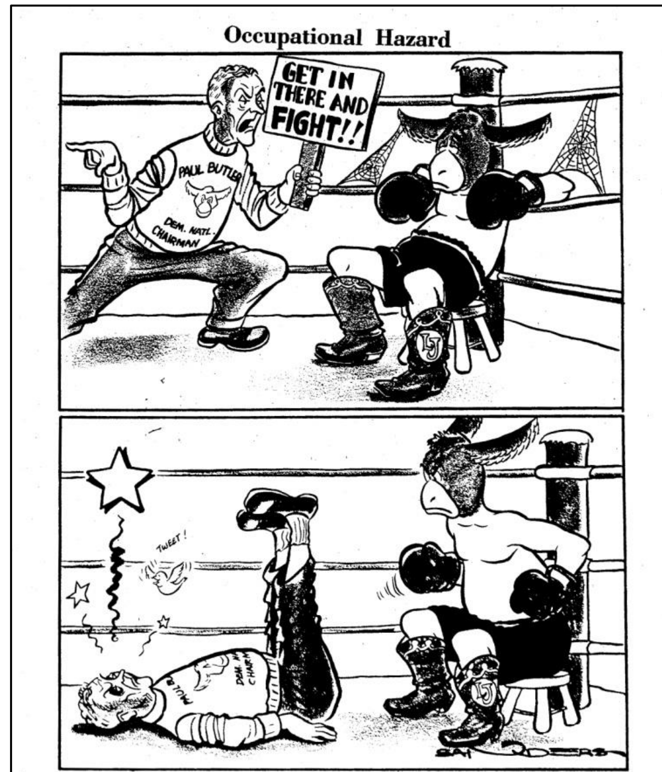
Chapter 2: Democrats and the Politics of Principle



***Greensboro Daily News*, July 8, 1959**

The scholarly apostles of responsible party doctrine in the postwar years tended to be liberal Democrats who shared their ilk's frustration with the party's internal divisions and contradictions. When E.E. Schattschneider wrote to Adlai Stevenson after the 1952 election, he laid out a vision of a disciplined and coherent Democratic opposition that increasing numbers of liberal activists and voters found attractive.[1] As his noncommittal reply suggested, Stevenson's role in realizing this vision would be partial, somewhat unlikely, and at times even unwitting. An introspective patrician rather than a party warrior – and an ideological moderate to boot – Stevenson nonetheless served as a vessel for programmatic liberal energies in the 1950s. His two campaigns for president facilitated, on the one hand, the coalescence of a powerful cadre of policy intellectuals that helped to shape a liberal agenda during the Eisenhower era, and, on the

[1] E.E. Schattschneider to Adlai E. Stevenson, November 9, 1952, Box 1, Folder 36, E.E. Schattschneider Papers, Olin Library, Wesleyan University, Middletown, CT.

other hand, a major grassroots influx of new Democratic activists committed to party reform as well as substantive, issue-based politics. Both developments created constituencies that were open to making American party politics more national in scope, programmatic in orientation, and coherent in structure.

The Democratic struggle for party responsibility was less visible in Stevenson's actual campaigns than in nascent efforts to reform Congress, skirmishes in the national conventions, and, most vividly, the controversial tenure of Democratic National Committee (DNC) Chairman Paul Butler. During his chairmanship from late 1954 to 1960, Butler institutionalized a key responsible party reform proposal – an official party council – and articulated an increasingly explicit vision of vigorous party opposition. His actions drew him into ceaseless public conflicts with southern Democrats, urban bosses, and the congressional leaders Sam Rayburn and Lyndon Johnson, two men who embodied a starkly different outlook on the value and function of parties in America.

These struggles proved inconclusive in the Eisenhower era. They raised crucial questions about the nature of political conflict in the United States and the relationship between parties and principles without answering them. Because the struggle for party responsibility pitted liberals against conservative southern Democrats, it was inextricably bound up in the politics of civil rights. The substantive fight for civil rights would prove to be the great dynamic force for nationalizing power within the Democratic Party, bolstering its capacity for internal discipline, and, eventually, ushering an ideological realignment of both parties. But that process would involve more conflict and take more time than Schattschneider and others anticipated. Thus, on the eve of a new Democratic administration in 1960, the forces of programmatic liberalism would appear once again ascendant, while still entwined in an unreconstructed party system.

Paul Butler, Adlai Stevenson, and the Amateur Spirit

That national party chairmen rarely acted as historically significant players in American politics is testament to the very institutional features that subordinated the national committees to the authority of local and state organizations and muddied national party leadership. The title of a leading scholarly assessment of the party committees summarized their peculiar position: *Politics Without Power*.[2] Paul Butler, whose tenure as DNC Chairman from 1954 to 1960 was lengthy by the standards of these thinly institutionalized entities, cannot be said to have successfully transcended the limits of his post or transformed it in an enduring manner. But his unusually energetic effort to do just that, driven by both substantive commitments and responsible party theory, served to highlight dynamic tensions within the Democratic coalition and the American party system.

Butler was a lawyer from South Bend, Indiana, who had risen through the Democratic ranks in a state with a competitive two-party system. In his native setting he was not a good-government reformer. Committed to the party, comfortable with patronage, and scornful of anti-party reforms, he wrote in a 1950 letter that he made "no pretense of being anything but an organization Democrat."[3] He was, however, a devoted New Deal liberal, and despite his modest reform bona fides, he owed his ascension within the DNC to a new breed of Democrats who saw in him a kindred spirit.[4] "Paul had observed the discontent brewing in the Party in many states

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[2] Cornelius P. Cotter and Bernard C. Hennessy, *Politics without Power: The National Party Committees* (New York: Atherton Press, 1964).
[3] George C. Roberts, *Paul M. Butler: Hoosier Politician and National Political Leader* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1987), 13.
[4] A factional split within the state party in the 1950s pit Butler against state treasurer Frank McKinney, a self-described conservative who chaired the DNC during Truman's second term; Butler letter to George C. Roberts, 7/5/61, and Frank McKinney letter to George C. Roberts, 6/28/61, Box 29, Paul M. Butler Papers, Hesburgh Library, University of Notre Dame, South Bend, IN. As a newly elected DNC committeeman in 1952, Butler urged Stevenson to replace McKinney with "a new chairman entirely disassociated from the political bosses of big city organizations around the country;" Butler letter to Adlai Stevenson, June 29, 1952, Box 15, Folder 16, Adlai E. Stevenson Papers, Seeley G. Mudd Library, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ.

over the ineffectiveness of the old politics," recalled Michigan party chairman Neil Staebler, "and was determined to bring the new approach into the National Committee."[5]

What was "the old politics?" What was "the new approach?" Staebler's language hinted at an important current of intraparty dynamism that ran through Democratic politics across a slew of states and cities in the 1950s. At the vanguard of this change was a postwar generation of predominantly middle-class liberal party activists – the "club Democrats." In state after state beginning in the late 1940s, the club Democrats came into conflict with existing party machinery and leadership, unless, as was sometimes the case, they took over with little resistance at all.

The context for these power struggles was the postwar acceleration of a trend that had begun during the Progressive Era: the long-term decay of transactional, non-programmatic local and state party organizations. Observers recognized this decline as it happened. Journalist John Fischer, who had worked on the Stevenson campaign in 1952, described in a *Harper's* essay the following year the "almost total collapse of the party organization" across the country that had hindered that campaign's efforts: "The city machines turned out to be a toothless and rheumatic team of dragons," he wrote, "far gone in senility and fatty degeneration. The old-time bosses … found they could no longer deliver the votes."[6] The senility may have been partly willful in 1952 – many party regulars were unimpressed by Stevenson and disinclined to work hard for his election – but the underlying process was real enough.

Myriad forces drove the unraveling of the parties' classic patronage model in most localities over the course of half a century.[7] Economic growth and the creation and expansion of

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[5] Neil Staebler letter to George C. Roberts, July 6, 1982, Box 292, Folder "Roberts, Robert," Neil Staebler Papers, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI.
[6] John Fischer, "What Do the Democrats Do Now?", *Harper's*, March 1953.
[7] On the decline of mass party organizations in the twentieth century, see A. James Reichley, *The Life of the Parties: A History of American Political Parties* (New York: The Free Press, 1992), 304-315; and Alan Ware, *The Breakdown of Democratic Party Organization, 1940-1980* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

a national welfare state reduced the demand for the material inducements offered by the old machines. Civil service reforms in states and cities, meanwhile, drastically depleted those machines' supply of such inducements in the form of public sector employment. ("Grandma no longer needed to see her precinct captain about that pension," Fischer wrote in explaining the pincer dynamic hastening the machines' decline. "Instead she talked to a brisk civil servant with a Vassar degree in the neighborhood Social Security office.")[8] Finally, increases in mass educational attainment combined with the advent of new communications media – most importantly, television – to reduce the need for party organizations to mediate and prescribe political information and voting choices. To be sure, as catalogued by the studies of Angus Campbell and his University of Michigan colleagues, well into the 1950s the voting behavior of the mass electorate continued largely to be structured by stable partisan affiliations formed early in life, with issues and ideology playing very limited roles.[9] But the long-range trends were working to destabilize those patterns in the electorate, while they set the context for more visible, immediate changes among the parties' activist ranks.

The pattern recurred in multiple states in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Young, educated New Deal liberals, motivated largely by convictions related to national issues, forged alliances with organized labor and racial minorities to square off against sclerotic, generally non-ideological existing Democratic organizations. There was the California Democratic Council, launching pad for future liberal congressional stalwarts like George Miller, Phil Burton, and Henry Waxman, which produced in the 1950s a zealous and energetic DNC committeeman in

[8] Fischer, "What Do the Democrats Do Now?"
[9] Angus Campbell, Gerald Gurin, and Warren E. Miller, *The Voter Decides* (Evanston, IL: Row, Peterson and Co., 1954); and Campbell et al., *The American Voter* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1960).

