The Idea of Non-Party Government in England, 1702-1751, with Some Special Reference to Bolingbroke.

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by

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I

Until recent years there has been a widely accepted theory that party government in the modern sense of the term, that is, government by a group of men all of the same political complexion, united upon certain fundamental principles, and backed by a majority in the House of Commons, was a practice which followed almost immediately upon the Revolution of 1688. As a result of this antedating, the tendency has been to gloss over the work and theories of those Englishmen who strove to evade the implications of government by party, and who advocated a system of government by capable and moderate men, regardless of party ties. It is the purpose of this thesis to show that although in the years following 1688 the constitution was undoubtedly drawing toward the stage where a Cabinet based upon party was to displace a government whose members were chosen solely by the King irrespective of party affiliations, this conclusion was by no means accepted or foreseen by the men who were actually administering the affairs of the nation during the reign of Anne, and that, although non-party government ceased to be practiced after Anne's death, the theory was nevertheless retained by some of the foremost minds of the time.

II

The brief period from 1708-1710 was the only time during the twelve years of Anne's reign in which England was governed

by a Ministry whose members were chosen solely from one party. At all times throughout the reign, at least two of the four great exponents of non-party government, the Queen, Godolphin, Marlborough, and Harley, were actively engaged in the administration of governmental policy.

In part, at least, this system of non-party government was inherited from the Queen's predecessor, William III. William had been little concerned with Whig or Tory party as such. As Stadtholder, his chief desire had been to curb the power of France, and this factor had been largely instrumental in the making of his decision to accept the throne of England. With the resources of England behind him, his chances of achieving his object were good; without England his efforts would have been in vain. Accordingly, as King of England, William was willing to choose his Ministers from whatever party would provide him with the means and resources to prosecute the war with France. In time, he found by practical experience, that a Ministry composed of the moderate men of both parties was the best instrument for his purpose. He therefore chose his Ministers from both Whig and Tory party. It was to this policy, as well as to the war with France, than Anne succeeded.

Upon her accession to the throne, Anne immediately announced her intention of pursuing the war against Louis XIV. She began her reign with a Ministry almost exclusively Tory, and had the bulk of the Tory party been willing to acquiesce, for the duration of the war, in a system of toleration and moderate measures at

home, it might well have remained in power for many years. The High Tories, however, were anxious to persecute the Whigs and dissenters, and it was on this as well as on the personal rivalry of the great noblemen, that the party finally split in two.

The final break came in 1704 when the High Tories were enraged by the rejection of the Occasional Conformity bill. In the face of the crisis that followed, Anne chose to retain the moderate Tories and to dismiss the High Tories, Jersey, Nottingham, and Seymour, and in so doing she took occasion to state her attitude to the whole question of party government. To Godolphin she wrote in May or June, 1705:

> "... I am truly sensible of everything you say proceeds from the sincerity of your heart, and from no other motive, and I beg you would be so just to me as to believe I am entirely satisfied with you in everything, and that I have no thought or desire to have you join yourself to any one party. All I wish is to be kept out of the power of both..." (1)

Harley also refused to admit that the breach with the High Tories and the loss of their support would necessitate a union with their Whig rivals.

"I take it for granted" he wrote to Godolphin in Sept-

(1) Brown, p. 165. See also Appendix I.

ember of 1704, "that no party in the House can carry it for themselves without the Queen's servants join with them;

That the foundation is, persons or parties are to come in to the Queen, and not the Queen to them;

That the Queen hath chosen rightly which party she will take in...

If the gentlemen of England are made sensible that the Queen is the Head, and not a Party, everything will be easy, and the Queen will be courted and not a Party..." (1)

Marlborough, too, shared the same sentiments. In April, 1705, just prior to the General Election, he wrote to Sarah:

"... I think at this time it is for the queen's service, and the good of England, that the choice might be such as that neither party might have a great majority, so that her majesty might be able to influence what might be good for the common interest." (2)

The Highflying Tories having been alienated, the Godolphin Ministry found itself with no specific party majority upon which to base itself in the Commons, and to Godolphin

(1) Bath Papers I, p.74.
(2) Coxe I, p481. See also Appendix II.

himself, it began to appear necessary to court at least some measure of Whig support.

