

CHAPTER XXII

ANOTHER THEORY OF DEMOCRACY

I. COMPETITION FOR POLITICAL LEADERSHIP

I THINK that most students of politics have by now come to accept the criticisms leveled at the classical doctrine of democracy in the preceding chapter. I also think that most of them agree, or will agree before long, in accepting another theory which is much truer to life and at the same time salvages much of what sponsors of the democratic method really mean by this term. Like the classical theory, it may be put into the nutshell of a definition.

It will be remembered that our chief troubles about the classical theory centered in the proposition that “the people” hold a definite and rational opinion about every individual question and that they give effect to this opinion—in a democracy—by choosing “representatives” who will see to it that that opinion is carried out. Thus the selection of the representatives is made secondary to the primary purpose of the democratic arrangement which is to vest the power of deciding political issues in the electorate. Suppose we reverse the roles of these two elements and make the deciding of issues by the electorate secondary to the election of the men who are to do the deciding. To put it differently, we now take the view that the role of the people is to produce a government, or else an intermediate body which in turn will produce a national executive¹ or government. And we define: the democratic method is that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people’s vote.

Defense and explanation of this idea will speedily show that, as to both plausibility of assumptions and tenability of propositions, it greatly improves the theory of the democratic process.

First of all, we are provided with a reasonably efficient criterion by which to distinguish democratic governments from others. We have seen that the classical theory meets with difficulties on that score because both the will and the good of the people may be, and in many historical instances have been,

¹ The insincere word “executive” really points in the wrong direction. It ceases however to do so if we use it in the sense in which we speak of the “executives” of a business corporation who also do a great deal more than “execute” the will of stockholders.

served just as well or better by governments that cannot be described as democratic according to any accepted usage of the term. Now we are in a somewhat better position partly because we are resolved to stress a *modus procedendi* the presence or absence of which it is in most cases easy to verify.²

For instance, a parliamentary monarchy like the English one fulfills the requirements of the democratic method because the monarch is practically constrained to appoint to cabinet office the same people as parliament would elect. A “constitutional” monarchy does not qualify to be called democratic because electorates and parliaments, while having all the other rights that electorates and parliaments have in parliamentary monarchies, lack the power to impose their choice as to the governing committee: the cabinet ministers are in this case servants of the monarch, in substance as well as in name, and can in principle be dismissed as well as appointed by him. Such an arrangement may satisfy the people. The electorate may reaffirm this fact by voting against any proposal for change. The monarch may be so popular as to be able to defeat any competition for the supreme office. But since no machinery is provided for making this competition effective the case does not come within our definition.

Second, the theory embodied in this definition leaves all the room we may wish to have for a proper recognition of the vital fact of leadership. The classical theory did not do this but, as we have seen, attributed to the electorate an altogether unrealistic degree of initiative which practically amounted to ignoring leadership. But collectives act almost exclusively by accepting leadership—this is the dominant mechanism of practically any collective action which is more than a reflex. Propositions about the working and the results of the democratic method that take account of this are bound to be infinitely more realistic than propositions which do not. They will not stop at the execution of a *volonté générale* but will go some way toward showing how it emerges or how it is substituted or faked. What we have termed Manufactured Will is no longer outside the theory, an aberration for the absence of which we piously pray; it enters on the ground floor as it should.

Third, however, so far as there are genuine group-wise volitions at all—for instance the will of the unemployed to receive unemployment benefit or the will of other groups to help—our theory does not neglect them. On the contrary we are now able to insert them in exactly the role they actually play. Such volitions do not as a rule assert themselves directly. Even if strong and definite they remain latent, often for decades, until they are called to life by some political leader who turns them into political factors. This he does, or else his agents do it for him, by organizing these volitions, by working them

² See however the fourth point below.

up and by including eventually appropriate items in his competitive offering. The interaction between sectional interests and public opinion and the way in which they produce the pattern we call the political situation appear from this angle in a new and much clearer light.

