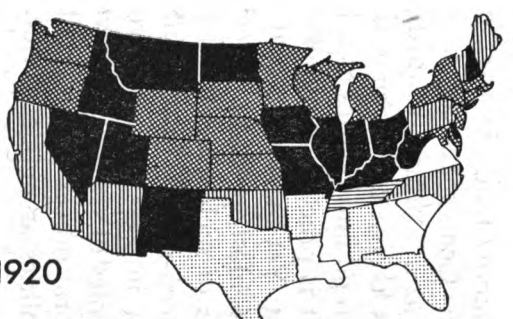

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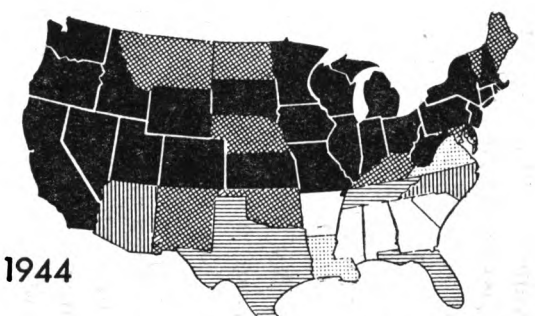

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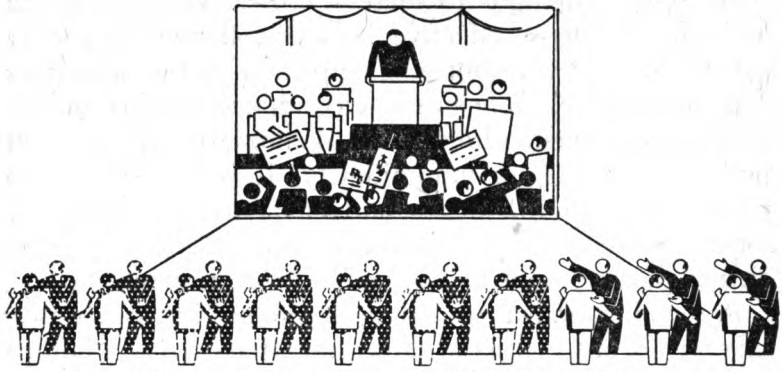

THE SUCCESS OF DEMOCRACY DEPENDS UPON EACH ONE

BUT 7 OUT OF 10 PARENTS
DON'T WANT THEIR SONS TO GO INTO POLITICS

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some extent, merit-system laws and modern demands for public employees with highly-developed skills have already superseded direct party responsibility for filling public positions through patronage. Competing organizations, often with large memberships and well-defined programs, have forced parties to alter the policies of government. Yet political parties remain the greatest instrument for transmitting the public voice into specific decisions. So long as they remain representative of the country, their power and responsibility will continue to be indispensable in democratic government.

The history of political parties in America is one of expanding membership and increasing representation of the whole population. The suffrage, or privilege of voting, has been broadened to include the propertyless, citizens of all races, and women. There is a movement, already accepted by state constitutional amendment in Georgia, to lower the voting age to eighteen.

Social problems and problems of administration have led to discrimination in extending the voting franchise. It has been difficult to keep social progress and legal de-

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Political Parties: An American Way

This second pamphlet in the ***Basic American Concepts Series*** was examined and approved before publication by experienced leaders of our national political parties.

It not only indicates the citizen's role in the organization and the work of political parties but also describes the importance of the two-party system in our form of government.

This pamphlet is written for popular education.

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