SOUTHERN POLITICS
IN STATE AND NATION

V. O. KEY, JR.

With the Assistance of

ALEXANDER HEARD

A New Edition

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE PRESS
KNOXVILLE

Reprinted by arrangement with Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., by
The University of Tennessee Press, Knoxville, 1984.
Cloth: first printing, 1984.
Paper: first printing, 1984; second printing, 1986; third printing, 1993; fourth printing, 1996; fifth printing, 2001; sixth printing, 2006; seventh printing, 2011.

Frontispiece: V. O. Key, Jr.
Photograph by John Brook, courtesy of Marion T. Key.

The paper in this book meets the requirements of American National Standards Institute / National Information Standards Organization specification Z39.48-1992 (Permanence of Paper). It contains 30 percent post-consumer waste and is certified by the Forest Stewardship Council.

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Key, V. O. (Valdimer Orlando) 1908–1963.
Southern politics in state and nation.
Reprint. Originally published: New York: Knopf, 1949. With a new introduction and profile.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
1. Southern States—Politics and government—1865–1950. 2. Political parties—Southern States—History. I. Heard, Alexander. II. Title.
F215.K45 1984 324.975'04 84-3665
ISBN 0-87049-434-1 (cloth: alk. paper)
ISBN 10: 0-87049-435-X (pbk.: alk. paper)
ISBN 13: 978-0-87049-435-2

Chapter One

OF THE SOUTH

THE South may not be the nation's number one political problem, as some northerners assert, but politics is the South's number one problem.

From afar, outlanders regard southern politics as a comic opera staged on a grand scale for the amusement of the nation. They roared when Texans elected "Ma" Ferguson as their governor to serve as proxy for her husband, barred from office by an earlier impeachment and conviction. They shuddered when Louisiana was ruled by Huey Long, a flamboyant advocate of the subversive doctrine of "Every Man A King." Yet he put on a good show. The connoisseurs of rabble-rousing relished the performance of Gene Talmadge, he of the "red galluses" and the persuasive way with the wool-hat boys. Bilbo's artistry in demagoguery excited, if not admiration, attention from beyond the hills of Mississippi. Alabama's "Big Jim" Folsom, the "kissing governor," Texas' W. Lee O'Daniel, flour salesman and hillbilly bandsman, South Carolina's "Cotton Ed" Smith, eloquent exponent of the virtues of southern womanhood, and other fabulous characters have trod the southern political stage to the accompaniment of hilarity—often derisive—from the other side of the Mason and Dixon line.

That not all the actors in the southern political drama have been clowns or knaves may be dismissed as a detail obscured by the heroic antics of those who were. That the South's spectacular political leaders have

been indiscriminately grouped as demagogues of a common stripe, when wide differences have actually separated them, may likewise be regarded as an excusable failing of the Yankee journalist insensitive to the realities of southern politics.

Nor does the fact that, as southerners are wont to say, "the North is just as bad" give ground for complacency about the political plight of the South. It may be conceded that Illinois' Republican party is an evil combination of North Shore plutocracy and downstate, rural backwardness; that Pennsylvania's Republican party has been unbelievably corrupt; and that Boston's Democratic party has about it little of the attar of roses.

When all the exceptions are considered, when all the justifications are made, and when all the invidious comparisons are drawn, those of the South and those who love the South are left with the cold, hard fact that the South as a whole has developed no system or practice of political organization and leadership adequate to cope with its problems. In its shortcomings the South has all the failings common to the American states. The South after all is a part of the United States, and everywhere state governments have a long way to go to achieve the promise of American democracy. The states, often dominated by the least forward-looking elements and always overshadowed by Washington, only infrequently, North or South, present inspiring performances as instruments of popular government.

Southern politics labors under the handicaps common to all states. Southern politicians are also confronted by special problems that demand extraordinary political intelligence, restraint, patience, and persistence for their solution. The South's heritage from crises of the past, its problem of adjustment of racial relations on a scale unparalleled in any western nation, its poverty associated with an agrarian economy which in places is almost feudal in character, the long habituation of many of its people to nonparticipation in political life—all these and other social characteristics both influence the nature of the South's political system and place upon it an enormous burden.

Thus southern politics is no comic opera. It is deadly serious business that is sometimes carried on behind a droll façade. By the process of politics we determine who governs and in whose interests the government is run. Politics embraces far more than campaigns and elections. Actions by legislature, by governors, and by all agencies of government between campaigns are readings of the balance in a continuous competition for power and advantage. The management of government is as much a part of politics as is campaign oratory. Moreover, the political process extends beyond the operations of those formal mechanisms that we usually call government. Custom, the organization of the economic system, and, now and then, private violence have a role in determining who governs and who gets what.

In its grand outlines the politics of the South revolves around the position of the Negro. It is at times interpreted as a politics of cotton, as a politics of free trade, as a politics of agrarian poverty, or as a politics of planter and plutocrat. Although such interpretations have a superficial validity, in the last analysis the major peculiarities of southern politics go back to the Negro. Whatever phase of the southern political process one seeks to understand, sooner or later the trail of inquiry leads to the Negro.

Yet it is far from the truth to paint a picture of southern politics as being chiefly concerned with the maintenance of the supremacy of white over black. That dominance is an outcome, but the observer must look more closely to determine which whites and which blacks give southern politics its individuality. The hard core of the political South—and the backbone of southern political unity—is made up of those counties and sections of the southern states in which Negroes constitute a substantial proportion of the population. In these areas a real problem of politics, broadly considered, is the maintenance of control by a white minority. The situation resembles fundamentally that of the Dutch in the East Indies or the former position of the British in India. Here, in the southern black belts, the problem of governance is similarly one of the control by a small, white minority of a huge, retarded, colored population. And, as in the case of the colonials, that white minority can maintain its position only with the support, and by the tolerance, of those outside—in the home country or in the rest of the United States.

It is the whites of the black belts who have the deepest and most immediate concern about the maintenance of white supremacy. Those whites who live in counties with populations 40, 50, 60, and even 80 per cent Negro share a common attitude toward the Negro. Moreover, it is generally in these counties that large-scale plantation or multiple-unit agriculture prevails. Here are located most of the large agricultural operators who supervise the work of many tenants, sharecroppers, and laborers, most of whom are colored. As large operators they lean generally in a conservative direction in their political views.

If the whites of the black belts give the South its dominant political tone, the character of the politics of individual states will vary roughly with the Negro proportion of the population. The truth of that proposition will be abundantly illustrated as the story progresses. At this point it is only necessary to call attention to the marked differences in the composition of the population of the southern states. Over a third of all Mississippi whites live in counties over half Negro, while only 2.4 per cent of Florida whites reside in such counties. Equally striking differences prevail between the two states in their politics.

