

## Closing Thoughts

There is no such thing as a free government without political leaders and politicians.

We need capable individuals in every generation who will strive to equip themselves for a career in politics.

America has been blessed with some good politicians and political leaders and I suspect that this is one of the primary factors that has enabled us to develop the greatest Republic with the highest standard of living in the world.

No matter how high your aspirations are for good government, those aspirations must be carried out primarily by the men and women elected to public office.

© 1978 "How To Win An Impossible Election,"  
George W. Parker, Civic Enterprises, IV, Columbia, Missouri.

## Quotes

"The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing."  
Edmund Burke

"What makes politics great are the ends that it serves. Politics is the means by which we govern ourselves and resolve our differences without violence. Politics is the compelling sense of participation in great deeds and the striving to achieve great goals -- the advancement or triumph of an idea or proposal that may mean security, opportunity, justice, or perhaps even life itself for millions of people. Politics, win or lose, is the sense that one is doing the most important work in the world, work that will affect the largest number of people over the longest period of time. Stay with it and give it a chance. It may be frustrating. You may not always win, but your actions can count. You can make the difference. But above all: What are the alternatives?"  
(A Student Guide To Campaign Politics by Donald Herzberg & J.W. Peltason)

- "One man with a belief is worth 99 without."
- "The squeaking wheel gets the grease."
- "Knowledge Is Power."
- "The pen is mightier than the sword."
- "Oratory usually precedes action in a free society."
- "Kindness is the most vital ingredient of all sound human relationships and the most binding force of any civilized society."
- "Experience is the best teacher."
- "Fools learn from experience, I learn from the experience of others." Bismarck.

**"Free government requires active citizens"**  
**(Pachyderm Motto)**



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## Understanding Politics



### How Our Political System Works

How does our political system work? One asset is that we have been able to change power without cutting each other's throats.

After the Republican party began in 1860, the Republicans ruled the nation for about 72 years, 1860 to 1932. We did not change parties every two or four years, the only intervention in that 72 years period was Cleveland and Wilson. While they were president, the Republicans controlled the Congress most of the time.

What did it take to cause a change? The big depression; a catastrophe. From 1932 through 1980, a period of 48 years, the Democrats held the presidency and controlled both houses of the Congress, with these exceptions: President -- 16 years Republican (8 years Eisenhower; 8 years Nixon-Ford); U.S. House -- 4 years Republican (1947-49; 1953-55); U.S. Senate -- 5 years Republican (1932-33, one-vote margin; 1947-49; 1953-55, two-vote margin).

James Madison said, "People are inclined to tolerate a regime in power until it becomes almost unbearable." Don't rock the boat: a change may bring worse things. This is the human nature of it.

Each of us knows what is going to happen during each election. Those who are in power are going to say, "Reelect us, our record is great" or words to that effect. Those who are out of power are going to say, "Elect us, it is time for a change" or words to that effect.

Should the people be amazed when this happens? Of course not. There is a lot of talk and advertising with each side and each candidate proclaiming that they are right. The individual voter will decide who is right and who is wrong at the ballot box.

Another attribute of our system is that there is only one winner in our elections just like in a football game. We call this the plurality system. This is probably the basic reason why we have maintained two major parties. We have the freedom to have fifty-two political parties, for example, like Germany possessed before Hitler advanced to power. But, our plurality system with one winner drives us into two parties rather automatically.

Many of our elections are won by small margins. If a president wins by 3 or 4 percent, we call it a landslide. These close elections tend to cause both political parties and most candidates to be all things to all people. This also causes party platforms designed to appeal to all groups in the society. Why? Because the elections are so close that if either party loses any one large bloc of votes it may lose the election. Therefore, the parties and candidates must try to obtain every vote possible. This means that they must appeal to the Catholic, the Protestant, the Black, the White, the Labor, the Farmer, men, women, young, old and all the rest. No wonder the party platforms are often written in general and vague terms.

Certainly, we can criticize their being all things to all people, but is there some virtue in it all? One virtue in it is that it causes our parties and candidates to be mindful and considerate of minority groups. The minorities tend to obtain their share of the good things rather automatically through our election processes. This results in one tremendous bonus: Peace in our society. It has enabled us to develop the strongest republic in the history of the world.

