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AMERICAN IDEAS OF POLITICAL REPRESENTATION

ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED
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The thesis of the work is that ideas concerning ways and means of representing political values in American history may be gathered into clusters which are associated with major currents of political ideas on the nature of government. The method amployed is analytic-historical. It takes the major divisions of American history, including a division of English history between 1600 and 1800, abstracts the dominant political-idea trends, and associates with these political-idea trends groups of ideas of representation.

Representation is defined as a condition wherein the characteristics of one who holds a position of political power are in accord with the desires of the individuals over whom the power is wielded. A wide range of representative phenomena fall into a general systematic order — so that we can be concerned with representation that is basic and often unconscious; representation that is on the level of bargaining, expressed interests, and felt wants; and representation that is technical, professional, or administrative.

A complete psychology of a political movement contains in its theory of representation devices reflective of or characteristic of each of these levels. It proposes answers to problems arising on each level. When the psychology has strong answers to propose which tend to be allembracing on any particular level, investigation of the necessary ramifications of such ideas into the other levels may reveal serious weaknesses of the psychology. In time and under certain changing conditions, such weaknesses become the source of defeat of the total idea. Thus, the estates idea could not survive in America; nor could the leadership, organic, conscience representing Furitan idea succeed against the powerful environmental forces of free land, high mobility, and high evaluation of

personality; nor could the direct representation ideas of Jeffersonians and Jacksonians cope with the industrial forces of the late 19th Century.

First we examine the ideas of representation in England during the 17th Century. We find in the beginning a powerful representation by the Crown idea, with Parliament first not considered as representative of major values or of the whole nation. When the internal strengthening of the House of Commons by a strong infusion of new interests can no longer be denied, the English government is considered as an organic unity with the Parliament a vital organ, or even, as Sir Thomas Smith declared, "which representeth and hath the power of the whole realme both the head and the bodie."

The overthrow of the monarchy, its restoration, and the Glorious Bevolution of 1688 mark the success of Parliament as the principal member of the body politic and blessed now with the idea of "virtual representation" which gives it complete "sovereignty," that is, a theory of parmeating the whole English political sphere with its influence. Burke, favorite son of oligarchic theory, is able to impute to Parliament the qualities of general power, complete tradition, and mystical virtues which Parliament a century and a half earlier had denied the Grown. The transition is eased and rationalized by the passing of the land, traditional symbol of representation, into the more flexible, manipulative hands of a fused landed-commercial aristocracy of blood and wealth.

No basic changes in the representative structure on the constituency level take place from 1600 to 1832. The two major protest movements, the Levellars of the mid-17th Century and the Radicals of the late 18th Century, were completely defeated. Yet they both present the complete psychology of modern mass democracy later stated in detail by Roger Williams and Jefferson. The resemblances occur not only in general theories of man as a naturally free, rational being, but in immediate statutory demands for rationalized constituency construction, a broad suffrage, annual elections, election of many officers, constitutional drafting and changing, and whatever else the majority wills. When Jackson fights the Senate and demands rotation in office and the deminance of the voice of the majority, he is congratulated by Jeremy Bentham from England, who observes a remarkable coincidence of ideas.

The practices which met entremend opposition in England achieved success in America. There was only a single period in American history before the Civil War which stopped and turned back the march from the Levellers to Jackson, if we except the always silently influential ideas of representation maintained in 17th Century New England by the Puritan leaders. This single period was the constitutional period when an array of highly competent statemen, bolstered by the active and shrewd support of the merchant and land-owning classes, devised a substitute scheme of representation, midway between the estates representation — then declining but beautifully expounded in England by Burke — and the mass democratic ideas of representation of the small farmers and individualists in America. Realizing that movable possessions could not achieve permanent

representation on any sort of medieval estates theory or on the clusive and shifting commercial representation involved in the "no taxation without representation" idea, they proposed a "neutral" representative system capable of being mastered by no group in order to central asother group, hoping that individual expertise and leadership would direct the new representative structure along rational lines beneficial to the nation as a whole. Certainly underlying the new structure were a disbelief in the omnicompetence of the majority principle and a feeling that the future of the nation lay in the bands and purposes of the vigorous commercial class and the professional (mostly legal) class which shared its viewpoint.