Beverly Hills attorney Paul Ziffren.[10] The Democratic Organizing Committee of Wisconsin, a para-party band of liberals, swamped and supplanted the existing state party leadership through primary fights in the late 1940s. (James E. Doyle, Sr., became the state party chairman in 1953.)[11] The Michigan Democratic Club formed in the wake of liberals' failed efforts to oust the state party leadership in 1946. Through painstaking statewide organizational work by Neil Staebler in alliance with Walter Reuther's United Auto Workers (UAW), the Club launched G. Mennen "Soapy" Williams to a record six terms as governor starting in 1948.[12] In some states, like New York and Illinois, with more robust existing machines capable of defending themselves, new reformers and clubs still managed to establish organized beachheads from which they became meaningful players in intraparty activities. Even in one-party Texas, a vigorous liberal cadre, inspired initially by the Stevenson campaigns, established the Democrats of Texas in 1957 as an organizational base for Senator Ralph Yarborough, providing a left flank for what was now a tripartite factional division within the state party.[13]

Contemporaries described such activists as "New Look" Democrats.[14] What distinguished them from their fellow partisans? The leading scholarly observer of the "amateur Democrats," James Q. Wilson, contrasted such activists with the professionals in terms of their outlooks on the ends of politics and the functions of the party system. "The amateur takes the outcome of politics – the determination of policies and the choice of officials – seriously, in the

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[10] Jonathan Bell, "Social Democracy and the Rise of the Democratic Party in California, 1950-1964," *The Historical Journal* Vol. 49 (2006): 497-524; and James Q. Wilson, *The Amateur Democrat: Club Politics in Three Cities* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), 96-125.
[11] Frank J. Sauroff, "Extra-Legal Political Parties in Wisconsin," *American Political Science Review* Vol. 48 (Sept. 1954): 692-704.
[12] Harry Lunn, "Politics Keeps Neil Staebler Moving," *Michigan Daily*, August 2, 1952; Staebler letter to Dora Beale Polk, April 8, 1953, and Staebler letter to Samuel Lubell, July 18, 1956, both in Box 314, Folder "Neil Staebler - Summations & Forecasts; Analyses & Plans; Statements of Principles - 1952-1956," Staebler Papers.
[13] Sean J. Savage, *JFK, LBJ, and the Democratic Party* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), 35.
[14] Stevenson described his early impression of Butler as "definitely a 'new look' type," in a letter to Arthur Schlesinger, August 16, 1954, Box 73, Folder 9, Stevenson Papers; Staebler employed the "new look" term in Jim Elsman, "Staebler Attacks Republican Practices," *Michigan Daily*, January 15, 1956.

sense that he feels a direct concern for what he thinks are the ends these policies serve and the qualities these officials possess." By contrast, public policy to the non-ideological professionals was merely "the by-product of efforts that are aimed, not at producing the good society, but at gaining power and place for one's self and one's party." Parties served as "neutral agents which mobilize majorities for whatever candidates and programs seem best suited to capturing public fancy."[15] A key implication of this distinction was that the amateur's attention to issues of public policy made him at least a potential advocate for a party system organized around coherent agendas – that is, responsible party government. The authors of *Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System* had heralded the emergence of just a type of activist helping to "break down the patronage-nomination-election concept of party" and to build programmatic parties in its wake.[16] As the 1950s progressed, advocates like Schattschneider and Burns similarly welcomed signs of ascendant issue-based voting and party activism.[17]

No development proved more galvanizing to the grassroots emergence of that activism in the 1950s than Adlai Stevenson's first campaign for president. Stevenson was in many ways an unlikely vessel for such liberal energies. He was frequently at pains to point out that his own beliefs on issues ranging from civil rights to economics were a good deal more conservative than those of the activists manning the Draft Stevenson movement and populating Stevenson Clubs in 1952, as well as those of policy advisors and speechwriters like Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., and John Kenneth Galbraith. What endeared him to the new breed of issues-based party activists was clearly his political style and posture toward the party machinery. His intelligence and evident

[15] Wilson, *The Amateur Democrat*, 3-4, 18-19.
[16] Committee on Political Parties, *Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System*, supplement to the *American Political Science Review,* Vol. 40 (Sep. 1950): 67.
[17] David Adamany, "The Political Science of E.E. Schattschneider," *American Political Science Review* Vol. 66 (Dec. 1972): 1328-1330; James MacGregor Burns, "Forces for Unity and Disunity in the Democratic Party, 1954-1956," paper presented at the APSA annual meeting, September 11, 1954, Box 1, Folder 32, Schattschneider Papers.

aversion to the grubby business of old-fashioned party politicking struck a chord with amateurs whose interest in politics was, to use Wilson's later term, "purposive" and ends-focused rather than transactional.[18] In this sense the Stevenson followers' proud adoption of the pejorative "egghead" label reflected not merely their dominant social characteristics, but a particular disposition toward politics that was of growing prevalence and significance for both parties.[19]

Butler, an early Stevenson supporter who was first elected national committeeman in 1952, built a reputation among his fellow DNC members as an energetic and innovative proponent of issue-based, program-oriented party politics, traveling endlessly to foster intra-party communication while proposing organizational reforms that stemmed directly from the work of the American Political Science Association (APSA) Committee on Political Parties.[20] Butler's introduction to the committee had come by way of Paul Willis, a University of Indiana political scientist with whom he collaborated on a proposal for a 1954 midterm national party convention.[21] The first page of Butler's proposal, "A Democratic National Convention in 1954?", explicitly cited the APSA report and its proposal for biennial party conventions.[22] He argued that a midterm convention would generate publicity for the party while helping to keep it engaged on national issues and a coherent program. The response to the proposal at the DNC Executive Committee offered an early illustration of the intraparty fault lines that would later define Butler's chairmanship. Chairman Stephen Mitchell and several reformist committeemen expressed interest. But Pittsburgh mayor David Lawrence, a powerful machine boss, articulated

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[18] James Q. Wilson, *Political Organizations* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 45-51, 95-118.
[19] Stevenson's appointments to the DNC reflected this disposition. His handpicked chairman, the reformist Stephen Mitchell, took an approach to party management that anticipated in many ways Paul Butler's succeeding tenure. See James Reston, "Stevenson Selects Political Amateur as Party Chairman," *New York Times*, August 9, 1952.
[20] Butler's interest in the Draft Stevenson movement can be seen in Stevenson letter to Butler, April 18, 1952, Box 46, Folder 56, Butler Papers.
[21] Roberts, *Paul M. Butler*, 35-37.
[22] Paul M. Butler, "A Democratic National Convention in 1954?", p. 1, Box 176, Folder "Nat'l Committee, 1/1/54 to 11/2/54," Staebler Papers.

a skepticism shared by many party professionals when he pointed out that to "have a convention and have the linen washed out over television" might exacerbate rather than resolve intraparty tensions.[23] Unity-minded professionals, conservative southerners, and congressional leaders jealously guarding their dominance over policy all voiced opposition.[24] One congressman called the idea "asinine."[25] Mitchell appointed a committee to consider the idea, which dismissed it on ostensibly logistical grounds.[26]

Similar factional lines recurred in Butler's 1954 bid to succeed Mitchell as DNC chairman, with one important difference. Unlike his two main rivals for the job -- Harry Truman's favored candidate, Mike DiSalle of Ohio, and the leading urban bosses' pick, James Finnegan of Pennsylvania – Butler lacked a powerful political patron backing his effort. He was the only candidate to actively campaign for the job, personally calling 93 of the 105 DNC members to solicit their vote.[27] At the December meeting where the vote took place, Butler secured the support of reformist committee members from states like California, Wisconsin, Michigan, and Minnesota, while Finnegan and DiSalle split the machine-dominated East Coast.[28] Surprisingly, however, Butler also swept the votes of southern committee members, the region least committed to responsible-party reforms, nationalized parties, or issues-based politics. In an uncharacteristically cynical gambit, Butler secured the support of key southern committeemen thanks to a secret pledge he signed at a closed-door meeting with Georgia Democratic Chairman John Sammons Bell. "I do not consider the question of segregation a political issue," read the

[23] Minutes of DNC Executive Committee meeting, April 1, 1953, Box 114, Folder "Executive Committee Meeting – March 31-April 1, 1953 – Transcripts," Democratic National Committee (DNC) Records, John F. Kennedy Presidential Libray (JFKL), Boston, MA.
[24] Peter Edson, "Democrats Plan 1954 'Convention'," *Nashville Tennessean*, April 14, 1953.
[25] W.H. Lawrence, "Congress' Democrats Shun '54 Convention," *Louisville Courier-Journal*, April 30, 1953.
[26] Ralph M. Goldman, *The National Party Chairmen and Committees: Factionalism at the Top* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 1990), 445-446.
[27] Sidney Hyman, "The Collective Leadership of Paul Butler," *The Reporter*, December 24, 1959.
[28] Democratic National Committee Meeting minutes, December 4, 1954, Box 116, Folder "DNC & Subordinate Committee Meetings – DNC Meeting, December 4, 1954," DNC Records.

note that bore Butler's signature. "I see no reason for any chairman of our party at any level to project segregation into our political discussions."[29] Expediency appears to explain Butler's signature, since his personal views as of December 1954 were progressive on civil rights and critical of the South's role in the party. As we will see, a mid-fifties intra-party détente on racial issues soon broke down as the issue grew in political salience, and Butler would become an outspoken advocate on behalf of this process.

Butler's early years as party chairman saw little movement on civil rights but a number of initiatives reflecting the issues-based, programmatic orientation of his core allies. He appointed Neil Staebler as chairman of a new Advisory Committee on Political Organization (ACPO), which offered suggestions on party structure, worker training, and communication. Among ACPO's recommendations were several reflecting a responsible party belief in issue-based partisanship. District and regional issues conferences, for example, would foster the intraparty circulation of "a common body of information and argument for party members," in the words of a 1957 report, while televised town hall meetings could publicize those positions.[30] ACPO also recommended measures promoting disciplined commitment to party programs, such as a Platform Review Committee operating between conventions that would report to the DNC concerning "the manner in which the Democratic Party Platform is being implemented."[31]

Butler's own conception of the relationship between program and party reflected responsible party theory. In a 1959 speech, he would explain why a modern party must be "first and foremost an 'issue-oriented' organization – one held together primarily by belief in and

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[29] A copy of the pledge is enclosed with David Lawrence's letter to Harry Truman, August 14, 1959, Box 92, Folder "Lawrence, David L.," Truman Post-Presidential Papers, Harry S. Truman Library (HSTL), Independence, MO.
[30] Roberts, *Paul M. Butler*, 140.
[31] Recommendation No. 16-A, Report to the Democratic National Committee on Recommendations of Advisory Committee on Political Organization, April 20, 1956, Box 2, Drexel Sprecher Papers, JFKL.

devotion to some commonly held, clearly enunciated principles that provide motivation for political action."

> The extent and nature of the modern means of mass communication, the increased educational level of the population, the increasing importance of nationalizing trends as regards both section and nationality, the expanding participation of citizens in the processes of political parties and the growing importance of governmental programs in the Nation's economy and the everyday life of the citizen are all increasing the emphasis on the power of issues, principles, and ideas as the forces which are most responsible for the attraction and lasting attachment of new people to the banners of political parties. Party leaders are fast discovering, some the hard way, that political organizations based solely on patronage, personal favors, and the power and prestige of public office no longer enjoy the tremendous effectiveness they once possessed.

Using a term that would gain currency a decade later, Butler explained that "the 'new politics' places a premium on principles and demands greater attention be given to issues." Wherever the party takes "a hard-hitting approach based on issues designed to clarify the differences between our party and the opposition, we are making steady and often phenomenal progress."[32]

Proposals like the midterm convention and platform review committee reflected simultaneously the attention to national issues that Butler's allies stressed as a political strategy and the drive toward a cohesive program that responsible party reformers advocated. Neither came to pass during Butler's tenure. But a related reform – also with origins in the APSA report – did. The Democratic Advisory Council (DAC), a party council with a broad policy purview, was Butler's crowning innovation, an experiment that achieved an outsized impact precisely by sharpening rather than papering over the party's institutional and ideological tensions.