The black belts make up only a small part of the area of the South and—depending on how one defines black belt—account for an even smaller part of the white population of the South. Yet if the politics of

the South revolves around any single theme, it is that of the role of th black belts. Although the whites of the black belts are few in numbe their unity and their political skill have enabled them to run a shoestrin into decisive power at critical junctures in southern political history.

Two great crises have left their imprint on southern political behav ior: The War of the 'sixties and the Populist revolt of the 'nineties. Bot these social convulsions had an impact on political habit whose influenc has not worn away even yet, and in both of them the black-belt white played a determining role. In the maneuvers leading to The War thos

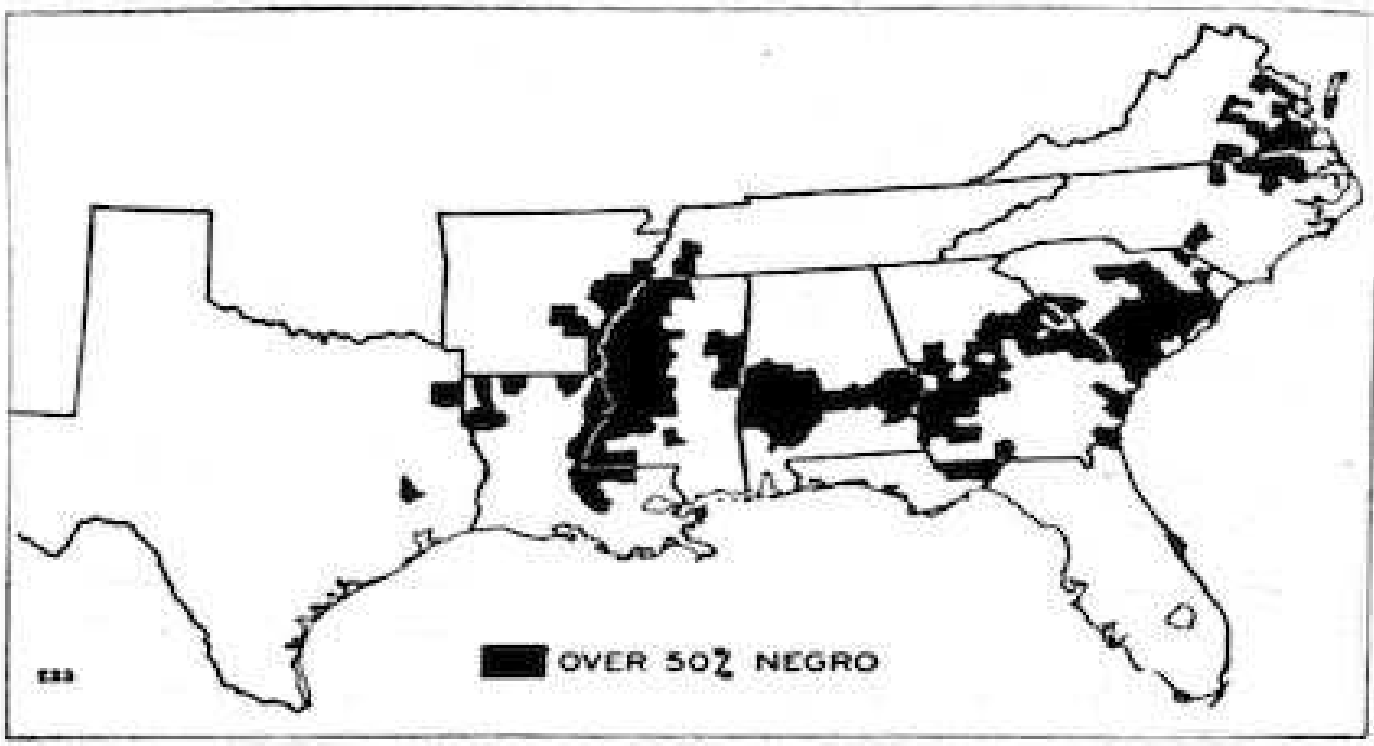

FIGURE 1

Bedrock of Southern Solidarity: Counties of the South with 50 Per Cent or More Negro Population, 1940

with most at stake—the owners of large numbers of slaves—were to be found roughly in the same areas as present-day black belts. They recruited allies wherever they could find them; their allies were fewest in the regions of few Negroes. Opposition to The War was most intense in the highlands and in the upcountry, where the soil would not support a plantation economy and where independent yeomanry had no overwhelming desire to take up arms to defend the slave property of the lowland planters.

The impressive—and unfortunate—political victory of the large slaveholders came in their success, despite their small numbers, in carrying their states for war. Within the South the scars of the dispute over whether to go to war remain in persistent Republican enclaves in the

highlands of eastern Tennessee, western North Carolina, northern Georgia, northern Alabama, and in isolated pockets elsewhere over the region. West Virginia, which was torn away from the Commonwealth, stands as an even more impressive reminder of the lack of unanimity within the South over a policy of war. Yet even more significant for the practical politics of the South of today is the fact that The War left a far higher degree of southern unity against the rest of the world than had prevailed before. Internal differences that had expressed themselves in sharp political competition were weakened—if not blotted out—by the common experiences of The War and Reconstruction.[1] And, however unreasonable it may seem, it follows—as even a sophomore can see from observing the European scene—that a people ruled by a military government will retain an antipathy toward the occupying power.

TABLE 1

Proportion of White Population of Each Southern State Residing in Counties with Specified Percentages of Total Population Negro, 1940

STATE	PERCENTAGE OF STATE'S WHITE POPULATION RESIDING IN COUNTIES		
	50 PER CENT OR MORE NEGRO	40 PER CENT OR MORE NEGRO	30 PER CENT OR MORE NEGRO
Mississippi	36.6	50.3	69.9
South Carolina	20.2	46.8	61.1
Alabama	11.6	16.9	49.4
Georgia	11.3	28.3	58.8
Louisiana	8.2	25.2	71.6
Arkansas	8.1	14.9	26.9
Virginia:			
Counties	5.1	10.5	18.3
Independent Cities	0.0	1.9	16.4
North Carolina	4.5	17.7	38.9
Florida	2.4	8.4	33.1
Tennessee	0.8	9.2	12.6
Texas	0.5	2.2	7.8

In the second great crisis whose influence persists—the Populist revolt—political cleavages often fell along the same lines as in the dispute leading to The War. The details of the pattern differed, of course, from state to state as did the timing of the great upsurge of agrarian radicalism. Yet everywhere the most consistent, the most intense rural re-

[1] It may also be noted that The War left quite as permanent an imprint on parts of the rural North as on the South. In many rural northern counties Republicanism can be quite as clearly attributed to The War as can southern Democracy.

sistance to Populists and like radicals of the day came from the black-belt whites. They had valiant allies in the merchants and bankers of the towns and in the new industrialists. Against these defenders of the status quo were arrayed the upcountrymen, the small farmers of the highlands and other areas where there were few Negroes and where there was no basis for a plantation economy. And they were joined by many of the workers of the cities which were beginning to grow, as well as by many poor white farmers of other regions.