Fourth, our theory is of course no more definite than is the concept of competition for leadership. This concept presents similar difficulties as the concept of competition in the economic sphere, with which it may be usefully compared. In economic life competition is never completely lacking, but hardly ever is it perfect.³ Similarly, in political life there is always some competition, though perhaps only a potential one, for the allegiance of the people. To simplify matters we have restricted the kind of competition for leadership which is to define democracy, to free competition for a free vote. The justification for this is that democracy seems to imply a recognized method by which to conduct the competitive struggle, and that the electoral method is practically the only one available for communities of any size. But though this excludes many ways of securing leadership which should be excluded,⁴ such as competition by military insurrection, it does not exclude the cases that are strikingly analogous to the economic phenomena we label “unfair” or “fraudulent” competition or restraint of competition. And we cannot exclude them because if we did we should be left with a completely unrealistic ideal.⁵ Between this ideal case which does not exist and the cases in which all competition with the established leader is prevented by force, there is a continuous range of variation within which the democratic method of government shades off into the autocratic one by imperceptible steps. But if we wish to understand and not to philosophize, this is as it should be. The value of our criterion is not seriously impaired thereby.

Fifth, our theory seems to clarify the relation that subsists between democracy and individual freedom. If by the latter we mean the existence of a sphere of individual self-government the boundaries of which are historically variable—*no* society tolerates absolute freedom even of conscience and of speech, *no* society reduces that sphere to zero—the question clearly becomes a matter of degree. We have seen that the democratic method does not necessarily guarantee a greater amount of

³ In Part II we had examples of the problems which arise out of this.

⁴ It also excludes methods which should not be excluded, for instance, the acquisition of political leadership by the people’s tacit acceptance of it or by election *quasi per inspirationem*. The latter differs from election by voting only by a technicality. But the former is not quite without importance even in modern politics; the sway held by a party boss *within his party* is often based on nothing but tacit acceptance of his leadership. Comparatively speaking however these are details which may, I think, be neglected in a sketch like this.

⁵ As in the economic field, *some* restrictions are implicit in the legal and moral principles of the community.

individual freedom than another political method would permit in similar circumstances. It may well be the other way round. But there is still a relation between the two. If, on principle at least, everyone is free to compete for political leadership⁶ by presenting himself to the electorate, this will in most cases though not in all mean a considerable amount of freedom of discussion *for all*. In particular it will normally mean a considerable amount of freedom of the press. This relation between democracy and freedom is not absolutely stringent and can be tampered with. But, from the standpoint of the intellectual, it is nevertheless very important. At the same time, it is all there is to that relation.

Sixth, it should be observed that in making it the primary function of the electorate to produce a government (directly or through an intermediate body) I intended to include in this phrase also the function of evicting it. The one means simply the acceptance of a leader or a group of leaders, the other means simply the withdrawal of this acceptance. This takes care of an element the reader may have missed. He may have thought that the electorate controls as well as installs. But since electorates normally do not control their political leaders in any way except by refusing to reelect them or the parliamentary majorities that support them, it seems well to reduce our ideas about this control in the way indicated by our definition. Occasionally, spontaneous revulsions occur which upset a government or an individual minister directly or else enforce a certain course of action. But they are not only exceptional, they are, as we shall see, contrary to the spirit of the democratic method.

Seventh, our theory sheds much-needed light on an old controversy. Whoever accepts the classical doctrine of democracy and in consequence believes that the democratic method is to guarantee that issues be decided and policies framed according to the will of the people must be struck by the fact that, even if that will were undeniably real and definite, decision by simple majorities would in many cases distort it rather than give effect to it. Evidently the will of the majority is the will of the majority and not the will of "the people." The latter is a mosaic that the former completely fails to "represent." To equate both by definition is not to solve the problem. Attempts at real solutions have however been made by the authors of the various plans for Proportional Representation.

These plans have met with adverse criticism on practical grounds. It is in fact obvious not only that proportional representation will offer opportunities for all sorts of idiosyncrasies to assert themselves but also that

⁶ Free, that is, in the same sense in which everyone is free to start another textile mill.

⁷ The argument against proportional representation has been ably stated by Professor F.A.Hermens in "The Trojan Horse of Democracy," *Social Research*, November 1938.

it may prevent democracy from producing efficient governments and thus prove a danger in times of stress.⁷ But before concluding that democracy becomes unworkable if its principle is carried out consistently, it is just as well to ask ourselves whether this principle really implies proportional representation. As a matter of fact it does not. If acceptance of leadership is the true function of the electorate's vote, the case for proportional representation collapses because its premises are no longer binding. The principle of democracy then merely means that the reins of government should be handed to those who command more support than do any of the competing individuals or teams. And this in turn seems to assure the standing of the majority system within the logic of the democratic method, although we might still condemn it on grounds that lie outside of that logic.