From Brain Trust to Party Council

The core driver behind the DAC was not Butler, but rather an unofficial network of intellectuals, politicians, and ex-New Dealers associated with Stevenson and known amongst one

[32] Butler speech, Lansing Michigan, January 1, 1959, Box 3, Folder "Butler, Paul – Speeches, 1959," Butler Papers.

another as "the Finletter group," named after its social center and patron, ex-Air Force Secretary and Stevenson ally Thomas Finletter.[33] The Finletter group owed its existence to the liberal impetus to publicize a positive, distinct Democratic program in the Eisenhower years. A chorus of such voices urged Stevenson to maintain a national presence after his loss in 1952, starting with his adviser, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.[34] Resolutions passed after the election by Stevenson clubs and state and local parties pledged continued activity on behalf of his national agenda.[35] Staebler's Democratic State Central Committee in Michigan, for instance, unanimously resolved that "the continuing active leadership of Governor Adlai E. Stevenson is essential in building a party of principle and vitality" and urged that the DNC in conjunction with volunteer groups finance a radio and television presence for Stevenson and other party spokesmen."[36] *Saturday Review* editor Norman Cousins suggested that Stevenson help establish a High Council for the Democratic Party to develop issue positions, while Hubert Humphrey urged him to sustain a vigorous, public advocacy of liberal principles and to combat the party's right wing.[37] Stevenson heeded the call in 1953 and 1954 by authorizing an informal stable of experts, writers, and politicians to produce detailed memos and speech material for party officials.

It was fitting that Tom Finletter would lead such an effort, holding the first meeting at his apartment in October 1953. A hardliner on military matters but a staunch liberal domestically, he generally encouraged boldness in the party's policy pronouncements. More significant was his abiding intellectual interest in strengthening the lines of accountability and partisan cohesion

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[33] On the Finletter group's activities between 1953 and 1956, see John Bartlow Martin, *Adlai Stevenson and the World* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1977), 82-89.
[34] Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., letter to Adlai Stevenson, November 7, 1952, Box 73, Folder 8, Stevenson Papers.
[35] For an example of the former, see "Volunteers in Politics: Dedicated to Adlai Stevenson's Principles of Government" pamphlet, Box 73, Folder 8, Stevenson Papers.
[36] Minutes of State Central Committee Meeting, November 23, 1952, Box 138, Folder "Democratic State Chairman, Minutes," Staebler Papers.
[37] Walter Johnson, ed., *The Papers of Adlai E. Stevenson, Vol. IV* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1974), 221; Martin, *Adlai Stevenson and the World*, 8.

in the political system. Finletter had advocated a partial parliamentarization of government in his book *Can Representative Government Do the Job?*, and the Democrats' ouster in 1952 sharpened his focus on the problem of opposition.[38] "The idea of a 'cabinet,' an organization in opposition, a shadow organization, was in my mind for a long time," he later recalled.[39]

The collective research and communication capacities of this brain trust provided not only Stevenson but also other leading Democrats with a steady supply of ammunition for attacking the policies of the Eisenhower administration and articulating alternatives. Arthur Schlesinger and John Kenneth Galbraith were leaders and informal coordinators of the ad-hoc, ever-changing roster of participants.[40] The group's output between 1953 and 1956 was often reactive, responding to issues and agendas set by congressional Republicans or the Eisenhower administration. But collectively the papers circulated by the group amounted to a coherent articulation of Cold War liberal orthodoxy – hawkish and internationalist, aggressively Keynesian, and committed to enhancing New Deal-vintage activism in labor relations, healthcare, social insurance, and agriculture. Importantly, this was primarily *northern* Democratic doctrine, advocated without the threat of veto from southern or other conservative party professionals.[41] By 1955 the "Finletter group" was a phrase and a phenomenon readily discussed in the press. The *Christian Science Monitor* described the group that year as the "secretariat of a shadow-government … one of the most interesting innovations in the evolution of the United States political system.[42] Soon enough, the DNC under Paul Butler's stewardship would absorb the group's approach, and much of its key personnel, into a formal party apparatus.

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[38] Thomas K. Finletter, *Can Representative Government Do the Job?* (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1945).
[39] Martin, *Adlai Stevenson and the World*, 83-84.
[40] A useful overview of the group's structure is in Finletter letter to Schlesinger, September 28, 1954, Box P-13, Folder "Incoming Correspondence File 1945-1960 -- Thomas Finletter," Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., Papers, JFKL.
[41] Herbert S. Parmet, *The Democrats: The Years After FDR* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 126-127.
[42] Joseph C. Harsch, "How Tough is the Elephant's Hide?," *Christian Science Monitor*, November 29, 1955.

The Democrats' recapture of Congress in the 1954 midterms intensified efforts among some to publicize a party program in competition with Eisenhower. Stevenson sought to formalize the Finletter group's activities with a salaried director, and discussed his intensions with Butler.[43] From a different source within the DNC came renewed attention to policy promulgation – and to the sticky subject of coordinating with the congressional leadership. After the midterms, Truman aide and DNC special counsel Charles Murphy suggested that the committee liaison with congressional leaders to develop a distinct policy agenda for the party, arguing that "it is not enough to wait for Eisenhower's recommendations and vote them up or down "[44] He sent Butler a dossier of collected material for drawing up a Democratic legislative program and strategized about how they might share it with the congressional leadership "without undue ruffling of feelings" or provoking suspicions of "mischievous interference."[45]

Murphy's fears on this latter score were prescient. The conflict that flared up in the later 1950s between Paul Butler and the congressional Democratic leaders Sam Rayburn and Lyndon Johnson was overdetermined, combining clashes over strategy, ideology, political theory, and personality. Underlying all of it, however, were the institutional barriers to cohesive party agendas inherent in the American system. Policymaking authority for the minority party belonged to congressional officials, each of whom were directly responsible to local constituents rather than a collective party organ. The party committees' own organizational weakness, meanwhile, rendered any claim to a policy role dubious. The drafters of the 1950 APSA report had been well aware of this predicament when they cast their proposal for a Party Council not as an incursion on congressional prerogative but rather an instrument of integration, one

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[43] Stevenson letter to Finletter, December 12, 1954, Box 32, Folder 10, and Stevenson letter to Butler, December 30, 1954, Box 15, Folder 16, both in Stevenson Papers.
[44] Charles Murphy letter to Stephen Mitchell, November 5, 1954, Box 7, Folder "Democratic National Committee – 1954," Charles S. Murphy Papers, HSTL.
[45] Murphy letter to Butler, December 20, 1954, Box 7, Folder "Democratic National Committee," Murphy Papers.

incorporating a large congressional contingent.[46] But the very divisions the council was meant to heal made the prospect of establishing such a body difficult. Frustration would compel liberals to begin addressing this dilemma, and electoral defeat would embolden them to action.

The frustration stemmed from the performance of congressional Democrats during the Eisenhower years, first in the minority and especially in the majority during the 83rd Congress (1955-1956). The political strategy toward Eisenhower adopted by Rayburn and Johnson was well-publicized, and its watchword was *cooperation*. They surmised that the president's immense personal popularity, combined with policy divisions between his administration and the Old Guard majority of congressional Republicans, necessitated a constructive rather than oppositional Democratic posture. Democrats should seek opportunities to find common ground with the president, which would exacerbate fractures within the GOP. This implied that Congressional leaders should work to blur programmatic differences between the parties while avoiding issues that divided Democrats.[47] Rayburn and Johnson took their recapture of congressional control in 1954 as vindication of this strategy. "We are going to look upon the president's recommendation with kindliness," Rayburn said upon reclaiming the Speaker's gavel, "because he is the leader of our country. We are not going to be against [his program] just because a Republican President has recommended it."[48] Throughout 1955 and 1956, newspapers depicted the "bipartisan love match" and "Capitol Hill armistice" governing executive-legislative relations."[49] Assessing congressional politics prior to the 1956 party conventions – typically a time ripe with campaign-eve partisanship – William S. White marveled how "Little that is stark

[46] *Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System,* 43.
[47] Robert Caro, *The Years of Lyndon Johnson: Master of the Senate* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002), 598-604.
[48] William S. White, "Democrats Reject a Harsh Approach as Congress Opens," *New York Times*, January 6, 1955.
[49] Robert C. Albright, "84th Congress a Bipartisan Love Match for Ike," *Washington Post*, July 24, 1955; William S. White, "Capitol Hill Armistice Holds Despite Election," *New York Times*, May 27, 1956.

and unarguably clear stands to differentiate the parties as they enter the final weeks of this session."[50]

For liberals, that was just the problem. To their minds, it was both politically and substantively perverse for Democratic leaders to insulate Eisenhower from the taint of congressional Republicans' conservatism while melding the Democratic agenda with his own. What the opposition party needed was a program that contrasted with Eisenhower's while illustrating the degree to which his moderate image was window-dressing. In a widely circulated 1955 memo, Schlesinger described how Eisenhower's "bear hug" of congressional Democrats – a strategy "designed to obscure and minimize the issues between the parties" – might "result in squeezing a good deal of the vitality out of the Democratic appeal." Democrats needed instead to "clarify the differences between the parties," in part by passing an array of bills *intended* to draw presidential vetoes.[51] This veto strategy was significant, for it spoke directly to the tricky question of applying responsible party principles to a system where power could be – and for much of the 1950s, was – divided between the parties. Liberals advocated approaching lawmaking like the opposition party in a parliamentary system: passing bills doomed to veto would help amass a record to run on in the next election, while the very process of committing to a bold agenda could resolve the chronic problem of intraparty ideological division through victory on the part of the liberal majority. Both goals were anathema to Johnson and Rayburn.[52]

When Stevenson lost the 1956 election by even bigger margins than in 1952, a wave of intra-Democratic recrimination ensued. "The election of 1956 was over before the campaign

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[50] White, "Capitol Hill Armistice Holds Despite Election."
[51] Schlesinger, "Congressional Strategy and the 1956 Elections," undated, Box 73, Folder 10, Stevenson Papers.
[52] Johnson described his approach to Harry Truman in late 1956, explaining that he would construct his legislative agenda in reaction to the president's declared priorities rather than independently, and would pursue only what was passable. Lyndon Johnson letter to Harry Truman, December 7, 1956, Box 22, Folder "Johnson, Lyndon B. -- corres. 1955-58," Truman Post-Presidential Files, HSTL.

began," ex-senator Herbert Lehman argued. "The Democrats in Congress failed to make the issues during the 18 months we were in control. On the contrary, almost everything the leadership did during that time was designed to prevent any controversial issue from being seriously joined or vigorously debated."[53] The fact that Eisenhower made gains among key Democratic constituencies, particularly African Americans and union members, illustrated to liberals the costs of letting two congressional southerners dictate party strategy.[54] The domination of committees by southerners far more reactionary than Johnson or Rayburn, moreover, posed even more of an electoral burden. One party boss summarized the predicament faced by northerners when trying to get out the labor and black votes for Stevenson that year: to counter the Democrats' appeal, the Republicans "just say 'Eastland'; they say 'Barden'; and that answered all kinds of arguments."[55] These were not new complaints, but Stevenson's second loss at last prompted action to institutionalize a party voice outside of Congress.