The black-belt whites, the townsmen, and all the allied forces of conservatism staved off radical agrarianism, although not without leaving a residue of a belligerent attitude that for decades found expression in support for leaders who at least talked, if they did not always act, against the "interests." And in crucial campaigns even now the counties of several states divide about as they did in the elections of the agrarian uprising.

The battle of Populism left a habit of radicalism in the upland areas; fortuitously it also strengthened the position of the black-belt whites. Intense agitation over Negro voting came as an aftermath of the Populist crisis. In some states the Negro had been disposed to go along with the coalition of upcountry white Democrats and Republicans under the Populist or fusion banner. Everywhere the plantation counties were most intense in their opposition to Negro voting; they raised a deafening hue and cry about the dangers to white supremacy implicit in a Negro balance of power. The Populists, with the death of their party on the national scene, dispiritedly returned to the Democratic party which offered them more than the party of McKinley and Hanna. And in the disillusionment brought about by Populist defeat, the black belts were able to recruit enough upcountry support to adopt poll taxes, literacy tests, and other instruments to disfranchise the Negro. Even on Negro disfranchisement, however, almost everywhere the battle was close. While the upcountryman had no love for the Negro he suspected, at times rightly, that the black belt was trying to disfranchise him as well as the black man.

In the fight against Populism and in the subsequent agitation about the place of the Negro, the black belts strengthened their position by reenforcing the South's attachment to the Democratic party. The raising of a fearful specter of Negro rule and the ruthless application of social pressures against those who treasonably fused with the Republicans under Populist leadership put down for decades the threat of the revival of two-party competition.

Two-party competition would have been fatal to the status of black-belt whites. It would have meant in the 'nineties an appeal to the Negro vote and it would have meant (and did for a time) Negro rule in some black-belt counties. From another standpoint, two-party competition would have meant the destruction of southern solidarity in national pol-

itics—in presidential elections and in the halls of Congress. Unity on the national scene was essential in order that the largest possible bloc could be mobilized to resist any national move toward interference with southern authority to deal with the race question as was desired locally. And the threat of Federal intervention remained, as the furore over the Lodge force bill of 1890 demonstrated.

This sketch of the broad outlines of the foundations of southern politics points to an extraordinary achievement of a relatively small minority —the whites of the areas of heavy Negro population—which persuaded the entire South that it should fight to protect slave property. Later, with allies from conservatives generally, substantially the same group put down a radical movement welling up from the sections dominated by the poorer whites. And by the propagation of a doctrine about the status of the Negro, it impressed on an entire region a philosophy agreeable to its necessities and succeeded for many decades in maintaining a regional unity in national politics to defend those necessities.

If the interpretation is correct—and there are many deviations in detail—the political prowess of the black belts must be rated high. The thesis, however, runs counter to the idea that many top-drawer southerners firmly believe, viz., that the poor white is at the bottom of all the trouble about the Negro. The planter may often be kind, even benevolent, towards his Negroes, and the upcountryman may be, as the Negroes say, "mean"; yet when the political chips are down, the whites of the black belts by their voting demonstrate that they are most ardent in the faith of white supremacy as, indeed, would naturally be expected. The whites of the regions with few Negroes have a less direct concern over the maintenance of white rule, whereas the whites of the black belts operate an economic and social system based on subordinate, black labor.

The critical element in the structure of black-belt power has been the southern Senator and his actual, if not formal, right to veto proposals of national intervention to protect Negro rights. The black belts have had nothing to fear from state governments on the race question, although control of state governments by hill people with their Populist notions might mean heavier taxation for schools and other governmental services. On the fundamental issue, only the Federal Government was to be feared. The black belts became bulwarks of Democratic strength. Their common attachment to the Democratic party gave them security of sorts against Republican meddling in the South. In the great apostasy of 1928 it was not the black belts that went Republican; they stood stalwart in the Democratic ranks. By the same logic, in 1948, after the Democratic party had abandoned the black belts, it was not the South as a whole that deserted the party. The seat of rebellion was the delta of Mississippi, the home of great planters, few whites, and many Negroes, as well as the last

Who turned to GOP first??

vestige of ante-bellum civilization. In the Dixiecrat standard-bearers, Governor Thurmond of South Carolina and Governor Wright of Mississippi, there was neatly symbolized the roots of a southern solidarity that was in process of erosion. As chief executives of the two states with the highest proportions of Negroes in their population, they spoke fundamentally for the whites of the black belt and little more, at least if one disregards their entourage of professional Ku Kluxers, antediluvian reactionaries, and malodorous opportunists.

Perhaps 1948 marked the beginning of an even sharper rate of descent in the long curve recording the decline in the power of black-belt whites. Yet their success—in conspiracy with the grand accidents of history—in cementing the South to the Democratic party will for a long time exert a profound influence on the politics of the South. Attachments to partisan labels live long beyond events that gave them birth.

If the critical element in the southern political system has been solidarity in national politics, there is logic in defining the political South—as it is here defined—in terms of consistency of attachment to the Democratic party nationally. Eleven states and only eleven did not go Republican more than twice in the presidential elections from 1876 to 1944 (both inclusive). These states constitute the South for the purposes of this study. They are: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia. Of these states only two went Republican twice in the period 1876–1944: Florida in 1876 and 1928 and Tennessee in 1920 and 1928. Five went Republican only once: South Carolina and Louisiana in the disputed election of 1876 and North Carolina, Texas, and Virginia in 1928. Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, and Mississippi maintained an unbroken record of Democratic loyalty.[2]

A high percentage of Negro population is associated with the Democratic voting tradition of those states we call "the South." In nine of them one-fourth or more of the population was Negro in 1940. Tennessee and Texas are marginal to "the South" by the criterion of Negro population. Tennessee in 1940 was 17.4 per cent Negro and Texas, 14.4. Maryland, which we exclude from the South, was 16.6 per cent Negro, but its voting habits diverged markedly from those of Tennessee and Texas. The range of Negro population—from 49.2 per cent in Mississippi to 14.4 in Texas—

[2] Over the same period border states that might be considered southern went Republican more than twice: Missouri, 5 times; West Virginia, 8; Maryland, 7; Delaware, 9; Kentucky, 3. Oklahoma, since its admission to the Union in 1907, has gone Republican twice, in 1920 and 1928. It has strong southern characteristics in its politics, but it leans more strongly Republican than any of the eleven states included in the South. In 1940, for example, Oklahoma, along with Kentucky, Missouri, West Virginia, Maryland, and Delaware, gave more than 40 per cent of its popular vote to the Republican presidential candidate. In none of the eleven states did the Republican strength reach the 40 per cent level.

suggests that even "the South" is by no means homogeneous and that if the Negro influences the politics of the South, there ought to be wide variations in political practices from state to state. That supposition will amply be borne out as the analysis proceeds.