As a price of this support, however, the Whigs demanded a share in the fruits of royal favour and of admission to office, and Godolphin, faced with the necessity of securing support for the administration, was prepared to meet their demands. Marlborough, on the other hand, being in less immediate touch with the parliamentary situation at home, was slower to realise the necessity, while the Queen could never bring herself to acknowledge it.

It is clear from Godolphin's correspondence, that his decision to include the Whigs in his administration was never due to any preference for party government, or to any conscious theory as to its nature. It was due simply and solely to the immediate need to enlist Whig support. Late in 1705, he wrote to Harley:

> "... is it not more reasonable and more easy to preserve those who have served and helped us than to seek those who have basely and ungratefully done all that was in their poor power to ruin us: and when they find themselves disappointed, they would willingly make a little fair weather again, in hopes only as I think of a better opportunity next winter, if we have ill success, and if we have good, of making a merit." (1)

(1) Portland Papers IV, p.891.

It was Godolphin's plan to offer ministerial positions to Whigs such as Newcastle, Sunderland, and Cowper, who would be less objectionable to Anne than some of the great Lords of the Junto. Even so, the Queen was far from agreeable; and when asked to appoint Cowper as Keeper of the Great Seal, she wrote to Godolphin as follows:

> "... I wish very much that there may be a moderate Tory found for this employment. For I must own to you I dread the falling into the hands of either party, and the Whigs have had so many favours showed them of late, that I fear a very few more will put me insensibly into their power, which is what I'm sure you would not have happen no more than I... I do put an entire confidence in you, not doubting but what you will do all you can to keep me out of the power of the merciless men of both parties..." (1)

In regard to the appointment of Sunderland as Secretary of State, Anne was even more emphatic and she seized this opportunity to repeat once again her theory of government. To Godolphin she wrote:

> "... Besides, I must own freely to you, I am of

(1) Brown, p. 172.

> the opinion, that making a party man Secretary of State, when there are so many of their friends in employment of all kinds already, is throwing myself into the hands of a party, which is a thing I have been desirous to avoid. May be some may think I would be willing to be in the hands of the tories; but whatever people may say of me, I do assure you I am not inclined, nor never will be, to employ any of those violent persons, that have behaved themselves so ill towards me. All I desire is, my liberty in encouraging and employing all those that concur faithfully in my service, whether they are called whigs or tories, not to be tied to one, nor the other; for if I should be so unfortunate as to fall into the hands of either, I shall not imagine myself, though I have the name of queen, to be in reality but their slave, which as it will be my personal ruin, so it will be the destroying of all government; for instead of putting an end to faction, it will lay a lasting foundation for it..." (1)

In spite of the Queen's protests, however, Marlborough and Godolphin became increasingly convinced of the need of Whig support for their war policies; and, though neither of

(1) Coxe II, p.137.

them had relished the process, by 1708 they had completely reconstructed the government on Whig lines.

In 1708, however, the final breach occurred in this junto of four moderate Tories who had governed England since 1702. Marlborough and Godolphin had come to realise the practical necessity, if not the theoretical implications of party government, while the Queen and Harley refused to acknowledge the implications of a system of government by parties, and clung tenaciously to the theory that the best administration was one composed of the moderate men of both parties. It was on this, as well as upon the ever-growing personal rivalry of Godolphin and Harley, that the break occurred which compelled Godolphin and Marlborough to rely more and more on the Whigs, while Anne and Harley, faced with the party spirit of the Whigs, found themselves reluctantly driven into the arms of the extreme Tories.