Surprisingly, the Democratic Advisory Council was born of mixed amateur and professional parentage inside the DNC. The central mover on its behalf was California's Paul Ziffren, who epitomized those "new look" liberal committeemen devoted to issues-based politics and loyal to Paul Butler. But two powerful big-city professionals, former Illinois Cook County boss Jacob Arvey and Pittsburgh mayor David Lawrence, joined Ziffren in proposing the council at a DNC Executive Committee meeting in late November.[56] They suggested a two-part

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[53] D.B. Hardeman and Donald C. Bacon, *Rayburn: A Biography* (Austin: Texas Monthly Press, 1987), 407.
[54] Caro, *Master of the Senate*, 842.
[55] Mississippi Senator James Eastland was the white-supremacist chairman of the Judiciary Committee; North Carolina Congressman Graham Barden, the anti-union chairman of the House Education and Labor Committee. The quote is from David Lawrence, DNC Executive Committee Meeting Minutes, November 27, 1956, p. 188, Box 119, Folder "Executive Committee Meeting - November 26-27, 1956," DNC Records.
[56] Arvey and Lawrence were no fans of Butler, but in the aftermath of the election they shared other northerners' alarm at the atrophying of key Democratic electoral constituencies. Moreover, both were Stevenson allies, and perceived the DAC as a platform for him. Sean J. Savage offers an analysis of Lawrence and Arvey as adaptable party bosses who, beginning in the Roosevelt years, consciously aligned themselves with the forces of New Deal liberalism; *Truman and the Democratic Party* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1997), 31-36, 41-48.

resolution: first, a reaffirmation of the contents of the 1956 Democratic platform and a call for the Democratic congressional majorities to enact it; and second, authorization for the Chairman to establish an advisory committee made up of the full DNC Executive Committee as well as party leaders from Congress, state and local government, and elsewhere that would meet from time to time to "coordinate and advance efforts in behalf of Democratic programs and principles."[57] The three pitched their proposal in tactical terms, as a way to thwart Eisenhower's increasingly aggressive efforts to co-opt Democratic issues. "We have to beat [the Republicans] to the punch," argued Lawrence, "and I think this is the only medium we have of doing it."

Predictably, the Executive Committee members most skeptical of this proposal were southern. Camille F. Gravel, Jr., a committeeman from Louisiana who was racially moderate and loyal to the national party, worried that "we might be playing with political dynamite if we try to take the position in this committee that we should advise the members of Congress and the Senators as to what sort of legislative program they should adopt." Assuring the committee that "we are going to have trouble with our states in the South," Gravel questioned whether "the Executive Committee of the Democratic National Committee should adopt a resolution in the face of major conflicts we apparently have within the Democratic Party." Even the proposed symbolic reaffirmation of the platform gave him pause. He reminded his colleagues of how much unhappy intersectional compromise had been required just to secure grudging agreement to that platform in the first place. This prompted Arvey to interject that he saw nothing wrong "in asserting our belief in the principles which we adopted in our last Democratic Convention. We either meant those things at that time, or we did not." Gravel was dubious:

Gravel: 110 members of the Democratic House are from the South.

[57] This language and the ensuing discussion come from the DNC Executive Committee Meeting Minutes, November 27, 1956, p. 185-239, Box 119, Folder "Executive Committee Meeting - November 26-27, 1956," DNC Records.

> **Arvey:** Just a minute, they were elected on the Democratic platform, were they not?
> **Gravel:** Parts of it.
> **Arvey:** Well, parts of it.
> (Laughter)
> **Gravel:** I mean seriously, now that –
> **Arvey:** My friend, let me finish. We either have a National Party or we do not have.

Gravel's fellow southerner on the Executive Committee echoed his skepticism, but both agreed to join the others in passing the resolution, which authorized Butler to extend invitations to twenty Democrats for membership. During the meeting Butler expressed hope that he could secure cooperation from congressional leaders, though he allowed that he had a better shot with Rayburn than Johnson. When Ziffren acknowledged the likelihood that "Mr. Johnson will view this with less than enthusiasm," DNC Treasurer Mike McCloskey chimed in: "That's an understatement." "That's the understatement of the year," Gravel added, to laughter.

The congressional leaders' response to the Democratic Advisory Council was, indeed, immediate and negative. Johnson wrote Rayburn in December that the council idea "opened up a real hornet's nest" and "is capable of deepening divisions within the Democratic Party."[58] He suggested that all members of the congressional leadership convey appreciation for the spirit of the resolution but refuse to join the council on the grounds that membership would conflict with their obligations to colleagues.[59] Rayburn expressed this to Butler, whose follow-up pleading fell on deaf ears.[60] The leaders' refusal to join the council had the effect of dissuading most other invited congressmen from joining, along with two southern governors. Reporters covering these demurrals conveyed a sense that the council was stillborn.

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[58] Phillip A. Klinkner, *The Losing Parties: Out-Party National Committees, 1956-1993* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 23.
[59] Roberts, *Paul M. Butler*, 106-107.
[60] Rayburn letter to Butler, December 8, 1956, Box 14, Folder "Comments re. Advisory Council," Butler Papers.

But Butler, characteristically persistent, did not take the congressional opposition as a reason to scrap the initiative. He pressed on without them, asking Charles Murphy to draw up an organizational plan and bylaws.[61] The DNC Executive Committee made Butler chairman of the DAC, authorizing him to appoint an organizing committee and hire an executive director.[62] Over the course of two DAC meetings in early 1957, members hashed out the basic contours of the organization, with key internal leadership eventually concentrated within an administrative committee that met several times a month, consisting of Butler, Murphy, Finletter, Maryland committeeman Phil Perlman, and prominent New Dealer Henry Fowler.[63] Significantly, on two early occasions the full DNC endorsed the initiative. In February, it ratified the establishment of the council over the objections of several southern members.[64] In May, southerners pushed a resolution requiring full committee approval for any DAC policy declaration; it was defeated 67 to 26.[65] The DAC rested on a strong foundation of DNC support.

Those committeemen and women who backed the DAC largely shared its view that the national committee had a legitimate claim to contribute to party policy. The congressional party, they argued, could not exercise a monopoly on policy during non-convention years, not only because institutional constraints compromised its effectiveness, but because doing so shut out millions of Democrats not represented by their party in Congress. “The Democratic Party is not just a Congressional party, it is a National party,” Stevenson declared in justifying the DAC. “To be an effective opposition, the Democratic Party must have a broader base than the

[61] Charles S. Murphy, Oral History Interview with Jerry N. Hess, May 19, 1970, p. 496-497, HSTL.
[62] Minutes of Combined Meeting of the Executive Committee and Advisory Committee of the Democratic National Committee, January 4, 1956, Box 357, Folder 11, Stevenson Papers.
[63] See Proceedings of the Advisory Council of the Democratic Committee, February 15-16, 1957, Box 120, and Proceedings of the Advisory Council of the Democratic Committee, May 5, 1957, Box 121, both in DNC Records.
[64] Hugh A. Bone, *Party Committees and National Politics* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1956), 223.
[65] Mildred Jeffrey letter to Margaret Price, May 22, 1957, Box 18, Folder 2, Mildred Jeffrey Papers, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI.

Democrats in Congress."[66] Phil Perlman argued that, given the regional biases of the congressional party, "on many policy matters, if not all of them, the Democratic National Committee is more truly representative of the entire Party."[67] The council's executive director, Charles Tyroler, put it more bluntly decades later: the DAC's founders were "goddamned tired of the presidential wing of the party – the liberal, national-oriented wing of the party, stalwarts of it, who controlled 60 percent of the electoral votes – not being listened to in the off-years. Everybody was listening to Sam and Lyndon. Who were they but a couple of Texas politicians?"[68]

Rayburn and Johnson may have just been a couple of Texans, but their opposition to the DAC – and its ripple effects on others' agreement to participate – served to render the council's membership much more monolithically liberal than originally intended. Indeed, the two congressional members who bucked their leaders to accept Butler's invitation at the outset, Senators Estes Kefauver and Hubert Humphrey, epitomized the council's ideological and operational cast. Humphrey had long served as a leader of the Senate Democrats' liberal bloc, and just as the DAC took shape in 1957 he sponsored a comprehensive Democratic legislative program in the Senate, in conjunction with Eugene McCarthy's introduction of a similar manifesto in the House.[69] In addition to Kefauver, Humphrey, and the 14 ex-officio members from the DNC's Executive Council, the DAC's membership included figures such as Truman, Stevenson, and Soapy Williams, joined in later years by the likes of Herbert Lehman, Governors Pat Brown and Orville Freeman, labor chief George Harrison, and, eventually, 1960 presidential

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[66] Statement to the press, January 3, 1957, Box 358, Folder 3, Stevenson Papers.
[67] Phillip Perlman letter to William S. White, December 3, 1959, Box 35, Folder "Demo Nat Comm Advis Council, working papers July-Dec 1959," Murphy Papers.
[68] Klinkner, *The Losing Parties*, 21.
[69] Kenneth Kofmehl, "The Institutionalization of a Voting Bloc," *Western Political Quarterly*, Vol. 17 No. 2 (1964): 256-272; Julian E. Zelizer, *On Capitol Hill: The Struggle to Reform Congress and its Consequences, 1945-2000* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 49.

hopefuls Stuart Symington and John F. Kennedy. This was a body with real stature. But it was also, more by circumstance than design, the mouthpiece of a specific party faction.

What did the DAC council actually do? Its core function, like that of the Finletter group before it, lay in issuing substantive policy statements. It interpreted its mandate in the same broad manner as had the APSA report in suggesting a Party Council that could "make more specific or reformulate the party principles in their application to current situations."[70] Between January 1956 and June 1960, the DAC produced a total of 61 statements.[71] Ranging from lengthy essays to short reactions to current events, they emerged from the work of issue-specific advisory committees comprised of academics and activists, including groups on foreign affairs, economic policy, labor, natural resources, and civil rights. Intramural conflicts emerged within some advisory committees, but they were differences of degree. The DAC's published output reflected members' shared support for military buildup, criticism of Eisenhower's approach to foreign and domestic policy, and advocacy of Keynesian management and more equitable social provision. The most significant subset of DAC statements, by dint of its sheer distance in tone and content from the congressional party's output, was undoubtedly civil rights, discussed below.