II. THE PRINCIPLE APPLIED

The theory outlined in the preceding section we are now going to try out on some of the more important features of the structure and working of the political engine in democratic countries.

1. In a democracy, as I have said, the primary function of the elector's vote is to produce government. This may mean the election of a complete set of individual officers. This practice however is in the main a feature of local government and will be neglected henceforth.⁸ Considering national government only, we may say that producing government practically amounts to deciding who the leading man shall be.⁹ As before, we shall call him Prime Minister.

There is only one democracy in which the electorate's vote does this

⁸ This we shall do for simplicity's sake only. The phenomenon fits perfectly into our schema.

⁹ This is only approximately true. The elector's vote does indeed put into power a group that in all normal cases acknowledges an individual leader but there are as a rule leaders of second and third rank who carry political guns in their own right and whom the leader has no choice but to put into appropriate offices. This fact will be recognized presently.

Another point must be kept in mind. Although there is reason to expect that a man who rises to a position of supreme command will in general be a man of considerable personal force, whatever else he may be—to this we shall return later on—it does not follow that this will always be the case. Therefore the term "leader" or "leading man" is not to imply that the individuals thus designated are necessarily endowed with qualities of leadership or that they always do give any personal leads. There are political situations favorable to the rise of men deficient in leadership (and other qualities) and unfavorable to the establishment of strong individual positions. A party or a combination of parties hence may occasionally be acephalous. But everyone recognizes that this is a pathological state and one of the typical causes of defeat.

¹⁰ We may, I take it, disregard the electoral college. In calling the President of the United States a prime minister I wish to stress the fundamental similarity of his position to that of prime ministers in other democracies. But I do not wish to minimize the differences, although some of them are more formal than real. The least important of them is that the President also fulfills those largely ceremonial functions of, say, the French

directly, viz., the United States.¹⁰ In all other cases the electorate's vote does not directly produce government but an intermediate organ, henceforth called parliament,¹¹ upon which the government-producing function devolves. It might seem easy to account for the adoption or rather the evolution of this arrangement, both on historical grounds and on grounds of expediency, and for the various forms it took in different social patterns. But it is not a logical construct; it is a natural growth the subtle meanings and results of which completely escape the official, let alone legal, doctrines.

How does a parliament produce government? The most obvious method is to elect it or, more realistically, to elect the prime minister and then to vote the list of ministers he presents. This method is rarely used.¹² But it brings out the nature of the procedure better than any of the others. Moreover, these can all be reduced to it, because the man who becomes prime minister is in all normal cases the one whom parliament would elect. The way in which he is actually appointed to office, by a monarch as in England, by a President as in France or by a special agency or committee as in the Prussian Free State of the Weimar period, is merely a matter of form.

The classical English practice is this. After a general election the victorious party normally commands a majority of seats in Parliament and thus is in a position to carry a vote of want of confidence against everyone except its own leader who in this negative way is designated "by Parliament" for national leadership. He receives his commission from the monarch—"kisses hands"—and presents to him his list of ministers of which the list of cabinet ministers is a part. In this he includes, first, some

presidents. Much more important is it that he cannot dissolve Congress—but neither could the French Prime Minister do so. On the other hand, his position is stronger than that of the English Prime Minister by virtue of the fact that his leadership is independent of his having a majority in Congress—at least legally; for as a matter of fact he is checkmated if he has none. Also, he can appoint and dismiss cabinet officers (almost) at will. The latter can hardly be called ministers in the English sense of the word and are really no more than the word "secretary" conveys in common parlance. We might say, therefore, that in a sense the President is not only prime minister but sole minister, unless we find an analogy between the functions of an English Cabinet minister and the functions of the managers of the administration's forces in Congress.

There is no difficulty about interpreting and explaining these and many other peculiarities in this or any other country that uses the democratic method. But in order to save space we shall mainly think of the English pattern and consider all other cases as more or less important "deviations" on the theory that thus far the logic of democratic government has worked itself out most completely in the English practice though not in its legal forms.

