THE IDEA OF NON-PARTY GOVERNMENT IN ENGLAND

BETWEEN 1688 and 1760

by

Adèle Curry.

1 9 3 5.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources:

Defoe, Daniel - "The Secret History of the White Staff".
London, 1714.

Defoe, Daniel - "Minutes of the Negotiations of Monsieur
Menager at the Court of England".
London, 1717.

Swift, Jonathon - "Some Free Thoughts on the Present
State of Affairs".
Reprinted in the Prose Works of
Jonathon Swift.
Edit. Temple Scott.
London, 1897-1908 (Vol. 5).

Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke - "The Works of".
London, 1844 (4 Vols.).

Various - "The Craftsman".
London, 1737 (14 vols.)

- Calendar of the Manuscripts of the
Marquis of Bath at Longleat.
Vol. I (The Harley Papers).
Historical Manuscripts Commission - 1904.

- Manuscripts of the Duke of Portland.
Vol. IV (Portland Papers).
Historical Manuscript Commission - 1897.

Secondary Sources:

Trevelyan, G. M. - "The History of England under Queen Anne"
London, New York & Toronto, 1932-34.
3 Vols.

Trevelyan, G. M. - "The Two Party System in English History"
Oxford, 1926.

Oliver, F. F. - "The Endless Adventure". 3 Vols.
London. 1930-5.

Cole, George D. H. - "Politics and Literature".
London, 1929.

Namier, Lewis D. - "The Structure of Politics at the
Accession of George III".
London, 1927.

Adams - "Constitutional History of England".

Feiling, Keith G. - "The History of the Tory Party".
Oxford, 1924.
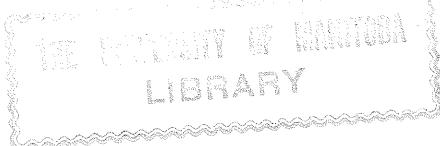
The eighteenth century in England is generally accepted as having been the period in which the English system of government through the medium of opposing political parties was first developed. Whig historians have been apt to attribute to this development a certain inevitability, to assume that each of its stages was consciously reached by politicians who had a clear and complete foreknowledge of its end, and to speak as though English constitutional development could have followed no other line of advance. Those of them who have considered the possibility of non-party government have tended to treat it as a negligible and somewhat freakish aberration from the well determined lines of English political development, and, in consequence, have been at little pains to do justice to the motives of those public men who from time to time have been critical of the whole theory and practice of party government. The purpose of this thesis is to attempt to examine the idea of non-party government as it appeared in the period which elapsed between the accession of William III and that of George III, and to relate it to contemporary constitutional theory and practice. It is hoped that at the end of such an examination it may be made to appear that while the future of English political development was not to be with it, the idea of non-party government in this period died hard, and commanded the allegiance of some of the foremost minds in England.

<center>II</center>

The accepted views of constitutional development after 1688 are nowhere better stated than in Adams "Constitutional History of England". "The new epoch", he writes, "starts with the old issue (between a limited and an absolute monarchy) settled, and its chief endeavour constitutionally is to learn

how to apply that settlement more and more completely to all
the details of government operation, and to devise effective
machinery for carrying it out in practice.   Its most striking
characteristic is the institution making, and the chief
institution made is beyond all question one of the most
important of history, we may perhaps in the end be justified
in saying the most important, for its history is not yet
finished.   The new institution was the English cabinet, not
meaning by that the cabinet as it is today, a mere institution,
but the cabinet system of government, as controlled by the
modern doctrine and practice of ministerial responsibility[1].
With the settling of the executive power in the cabinet and
of the sovereign authority in the House of Commons, another
feature of modern democracies also became a more definitely
effective and controlling force in public affairs, what we call
party government; that is, the vital connection between
organized political party and the new executive and the new
sovereign power.