As a vehicle for transmitting a distinct and relatively coherent party policy agenda to a national political audience, the DAC was a success. It commanded widespread and prominent press attention.[72] National and local newspapers alike routinely covered DAC pronouncements between 1957 and 1960, often reprinting their full text and frequently portraying them as official party positions. On occasion journalists even assessed the council's institutional significance.

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[70] *Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System*, 51.
[71] Roberts, *Paul M. Butler*, 113.
[72] See the clippings collected by Charles Tyroler in Box 3, Folder 6, and Box 358, Folder 4, Stevenson Papers; and Box 34, Folder "Demo Nat Advis Council – working papers, Dec. 1958 - June 1959," Murphy Papers.

"The U.S. political system has been often criticized for its failure to produce a coherent and challenging opposition between national elections," the *Dayton Daily News* editorialized in 1957, pointing by contrast to "Britain's annual party meetings" that helped to elevate and organize political debate in that country. "For that reason, the Democratic hierarchy rates an 'A' for effort for taking up the chore of periodic policy review."[73] Two years later the *Christian Science Monitor* declared the DAC "a significant development in the political evolutionary process."[74]

Press reports like these spoke directly to Butler's own vision for the council and his overall leadership of the DNC. Butler developed an increasingly articulate theoretical commitment to party responsibility over the course of his tenure. Years of pitched conflict within his party and frustration with the fragmented machinery of national lawmaking sharpened his diagnosis of the American party system's ailments. In an extraordinary address in the summer of 1958, Butler offered an analysis that would have sounded familiar in a political science seminar but hardly constituted the typical rhetoric of party chairmen.[75] During the speech, Butler ticked off some of the main components of American party irresponsibility, including "loose party organization in the relationship of the state group to the national level … loosely organized national conventions and national committees, and the lack of mechanics to provide statements of official policy." The system's crowning failure, however, was the "total lack of disciplinary authority in implementing the provisions of the party platform." Butler declared this "political party responsibility at its worst: the lack of capacity within our political parties to so discipline party members as to require such reasonable conformity to party policies

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[73] Editors, "From Small Oaks," *Dayton Daily News*, November 11, 1957.
[74] Richard L. Strout, "A Voice for the 'Out' Party," *Christian Science Monitor*, November 19, 1959.
[75] "Party Responsibility in the 20th Century," July 2, 1958, Box 29, Folder "Speeches - July, 1958," Butler Papers.

as to best serve the public interest." He knew that the DAC could not eradicate the structures fostering indiscipline. But he saw the body as one mechanism by which to compensate for it.

Crucially, however, the impediments to party responsibility did not end with the institutional elements Butler identified. Major ideological conflicts rent the party as well – substantive divisions that aligned with and thus compounded the institutional divisions and ensured that a party council like the DAC could never fully transcend its lot as an embattled factional mouthpiece.[76] That Butler invariably viewed such complications as goads to further action is what made his tenure a source of inspiration for some and exasperation for others.

What did account for this heedless persistence of Butler's, a widely noted trait that at times struck many as downright eccentric? Critics frequently alleged that Butler's seeming eagerness to ignite intra-party conflagrations stemmed from an interest in building a liberal base for a career of his own in electoral office, but little evidence bears that out. (He considered running for Senate in 1958, but decided to stay on as DNC chair instead.) Firsthand accounts of Butler's personality emphasized both earnestness and guilelessness, a tendency to commit fully to abstractly reasoned plans without sensing the likely controversy they would engender. Murphy wrote to Harry Truman in 1957 that Butler was a bad executive but had both integrity and a "good, clear, orderly mind."[77] The man with that orderly mind appeared to lack a certain knack for the human touch. Katie Loucheim, the savvy head of the DNC Women's Division and a powerful player in the party, never warmed to his leadership, recalling him as a moody micromanager. He never seemed to anticipate making enemies but was, Loucheim wrote, "afraid of no one."[78] Sidney Hyman portrayed Butler as the personal embodiment of the amateur spirit in modern American politics – the egghead as party boss: "Tall, thin, an abstainer from

[76] Klinker, *The Losing Parties*, 14.
[77] Murphy letter to Truman, August 7, 1957, Box 19, Folder "Advisory to Pres HST, 1953-1966," Murphy Papers.
[78] Katie Loucheim, *By the Political Sea* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1970), 171.

both smoking and drinking, he impresses most of those who meet him as an intense and innocent man, scholarly and stubborn … He seems lacking in all the back-slapping, yarn-swapping minor arts of politics. All this makes the 'old pros' uncomfortable in his presence.[79]

Those pros, Truman among them, never ceased in their efforts to oust Butler from the DNC, while the base of his support lay among reformist committeemen who shared his outlook and commitment to issue-based politics. It was this commitment that won him the support of liberals nationally. The symbolic stakes that came to be attached to Butler's clashes with Rayburn and Johnson explain why Johnson's aide George Reedy once advised his boss to take a public attitude toward Butler's pronouncements akin to that of "a tolerant father toward a wayward son who drinks too much, necks too much, and gets himself hauled off into police court too many times for speeding. Any comments should be amused and tolerant and delivered with a smile – and should be held to a minimum."[80] That advice would be sorely tested in the late 1950s.

Parties, Principles, and the Dilemmas of Opposition

A Broadway hit came to Washington in June 1959. "Sunrise at Campobello" depicted a young Franklin Roosevelt's heroic struggle with polio, offering a showcase for actor Ralph Bellamy. D.C.'s Democratic Central Committee sponsored a gala opening at the National Theater and invited Democratic luminaries and party activists to the show.[81] At one point in the play, Bellamy read aloud a letter Roosevelt wrote in 1922, warning that "this country will be enduring Republican presidents for a long time unless we rip the barnacles off the Democratic

[79] Sidney Hyman, "The Collective Leadership of Paul Butler," *The Reporter*, December 24, 1959.
[80] Lazorowitz, *Years in Exile*, 129-130.
[81] "'Sunrise' Dawning for the Democrats," *Washington Post*, May 24, 1959.

organization and make it a progressive and modern political party." At the reading of that line, the audience exploded into unexpected applause.[82]

The now familiar pattern of congressional electoral gains followed by liberal frustration at the Democrats' legislative performance recurred after the 1958 midterms, with one difference. The party's gains that election were *massive*, marking a watershed in the ideological makeup of Congress and thus compounding liberals' ensuing impatience with its actual policy output.[83] Capitalizing on a recession and the electoral mobilization of organized labor facing a slew of state-level right-to-work proposals, Democrats picked up 48 House and 13 Senate seats in November 1958 – and virtually all of the new members were liberals from outside the South. Liberals now constituted not only a majority of the Democratic congressional ranks but something close to a majority of the full House and Senate. A sense of ascendency helped set the tone for the DAC's post-election statement, a 17-page agenda titled "The Democratic Task in the Next Two Years."[84] It called on Democrats to pass a gamut of bills covering, among others, foreign aid, defense spending, public housing, federal aid to education, rural electrification, the enforcement of desegregation and voting rights statutes in the South, Social Security expansion, the repeal of Taft-Hartley's right-to-work provisions, and a minimum wage hike.

Rayburn and Johnson, as usual, responded dismissively to the proposal, a reflection not merely of pique and differing strategy but also of the stark fact that the filibuster, the seniority system, and Congress's committee structure all ensured the conservative coalition's continued power even in the face of swelled liberal ranks.[85] By the end of the first session of Congress,

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[82] The applause is reported in the *NCEC Congressional Report*, June 30, 1959, Box 8, Folder 3, Maurice Rosenblatt Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
[83] Edward G. Carmines and James A. Stimson, *Issue Evolution: Race and the Transformation of American Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), xi-xiii, 59-88.
[84] "The Democratic Task in the Next Two Years," December 7, 1958, in Box 358, Folder 6, Stevenson Papers.
[85] "Rayburn Says Thanks, But House Will Set Own Course," *Chicago Sun-Times*, December 9, 1958.

Democrats had passed less than a third of the council's suggestions, and indeed the most important bill produced by the 86th Congress turned out to be the anti-labor Landrum-Griffin Act.[86] Liberals reached new peaks of outrage toward Democratic Congressional leaders, expressed not merely in spontaneous applause from theater audiences but in jeremiads from the likes of ADA and the National Committee for an Effective Congress.[87] The DAC issued a harsh analysis of "The Current Legislative Situation" at the end of the first session. Careful to focus the blame not on Democrats but rather on Eisenhower for the "retarding and corrosive effects of 'veto government,'" the council nonetheless urged Congress to stop attempting "to water-down proposals to the limits of what the president might accept…The Congress should not be intimidated by threats of Presidential veto. The American people are entitled to have the lines definitely drawn."[88]

But it was precisely Rayburn and Johnson's strategy not to draw definite lines on legislative matters. These leaders defended their approach with both pragmatic and normative arguments. The practical case was simple. Beyond the institutional obstacles to coordinated party activity in the American system, the scrambled ideological contours of *both* parties as they actually existed in the 1950s virtually guaranteed that legislative strategies would have to be bipartisan. The Republicans' main factional cleavage was not symmetrical to that of the Democrats, but the divisions between the Old Guard based in Congress and the "Modern Republicans" led by Eisenhower were real enough. Ad hoc alliances of liberal Democrats and Eisenhower Republicans on certain issues alternated with conservative coalition action on others. The intellectual architects of Modern Republicanism, for their part, framed their agenda as a

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[86] "How Democrats Fared in 1959 Session," *Congressional Quarterly* Fact Sheet, September 29, 1959, p. 1305, in Box 358, Folder 7, Stevenson Papers. Liberal frustration with the 86th Congress is discussed in Nelson Polsby, *How Congress Evolves: The Social Bases of Institutional Change* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 20-30.
[87] "2 Liberal Groups Score Johnson in Assessing Record of Congress," *New York Times*, June 22, 1959.
[88] "The Current Legislative Situation" text, June 15, 1959, Box 358, Folder 7, Stevenson Papers.

party position that fell *in between* twin ideological extremes represented by the Democratic Party. In his bestseller *A Republican Looks at his Party*, Eisenhower aide Arthur Larson described the Democrats as including "the most conservative elements in the country – the Southern Democrats – and the most radical – the ultra-Fair-Dealers," and depicted Modern Republicanism as the creed of the "Authentic American Center."[89] All of this made for a fluid legislative terrain in which party labels did little to structure conflicts. In that terrain, Johnson and Rayburn sought to avoid explicitly partisan efforts whenever possible. Johnson had laid out this logic to Rayburn in arguing against the DAC in 1956: "Republicans who will vote for certain types of Democratic legislation … are highly unlikely to vote for that legislation when they are told that it was advanced by a committee whose sole objective is to sponsor a Democratic ticket that will elect a Democratic Congress in 1958 and Democratic President in 1960."[90] He retained this aversion to partisanship even after his party's margins expanded in 1958.