¹¹ It will be recalled that I have defined parliament as an organ of the state. Although that was done simply for reasons of formal (legal) logic this definition fits in particularly well with our conception of the democratic method. Membership in parliament is hence an office.

¹² For example, it was adopted in Austria after the breakdown in 1918.

party veterans who receive what might be called complimentary office; secondly, the leaders of the second rank, those men on whom he counts for the current fighting in Parliament and who owe their preferment partly to their positive political value and partly to their value as potential nuisances; third, the rising men whom he invites to the charmed circle of office in order to “extract the brains from below the gangway”; and sometimes, fourth, a few men whom he thinks particularly well qualified to fill certain offices.¹³ But again, in all normal cases this practice will tend to produce the same result as election by Parliament would. The reader will also see that where, as in England, the prime minister has the actual power to dissolve (“to go to the country”), the result will to some extent approximate the result we should expect from direct election of the cabinet by the electorate so long as the latter supports him.¹⁴ This may be illustrated by a famous instance.

2. In 1879, when the Beaconsfield (Disraeli) government, after almost six years of prosperous tenure of power culminating in the spectacular success of the Congress of Berlin,¹⁵ was on all ordinary counts entitled to expect a success at the polls, Gladstone suddenly roused the country by a series of addresses of unsurpassable force (Midlothian campaign) which played up Turkish atrocities so successfully as to place him on the crest of a wave of popular enthusiasm *for him personally*. The official party had nothing to do with it. Several of its leaders in fact disapproved. Gladstone

¹³ To lament, as some people do, how little fitness for office counts in these arrangements is beside the point where description is concerned; it is of the essence of democratic government that political values should count primarily and fitness only incidentally. See below, ch. xxiii.

¹⁴ If, as was the case in France, the prime minister has no such power, parliamentary *coteries* acquire so much independence that this parallelism between acceptance of a man by parliament and acceptance of the same man by the electorate is weakened or destroyed. This is the situation in which the parlor game of parliamentary politics runs riot. From our standpoint this is a deviation from the design of the machine. Raymond Poincaré was of the same opinion.

Of course, such situations also occur in England. For the Prime Minister’s power to dissolve—strictly, his power to “advise” the monarch to dissolve the House of Commons—is inoperative either if his party’s inner circle sets its face against it or if there is no chance that elections will strengthen his hold upon Parliament. That is to say, he may be stronger (though possibly still weak) in Parliament than he is in the country. Such a state of things tends to develop with some regularity after a government has been in power for some years. But under the English system this deviation from design cannot last very long.

¹⁵ I do not mean that the temporary settlement of the questions raised by the Russo Turkish War and the acquisition of the perfectly useless island of Cyprus were in themselves such masterpieces of statesmanship. But I do mean that from the standpoint of domestic politics they were just the kind of showy success that would normally flatter the average citizen’s vanity and would greatly enhance the government’s prospects in an atmosphere of jingo patriotism. In fact it was the general opinion that Disraeli would have won if he had dissolved immediately on returning from Berlin.

had resigned the leadership years before and tackled the country single-handed. But when the liberal party under this impetus had won a smashing victory, it was obvious to everyone that he had to be again accepted as the party leader—nay, that he had become the party leader by virtue of his national leadership and that there simply was no room for any other. He came into power in a halo of glory.

Now this instance teaches us a lot about the working of the democratic method. To begin with, it must be realized that it is unique only in its dramatic quality, but in nothing else. It is the oversized specimen of a normal genus. The cases of both Pitts, Peel, Palmerston, Disraeli, Campbell Bannerman and others differ from it only in degree.

First, as to the Prime Minister's political leadership.¹⁶ Our example shows that it is composed of three different elements which must not be confused and which in every case mix in different proportions, the mixture then determining the nature of every individual Prime Minister's rule. On the face of it, he comes into office as the leading man of his party *in Parliament*. As