The determination of the policy which the nations
would follow by a group of the chief political leaders of the
time, who would act together as a unit, implied of necessity
two things.   For one thing it implied that they, all of them,
held to certain common fundamental principles of government
which made it easy for them to unit upon a special line of
policy; and second, it implied that a majority of the House of
Commons, and perhaps of the nation, could be for the same
reason easily inclined in the same direction".[2]

That this passage gives an accurate picture of

(NOTES: 1.   Adam's "Constitutional History of England". p.362.
        2.   Adam's "Constitutional History of England". p.388.

the final result of English constitutional development in the
period from 1688 to 1832, no one need deny.   At the same time,
however, it may be pointed out that the inevitability or even
the probability of this development was by no means clear to
contemporaries under William III and Anne.   So far from being
an accepted fact, party government seemed highly undesirable
to some of the most practical political minds of today.

It is not too much to maintain that the men, who had
the largest share in directing the political fortunes of England
during the reigns of William III and Anne, inclined to practise
a non-party system whereby the moderate men of both sides would
combine to carry on the Crown's policy.   The Revolution of 1688
itself was the result of the combination of both parties, the
moderate men working together for a settlement which would be
acceptable to the majority, and so successful was their effort
that this was obtained without bloodshed.

William III, when he became King, was not himself
primarily interested in the internal party struggle in England.
All his attention was focused on European affairs, and, in
particular, on his long struggle with Louis XIV.   His main
purpose in securing the throne of England was to procure
additional means of prosecuting that struggle, and, in consequence,
William was virtually prepared to govern through any set of men
who obtain for him the necessary supplies for the war with
France.   It was this fact that led him to choose moderate men
for his government, and to throw the influence of the Crown
against any measures which, by threatening to revive the worse
animosities of party, would have distracted men's minds from
foreign affairs.

If we look at the parliamentary politics of the

reign it at once becomes apparent that they cannot be described merely in terms of the conventional opposition between Whig and Tory. In effect, William's governments were composed of official, and therefore moderate, Whigs, and of the 'de facto' Tories who had accepted the Revolution and its consequences. The opposition consisted of the extreme Whigs, who considered the Revolution a party victory to be followed by a proscription of their Tory rivals; the non-juring Tories, who had assisted in expelling James, but who shrank from a formal acceptance of the consequences of their act in the shape of an oath of allegiance to William; the Jacobites, who still upheld James' right to the throne; and, lastly, the neo-Tories, the heirs of the old country party of Charles II's reign, a constitutional opposition which objected to standing armies, continental wars, Dutch placemen, and the influence of the Crown in parliament. Standing outside all these parliamentary groups were the great individual figures of the political managers, such as Marlborough, Shrewsbury, Godolphin, Somerset, and Argyll; and in the formation of all his ministries, William was guided much more by the need of constructing a working team from among these aristocratic cliques, than with any formal recognition of the various parties in Parliament.

Throughout Queen Anne's reign, the same practice of non-party government was continued, both in the six year Marlborough-Godolphin regime from 1702 to 1708, and in the Oxford regime from 1710 to 1714. Only the brief Whig rule of 1708 to 1710 represents an interlude of government consciously based on party. In the first part of this period, from 1702 to 1708, the government was in the hands of four

moderate Tories, the Queen herself, with Marlborough for her captain, Godolphin for her financier, and Harley for her discreet manager of the Commons.   This group took over and perpetuated William III's policy of concentrating on the war with France, and, for the same reasons as the former Monarch, wished to avoid the extreme passions and strife of party warfare at home.   The government had at first been High-Tory in complexion, but the ministers had gradually drawn to themselves a middle party who were willing to concentrate on a vigorous war policy.   This support was drawn partly from the commercial and trading interests in the country, who were usually Whigs in politics, and it tended to alienate the High Tories who were opposed to the war, and who were inclined to revive party animosities by pushing their extreme Anglican pretensions. This split between the High and Moderate Tories occured during the winter of 1704-5, and, at this time, the Queen took occasion to state her opinions on party government.   She had quarrelled with the High Tories, but did not think that this made it necessary for her to make friends with the Whigs, whom she always disliked.   To Godolphin, she wrote, imploring him, "to keep me from the merciless men of both parties".3   Harley also refused to acknowledge the necessity of party government, and maintained that government could be carried on with those men who were under the Queen's influence, supported by the moderate men of each side.   "I take it for granted," he writes to Godolphin, "no party in the House can carry it for themselves without the Queen's servants join them.   The foundation is, persons and parties are to come to the Queen and not the Queen to them.   The Queen hath chosen rightly which party she will take in.   If the gentlemen of England are made sensible that