Johnson and Rayburn's objections to the responsible party model as advocated by the DAC and other liberals also had a cultural context, specific to the institution they led – the set of norms and mores that defined virtuous behavior in the midcentury Congress. Those mores tended to emphasize attitudes antithetical to the vigorous discipline and programmatic commitment that responsible party theory required. A slew of ethnographic studies portraying the social world and professional values of midcentury congressmen and senators revealed a focus on collegiality, compromise, deference , and bipartisanship. "Integrity crosses party lines," a Republican told one such scholar. "You rely on some of your Democratic colleagues equally."[91] The intensely self-conscious internal culture of the Senate in particular venerated civility, reciprocity, and a

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[89] Arthur Larson, *A Republican Looks at his Party* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1956), 18.
[90] Klinkner, *The Losing Party*, 23.
[91] Charles L. Clapp, *The Congressman: His Work as He Sees It* (D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1963), 25.

peculiar combination of individualism and conformity.[92] It instilled a primary commitment to the Senate as a body. As William S. White put it in his paean to the upper chamber, *Citadel*, the Senate type is "a man for whom the Institution is a career in itself, a life in itself, and an end in itself."[93] That meant, in turn, that lawmaking should always take priority over partisan efforts. As a young Senator Robert Byrd told Butler in 1959, "We are here to legislate – not to make a political record."[94]

Such a congressional culture not only challenged responsible partisanship in the Schattschneider mode, but also helped buttress an alternative vision of American parties' proper function, as big tents that mitigated rather than clarified conflict. According to one early scholarly critique of Butler's tenure, his commitment to implementing responsible party principles betrayed a disastrous misunderstanding of the American system, where federalism and the separation of powers demanded that parties serve not as programmatic bodies at all, but as "arenas of compromise" – decentralized "multi-group associations with liberal and conservative wings."[95] To scholars skeptical of the responsible party vision, the very "irresponsibility" of American parties was a feature rather than a bug, for many of the reasons articulated by the APSA committee report's critics. During the Eisenhower era, scholars further elaborated a Madisonian argument for loose, inclusive parties. Each party incorporated a portion of all the various groupings in the population, according to this view, thus tempering any particular conflicts between them while protecting minority rights. Schattschneider's disciple-*cum*-heretic,

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[92] Donald Matthews, *U.S. Senators and Their World* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 1960), 92-117.
[93] William S. White, *Citadel: The Story of the U.S. Senate* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1956), 84.
[94] Robert C. Byrd letter to Butler, July 10, 1959, Box 449, Folder "Chairman Butler's File - Anti-Butler Correspondence, 7/8-7/11/59," DNC Records. Byrd assured Butler that "our party is big enough for the liberals, the conservatives, and the middle-of-the-roaders…[T]hat our Party possesses these varied elements makes it all the more representative of this Nation's heterogeneous people and all the more responsive to the public heartbeat."
[95] Charles Ogden, Jr., "Paul Butler, Party Theory, and the Democratic Party," in *Comparative Political Problems: Britain, United States, and Canada*, eds. John E. Kersell and Marshall W. Conley (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1968), 117-125.

Austin Ranney, laid out this argument at length in his 1956 collaboration with conservative theorist Willmoore Kendall.[96] "The parties have been the peacemakers of the American community," Clinton Rossiter wrote in his bestselling *Parties and Politics in America*, "the unwitting but forceful suppressors of the 'civil-war potential' we carry always in the bowels of our diverse nation. Blessed are the peacemakers, I am tempted to conclude."[97]

The normative defense of traditional American parties meshed well with the postwar flourishing of pluralist models in political science that portrayed politics writ large as the ad hoc, incremental, and non-ideological negotiation of group interests. In his study of reform Democrats, James Q. Wilson cast a critical eye on such activists' commitment to a politics of principle, issues, and outcomes, their belief that "the ends of government and the incentives for political action ought to be identical." Wilson preferred a politics of unprincipled professionals and non-ideological voters, in which "public policies are the by-product of political self-seeking just as the distribution of goods and services is the by-product of economic self-seeking."[98]

Ideology – the politics of principle – occupied an ambiguous place in this discourse, just as it had in the contrasting arguments of Schattschneider and the APSA committee. Celebrators of the American party system at times implicitly sidelined ideology in their own arguments, while at other times explicitly celebrated *the system's* sidelining of ideology. They alternated between, on the one hand, arguing that the parties' non-ideological orientation reflected a real American consensus and, on the other hand, celebrating the parties for their role in mitigating a real American potential for ideological strife. When Lyndon Johnson argued that "what the man on the street wants is not a big debate on fundamental issues; he wants a little medical care, a rug

[96] Ranney and Kendall, *Democracy and the American Party System*, 459-487, 500-533.
[97] Clinton Rossiter, *Parties and Politics in America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1960), 59. Rossiter took the term "civil-war potential" directly from Ranney and Kendall's book.
[98] Wilson, *The Amateur Democrat*, 20.

on the floor, a picture on the wall," he implied that Americans shared core premises and sought from politics only the incremental improvements of means and materials. But when, in nearly the same breath, he intoned that "the biggest threat to American stability is the politics of principle," he conveyed a fear that ideological conflict was in fact all too possible.[99]

Likewise, Connecticut Senator Thomas Dodd combined optimism with alarm in a 1960 speech that condemned Democratic reformers' recklessness "when they try to whittle away at the deliberative process, when they attack the committee system of the Congress … when they propose binding party platforms and binding party caucuses."[100] Dodd associated the DAC with those lines of reform and warned against paving the road to the British system, which he cast as a heinous party dictatorship that crushed independent judgment and divided the country. Such ominous warnings, though, jibed awkwardly with his complacent belief in an American consensus. "The extreme liberals in the Democratic Party and their conservative counterparts in the Republican Party," Dodd mused, "are fond of issuing manifestos calling for a repudiation of the moderate elements in each party and thus presenting the voters with a clear choice." The reason they always fell on deaf ears was simple:

> We live in a country which has an essentially sound system of government, a basically just social system, a growing and prosperous economy, a happy relationship between church and state, a satisfactory arrangement between workers and employers, and the absence of bitter conflict between the so-called classes. Why then should there be a doctrinaire division, a fundamental conflict between the two parties? Why should people resent the fact that our parties offer similar solutions

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[99] Quotes from Doris Kearns, *Lyndon Johnson and the American Dream* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), 152, 154. Kearns offers a rich discussion of Johnson's pluralist assumptions and normative democratic commitments, 152-159. One irony of Johnson's leadership was that he valorized a political vision of consensus forged through relentless bargaining – a process yielding incremental improvements while ensuring stability – while at the same time innovating unprecedented tools of discipline and centralized command as majority leader. Johnson's mastery of the Senate's legislative machinery bolstered a personal rather than party-oriented rule, utilized in the service of blurring rather than sharpening partisan disagreements. See Caro, *Master of the Senate*, 488-515, 572-578.

[100] Dodd delivered his speech, "The Case Against Reforming our Political System," on November 21, 1960 in New York City. The text was reprinted in the *Congressional Record - Senate*, 87th Cong., 1st sess., Vol. 107: 205-208.

> to most problems? Why should there be a call for disagreement, merely for the sake of disagreement?

Dodd's rhetorical questions conjured an image of social peace and consensus. Hindsight affords us the knowledge of just how soon afterwards the explosion of the long civil rights struggle into a mass movement of direct action and moral reckoning would belie that picture.

This knowledge is not only relevant for critically engaging postwar American assumptions about consensus and ideology, however. It is also central to an understanding of how the American party system eventually did transform. As we have seen, responsible party innovations like the DAC were doomed to a life of factional controversy and illegitimacy so long as deep ideological divisions remained in the parties, while the existence of those divisions helped in turn to entrench an array of cultural and intellectual bulwarks against party responsibility. The gradual emergence of issue-based activism and voting behavior at least created the possibility of ideological realignment in American parties and produced a set of constituencies potentially committed to it. But the actual catalyst for that eventual realignment – and the fulcrum of party transformation – turned out to be civil rights.

Civil Rights, Institutional Reform, and the Specter of Realignment

Within the DNC, Butler's initial posture toward civil rights was compromised. His victory in the 1954 chairmanship election depended on a coalition of northern reformers on the one hand and highly un-reformist southerners on the other. Butler's early behavior in office relating to sectional issues was conciliatory toward the South, partly in reflection of Stevenson's intraparty posture at the time.[101] But Butler's personal views on civil rights were liberal, and dynamics during the later 1950s increasingly compelled him and other Democrats like him to

[101] See, for example, Thomas L. Stokes, "Loyal Democrats in the South: Regulars Irked by Butler's Inclination to Forgive those Who Deserted Fold," *Washington Star*, May 18, 1955. Also, Roberts, *Paul M. Butler*, 91-93.

marry their substantive commitment to civil rights with institutional reform commitments related to partisan nationalization and discipline.

Leading Democrats' substantive position on civil rights evolved as a result of pressure from African American advocates and politicians, other Democratic activists, and the logic of national events. Black officials like Michigan congressman Charles Diggs and NAACP executive secretary Roy Wilkins lobbied Butler relentlessly regarding DNC policies and voting conditions in southern primaries.[102] "We don't think that Chairman Butler can blandly ask for the support of Negro voters over the country," Wilkins wrote Hubert Humphrey in 1955, "when one branch of his party is so brazenly and brutally denying Negroes the right to vote in certain states."[103] Other reformist Democrats began articulating this same political logic. As a state chairman wrote to Stevenson in 1956, increasing numbers of northern Democrats were "persuaded that the southern Democratic base no longer is a reality and that efforts to restore it are fatal to success in the north and the west," an assessment with implications for the party's positioning on civil rights.[104]

But the substantive commitment among many Democrats was not merely strategic. Those middle-ranking activists most inclined toward programmatic partisanship – issue-based amateurs, laborites, urban constituencies – held disproportionately liberal views on civil rights. They served as a pressuring force on party officials that had little counterpart among Republicans, despite the moderate civil rights posture of many Modern Republican officeholders.[105] More and more Democrats concluded that a commitment to liberalism required

[102] See, e.g., Charles Diggs letters to Butler, August 4 and September 13, 1955, and Butler's letter to Diggs, November 15, 1955, in Box 457, Folder "NAACP – Integration," DNC Records.
[103] Wilkins letter to Humphrey, August 9, 1955, Box 457, Folder "NAACP – Integration," DNC Records.
[104] James Doyle memo to Adlai Stevenson, February 1956, Box 358, Folder 3, Stevenson Papers.
[105] Brian D. Feinstein and Eric Schickler, "Platforms and Partners: The Civil Rights Realignment Reconsidered," *Studies in American Political Development 22* (Spring 2008): 1-31; and Schickler, Kathryn Pearson, and. Feinstein, "Congressional Parties and Civil Rights Politics from 1933 to 1972," *Journal of Politics* 72 (July 2010): 672-689.