¹⁶ It is characteristic of the English way of doing things that official recognition of the existence of the Prime Minister's office was deferred until 1907, when it was allowed to appear in the official order of precedence at court. But it is as old as democratic government. However, since democratic government was never introduced by a distinct act but slowly evolved as part of a comprehensive social process, it is not easy to indicate even an approximate birthday or birth period. There is a long stretch that presents embryonic cases. It is tempting to date the institution from the reign of William III, whose position, so much weaker than that of the native rulers had been, seems to give color to the idea. The objection to this however is not so much that England was no "democracy" then—the reader will recall that we do not define democracy by the extent of the franchise—as that, on the one hand, the embryonic case of Danby had occurred under Charles II and that, on the other hand, William III never reconciled himself to the arrangement and kept certain matters successfully in his own hands. We must not of course confuse prime ministers with mere advisers, however powerful with their sovereign and however firmly entrenched in the very center of the public power plant they may be—such men as Richelieu, Mazarin or Strafford for instance. Godolphin and Harley under Queen Anne were clearly transitional cases. The first man to be universally recognized at the time and by political historians was Sir Robert Walpole. But he as well as the Duke of Newcastle (or his brother Henry Pelham or both jointly) and in fact all the leading men down to Lord Shelburne (including the elder Pitt who even as foreign secretary came very near to fulfilling our requirements *in substance*) lack one or another of the characteristics. The first full-fledged specimen was the younger Pitt.

It is interesting to note that what his own time recognized in the case of Sir Robert Walpole (and later in that of Lord Carteret [Earl of Granville]) was not that here was an organ essential to democratic government that was breaking through atrophic tissues. On the contrary, public opinion felt it to be a most vicious cancer the growth of which was a menace to the national welfare and to democracy—"sole minister" or "first minister" was a term of opprobrium hurled at Walpole by his enemies. This fact is significant. It not only indicates the resistance new institutions usually meet with. It also indicates that this institution was felt to be incompatible with the classic doctrine of democracy which in fact has no place for political leadership in our sense, hence no place for the realities of the position of a prime minister.

soon as installed however, he becomes in a sense the leader of *Parliament*, directly of the house of which he is a member, indirectly also of the other. This is more than an official euphemism, more also than is implied in his hold upon his own party. He acquires influence on, or excites the antipathy of, the other parties and individual members of the other parties as well, and this makes a lot of difference in his chances of success. In the limiting case, best exemplified by the practice of Sir Robert Peel, he may coerce his own party by means of another. Finally, though in all normal cases he will also be the head of his party in *the country*, the well-developed specimen of the prime ministerial genus will have a position in the country distinct from what he automatically acquires by heading the party organization. He will lead party opinion creatively—shape it—and eventually rise toward a formative leadership of public opinion beyond the lines of party, toward national leadership that may to some extent become independent of mere party opinion. It is needless to say how very personal such an achievement is and how great the importance of such a foothold outside of both party and Parliament. It puts a whip into the hand of the leader the crack of which may bring unwilling and conspiring followers to heel, though its thong will sharply hit the hand that uses it unsuccessfully.

This suggests an important qualification to our proposition that in a parliamentary system the function of producing a government devolves upon parliament. Parliament does normally decide who will be Prime Minister, but in doing so it is not completely free. It decides by acceptance rather than by initiative. Excepting pathological cases like the French *chambre*, the wishes of members are not as a rule the ultimate data of the process from which government emerges. Members are not only handcuffed by party obligations. They also are driven by the man whom they “elect”—driven to the act of the “election” itself exactly as they are driven by him once they have “elected” him. Every horse is of course free to kick over the traces and it does not always run up to its bit. But revolt or passive resistance against the leader’s lead only shows up the normal relation. And this normal relation is of the essence of the democratic method. Gladstone’s personal victory in 1880 is the answer to the official theory that Parliament creates and cashiers government.¹⁷

¹⁷ Gladstone himself upheld that theory strongly. In 1874, when defeated at the polls, he still argued for meeting Parliament because it was up to Parliament to pass the sentence of dismissal. This of course means nothing at all. In the same way he studiously professed unbounded deference to the crown. One biographer after another has marveled at this courtly attitude of the great democratic leader. But surely Queen Victoria showed better discernment than did those biographers if we may judge from the strong dislike which she displayed for Gladstone from 1879 on and which the biographers attribute simply to the baleful influence of Disraeli. Is it really necessary to point out that