(NOTE: Trevelyan - "England under Queen Anne."Vol. II, page 80).

the Queen is the head and not a party, everything will be easy, and the Queen will be courted and not a party".[4]

Thus the Queen and Harley refused to be drawn over to the Whig side, but Godolphin and Marlborough, whose task and main purpose it was to carry on the war, found it increasingly difficult to resist the Whig demands. The country, and specially the landed class which was heavily taxed, was becoming discontented with the long war. More and more Marlborough and Godolphin were forced to turn to the commercial classes, who were strongly Whig for their support, and these men were not willing to uphold indefinitely an administration in which their leaders were not included. Godolphin, as head of the ministry, was the first to realize this and to advise that the administration be broadened to include some of the Whigs. That it was merely pressure of circumstances and not any theoretic predilection for party government which led Godolphin to adopt this course appears from his letter to Harley of 1706, "Is it not more reasonable," he wrote, "and more easy to preserve those who have served and helped us (i.e. the Whigs) than to seek those who..........have done all in their power to ruin us".[5]

Marlborough, being in less immediate touch with the state of parties in parliament, was even more reluctant to admit the need of having recourse to the Whigs, and though, by the end of 1708, he and Godolphin had been compelled to re-construct their government upon entirely Whig lines, neither of them really relished the process. For the past six years, England had really been governed by a junto consisting of the Queen, Marlborough, Godolphin, and Harley, all of whom, if

(NOTE: 4. Bath Mss. Vol. I. p. 74-75.)
     5. Portland Mss.Vol IV. p.291).

party labels must be employed, could best be described as Moderate Tories.   That junto had now split upon the personal rivalry of Godolphin and Harley, and the results were to be disastrous to that idea of government through the moderate men of both sides which was equally dear to all of them. Marlborough and Godolphin, deprived by Harley of the Queen's confidence, were compelled to throw themselves into the arms of the Whigs to an extent which neither of them had either foreseen or desired, while Harley and the Queen, faced with the partisanship of the Whigs, were reluctantly driven into the arms of the extreme Tories.   That Harley already had some apprehension of what was to come appears from his letter to Godolphin, 1708, "I dread the thoughts," he wrote, "of running from the extremes of one faction to another, which is the natural consequence of party tyranny and renders the government like a door which turns both ways upon the hinges to let in each party as it grows triumph. and".6

That Harley and the Queen never intended to be captured by the Tories can be seen from their action when their hour arrived in 1710.   The gradual steps by which in that year they displaced the Whig ministers were not merely a matter of adroit tactics, but also the genuine expression of the Queen's and Harley's moderation.   There is convincing evidence that, when Harley ousted Marlborough and Godolphin in 1710, it was not his intention to play the Tory party game.   Thus his con-fidant, Defoe, tells us that, "his design was to have framed a middle party of neuters,"7 and in 1710, we find him writing to Harley that he is "acquainting some people (i.e. the Whigs)

(NOTES: 6. Bath Mss.   Vol. I. p. 180-181).

7. Defoe. "Minutes of Menager". p. 70.)

they are not all to be devoured and eaten up ...., assuring
them that moderate councils are at the bottom of all things;
that the old mad party are not coming in, that his Grace, the
Duke of Shrewsbury and yourself......etc. are at the head of
the management; that toleration, succession, or union are not
struck at".8 Similarly, Swift assures us that the Queen made
the change only with a view of acting "upon a moderating scheme
in order to reconcile both parties".9   In short, while, in
1710, Harley scored a personal revenge upon Marlborough and
Godolphin, who had turned him out in 1708, he always hoped to
have the co-operation and support of such moderate Whigs as
Newcastle, Cowper, and Halifax. Throughout 1710 he was in
continuous negotiation with the more moderate among the Whig
leaders, and his disappointment, when he failed to retain any
of them, save Newcastle in the government, was genuine. It
is significant, moreover, that in making the changes of 1710,
the Queen and Harley had the support of Shrewsbury, Somerset,
and Argyll. For each of these great magnates, judged by
party affiliation, was a Whig, and none of them would have
supported Harley in consciously preparing the way for a full
Tory policy. Shrewsbury supported Harley because he genuinely
believed that the country needed peace, and that the Whigs
would never make it, but he had no affection for the high
Anglican pretensions of the extreme Tories, and he was a firm
adherent of the Protestant succession. Somerset and Argyll
had their personal feuds with Marlborough, and were willing
to contribute to his downfall, but, that once accomplished,
their sympathy with Tory purposes in 1710 was at an end.
(NOTES; 8. Portland Mss. Vol.IV. p.552.
       9. Swift - "Free Thoughts". p. 401.)