a commitment to civil rights.[106] Stevenson's routing in 1956 and later southern resistance to the Supreme Court's *Brown* decision helped bring Butler around to that position. During the Little Rock desegregation controversy in 1957, he declared that "the Democratic Party will not be deterred in its stand for civil rights by any threat of a third party in the South."[107] The DAC condemned Arkansas's governor and later established an Advisory Committee on Civil Rights, headed by Eleanor Roosevelt, which called for the 1960 platform to explicitly endorse picketing and sit-down demonstrations.[108]

Substantive conflict over civil rights had important institutional consequences. Within the national committee, it prompted a little-noticed but important process of nationalization through the resolution of the so-called "loyalty oath" controversy.[109] The Dixiecrat revolt of 1948 had created a situation in which the ballots of four southern states listed, under the Democratic name and label, electors pledged to the States' Rights Party nominee. To prevent this from recurring, Michigan Senator Blair Moody authored a resolution requiring that the duly nominated presidential and vice-presidential ticket appear on all states' ballots under the Democratic label. Three southern states refused to comply in 1952 and others expressed opposition on federalist grounds.[110] In 1953, a DNC panel revisited the rule. Its proposal, adopted and aggressively enforced by Butler, made state party chairmen responsible for ensuring that the national ticket appear properly on all ballots and added a stringent loyalty requirement

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[106] As Joseph Rauh put it in 1956, Democrats would be "the Party of unsegregated federal aid or it will no longer be the Party of federal aid … Civil rights is no longer a single or a separate issue." John Frederick Martin, *Civil Rights and the Crisis of Liberalism: The Democratic Party, 1945-1976* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1979), 148.
[107] Roberts, *Paul M. Butler*, 92.
[108] Press release, September 15, 1957, Box 449, Folder "Chairman Butler's Files – Advisory Council Press Releases," DNC Records. "Possible Policy Positions," April 22, 1960, Box 100, Folder "Democratic Advisory Council – Advisory Committee on Civil Rights – Meeting, April 22, 1960 [1 of 2]," Philleo Nash Papers, HSTL.
[109] For a useful account of the controversy, see Abraham Holtzman, "Party Responsibility and Loyalty: New Rules in the Democratic Party," *Journal of Politics* Vol.22 (1960): 485-501.
[110] Allan P. Sindler, "The Unsolid South: A Challenge to the Democratic Party," in *The Uses of Power: Seven Cases in American Politics*, ed. Alan F. Westin (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1962), 229-282.

for DNC members. Though a compromise measure, the new rule set a precedent for the nationalization of party authority. It created a citable record of officials from both southern and northern states agreeing in principle with the DNC's counsel that, with respect to national conventions and elections, "the state party is not acting by and for itself, but as a part of a national party and, linked with all other states parties, in a national effort."[111] As a novel demonstration of the national party's power to set rules for conventions, it proved an entering wedge for transformative national reforms in later decades.[112]

The most important way in which civil rights politics contributed to party nationalization and reform was in motivating a more intensive effort to restructure Congress. The litany of suggested congressional reforms, including curbing seniority, subordinating the authority of committee chairmen to party leaders and caucuses, and abolishing the Senate filibuster, remained largely the same as those in the 1950 APSA report. But civil rights threw into relief the connection between southern conservative power and the structure of Congress, since southern Democrats controlled key legislative chokepoints. The conservative coalition's obstructive capacity was never better demonstrated than during these fights, and this bipartisan alliance diminished the luster of bipartisanship itself to increasing numbers of liberals, inclining them toward reforms to foster greater coherence in the legislative parties.[113] The NAACP began lobbying for filibuster reform in 1949 and joined with labor and other activists in such efforts during every Congress in the 1950s. Liberals inserted a call for 'improved Congressional procedures so that majority rule prevails" into the party platform.[114] The DAC's very first policy

[111] Quoted in "The Democratic Party's Approach to its Convention Rules," *American Political Science Review* 50 (June 1956): 567.
[112] Holtzman, "Party Responsibility and Loyalty," 492; Austin Ranney, *Curing the Mischiefs of Faction: Party Reform in America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 183.
[113] Zelizer, *On Capitol Hill*, 42-51.
[114] *The Democratic Platform 1952*, in Box 43, Folder "Subject File, U.S. Senate – Rule 22," Joseph L. Rauh Jr. Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

statement endorsed filibuster reform, meanwhile, and conflict over the committee system provided subtext to its clashes with congressional leaders. The council advocated not only policies that conservative chairmen opposed but also the kind of overarching party *program* that a fragmented system of autonomous committees could not sustain.

A related development, similarly catalyzed by the civil rights issue, was the organization of a liberal bloc in Congress.[115] By 1957, the press was already familiar with "McCarthy's Mavericks," the informal caucus of liberal House Democrats who supported Minnesota Representative Eugene McCarthy's proposed party manifesto that year. Confidential proposals to formalize this faction and bolster its capacity in areas such as whip operations, coordinated floor speeches, and committee testimony circulated in ensuing years, resulting in the 1959 formation of the 120-member Democratic Study Group (DSG).[116] At the outset, the DSG gave voice to liberal representatives' growing criticism of their congressional leaders for being "more content … to keep peace between the North and South than to push the Democratic Party's aims."[117] An early DSG report analyzed the conservative coalition's makeup and operations, while the staff distributed talking points and speech material to combat it.[118]

Unsurprisingly, both Butler's staff and the DAC sought to liaison with the DSG.[119] As scholar James Sundquist later observed, the combined efforts of the DAC, the DSG, key Senators, and allied advocates amounted to a phalanx of liberal policy activism that directly

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[115] Zelizer, *On Capitol Hill*, 53-56.
[116] "Suggestions for More Effective Coordination by the Liberal Democratic Group in the House," unsigned memo, November 1957, Box 60, Folder 13, Rosenblatt Papers. See also Kenneth Kofmehl, "The Institutionalization of a Voting Bloc," *Western Political Quarterly* 17 (June 1964): 258-262.
[117] "Notes, Remarks, and Impressions of Democratic Study Group Meetings of September 5, 7, 8, and 9," unsigned memo, September 1959, Box 60, Folder 14, Rosenblatt Papers.
[118] "Notes, Remarks, and Impressions of Democratic Study Group Meetings of September 5, 7, 8, and 9," unsigned memo, September 1959, Box 60, Folder 14; and "The Republican-Southern Democratic Coalition – 1937-1959," DSG report, December 1959, Box 60, Folder 7, both in Rosenblatt Papers.
[119] Roberts, *Paul M. Butler*, 109. See also Charles Tyroler memo, "Tentative Liaison Designations," May 5, 1959, Box 14, Folder "Advisory Committee," Butler Papers.

influenced the party's unprecedentedly aggressive 1960 platform.[120] It was a feat of policy generation that, to Sundquist, actually warranted comparison to Schattschneider's vision of responsible partisanship, despite the fact that it took place without the support of congressional leaders and in the context of deep intraparty division. Civil rights exacerbated that division like nothing else, and so it is little surprise that the issue would motivate renewed interest not only in institutional reform but also in a further political endgame: realignment of the parties themselves.

In October 1958, after reiterating his repudiation of Arkansas Governor Orval Faubus's stance on school desegregation, Paul Butler received what by then had become a standard outpouring of angry correspondence from ordinary conservative Democrats.[121] "What are you trying to do, make Arkansas go Republican?" one elderly Iowan asked, while a Texan wrote to declare he was "beginning to think that maybe it would be a good idea if the South did quit the Democratic Party."[122] These warnings were meant as a rhetorical argument, of course – the threat of party-bolting long made by southerners in the face of northern criticism. But that threat was beginning to lose its sting among many liberals who, for the first time since FDR's purge campaign, were willing to contemplate favorably a southern switch to the GOP that could produce a more coherent right-left ideological alignment of the parties

Advocacy of ideological party realignment spread from responsible-party scholars to major liberal interest groups and activists in the later 1950s, thanks in part to civil rights' intensification of sectional discord among Democrats. As late as 1955, speculation about realignment retained an airily abstract quality given the absence of intense, immediate political

[120] James L. Sundquist, *Politics and Policy: The Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson Years* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1968), 389-415.
[121] "Butler Repudiates Faubus on Schools," *New York Times*, October 9, 1958.
[122] L.G. Gambs letter to Butler, October 9, 1959, and Don C. Bates letter to Butler, October 9, 1958, in Box 453, Folder "Chairman Butler's File - Statement of Faubus Re Integration and South's Reaction to," DNC Records, JFKL.

conflict over civil rights. James Macgregor Burns, making a case for ideological realignment that year in the *New York Times*, argued that long-range economic development in the South could have the effect of diminishing the region's exceptional qualities, thus facilitating two-party competition along liberal-conservative lines.[123] He did not depict this process as either a "bolt" or a "purge" precipitated by national political clashes over race. But by 1958, Democratic politicians could earn praise from liberal activists and journalist specifically for taking positions that might run the white South out of the party. *The New Republic* deemed the DAC's post-election policy manifesto that year "electrifying. They told the South if it wanted to bolt, to go bolt. Just like that." The magazine went further, connecting the prospect of a southern bolt to the possibility of a more effective American party system: "Ever since the Advisory Council began it has been helping to create a new, liberal national image of the party. One can't help hoping that if it goes on long enough the United States will ultimately have coherent political parties like other nations, instead of foggy coalitions."[124]

Key elements of the labor movement, meanwhile, echoed this vision. At its constitutional convention in 1959, the UAW passed a resolution calling for "a real realignment" of the party system and "a clear demarcation" between a liberal party and a conservative one. Americans could then "vote for a clear-cut program as represented by one of the major political parties with the full assurance that when elected that party will carry out its liberal program without qualification, compromise or delay."[125] This amounted to a tempered version of the political strategy developing at the farther ideological reaches of the labor movement, among activists associated with the socialist Max Shachtman. Since the late 1940s, Shachtman had

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[123] James MacGregor Burns, "Republicans, Democrats: Who's Who?," *New York Times Magazine*, January 2, 1955.
[124] TRB, "Two-Headed Donkey," *The New Republic*, December 15, 1958.
[125] Partial Report of the Resolutions Committee, 17th Constitutional Convention of the United Auto Workers, October 1959, Box 446, Folder "Chairman's Files, 1960 – Chapin, Arthur," DNC Records.

shared Walter Reuther's commitment to working within the Democratic Party. But, compelled by the civil rights conflicts of the later 1950s and under the influence of James MacGregor Burns's writings, Shachtman now articulated a more elaborate, aggressive political project for labor radicals.[126] The strategy involved uniting with civil rights and liberal forces and aggravating tensions within the Democratic coalition sufficiently to compel the exodus of reactionary southerners and urban bosses.[127] By 1959 Shachtman had compelled the Socialist Party to endorse the strategy, called simply "realignment."[128] As we will see, the Shachtmanite doctrine of realignment would inform an important current of activism in the 1960s thanks to its author's influence among elements of the era's civil rights, labor, and nascent radical movements.