3. Next, as to the nature and role of the cabinet.¹⁸ It is a curiously double-faced thing, the joint product of Parliament and Prime Minister. The latter designates its members for appointment, as we have seen, and the former accepts but also influences his choice. Looked at from the party's standpoint it is an assemblage of subleaders more or less reflecting its own structure. Looked at from the Prime Minister's standpoint it is an assemblage not only of comrades in arms but of party men who have their own interests and prospects to consider—a miniature Parliament. For the combination to come about and to work it is necessary for prospective cabinet ministers to make up their minds—not necessarily from enthusiastic love—to serve under Mr. X and for Mr. X to shape his program so that his colleagues in the cabinet will not too often feel like “reconsidering their position,” as official phraseology has it, or like going on a sitdown strike. Thus the cabinet—and the same applies to the wider ministry that comprises also the political officers not in the cabinet—has a distinct function in the democratic process as against Prime Minister, party, Parliament and electorate. This function of intermediate leadership is associated with, but by no means based upon, the current business transacted by the individual cabinet officers in the several departments to which they are appointed in order to keep the leading group's hands on the bureaucratic engine. And it has only a distant relation, if any, with “seeing to it that the will of the people is carried out in each of them.” Precisely in the best instances, the people are presented with results they never thought of and would not have approved of in advance.

4. Again, as to Parliament. I have both defined what seems to me to be its primary function and qualified that definition. But it might be objected that my definition fails to do justice to its other functions. Parliament obviously does a lot of other things besides setting up and

professions of deference may mean two different things? The man who treats his wife with elaborate courtliness is not as a rule the one to accept comradeship between the sexes on terms of equality. As a matter of fact, the courtly attitude is precisely a method to evade this.

¹⁸ Still more than the evolution of the prime minister's office, that of the cabinet is blurred by the historical continuity that covers changes in the nature of an institution. To this day the English cabinet is legally the operative part of the Privy Council, which of course was an instrument of government in decidedly pre-democratic times. But below this surface an entirely different organ has evolved. As soon as we realize this we find the task of dating its emergence somewhat easier than we found the analogous task in the case of the prime minister. Though embryonic cabinets existed in the time of Charles II (the “cabal” ministry was one, and the committee of four that was formed in connection with Temple's experiment was another), the Whig “junto” under William III is a fair candidate for first place. From the reign of Anne on only minor points of membership or functioning remain to disagree on.

pulling down governments. It legislates. And it even administers. For although every act of a parliament, except resolutions and declarations of policy, makes "law" in a formal sense, there are many acts which must be considered as administrative measures. The budget is the most important instance. To make it is an administrative function. Yet in this country it is drawn up by Congress. Even where it is drawn up by the minister of finance with the approval of the cabinet, as it is in England, Parliament has to vote on it and by this vote it becomes an act of Parliament. Does not this refute our theory?

When two armies operate against each other, their individual moves are always centered upon particular objects that are determined by their strategical or tactical situations. They may contend for a particular stretch of country or for a particular hill. But the desirability of conquering that stretch or hill must be derived from the strategical or tactical purpose, which is to beat the enemy. It would be obviously absurd to attempt to derive it from any extra-military properties the stretch or hill may have. Similarly, the first and foremost aim of each political party is to prevail over the others in order to get into power or to stay in it. Like the conquest of the stretch of country or the hill, the decision of the political issues is, from the standpoint of the politician, not the end but only the material of parliamentary activity. Since politicians fire off words instead of bullets and since those words are unavoidably supplied by the issues under debate, this may not always be as clear as it is in the military case. But victory over the opponent is nevertheless the essence of both games.¹⁹

Fundamentally, then, the current production of parliamentary decisions on national questions is the very method by which Parliament keeps or refuses to keep a government in power or by which Parliament accepts or refuses to accept the Prime Minister's leadership.²⁰ With the exceptions to be noticed

¹⁹ Sometimes politicians do emerge from phraseological mists. To cite an example to which no objection can be raised on the score of frivolity: no lesser politician than Sir Robert Peel characterized the nature of his craft when he said after his parliamentary victory over the Whig government on the issue of the latter's policy in Jamaica: "Jamaica was a good horse to start." The reader should ponder over this.