The first half of the 19th Century buffeted their structure, but did not destroy it. Mass democracy had to content itself principally, with the exception of the new manner of directly electing the President and the growth of metional political parties, with conquering the several state governments.

The defeat of the South in the Civil Was was associated with the triumph of industrialism in the North and was followed by the defeat of the majority principle in the North. The West attacked the almost federally independent industrial interests, who were also powerfully represented as a "third house of Congress" in Washington for many years. And as time went on and their successes were small, the spirit of Levellers and direct democrate proposed new ideas of representation - extensions of the old direct democracy idea of the citizen always being face-to-face with his governmental officials. The initiative, the referendum, the recall, election of judges, primary elections, election of senators, suffrage for women, and other ideas were advanced, all tending to restore the direct denocracy that democrats who descended from Jefferson and Jackson held as their ideal. Some opinion has more recently been advanced which bids that the results of public opinion polls be taken as the authoritative statement of policy. The actual political forces behind the success of such novements are conpounded of many motives, but a strong basis for their advocacy is found in wide and often unconscious acceptance of the idea of direct democracy.

More recent developments of ideas of representation includes (1) justifigation of the assemblage of devices passed down to the present as mixed forms of the pure ideas (this usually points to the element of concession to the majority and appeasement of minorities found in the geographical constituency under the majority principle); (2) an idea of "free market" representation in which political values are seen to be relative and the role of representives seen to be a bargaining and compromising of many expressed and changing interests (here the majority principle is passed over, emphasis in on the conscious parliamentary level of representation, and the legislature is the favored institution for providing representation); (3) "enlightened individu lism," the product of beliefs in the individual as the highest object of concern, the rationality of awa, and the possibility of transmitting this rationality to the society for the achievement of ascertainable objectives - strong elements of the general American belief in universal education and the Puritan individual conscience enter its composition, and its objectives in representation tend to emphasize a rational administration of government, the elected executive as incornating the

national interest, a planned ordering of political movement, and a related development in the form of proportional representation, which, deemphasizing the majority principle, conceived of the legislature as a perfect sample of the population with the parts of the sample behaving in the legislative process as rational beings to construct rational legislation with the aid of the data-collecting representative system that presents all points of view proportionally; and (4) the weakest of representative viewpoints in american history, the idea of fixed interest representation or pluralism, which, going beyond the unfixed or mobile interest representation of proportional representation, proposed that major groups be allowed a hand in conditioning general law to their particular requirements - not destroying the state, but removing its omnicompetence: not destroying the individual, but removing his anarchistic tendencies (powerful but contemmed lobbies, certain legal and medical specialised representation, the SIRA, and various minor evidences and proposals from time to time sugged up this story in America).

In short, every device or conception of the representative relationship with which we are familiar may be partially described in its relations to a general theory of politics. All devices and conceptions, when thus arranged according to the various major theories which prevail in historical periods, revolve generally around the grandiose problem of arranging the representation of the unity of society and the specialized portions of society. Responding to historical pressures and conditions, the devices and ideas, like the major theories to which they are related, emphasize at one time or another the unconscious, the expressed, or the technical levels of representation. The strength and weakness of each cluster of devices and ideas can be explored by plumbing the applications of them to all levels, rather than only to the one that they may emphasize or favor.

Our corollary is that the "ideal" theory of representation must take cognisance of and provide for (1) the disparate decands for unity and presentation of the specialized parts; (2) the three levels of representation — the unconscious, the expressed, and the technical; and (3) the system of representation presented by history to the present, with its mixture of ideas and jealously-guarded over-emphasis of "pure" ideas no longer of use in making new applications.