Much labor could be expended on a definition of the South. Indices of illiteracy, maps of the distribution of cotton production, averages of per-capita income, and scores of other statistical measures could be used to delimit the region. Some writers have tried to delimit the South in terms of psychological attitude and have spoken of "the mind" and "the spirit" of the South. For the immediate purpose no better delimitation can be devised than one based on political behavior. And it can be contended, of course, that the regional cast of political attitude has a reality and a being over and beyond all the underlying social and economic characteristics that can be pictured in endless tabulations, correlations, and graphic representations.

Incidentally—and not without importance—it may be noted that the eleven states that meet the test of partisan consistency also are the eleven states that seceded to form the Confederacy.

The chapters that follow are not dedicated solely to the elaboration of the introductory proposition, which, in its unvarnished form, runs to the effect that the fundamental explanation of southern politics is that the black-belt whites succeeded in imposing their will on their states and thereby presented a solid regional front in national politics on the race issue. The main burden of the chapters that immediately follow lies not in the support of this thesis—to which exceptions and modifications in detail are admittedly in order—but rather in the consequences of solidarity in national politics on political life within the individual states.

The coin of southern politics has two sides: on one is seen the relations of the South as a whole with the rest of the nation; on the other, the political battle within each state. And the two aspects are, like the faces of a coin, closely connected.

Consistent and unquestioning attachment, by overwhelming majorities, to the Democratic party nationally has meant that the politics within southern states—the election of governors, of state legislators, and the settlement of public issues generally—has had to be conducted without benefit of political parties. As institutions, parties enjoy a general disrepute, yet most of the democratic world finds them indispensable as instruments of self-government, as means for the organization and expression of competing viewpoints on public policy. Nevertheless, over a tremendous area—the South—no such competing institutions exist and the political battle has to be carried on by transient and amorphous political factions within the Democratic party, which are ill-designed to meet the necessities of self-government. By yielding to their black belts in their

desire for solidarity in national politics, the states of the South condemned themselves internally to a chaotic factional politics. A survey of the factional arrangements in each of the eleven states will lay the basis for an understanding of the variations within the South, as well as a foundation for a treatment of elements common to all states of the South.

Chapter Fourteen

NATURE AND CONSEQUENCES OF ONE-PARTY FACTIONALISM

DIFFERENCES in the factional systems of southern states are far more arresting than their similarities. Only in a limited sense is it possible to speak of "the" one-party system. Commonly, of course, discussion of the one-party system has concerned the attachment of southern states to Democratic presidential candidates rather than the internal factional competition within the Democratic party of the South. From the former aspect southern states could be dismissed with the observation that they are all alike politically. From the standpoint of the character of their factional systems, however, southern states differ widely. Although for groups of two or three states fundamental similarities are identifiable, each state has marked peculiarities of political organization and structure.

In the running of state governments—in the determination of what is done, for whom it is done, when it is done, and who pays for it—factions of the Democratic party play the role assigned elsewhere to political parties. Usually democracies rely principally on the political party as an instrument to provide leadership. Parties put forward candidates for office, advocate particular courses of governmental action, and, if their candidates win, create enough of a sense of joint responsibility among various officials to aid them in the fulfillment of a group responsibility for the direction of government.

The South really has no parties. Its factions differ radically in their organization and operation from political parties. The critical question is whether the substitution of factions for parties alters the outcome of the game of politics. The stakes of the game are high. Who wins when no parties exist to furnish popular leadership?

1. *Types of One-Party Politics*

To appraise one-party factions as instruments of popular leadership requires a comparison of the results of one-party and two-party systems. Differences in governmental action under the two systems might be attributed to dissimilarities in political organization. The problem thus phrased presupposes that one-party systems are alike, but they are not; that two-party systems are alike, but they are not. Moreover, two-party states have not been subjected to intensive analysis and the essential facts for the comparison are lacking.[1] One-party states, however, vary in the degree to which their factional systems approach the nature of a two-party system. North Carolina, for example, is in reality quite as much a two-party state as some nonsouthern states, while Arkansas and South Carolina present examples of one-party factionalism in almost pure form. Hence, comparisons of the workings of different types of southern factional systems along with casual allusions to commonly understood features of two-party politics ought to yield some sort of estimate of the significance of the southern one- or non-party system.

To make such a comparative analysis requires a recapitulation that differentiates the salient features of the factional systems of the eleven southern states. At one extreme of southern factional organization lie the states of Virginia, North Carolina, and Tennessee. Even these states fit no single pattern exactly, but all have been characterized by a relatively tightly organized majority faction within the Democratic party. In all three the majority faction has had a long life and something of a corporate or collective spirit. In each the majority has been opposed by a minority Democratic faction far less cohesive than the majority faction. Of the three, Virginia perhaps has had the weakest opposition faction. In Virginia and North Carolina the majority faction has been representative of the upper half of the economic scale, an upper half inclusive of more industry and finance than commonly exists in southern states. Crump's Tennessee machine, on the other hand, reflected a less-stable political combination than the majority factions of North Carolina or of Virginia. Although it had the support of business generally, it rested

[1] We express, out of scientific curiosity rather than agreement with the "you-are-another" school of southern thought, concurrence with the defensive remark of a southern judge, "Why don't you study the politics of northern states?"

in large measure on the tenuous coalition of a bossed Memphis and patronage-fed machines of eastern mountain counties.

The cohesiveness of the majority faction in these states points to the extraordinary influence of even a small opposition party. In both North Carolina and Tennessee the majority Democratic factions derive unity from the opposition of Republicans; in both states the Democrats of the counties with substantial Republican votes accept state leadership and discipline in the battle against a common foe. Virginia's extremely low voter participation makes it difficult to determine much about the nature of its politics, but the chances are that the Virginia Republican minority has a significant bearing on the unity of the majority faction of Democrats in Virginia. In all three states Republican opposition contributes to the creation of one tightly organized Democratic faction. By the same token existence of one relatively cohesive faction generates within the Democratic party an opposition group, producing something of a bi-factionalism within the dominant party.