What disconcerted the moderate plans of the Queen, Harley, and Shrewsbury was the results of the general election of November, 1710. From these elections the Tories returned an overwhelming majority, and Harley found that he had opened the flood gates to a Tory torrent which it was beyond his power to stem. He found himself trapped between Whig vindictiveness on the one side, and the intransigency of his Tory followers on the other. St. John and Harcourt became the spokesmen of the party demand for a full Tory game, and the places which Harley had intended for moderate Whigs, he was compelled to give to them. Even so, it was only with the greatest reluctance that Harley abandoned his plan for a coalition ministry, and throughout his period in office he never entirely severed his connection with Halifax and the Moderate Whigs.

III

At the crisis which followed Anne's death, the Tory power was shattered, and the party ceased to exist as an organized and effective opposition. The reason for this is to be found in the history of the party during the four years preceding Anne's death. They had been returned to power in 1710, for the purpose of ending the war with France, and paradoxically enough, the accomplishment of that aim brought about their own ruin. Down to 1710, the Hanoverian heir to the throne had maintained a strict impartiality between the two great English parties. When, in 1714, however, it became clear that the Tory ministry were bent on making peace, the elector, as a strong supporter of the

Emperor, and therefore a strong advocate of the continuation of the war, was drawn into the cabals of the Whig war-mongers in London. It is from the time of the peace negotiations onward that George may be regarded as having been captured by the Whigs. Finding the Hanoverian heir to the Throne in the pockets of their political rivals, the Tories were naturally led to flirt with the idea of excluding him from the succession by means of a Stuart restoration. Thus the peace question and the succession question moved in a vicious circle, and it was easy for the Whigs to represent at Hanover that their Tory rivals were unsound upon both questions alike.

So in 1714, on the accession of George I, the Whig party came into power and until 1760 enjoyed a monopoly of office. But, as there was no real opposition, it was not a period in which the further development of the two party system could be accomplished. The reasons for this state of affairs are not far to seek; between 1714 and 1760 the Tories were paralyzed by the accidental conflict between the two aspects of the Tory creed, the cause of legitimism and the cause of Protestantism. To such an extent is this so that during that period the party is better known from its literature than from its political activities. Who kept its electoral machine going, and how far, and on what issues, we do not know. For half a century after 1714, the two motive forces of the Seventeenth Century Toryism (i.e. the dislike of the dissenters and of their Whit patrons, and an attachment to the Anglican tradition of the earlier Stuarts) were rendered inoperative, first by the fear, which all genuine Tories felt, of the return of a Catholic King, and secondly, by their innate respect for law and order even when administered by

their rivals. Accordingly from 1714 to 1760, when George
III provided them with a Protestant King with Tory sympathies,
the Tories never emerged from the impasse into which they,
as the party of Church and King, had been forced ever since
the Catholic sympathies of Charles II and James II had com-
pelled them to choose between the two pillars of their creed.
As for the Whigs, the dependence of the first two Hanoverians
on Whig support against a Stuart restoration placed the party
in the fortunate position of being able to limit the power
of the Crown while posing as its only loyal supporters against
the concealed Jacobitism of the Tories.