²⁰ This of course applies to the pre-Vichy French and pre-Fascist Italian practice just as much as to the English practice. It may however be called in question in the case of the United States where defeat of the administration on a major issue does not entail resignation of the President. But this is merely due to the fact that the Constitution, which embodies a different political theory, did not permit parliamentary practice to develop according to its logic. In actual fact this logic did not entirely fail to assert itself. Defeats on major issues, though they cannot displace the President, will in general so weaken his prestige as to oust him from a position of leadership. For the time being this creates an abnormal situation. But whether he wins or loses the subsequent presidential election, the conflict is then settled in a way that does not fundamentally differ from the way in which an English Prime Minister deals with a similar situation when he dissolves Parliament.

presently, *every* vote is a vote of confidence or want of confidence, and the votes that are technically so called merely bring out *in abstracto* the essential element that is common to all. Of this we can satisfy ourselves by observing that the initiative in bringing up matters for parliamentary decision as a rule lies with the government or else with the opposition's shadow cabinet and not with private members.

It is the Prime Minister who selects from the incessant stream of current problems those which he is going to make parliamentary issues, that is to say, those on which his government proposes to introduce bills or, if he is not sure of his ground, at least resolutions. Of course every government receives from its predecessor a legacy of open questions which it may be unable to shelve; others are taken up as a matter of routine politics; it is only in the case of the most brilliant achievement that a Prime Minister is in a position to impose measures about a political issue which he has created himself. In any case however the government's choice or lead, whether free or not, is the factor that dominates parliamentary activity. If a bill is brought in by the opposition, this means that it is offering battle: such a move is an attack which the government must either thwart by purloining the issue or else defeat. If a major bill that is not on the governmental menu is brought in by a group of the governmental party, this spells revolt and it is from this angle and not from the extra-tactical merits of the case that it is looked upon by the ministers. This even extends to the raising of a debate. Unless suggested or sanctioned by the government, these are symptoms of the government forces' getting out of hand. Finally, if a measure is carried by inter-party agreement, this means a drawn battle or a battle avoided on strategical grounds.²¹

5. The exceptions to this principle of governmental leadership in "representative" assemblies only serve to show how realistic it is. They are of two kinds.

First, no leadership is absolute. Political leadership exerted according to the democratic method is even less so than are others because of that competitive

²¹ Another highly significant piece of English technique may be mentioned in this connection. A major bill is or was usually not proceeded with if the majority for it fell to a very low figure on the second reading. This practice first of all recognized an important limitation of the majority principle as actually applied in well-managed democracies: it would not be correct to say that in a democracy the minority is always compelled to surrender. But there is a second point. While the minority is not always compelled to yield to the majority on the particular issue under debate, it is practically always—there were exceptions even to this—compelled to yield to it on the question whether the cabinet is to stay in power. Such a vote on the second reading of a major government measure may be said to combine a vote of confidence with a vote for shelving a bill. If the contents of the bill were all that mattered there would hardly be any sense in voting for it if it is not to make the statute book. But if Parliament is primarily concerned with keeping the cabinet in office, then such tactics become at once understandable.

element which is of the essence of democracy. Since theoretically every follower has the right of displacing his leader and since there are nearly always some followers who have a real chance of doing so, the private member and—if he feels that he could do with a bigger hat—the minister within and without the inner circle steers a middle course between an unconditional allegiance to the leader's standard and an unconditional raising of a standard of his own, balancing risks and chances with a nicety that is sometimes truly admirable.²² The leader in turn responds by steering a middle course between insisting on discipline and allowing himself to be thwarted. He tempers pressure with more or less judicious concessions, frowns with compliments, punishments with benefits. This game results, according to the relative strength of individuals and their positions, in a very variable but in most cases considerable amount of freedom. In particular, groups that are strong enough to make their resentment felt yet not strong enough to make it profitable to include their protagonists and their programs in the governmental arrangement will in general be allowed to have their way in minor questions or, at any rate, in questions which the Prime Minister can be induced to consider as of minor or only sectional importance. Thus, groups of followers or even individual members may occasionally have the opportunity of carrying bills of their own and still more indulgence will of course be extended to mere criticism or to failure to vote mechanically for every government measure. But we need only look at this in a practical spirit in order to realize, from the limits that are set to the use of this freedom, that it embodies not the principle of the working of a parliament but deviations from it.

Second, there are cases in which the political engine fails to absorb certain issues either because the high commands of the government's and the opposition's forces do not appreciate their political values or because these values are in fact doubtful.²³ Such issues may then be taken up by outsiders who prefer making an independent bid for power to serving in the ranks of one of the existing parties. This of course is perfectly normal politics. But there is another possibility. A man may feel so strongly about a particular question that he may enter the political arena merely in order to have it solved in his way and without harboring any wish to start in on a normal political career.