The remaining eight states possess no outstanding features that suggest obvious classifications into sub-groups. Each of the eight differs from the others, yet from time to time similar characteristics emerge, at least for short periods, in all of them. The eight states vary widely in the degree to which their factional organization approximates a bi-factional division, as measured by the tendency of voters to divide into two camps in the first gubernatorial primary.[2] Georgia tends toward a dual division while at the other extreme the electorates of Mississippi and Florida fractionalize into many groups. While the tendency towards multifactionalism represents a significant aspect of the political structures of the eight states, other characteristics of factional organization and disorganization contribute to differences in their political structure.[3]

In North Carolina and Tennessee a cohesive minority party vote contributes to the development of disciplined and continuous Democratic factions. Other explanations must be sought for cohesive factions that arise in the absence of a substantial minority party. Georgia and Louisiana represent instances in which relatively cohesive majority factions have been built around personalities. Eugene Talmadge was a powerful organizing force in Georgia politics and his influence has continued in his son. Huey Long in Louisiana likewise was a potent influence in the division of the electorate into two opposing camps. In both Georgia and Louisiana factors other than personalities have contributed to the organization of political factions. Georgia's county-unit system created conditions favorable to a leader such as Talmadge who could rally the

[2] An analysis of this point was presented above at pp. 15–18.

[3] An institutional factor that may stimulate multifactionalism is the requirement of majority, rather than plurality, nominations. The run-off or second primary, in which a majority is required to nominate, may encourage a multiplication of factions and candidacies in the first primary. See below, pp. 416–23.

whites of rural counties, many of them in the black belt, and at the same time garner the support of urban finance and industry. A minority could be converted into a continuing faction around a spectacular leader. In Louisiana, on the contrary, a leader such as Long could build around a group of poorer rural whites a radical faction with a relatively high degree of cohesion and continuity. In some respects—such as the "ticket" system symbolizing the combination of candidates for all state posts and many legislative offices—Louisiana factionalism more nearly approaches the organizational realities of a two-party system than that of any other southern state. In all probability the long-standing machine of New Orleans—in whose operations the "ticket" system had to be an integral part just as are "organization slates" in the work of urban machines elsewhere—had an important influence in habituating voters to factional unity in campaigning and in the operation of state government.[4] Similarly, Memphis may have influenced Tennessee's factional form.

The remaining states—South Carolina, Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas, Texas, and Florida—enjoy a far more chaotic factional politics than the states that have been mentioned. These six states cannot, of course, be differentiated sharply from those with tighter political organization, nor are they themselves uniform. Nevertheless, certain patterns of behavior recur in them and provide clues to the nature of their politics.

In marked contrast with two-party politics, these states manifest varying degrees of multifactionalism. The tendency toward a dualism—often acclaimed as a great virtue of American politics—is at times replaced in these states by a veritable melee of splinter factions, each contending for control of the state somewhat after the fashion of a multiparty system.[5]

Those states with loose factional systems usually also have factional groupings of the most transient nature. Cleavages among voters form and reform from campaign to campaign depending on the issues and candidates involved. In extreme situations only the most shadowy continuity of faction prevails, either in voter grouping or in composition of leadership. This discontinuous and kaleidoscopic quality of faction contrasts markedly with the stability of electoral loyalty and the continuity of

[4] In a sense the New Orleans machine, with a large proportion of the state vote in its constituency, may have had an effect on Louisiana factional structure similar to that of the Republicans of western North Carolina in that state. The New Orleans machine, out of the necessities of urban politics, backed candidates for all state offices; whatever group was in opposition had to do the same. Hence, a force may have existed productive of competition between more or less unified factions involving the collaboration of many candidates instead of the more usual southern custom of autonomous candidacies.

[5] Of course, within each party of a two-party state factions exist. They are, however, usually less numerous than are those of a one-party state, and they ordinarily possess a degree of continuity and a discernible policy orientation that differentiate them from the fluid and discontinuous factions of a highly disorganized one-party state.

leadership of true political parties. It also differs, of course, from the factionalism of such states as Virginia and North Carolina.

Among the influences determining factional alignments in particular campaigns an important place must be assigned to localism. A local potentate or a leading citizen of a county who takes a notion that he wants to be governor polls an extremely heavy vote in his own bailiwick. In two-party states the force of party tradition and the strength of party cohesion minimize, although they do not entirely erase, localism. A faction built around a local following perhaps differs little in principle from a personal faction. In one instance the personal following happens to be geographically localized; in the other it may be scattered over the entire state.

Beyond localism—whose potency may be an indicator of the absence of a class politics or at least the disfranchisement of one class—economic and social groupings at times express themselves despite the confused factionalism. The projection of these economic differences into factional politics becomes most apparent at times of crisis—crises generated by economic depression or created by the appeal of a candidate. They disappear with a decline in social tension only to be replaced by confused alignments explicable on no rational grounds.

The alignment that most often forces its way into southern factional politics is the old Populist battle of the poor, white farmer against the plantation regions. In South Carolina, occasionally the Piedmont and plain battle it out; in Mississippi at times the lines form between the delta and the hills; in Alabama the black belt unites against the predominantly white counties of the northern and southern parts of the state. In Louisiana, Huey Long rallied the farmers of the northwestern hills as the most loyal element of his coalition, which included urban workers but few plantation operators. In Georgia, the lines have been confused but most of the diehard Talmadge counties have been in the black belt. In all these situations the counties with many blacks and many multi-unit farming operations tend to ally themselves with big-city finance and industry as well as with the top-drawer people of the smaller cities and towns. By no means, however, are such meaningful lines always drawn in these states.

2. *Limitations of Factional Leadership*

When one-party factionalism is reduced to a few adjectives descriptive of its form—multifaceted, discontinuous, kaleidoscopic, fluid, transient—it becomes in appearance a matter of no particular import. Nevertheless, these characteristics point to weaknesses of profound significance in one-party factions as instruments of popular leadership and, by contrast, point to the extraordinary importance in the workings of popular

government of political parties, imperfect though they may be. Although it is the custom to belittle the contributions of American parties, their performance seems heroic alongside that of a pulverized factionalism.

Consider the element of discontinuity in factionalism. Although conditions differ from state to state and from time to time, in many instances the battle for control of a state is fought between groups newly formed for the particular campaign. The groups lack continuity in name—as exists under a party system—and they also lack continuity in the make-up of their inner core of professional politicians or leaders. Naturally, they also lack continuity in voter support which, under two-party conditions, provides a relatively stable following of voters for each party's candidates whoever they may be.