So, after 1715, the old Tory party,as the late
Seventeenth Century had known it, died of royal disfavour,
while the old Whig party died of too much royal favour and
a surfeit of power and office. The evils which Bolingbroke
denounced under the first two Georges were real evils, but
they were the result, not of the two party system, but of its
partial abeyance. The Tory opposition was so weak that for
effective purposes England was governed by one party with
none to check its greed. In such circumstances any real
distinction between parties soon disappeared. After 1714,
there was no longer any succession question or any religious
question to provide a real line of cleavage, and even the
perennial division between those who are temperamentally
inclined to change and those who are temperamentally opposed
to change was curiously absent. For seventy years after
1714, therefore, with no real issue to invoke men's passions
and no party organization to lift their differences onto a
collective plane, politics became atomised and individualized.
Political contests were concerned with office and not with

doctrine and only family tradition or supposed personal interest made a man a Whig or Tory.

It was in this period of the partial abeyance of the two party sysem with its consequent evils, that Bolingbroke once more brought forward that idea of non-party government which had seemed so desirable to the political leaders at the beginning of the century. For, with all their defects, Bolingbroke's political writings did make clear two undeniable truths; firstly, that in the years after 1720, the names of Whig and Tory had become meaningless shibboleths, and secondly, that the real political division in those years was not Whig versus Tory, but court versus country. In Bolingbroke's view, it was not necessary to go back beyond 1688 in the history of the present state of parties. "Both sides," he wrote, "purged themselves on this great occasion of the imputations laid to their charge by their adversaries.... The proper and real distinction of the two parties expired at this era, and, although their ghosts have continued to haunt and divide us so many years afterwards, yet there neither is nor can be any division of parties at this time reconcilable with common sense and common honesty among those who are come upon the stage of the world under the present constitution, except those of churchmen and dissenters, those of court and country.......... But if the distinctions should remain, when the difference subsists no longer, the misfortune would be greater, because they, who maintained the distinction in this case, would cease to be a party and would become a faction. National interests would be no longer concerned, at least on one side. They would be sometimes sacrificed, and always made subordinate to personal interests; and that,

I think, is the true characteristic of faction".[10]

In considering the Revolution, he shows that the bulk of the Whigs had never been Republican, though the party had its Republican fringe; and that the Tories had never been Papists, though the party had for a brief time been under the accidental influence of Papish councils. In other words, even under Charles II and James II the parties had been much nearer to each other than they thought, and it was only the extremes of Monmouth's cabals on the one side, and the Duke of York's on the other, which had frightened men into fearing, some (the Tories) another 1640, and others (the Whigs) a Papist tyranny. The reactions of both parties to James II soon proved this. Both parties saw their errors. "The Tories stopped short in the pursuit of a bad principle, and the Whigs reformed the abuse of a good one".[11] In short, "the revolution was a fire which purged off the dross of both parties".[12] The Tories had shown that they were not for prerogative or Popery, and the Whigs had shown that they were not for republic or dis-establishment, and with their joint success against James II, the real distinction of Whig and Tory had disappeared.

Even with relation to the reign of William III, Bolingbroke had little difficulty in showing that the two great parties had largely lost their "raison d'être", "and here, he wrote, in the Examiner, "I shall take leave to produce some principles which in the several periods of the late reign (William III's) served to denote a man of one or the other party. To be against a standing army in time of peace

(NOTES: 10. Bolingbroke - Dissertation on Parties. Letter VII.
11. Bolingbroke - Dissertation on Parties. Letter VI.
12. Bolingbroke - Dissertation on Parties. Letter VIII.

was all High Church, Tory and Tantivy.   To differ from a
majority of the Bishops was the same.   To raise the pre-
rogative above law for serving a turn, was Low Church and
Whig.   The opinion of the majority in the House of Commons
especially of the country party or landed interest was High
flying and rank Tory.   To exalt the King's supremacy beyond
all precedent was Low Church, Whigish and Moderate.   To make
the least doubt of the pretended Prince being supposititious
and a tiler's son was, in their phrase, "top and top gallant",
and perfect Jacobitism.   To resume the most exorbitant grants
that were ever given to a set of profligate favourites, and to
apply them to the public, was the very quintessence of Toryism;
notwithstanding those grants were known to be acquired by
sacrificing the honour and the wealth of England.   In most
of these principles, the two parties seem to have shifted
opinions, since their institution under King Charles the
Second, and indeed, to have gone very different from what was
expected from each, even at the time of the Revolution".[13]