That Harley was not unprepared for this turn of events may be seen from his letter to Godolphin of September, 1707, wherein he states:

> "... I dread the thoughts of running from the extreme 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 its hinges to let in each party as it grows triumphant, and in truth this is the real parent and

nurse of our factions here..." (1)

From 1708 to 1710, then, Harley was out of office, and Marlborough and Godolphin, lacking the Queen's support, were obliged to turn more and more to the Whigs. Meanwhile, Harley and Anne, alarmed at the growing power of the Whigs, were steadily working to bring about the downfall of the administration. They did not, however, on that account entertain any thought of giving themselves wholly to the Tories, as may be seen by the gradual steps by which they displaced the Whig ministers. It was Harley's intention to take in the moderate men of both parties. As Defoe, his mouthpiece, wrote to him in 1710:

> "Since I had the honour of seeing you, I can assure you by experience I find, that acquainting some people [i.e. the Whigs] they are not all to be devoured, and eaten up - will have all the effect upon them could be wished for; assuring them that moderate counsels are at the bottom of all these things; that the old mad party [i.e the High Tories] are not coming in; that his Grace the Duke of S[hrewsbury] and yourself, &c. are at the head of the management; ... that toleration,

(1) Bath Papers I, p. 101.

succession or union are not struck at, and they may be easy as to the nation's liberties - those things make strong impressions, and well improved may bring all to rights again..." (1)

If further proof be needed that Harley did not intend a full Tory game, it may be adduced from the fact that, throughout the period of the formation of his administration, he had been in constant communication with moderate Whigs such as Shrewsbury, Somerset, Newcastle, and Argyll, who at that time, expressed their willingness to come into office under him. Whatever may have been the case with Shrewsbury, whose party obligations always sat lightly upon him, it is inconceivable that sincere Whigs such as Somerset and Argyll would ever have lent their support to Harley in the business of ejecting Marlborough and Godolphin had they believed that a full Tory game was intended. What disconcerted Somerset and Argyll equally with the Queen and Harley, was the resounding victory of the Tories at the election of 1710, which made it difficult, if not impossible, for Harley to pursue those moderate courses in which alone he could have carried Somerset and Argyll with him. Even Shrewsbury, though willing to work with Harley to obtain peace, would not have lent himself to the designs of the

(1) Portland Papers IV, p.502.

High Tories either in the matter of their High Anglican pretensions or of their views with regard to the Protestant succession. When Harley came to form his ministry, however, he found to his disappointment, that Newcastle was the only Whig who would consent to come in with him, and he was obliged to give the places that he had intended for moderate Whigs to men such as Harcourt and St. John who were intent on playing a full Tory game. It was not without genuine regret that Harley acted as he did, and that he was never in full sympathy with the High Tories may be adduced from the fact that, until the end of his period in office, he was still in communication with Halifax and other moderate Whigs. Nor did he ever willingly subscribe to the wishes of the Tory rank and file for a clean sweep of Whigs from place and office.

> "... Night and Day" Defoe was to write later, they besieged the White-Staff with their importunities on this Head, who, still resolving to act only upon the Defensive, and not to ruin the Persons of the other, tho' he had broken them as a Party, remain'd inflexible..." (1)

III.

The Tories had been swept into office in 1710 because they were the party which advocated the ending of the war, an object which was heartily desired by the majority of the

(1) White-Staff, pt. 1, p. 26. See also Appendix III.

English people. On the accession of George I, however, the tables were turned, and the Whigs came into the undisputed power which they were to enjoy for the next half century. Curiously enough, the collapse of the Tory party was engendered by the very thing which had won for them the election of 1710 - the peace negotiations of that and the following years. Prior to 1710 the Elector had shown favoritism for neither English party, but when the Tories opened negotations for peace, the fact that he was a supporter of the Emperor and therefore in favour of the continuation of the war, caused him to swing toward the Whigs. A section of the Tories, in turn, knowing this to be the case, were tempted to flirt with the idea of a Stuart restoration, a fact which naturally strengthened the bond between the Elector and their rivals. The death of Anne, coming as it did at a time when the Tories were undecided as to what course to pursue, caused the break up of the party and paved the way for the Whig accession to power.