Discontinuity of faction both confuses the electorate and reflects a failure to organize the voters into groups of more or less like-minded citizens with somewhat similar attitudes toward public policy. In political discussion a high value is placed on the independent voter who claims to be free of party loyalty in casting his vote, but the fact is that the consistent party supporter may be acting quite as rationally in the promotion of his political interests as the independent. Under a system of fluid factions, however, the voters' task is not simplified by the existence of continuing competing parties with fairly well-recognized, general-policy orientations. That is, this party proposes to run the government generally in one way; the opposition, another. Factions that form and reform cannot become so identified in the mind of the electorate, and the conditions of public choice become far different from those under two-party conditions. The voter is confronted with new faces, new choices, and must function in a sort of state of nature.

American politics is often cynically described as a politics without issue and as a battle between the "ins" and the "outs." In a system of transient factions—in its most extreme form—it is impossible to have even a fight between the "ins" and the "outs." The candidates are new and, in fact, deny any identification with any preceding administration. Without continuing groups, there can be no debate between the "ins" and "outs" on the record. Party responsibility is a concept that is greatly overworked, but in a fluid factional system not a semblance of factional responsibility exists. A governor serves his tenure—fixed either by constitution or custom—and the race begins anew. The candidates are, as completely as they can manage it, disassociated from the outgoing administration. The "outs" cannot attack the record of the "ins" because the "ins" do not exist as a group with any collective spirit or any continuity of existence. Moreover, the independence or autonomy of candidacies means that legislative candidates are disassociated from the gubernatorial races, and if the electorate wants to reward the "ins" by another term or to throw the rascals out—if electorates behave that way—it has no way of

identifying the "ins." All of it may come down to the proposition that if one considers some southern state governments as a whole, there is really no feasible way of throwing the rascals out.

The lack of continuing groups of "ins" and "outs" profoundly influences the nature of political leadership. Free and easy movement from loose faction to loose faction results in there being in reality no group of "outs" with any sort of corporate spirit to serve as critic of the "ins" or as a rallying point around which can be organized all those discontented with the current conduct of public affairs. Enemies of today may be allies of tomorrow; for the professional and semiprofessional politician no such barrier as party affiliation and identification exists to separate the "ins" from the "outs." No clique, given cohesion by their common identification as "outs," exists to scheme and contrive for control of the government. Under two-party conditions when Republicans control, leaders carrying the Democratic label are definitely out and have in common at least a desire to oust the Republicans.

When two distinct groups with some identity and continuity exist, they must raise issues and appeal to the masses if for no other reason than the desire for office. Whether the existence of issues causes the formation of continuing groups of politicians or whether the existence of competing groups causes the issues to be raised is a moot point. Probably the two factors interact. Nevertheless, in those states with loose and short-lived factions campaigns often are the emptiest sorts of debates over personalities, over means for the achievement of what everybody agrees on.

Not only does a disorganized politics make impossible a competition between recognizable groups for power. It probably has a far-reaching influence on the kinds of individual leaders thrown into power and also on the manner in which they utilize their authority once they are in office. Loose factional organizations are poor contrivances for recruiting and sifting out leaders of public affairs. Social structures that develop leadership and bring together like-minded citizens lay the basis for the effectuation of the majority will. Loose factions lack the collective spirit of party organization, which at its best imposes a sense of duty and imparts a spirit of responsibility to the inner core of leaders of the organization. While the extent to which two-party systems accomplish these ends are easily exaggerated, politicans working under such systems must, even if for no other reason than a yearning for office, have regard not only for the present campaign but also for the next. In an atomized and individualistic politics it becomes a matter of each leader for himself and often for himself only for the current campaign.

Individualistic or disorganized politics places a high premium on demagogic qualities of personality that attract voter-attention. Party machinery, in the advancement of leaders, is apt to reject those with rough edges and angular qualities out of preference for more conformist per-

sonalities. Perhaps the necessities of an unorganized politics—lacking in continuing divisions of the electorate and in continuing collaboration of partyworkers—provide a partial explanation for the rise to power of some of the spectacular southern leaders.[6] No group with any sort of internal cohesion or capacity to act exists to put forward leaders and to fight for their election. The candidate for state-wide office must win by his own exertions, his own qualities. On occasion the essentially personal power of political leaders may have consequences far more serious than the production of picturesque governors and Senators. A state leader whose fortunes have been cast over the years with a fairly compact political group which he is bound to consult on decisions of major import is apt to be a different kind of governor from one whose power rests more completely on his own qualities, demagogic or otherwise. Organization both elevates and restrains leaders; disorganization provides no institutional brake on capriciousness when the will in that direction is present. The frequency with which some southern governors have brought the National Guard into play on matters involving no question of public order suggest the possibilities. Individual factional leaders, unrestrained by organizational ties or obligations to political colleagues, may have all the erraticism of Mexican generals of an earlier day.

Factional fluidity and discontinuity probably make a government especially susceptible to individual pressures and especially disposed toward favoritism. Or to put the obverse of the proposition, the strength of organization reflecting something of a group or class solidarity creates conditions favorable to government according to rule or general principle, although it is readily conceded that such a result does not flow invariably. In a loose, catch-as-catch-can politics highly unstable coalitions must be held together by whatever means is available. This contract goes to that contractor, this distributor is dealt with by the state liquor board, that group of attorneys have an "in" at the statehouse, this bond house is favored. Such practices occur in an organized politics, to be sure, but an organized politics is also better able to establish general standards, to resist individual claims for preference, and to consider individual actions in the light of general policy. Organized groups—with a life beyond that of the particular leader—must perforce worry about the future if they are to survive. Individualistic leaders of amorphous groups are subjected to considerations of a different order.

Weak and kaleidoscopic coalitions built around individual leaders produce in the operations of government itself a high degree of instability. In the work of state institutions and in the programs of state gov-

[6] Personality is everywhere significant in political leadership, but the chances are that in the American milieu, spectacular demagogues flourish most luxuriantly under local conditions of social disorganiration or flux, and these localities are not confined to the South.

ernments uncertainty and insecurity rise as a gubernatorial campaign approaches. The erratic changes in personnel and policy associated with control by a succession of unrelated and irresponsible factional groups make the consideration, much less the execution, of long-term governmental programs difficult. Consequently groups concerned with particular governmental agencies indulge in all sorts of constitutional and statutory dodges to insulate the agency that concerns them from "politics," with the result that most southern state governments become disintegrated mechanisms incapable of moving forward on a broad front.[7]

All these propositions do not apply to all southern states all the time. Their general validity, however, can be indicated by contrast with the politics of those states to which they are least applicable. North Carolina and Virginia have tightly organized factional systems as southern politics goes.[8] In each the dominant faction has a relatively high degree of continuity. A genuine battle between recognizable groups of "ins" and "outs" occurs. The strength that comes from factional cohesion enables the governments of these states to avoid much of the favoritism and graft that often—but not always—occur in loose, personal factionalisms. Adventitious observation of the two states gives the impression of a fundamentally more responsible official attitude, one that seems to be connected with the sense of corporate responsibility of the controlling organization for the management of public affairs.