IV

Bolingbroke's criticism of the party system as
it was being worked under Walpole was contained, as we have
seen, chiefly in his papers published in "The Craftsman" and
more especially in the "Dissertation on Parties".   His best
known suggestion of a positive remedy was contained in his
"Spirit of Patriotism" and "The Idea of a Patriot King".
It is unfortunate for his reputation that these two works
have been so heavily emphasized.   They are meant to show,

(NOTE: 13. Bolingbroke - Examiner No. 44. Vol IX. p.285 of
           Swift's Works.)
        (See also "Craftsman" Nos. 17, 40, 66, 92, 103).

firstly, that the old Tory creed of divine right was an
absurd anachronism, and secondly, that a patriot king should
observe the constitution (i.e. should respect the various
classes and orders with their respective powers and privileges
established in the state, and the spirit and character of the
people) and thirdly, that a patriot King should "espouse no
party but govern like thd common father of his people". Apart
from some incidental wise aphorisms, however, these two works
merely amount to saying that a wise, public spirited, and
adroit prince will make a wise, public spirited, and adroit
use of the prerogative.

For the core of Bolingbroke's thinking on
these questions we must look elsewhere. His approach to the
constitutional question was made through the immediate issue
of the political corruption which was so rampant when he wrote,
and the connection between this corruption and Bolingbroke's
political thinking must never be lost from sight.

The political corruption of the age of Walpole
is notorious, and not to be condoned, but there is a sense in
which this corruption was a historical necessity. The
Revolution of 1688 had created a constitutional deadlock.
Parliament had been left supreme in the field of legislation,
and in the ultimate control of those sources of supply without
which, in the long run, policy could not be carried out. But,
in practice, as well as in theory, the King had been left free
to determine policy and to choose the instruments through whom
policy should be carried out.   It was to the provision of
some means by which a theoretically sovereign parliament could
be reconciled with a theoretically irresponsible executive
that the whole constitutional development of the years since

1688 had been directed.   The most obvious means to this
end was the use of corruption as it existed under Walpole;
that is the creation in parliament by every means of influence
and patronage of a corrupt "interest" which would supply a
steady majority in support of measures brought in by ministers.
Without the cement supplied by such "interest", a House of
Commons under George III would have been an assembly of
independent individuals, in which ministers could have found
no steady basis for the necessary exercise of power.   In the
England of George II, the necessary confidence of a majority
of the Commons in the Cabinet could have been obtained in no
other way than through the creation of some such interest
bound to support the measures of government and there was no
alternative between an acceptance of this situation and a
return to pre-revolution monarchy.

Bolingbroke perceived this corruption, and his
analysis of its sources was accurate and penetrating, yet
it was his preoccupation with this question which led him into
his cardinal error.   To his view, this corruption was wholly
evil, for he was necessarily too close to it to see its
historic necessity.   So it was in the hope of exterminating
it and of restoring the constitution to its pristine purity,
that Bolingbroke constantly advocated a return to the position
of 1688.   This tendency, which was the strength of his
analysis of parties, was the weakness of his analysis of the
constitution, for he never seems to have realized that the
situation as left in 1688 involved a deadlock, and he
denounced the corruption, which led to a dependency of the
legislature on the Crown.   "Corruption," he wrote, "hath
been defended, nay recommended, as a proper, a necessary, and
therefore, a reasonable expedient of government, than which

there is not perhaps, any one proposition more repugnant
to the common sense of mankind, and to universal experience.
Both of these demonstrate corruption to be the last deadly
symptom of agonizing liberty.   Both of them declare, that
a people abandoned to it are abandoned to a reprobate sense,
and are lost to all hopes of political salvation.   The
dependence of the legislature on the executive power hath
been contended for by the same persons under the same direction;
and yet nothing surely can be more evident than this, that in
a constitution like ours, the safety of the whole depends on
the balance of the parts, and the balance of the parts on their
mutual independency of one another.............. that the public
safety depends on the equal balance of the power of the King,
and the power of the kingdom, and, that if ever it should
happen that one outweighed the other, the ruin of one, or of
both must undoubtedly follow".[14]   And again, in the "Diss-
ertation on Parties", Bolingbroke stresses this point, "The
constitutional independency of each part of the legislature
arises from hence, that distinct rights, powers and privileges
are assigned to it by the constitution.   But then this inde-
pendency of one part can be so little said to arise from the
dependency of another, that it consists properly and truly in
the free, unbiased, uninfluenced, and independent exercise
of those rights, powers and privileges by each part, in as
ample an extent as the constitution allows, or, in other
words, as far as that point where the constitution stops this
free exercise, and submits the proceedings of one part, not to