²² One of the most instructive examples by which the above can be illustrated is afforded by the course taken by Joseph Chamberlain with respect to the Irish question in the 1880's. He finally outmaneuvered Gladstone, but he started the campaign while officially an ardent adherent. And the case is exceptional only in the force and brilliance of the man. As every political captain knows, only mediocrities can be counted on for loyalty. That is why some of the greatest of those captains, Disraeli for instance, surrounded themselves by thoroughly second-rate men.

²³ An issue that has never been tried out is the typical instance of the first class. The typical reasons why a government and the shadow cabinet of the opposition may tacitly agree to leave an issue alone in spite of their realizing its potentialities are technical difficulty of handling it and the fear that it will cause sectional difficulties.

This however is so unusual that it is difficult to find instances of first-rank importance of it. Perhaps Richard Cobden was one. It is true that instances of second-rank importance are more frequent, especially instances of the crusader type. But nobody will hold that they are anything but deviations from standard practice.

We may sum up as follows. In observing human societies we do not as a rule find it difficult to specify, at least in a rough commonsense manner, the various ends that the societies under study struggle to attain. These ends may be said to provide the rationale or meaning of corresponding individual activities. But it does not follow that the social meaning of a type of activity will necessarily provide the motive power, hence the explanation of the latter. If it does not, a theory that contents itself with an analysis of the social end or need to be served cannot be accepted as an adequate account of the activities that serve it. For instance, the reason why there is such a thing as economic activity is of course that people want to eat, to clothe themselves and so on. To provide the means to satisfy those wants is the social end or meaning of production. Nevertheless we all agree that this proposition would make a most unrealistic starting point for a theory of economic activity in commercial society and that we shall do much better if we start from propositions about profits. Similarly, the social meaning or function of parliamentary activity is no doubt to turn out legislation and, in part, administrative measures. But in order to understand how democratic politics serve this social end, we must start from the competitive struggle for power and office and realize that the social function is fulfilled, as it were, incidentally—in the same sense as production is incidental to the making of profits.

6. Finally, as to the role of the electorate, only one additional point need be mentioned. We have seen that the wishes of the members of a parliament are not the ultimate data of the process that produces government. A similar statement must be made concerning the electorate. Its choice—ideologically glorified into the Call from the People—does not flow from its initiative but is being shaped, and the shaping of it is an essential part of the democratic process. Voters do not decide issues. But neither do they pick their members of parliament from the eligible population with a perfectly open mind. In all normal cases the initiative lies with the candidate who makes a bid for the office of member of parliament and such local leadership as that may imply. Voters confine themselves to accepting this bid in preference to others or refusing to accept it. Even most of those exceptional cases in which a man is *genuinely* drafted by the electors come into the same category for either of two reasons: naturally a man need not bid for leadership if he has acquired leadership already; or it may happen that a local leader who can control or

influence the vote but is unable or unwilling to compete for election himself designates another man who then may seem to have been sought out by the voters acting on their own initiative.

But even as much of electoral initiative as acceptance of one of the competing candidates would in itself imply is further restricted by the existence of parties. A party is not, as classical doctrine (or Edmund Burke) would have us believe, a group of men who intend to promote public welfare "upon some principle on which they are all agreed." This rationalization is so dangerous because it is so tempting. For all parties will of course, at any given time, provide themselves with a stock of principles or planks and these principles or planks may be as characteristic of the party that adopts them and as important for its success as the brands of goods a department store sells are characteristic of it and important for its success. But the department store cannot be defined in terms of its brands and a party cannot be defined in terms of its principles. A party is a group whose members propose to act in concert in the competitive struggle for political power. If that were not so it would be impossible for different parties to adopt exactly or almost exactly the same program. Yet this happens as everyone knows. Party and machine politicians are simply the response to the fact that the electoral mass is incapable of action other than a stampede, and they constitute an attempt to regulate political competition exactly similar to the corresponding practices of a trade association. The psycho-technics of party management and party advertising, slogans and marching tunes, are not accessories. They are of the essence of politics. So is the political boss.