Even on the question of race, both states have a far different atmosphere from most southern states. This difference comes in part from other factors, but the relevance of the nature of political organization should not be underestimated. A cohesive faction has the power to discipline wild-eyed men. A chaotic factionalism provides no block to unscrupulous and spectacular personalities. The kinds of individuals thrown into positions of state-wide leadership in North Carolina and Virginia over the

[7] Comparative analysis of some southern and some northern states suggests the inference that theorists of the state reorganization movement have by and large failed to see the relation of political organization to the problem of state administrative organization. A state such as New York adapts itself to an integrated state administration under the direction of a governor who is the leader of a relatively cohesive and responsible party. A governor in a loose factional system does not have organized about him social elements necessary to produce enough power to control the entire state administration. Nor does he occupy a position as party leader that makes him appear sufficiently accountable to warrant vesting him with broad authority for the direction of administration. On the other hand, in such states as Virginia and North Carolina, a comparatively well-disciplined factional system provides a political base for a fairly well-integrated state administration. It should not, however, be forgotten that an integrated administration may, in turn, contribute to factional discipline because of its concentration of the power to reward.

[8] Both states also have a relatively high degree of centralization of functions in the state governments which may contribute to factional discipline. On the other hand, the existence of organized, state-wide factions with a state-wide point of view may be an essential prerequisite to the centralization of functions in state government.

past thirty years contrast markedly with many of those who have risen to power in states with more loosely organized politics.[9]

The significant question is, who benefits from political disorganization? Its significance is equalled only by the difficulty of arriving at an answer. There probably are several answers, depending on the peculiar circumstances in each case. Politics generally comes down, over the long run, to a conflict between those who have and those who have less. In state politics the crucial issues tend to turn around taxation and expenditure. What level of public education and what levels of other public services shall be maintained? How shall the burden of taxation for their support be distributed? Issues of public regulation and control have, of course, varying importance from time to time and place to place, and occasionally the issue of democracy itself arises, but if there is a single grand issue it is that of public expenditure.

It follows that the grand objective of the haves is obstruction, at least of the haves who take only a short-term view. Organization is not always necessary to obstruct; it is essential, however, for the promotion of a sustained program in behalf of the have-nots, although not all party or factional organization is dedicated to that purpose. It follows, if these propositions are correct, that over the long run the have-nots lose in a disorganized politics. They have no mechanism through which to act and their wishes find expression in fitful rebellions led by transient demagogues who gain their confidence but often have neither the technical competence nor the necessary stable base of political power to effectuate a program.

In speculation about the broad theme of political conflict it has to be kept in mind that the scales in the have-have-not conflict have been tipped by the exclusion of a substantial sector of the have-not population —the Negroes—from effective participation in politics. Similarly substantial numbers of whites of the have-not group do not vote but the extent to which suffrage limitations are responsible for their nonvoting is debatable.[10] The have-have-not match is settled in part by the fact that

[9] A loosely organized politics with no stable centers of power or leadership for an entire state is in one sense admirably suited for dealing with the Negro question. A pulverized politics decentralizes power to county leaders and county officials and in some areas devolution is carried even further in that public officials do not cross the plantation boundary without invitation and government is left to the plantation operator in his domain. In a granulated political structure of this kind with thousands of points of authority there is no point at which accountability can be enforced. Private and semi-private acts of violence can be subjected to no real check. By the same token, a disorganized politics makes it impossible for a state really to meet the obligations that its leaders assert it undertakes with respect to a dependent people. Loud protestations that "we are doing something about the Negro"—which contain more truth than is commonly supposed—have no buttress of political power to support a systematic program for dealing state-wide with the race question.

[10] The suffrage question is explored at length below, chaps. 25–30.

substantial numbers of the have-nots never get into the ring. For that reason professional politicians often have no incentive to appeal to the have-nots.

Within this framework of a limited suffrage, at times state-wide campaigns are but personal rivalries uncomplicated by substantial social and economic issues. The issue becomes one of who is the "best man" or the "most competent" man to carry out what everyone is agreed upon. In a broader sense, the politics of such a situation amounts to control, whatever governor is in office, by the conservative groups of the state who squabble among themselves for the perquisites of office, which are, after all, relatively minor in the total flow of income and in the total status system of a society. In a sense the absence of issues comes from the fact that these groups are unchallenged; when someone stirs the masses issues become sharper. Under such a chaotic factionalism, it is impossible to make any rational explanation of how the people of a state vote in terms of interest. They are whipped from position to position by appeals irrelevant to any fundamental interest.

A loose factional system lacks the power to carry out sustained programs of action, which almost always are thought by the better element to be contrary to its immediate interests. This negative weakness thus redounds to the benefit of the upper brackets. All of which is not to say that the upper brackets stand idly by and leave to chance the protection of their interests. A loose factionalism gives great negative power to those with a few dollars to invest in legislative candidates. A party system provides at least a semblance of joint responsibility between governor and legislature. The independence of candidacies in an atomized politics makes it possible to elect a fire-eating governor who promises great accomplishments and simultaneously to elect a legislature a majority of whose members are committed to inaction. The significance of an organized politics appears starkly when Louisiana, for example, is contrasted with Texas or Florida. The Long faction in 1948 came into power with a legislative majority (under the "ticket system") committed to a program of increased public expenditure—old-age assistance, school outlays, and so forth. The legislature convened and through factional discipline promptly put through a program of legislation. In a state with looser factional organization the powers of obstruction in a legislature elected quite independently of the governor are enormous.[11] In the whole scenario of southern politics the legislature undoubtedly plays an important obstructive role that warrants more investigation than it has received.[12]

[11] In Florida, a state with an extremely disorganized politics, one hears, for example, stories of a man in the background of state politics who is the representative of an important eastern financial group with local interests and who functions as a collector and distributor of campaign funds for legislative candidates.