(NOTE: 14. Bolingbroke - "History of England". Letter II).

private influence, but to the public control of the other parts". 15

In all this appears his basic error, a failure
to realize that to pretend to liberate parliament from the
influence of the Crown, and to abolish party under Eighteenth
Century conditions would have made collaboration between the
executive and the legislature impossible.   Nevertheless, this
criticism of Bolingbroke must not be over-emphasized. We can
see now that the Whig corruption of the Walpole period was an
almost inevitable stage in constitutional development, but it
is hardly to be expected that a contemporary opponent of the
Whigs should have seen it in that light.   Moreover, while we
see now that some link was necessary between a parliament
supreme in matters of legislation, and an executive supreme
in the determination of policy, we have the advantage of
knowing that that link was to be found in a cabinet system by
means of which parliament was to secure an independent control
over the determination of policy.   In 1730, however, it must
have seemed much more probable that the cabinet system as
worked by George II and Walpole, would end by giving the
Crown and its ministers control of the legislature.

In the Cabinet system as we understand it today,
the necessary harmony between the legislature and executive
is secured by providing that the Crown shall take as its
ministers the leaders of that party which has a majority in
the Commons.   Under George II, on the other hand, there were
no organized political parties, and the Crown's choice of
ministers was determined by the personal conflicts of oligarchic

(NOTE: 15. Bolingbroke - Dissertation on Parties. Letter XII).

Whig cliques, who once they had possessed themselves of
the Crown's influence and patronage, proceeded to use it to
create for themselves the necessary majority in the Commons.
In other words, while the necessary connection between
cabinit government and the majority in the Commons was
already perceived, there was a subtle difference in emphasis,
and contemporary critics may well be pardoned for having
failed to recognize in the cabinet system as worked by Walpole,
a means of asserting parliamentary control of the crown. To
Bolingbroke under George II, as to Burke under George III, it
not unnaturally seemed that the power of the crown, dead as
prerogative, was being revived as influence. Yet, it is not
too much to suggest that some dim perception of the difference
between cabinet government as worked by Walpole, and cabinet
government as it was ultimately to develop was already present
in Bolingbroke's passage in the "Craftsman". "The House of
Commons," he wrote, "considered as one part of the legislature
ought not to be independent of the other parts, which are the
House of Lords and the King. In like manner, the House of
Lords ought not to be independent of the King and Commons;
nor the King independent of the Lords and Commons. In this
sense then, the several estates of the legislature are
dependent on each other, but this dependency arises from the
wisdom and happiness of our constitution, which hath provided
that no one branch of the legislature shall enact anything to
the prejudice, or without the consent of the others. It arises
from the necessity of a mutual agreement, founded on mutual
interests; whereas, if the exercise of any corrupt influence
should be allowed, one branch of the legislature would gain
such an ascendent over the others, that the balance of our

constitution would be broken, and the concurrent assent
of the legislature might not arise from the mutual interests
of those who constitute it, but from a dependence which is
created by corruption".

Thus, by 1760, the necessity of some connect-
ing link between the legislative and executive powers was
seen.   During this period, it was supplied by a corrupt
"interest" and Bolingbroke, criticising this, denounced it
as the result of party government and advocated a non-party
system.   In the next fifty years the idea of a cabinet
responsible to the party having a majority in the House of
Commons was worked out; and, when this was more clearly
understood, and the party system had been dissociated from
that corruption which between 1714 and 1760 had seemed to be
its necessary concomitant, the idea of non-party government
rapidly became only a historical memory.

(NOTE: 16. Bolingbroke - "The Craftsman". No. 258.