Closer to the political mainstream, meanwhile, Butler experienced firsthand the dynamic by which intraparty tensions over civil rights could prompt discussions of realignment. Appearing on television in 1958, Butler voiced concern about southern dominance of the congressional committee system, then described civil rights as an issue that "requires moral leadership," promising it would be addressed "without compromise" in the 1960 Democratic platform. As for southern Democrats who disagreed? "Those people in the South who are not deeply dedicated to the policies and beliefs, in fact the philosophy, of the Democratic Party will have to go their own way," taking "political asylum wherever they can find it, either in the Republican Party or a third party."[129] The outcry was swift. House campaign chairman George

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[126] Peter Drucker, *Max Shachtman and His Left: A Socialist's Odyssey through the '"American Century"* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1994), 192-208, 242-244. On Burns's influence, see 268, 283.
[127] An early exposition is in R.M. and B.S., "Oust the South from Democratic Party," *Labor Action*, July 16, 1956.
[128] Resolution on Political Action, adopted by the National Committee SP-SDF, October 24-25, 1959, Series I, Reel 28, Max Shachtman Papers, microfilm, Tamiment Library/Robert Wagner Labor Archives, New York University, New York, NY.
[129] Quoted in Roberts, *Paul M. Butler*, 94.

Smathers of Florida told Butler to "pipe down," while Mississippi's Jamie Whitten warned that the South truly would bolt if he and others kept up such talk.[130]

Criticism of Butler's outbursts came not merely from southern conservatives, but also from northern machine elements within the party and those officials, like Harry Truman, sensitive to their views. To be sure, some urban bosses were solidly committed to civil rights. But Butler's moralistic rhetoric and zeal for making the party more programmatic clashed with these leaders' longstanding commitment to pragmatic, non-ideological coalition-building. At several points during Butler's tenure, an alliance of southerners and northern machine leaders attempted to orchestrate a replacement at the top of the DNC, for which the latest controversies over Butler's public statements usually provided the pretext. Truman supported the first such effort, in the summer of 1957, which included among the plotters Jacob Arvey, David Lawrence, and New York's Tammany boss Carmine De Sapio.[131] Most of the same participants mounted another "dump-Butler" effort two years later, following an infamous television appearance on the news show Celebrity Parade in which Butler explained his intention "to try to influence the Democratic leadership of the Congress to come along with the national program, rather than the more conservative and moderate program which they are trying to follow."[132]

The cycle of Butler-inspired exasperation and reproach was a familiar one by July 1959, but the furor sparked by these comments was outsized even by his standards – the sharply polarized response made headlines across the country. Southern Democrats rushed en masse to

[130] Smathers is quoted in Roberts, *Paul M. Butler*, 94, Whitten in his letter to Butler, December 19, 1958, Box 446, Folder "Chairman Butler's Files – Whitten, Jamie," DNC Records.
[131] Truman letter to Matthew McCloskey, August 1, 1957, in Box 28, Folder "McCloskey, Matthew H.," and Truman letter to Jacob Arvey, September 1, 1957, in Box 47, Folder "Arvey, Jacob," Truman Post-Presidential Papers; and Philip Perlman letter to Truman, June 19, 1957, Box 33, Folder "General Correspondence, 1953-1967 - Democratic National Comm, 1956-1959," Murphy Papers. See also Roberts, *Paul M. Butler*, 159-160.
[132] Celebrity Parade television show transcript, July 5, 1959, Box 19, Folder "Butler," Staebler Papers. The second dump-Butler effort is described in Frank McHale's letters to David Lawrence, August 21, 1959, and to Harry Truman, August 21, 1959, both in Box 98, Folder "McHale, Frank M.," Truman Post-Presidential Papers.

denounce the chairman, while Sam Rayburn curtly retorted that "Mr. Butler can do the talking and we'll do the acting and make the record."[133] Rayburn's response in private correspondence was more aggressive. He advised one donor to the DNC to hold off on a contribution so as to avoid demonstrating "endorsement of [Butler's] criticism of Congress," while telling other correspondents that Butler was "running wild," having "allowed himself to be passed into the hands of the most radical element of the Democratic Party – that element being led by Paul Ziffren, DNC from California, and others of the Lehman type in New York."[134]

Butler owed his survival to continued support among a majority of DNC members as well as liberals across the country. The second ouster attempt collapsed when a planned DNC vote was called off in the face of a clear pro-Butler majority. As one committeeman explained to a reporter, "we admire his integrity and courage. He is a symbol of the liberal feeling which is dominant in the party."[135] Many activists and officials specifically endorsed his Celebrity Parade comments.[136] In a floor speech, Michigan Senator Pat McNamara defended Butler and castigated congressional timidity. "Leadership of the 86th appears to be more like leadership of the minority of the majority," he said. "Or perhaps it is leadership of the majority of the minority. In any event, it is looking less like leadership of the majority party in Congress."[137]

It was, of course, the need for Johnson and Rayburn to accommodate disparate factions that prevented them from carrying out a legislative agenda supported by "the majority of the majority" as in a parliamentary system. And as mainstays of the heterogeneous Democratic coalition, urban machines and southern elites shared an aversion to such programmatic

[133] Rayburn is quoted in Allen Drury, "Congress Chiefs Reprove Butler," *New York Times*, July 7, 1959. Examples of critical letters sent to Butler can be found in Box 46, Folders 53 and "Originals Not Returned," Butler Papers.
[134] Roberts, *Paul M. Butler*, 83.
[135] Earl Mazo, "Butler Foes Seen Losing in Ouster Bid," *New York Herald Tribune*, September 15, 1959.
[136] Supportive letters from northern congressmen can be found in Box 46, Folder 52, Butler Papers.
[137] Patrick McNamara, "Criticism by Paul M. Butler of the slow pace of the 86th Congress," July 8, 1959, in *Congressional Record - Senate*, 86th Cong., 1st sess., Vol. 105: 12940.

partisanship even as they differed on countless other matters. Lines of partisanship and ideology were shifting and intersecting in new ways by the eve of the 1960s, such that an iconic partisan brawler like Harry "Give Em Hell" Truman could appear as a spokesman for Democratic conciliation while the most zealous advocates of partisanship were those channeling the amateur spirit of the clubs. That partisan zeal might stem from substantive commitments rather than non-ideological team affinity was key to the eventual transformation of the system. But the transformation was not yet imminent as the decade came to a close with a spirited and close presidential contest between Richard Nixon and John F. Kennedy.

Parties and Principle at the Dawn of the Sixties

The midcentury responsible party theorists had outlined a prescriptive model of partisan change in the United States along three lines of development. They sought the nationalization of party operations and political contests. They wanted policy issues and mutually distinctive party programs to be the central elements structuring national politics. And they advocated the development of sufficient discipline within the parties to enable their carrying out of coherent programs when in power.

Along all three of those dimensions, the 1950s saw the emergence of a number of phenomena providing necessary thought not sufficient conditions for the transformation of the party system. Middle-class amateurs increasingly supplanted the diminishing ranks of old-style party workers as the parties' key activist corps, and in doing so helped inject a programmatic, issue-oriented ethos into party politics. Long-term regional economic development as well as the seismic rumblings of the civil rights revolution both promised to end the Solid South's exceptional position in the political system by unleashing partisan competition. Shorter-term internal Democratic disputes over civil rights and other issues fuelled the institutional

development of formal national supremacy in party affairs, a break from American parties' traditional decentralization and patchwork localism. At the national level, meanwhile, liberal party factions devised new institutional innovations to foster both programmatic capacity and means of discipline within the Democratic National Committee and the congressional party. Ultimately, a potential byproduct of all three of these lines of development – the scale of politics, its policy orientation, and the parties' degree of internal cohesion – would be the realignment of the political system into two ideologically sorted parties.

Such developments were latent or incomplete by decade's end, however. The Democratic Party's standard-bearer in 1960, John F. Kennedy, occasionally connected a theory of party politics to his overarching critique of Eisenhower-era drift . "Legislative leadership is not possible without party leadership," Kennedy declared in one speech.[138] But the personalized nature of his campaign signaled a relative lack of interest in thoroughgoing party leadership. He made it clear that the DAC would cease operation upon his election, and, after considering the reformist Neil Staebler to replace Butler, opted instead for Connecticut machine boss John Bailey.[139] Meanwhile, his campaign strategy unfolded along the familiar lines of Democratic coalitional logic, in which securing a North-South sectional accord was seen as paramount, thus prompting the selection of Johnson as running mate. The campaign against Nixon, then adopting the moderate positioning of Eisenhower's "Modern Republican" brand, featured notably little in the way of clear-cut divisions on ideology or even basic policy stances. The resulting electoral map showed little evidence of a fraying of the Democrat's North-South coalition, excepting

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[138] "The Presidency in 1960," Washington, DC, January 14, 1960, text in John T. Woolley and Gerhard Peters, *The American Presidency Project* [online], Santa Barbara, CA. http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=25795. If a president "blurs the issues and differences between the parties," he went on to argue, "if he neglects the party machinery and avoids his party's leadership, then he has not only weakened the political party as an instrument of the democratic process – he has dealt a blow to the democratic process itself."
[139] Loucheim, *By the Political Sea*, 140-141.

Mississippi's plurality vote for Strom Thurmond's third-party candidacy. The forces underway that would bring transformative changes to the party system, in other words, were not yet in evidence at the level of national party politics.

Signs abounded, however, to those who knew where to look. They could be found in the burgeoning civil rights movement, whose rhetoric of moral transformation promised an equivalent transformation of American political institutions. They could be found in the increasingly impassioned language of middle-class reform clubs, captured in the inaugural declaration of Tom Finletter, Eleanor Roosevelt, and Herbert Lehman's New York Committee for Democratic Voters. "The day of boss rule and boss power … is nearing its end," it proclaimed in 1959, employing a participatory language ahead of its time to advocate "the principles of democracy within all the reaches of the Democratic Party organization of New York."[140] And they could be found in the words of the party chairman that Kennedy replaced. Five years before a more famous speech insisted that moderation in pursuit of justice was no virtue, Paul Butler sounded a similar note. "The Democratic Party is not a party of accommodation or attainability or compromise," he declared in 1959. "People who are willing to accommodate themselves and the objectives of the Democratic Party to existing obstacles and obstructions to achievement do not typify the real spirit, the true courage or the genuine zeal of our Party." Most dangerous of all: "The Democratic Party is a party of principle."[141]

[140] Press release, January 22, 1959, Box 15, Folder "Personal Memoranda," Thomas K. Finletter Papers, HSTL.
[141] Roberts, *Paul M. Butler*, 79.