## General Purpose Of Political Parties

· Party purpose. Our political parties have two main purposes. First to provide leadership in government. This means at least three things: (a) Helping to obtain good candidates for public office; (b) developing platforms at the local level for good government, and having a voice in state and national platforms; (c) analyzing and debating and bringing the issues of the day to the people. Second, to keep the public informed on the status of their government. To be able to criticize those in power has been considered one of the cornerstones of free government. This tends to keep government more honest and efficient. Some historians claim this right was obtained for free people when Oliver Cromwell chopped off King Charles' head in England. From that point on, we have been able to criticize those in power. It is an important part of free government and a very important duty of the party not in power.

## Campaign Dollars: Who Should Contribute?

· Raising money. Who is supposed to take action to see that good and qualified candidates are elected to public office? Who is supposed to provide the money it takes for a candidate to advertise and let the people know that they are in the race? Is it the special interest groups or the wealthy who should provide the necessary funds or is it you and I? Once a person is elected to public office we expect him to represent all the people. Isn't it about time that all the people made it is their duty to help provide the funds for the candidates of their choice?

*How To Prepare For:*

## A CAREER IN POLITICS

1. *LEARN HOW TO DEAL WITH PEOPLE.* Understanding people is the basic tool of the leader. Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "The ability for which I will pay the most is the ability to deal with people."

A. *Know how to get people out to a meeting.*

B. *Know how to sell ideas.*

C. *Know how to organize a precinct.* The precinct is the most basic political unit. Know what tools are needed and how to use them such as political district maps, street address directories, city directories and voting records.

D. *Join a political club - be an active party member.*

2. *LEARN HOW TO INFLUENCE PUBLIC OPINION.* Lincoln said, "Public sentiment is everything. With public sentiment nothing can fail; without it, nothing can succeed. He who molds public sentiment goes deeper than he who enacts statutes or pronounces decisions. He makes decisions possible or impossible to execute."

A. *Know how to write and distribute press releases* to the news media.

Some authorities claim that about 50 percent of the news stories in a newspaper are derived from the press releases distributed to the newspaper by other than their own employees.

B. *Know how to work with the news media.*

C. *Know how to advertise.* Be able to prepare a political ad for your newspaper, radio or TV station. (Review the book, "Winning Political Campaigns With Publicity" by Hank Parkinson. Campaign Associates Press, Petroleum Building, Wichita, Ks. 67202).

3. *LEARN HOW TO TYPE.* Develop and use your own shorthand.

4. *RECOGNIZE THAT "KNOWLEDGE IS POWER."*

· Your knowledge of history, political science and human nature will be valuable in politics. Know enough about the law and the Constitution so that you do not require the assistance of a lawyer in the area of fundamental rights and liberties of citizens in America. In college, a major in political science and law would be appropriate.

· Parliamentary procedure is a basic tool of free government. Learn the fundamentals. You should know how to conduct a meeting.

· Improve your organization sense. Remember the example of the father with ten sons. He took a stack of ten matches. He took one wooden match from the stack and easily broke it, but when he took the remaining nine together he could not break them! The lesson: We must curb some of our individual desires in order to accomplish something as a group. Also consider, "follow causes and not leaders."

· Know the laws governing political parties. Obtain a copy of any bylaws or adopted rules of your party. Know how you can obtain a voice in the development of your party's platform.

· Some recommended reading: biographies of such persons as Jefferson, Lincoln, Madison, Andrew Johnson, and Huey P. Long. The Federalists papers, Robert's Rules of Order, Manual of Legislative Procedures by Paul Mason, Free Government In The Making by Alpheus T. Mason and The Great Game of Politics by Frank Kent.

5. *LEARN HOW TO CONDUCT A POLITICAL CAMPAIGN.* What's more important than electing capable people to public office?

6. *LASTLY, YOU HAVE ANOTHER OPTION.* That is, if you cannot run for public office or take the lead in whatever situation you are concerned about, then support someone else.

· In the support role, your effectiveness will depend in large measure upon how well you are prepared in items listed above. However, I would hasten to add that the supporting role is one of the most practical ways to learn and improve your own abilities.