[12] One matter of great significance peculiar to the South is the effect of malapportionment. Everywhere discrimination against cities in legislative representation inflates

Although individual corporations, individual industries, and particular groups, if they are skillful manipulators, can gain great immediate advantage in the chaos of a loose one-party factionalism, it is by no means clear that the upper brackets generally can depend on a disorganized politics to look out for their interests. They can expect no sustained attack from the lesser peoples, who lack organization, but they cannot rely on a disorganized politics to dispense its favors among all those of the upper brackets impartially. The upper brackets can look forward themselves with greater confidence to equitable treatment—as among themselves—in the security of an organized politics. The great risk is that when they are organized, they become targets for attack and they become in a sense accountable—because they have a means to act—for their governance of the state. Furthermore, organization begets counterorganization and business runs the risk that the organization with which it is affiliated may be superseded by another with power to act. Even a dominant conservative organization must from time to time accede to discontent to remain in power.[18]

All in all the striking feature of the one-party system, the absence of organized and continuing factions with a lower-bracket orientation, is but one facet of an issueless politics. This is not to say that a stream of rebelliousness does not run through southern politics. The factional system simply provides no institutionalized mechanism for the expression of lower-bracket viewpoints. By chance and by exertions of temporary leaders and connivers, candidates are brought into the field, but no continuing, competitive groups carry on the battle. The great virtue of the

---

the strength of the coalition of urban financial interests and rural conservatism. In the South, however, this inflation is magnified by the fact that malapportionment is compounded by the inclusion of nonvoting Negroes in the population of legislative districts. Consequently an extremely small number of whites of the large-farming class in the black counties control an extremely large number of legislators. It is these large agricultural operators—not white farmers generally—who are most disposed to ally themselves with finance, utilities, and such industry as the South has. Thus, a few whites in the Mississippi delta, along the South Carolina coastal plain, and in the Alabama black belt exercise a greatly disproportionate power in state legislatures.

[18] A study by Clarence Heer of taxation of manufacturing corporations in North Carolina, Virginia, Tennessee, South Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama wound up with the conclusion that in the median city of each state "a corporation earning 2 per cent on its investment would have a lower tax bill in North Carolina than in any of the other five states except Virginia. At a 10 per cent rate of earnings, its tax bill in North Carolina would be lower than in any neighboring state except Virginia and Tennessee. At a 20 per cent rate of earnings, three states, Virginia, Tennessee, and South Carolina would offer more favorable tax treatment." In another study, James W. Martin and Glenn D. Morrow call attention to the relatively low level of taxation in the South in relation to taxable capacity, perhaps an index of the effect of a disorganized politics on the level of public services. They also point to the relatively large share of southern state revenues derived from consumer taxes, an indicator perhaps of the effect of a disorganized politics in the allocation among classes of the burden of tax action.—*Taxation of Manufacturing in the South* (University, Alabama: Bureau of Public Administration, University of Alabama, 1948).

two-party system is, not that there are two groups with conflicting policy tendencies from which the voters can choose, but that there are two groups of politicians. The fluidity of the factional system handicaps the formation of two such groups within the southern Democratic party, and the inevitable result is that there is no continuing group of "outs" which of necessity must pick up whatever issue is at hand to belabor the "ins." Even in such states as Virginia, North Carolina, and Tennessee the "outs" tend to be far less cohesive than do the "outs" of a two-party state.

Students of politics tend to express impatience with an issueless politics. They impute virtue to the conflict inherent in a politics of issues and fail to emphasize that the practicing politician—one-party or two-party—spends an extremely large portion of his time in ignoring, repressing, postponing, or composing differences. The raising of issues, the exploitation of differences, always starts a battle. It stirs up opposition and may bring an untimely end to a career in office. The chances are that the one-party or nonparty system facilitates the combination of those satisfied with current arrangements and encourages as well the inclination of the politician to let sleeping dogs lie.

While much political conflict may not be a "good thing," the danger point has not been approached in the South. A modicum of political conflict probably aids in the maintenance of the health of a capitalistic order. Within the capitalistic society, the tendencies in negation of competition, toward the maximization of short-run returns to the immediate holders of power, constitute a powerful drive toward self-strangulation. Economic competition alone may not serve to maintain a healthy ruling class; a continuing political challenge compels a defense and a strengthening of a ruling class. The upper bracket that goes unchallenged develops privileges and repressions destructive of mass morale and often restrictive of the potentialities of the productive system. And ruling groups have so inveterate a habit of being wrong that the health of a democratic order demands that they be challenged and constantly compelled to prove their case.

3. *Effects of Isolation from National Politics*

It seems clear that the factional organization within the Democratic party of the southern states fails to provide the political leadership necessary to cope reasonably well with the governmental problems of the South. In their weakness of political leadership the southern states may merely have in exaggerated form a weakness common to many American states. It is difficult to build a well-organized politics solely around the issues of state government. Isolation of state politics from national politics inherent in the one-party system removes the opportunity for the easy

projection into the state arena of national issues and national political organization. It would be agreed on every hand that over the past half century fairly significant differences in tempo, if not in direction, have characterized the national parties. These debates seep down into the battles between their state subsidiaries, and perhaps become blurred in the process, but even the chance for this sort of issue does not exist in one-party jurisdictions.

Transfer of the great issues to the Federal sphere deprives state politics of many questions that form voters into antagonistic groups and compel the organization of politics. And perhaps one reason why some issues of peculiar interest to the South have been transferred to the Federal sphere is the default of initiative attributable to the one-party system.[38] Even without the growth in importance of Federal action, it is doubtful that an autonomous politics can be maintained in a state of a federal system. State political organizations must be to a considerable extent hitchhikers on national politics. Without that connection, the political battle is apt to become either a chaos of personal factionalism or no battle at all in which an oligarchy rules without genuine challenge.

If state politics must be organized fundamentally along the same lines of division as national politics, the maintenance of a disorganized state politics depends fundamentally on a continuation of those conditions that induce southern unity in national politics. The race question and the heritage of The War have been more powerful drives toward unity—or at least toward the dominance of the top-drawer group—than the counter-divisive influences of national politics. In recent years, however, the sharpening of the issues of national politics and the parallel diversification of interests—such as the growth of industry within the South—have put a severe strain on the one-party system. The issues of national politics come to outweigh the forces of unity. One-party dominance, and a disorganized politics, may be expected to erode—gradually to be sure—first in those states in which the race issue is of least importance. In Texas, in Florida, in Arkansas, the days of a fluid factionalism are numbered. In Virginia, in North Carolina, in Tennessee the odds are against the survival of the one-party arrangement. While change will not come quickly, it is inevitable as the issues of national politics become more important than the peculiar regional interest.

[38] To illustrate: An official of an organization concerned with the status of tenant farmers when asked whether his organization lobbied before state legislatures and state departments explained that they did not bother with state governments. Everything of any importance to his organization was handled by the Federal Government. No more eloquent testimonial of the failings of the one-party system could be cited. One of the grand problems of the region goes without action and almost without discussion in a sterile politics.