From 1714-1760, therefore, the Whigs enjoyed a monopoly of office, and during that period the two party system was in almost complete abeyance. The reason for this lay in the fact that, for the time being, the Tories were paralyzed by the conflicting aspects of their creed - the cause of legitism and the cause of Protestantism - and were unable to offer any real opposition to the Whig party. During these years there was no fundamental question to divide the nation, and

the conflict of ideas which had characterized the previous reign, was succeeded by a struggle for place. Namier has stated the case as follows:

> "Fifty years later [after 1705] the nation was at one in all fundamental matters, and whenever that happy but uninspiring condition is reached, Parliamentary contests lose reality and unavoidably change into a fierce though bloodless struggle for place..." (1)

It was this situation, together with its ill-apprehended consequences, which formed the subject matter of Bolingbroke's polemic on the question of party. (2) For while Bolingbroke erred in attributing the corruption of his time to the party system, rather than to the abeyance of that system, he did succeed in making clear two undeniable facts - i.e. that, in his day, the names of Whig and Tory had ceased to have any meaning, and that the real political distinction of his time was that between court and country. In his first letter of the "Dissertation upon Parties" he insisted that the Whig and Tory principles of the previous century no longer served as the present policies of the parties who still bore those names.

> "The power and majesty of the people" he wrote, an original contract, the authority and independency of parliament, liberty, resistance, exclusion,

(1) Namier I, p. 21.
(2) See Examiner, Craftsman, and Dissertation upon Parties.

abdication, deposition; these were ideas associated, at that time, to the idea of a whig, and supposed by every whig to be incommunicable, and inconsistent with the idea of a tory.

Divine, hereditary, indefeasible right, lineal succession, passive obedience, prerogative, non-resistance, slavery, may, and sometimes popery too, were associated in many minds to the idea of a tory, and deemed incommunicable and inconsistent in the same manner, with the idea of a whig.

But now... These associations are broken; these distinct sets of ideas are shuffled out of their order; new combinations force themselves upon us; and it would actually be as absurd to impute to the tories the principles, which were laid to their charge formerly, as it would be to ascribe to the projector and his faction the name of whigs, whilst they daily forfeit that character by their actions. The bulk of both parties are really united; united on principles of liberty, in opposition to an obscure remnant of one party, who disown those principles, and a mercenary detachment from the other, who betray them." (1)

Bolingbroke then went on to show that even at the time of Charles II and James II the two parties had been much nearer

(1) Dissertation upon Parties, Letter I.

to each other than they had thought, and that it was only the cabals of Monmouth on the one side, and the Duke of York on the other, which frightened the Tories into fearing another 1640, and the Whigs a Papist tyranny. Fears such as these, Bolingbroke maintained, served to preserve the spirit of party.

> "... for" he wrote, "as the distinction of whig and tory subsisted long after the real differences were extinguished, so were these parties at first divided, not so much by overt acts committed, as by the apprehensions which each of them entertained of the intentions of the other..." (1)
>
> And again "As the two parties were formed, so was their division maintained by mutual jealousies and fears, which are often sufficient to nourish themselves, when they have once taken root in the mind, and which were, at this time, watered and cultivated with all the factious industry possible..." (2)

In the same way, he suggested that the action of both parties at the time of the Revolution of 1688 had served to prove that the imputations which each laid to the other's charge had been unjust. In joining together to remove James II and install William III in his place, the Tories had absolved themselves from

(1) Dissertation upon Parties, Letter V.
(2) Dissertation upon Parties, Letter VI.

the charge of favouring Popery, and the Whigs demonstrated that they were not Republicans. "The tories" Bolingbroke wrote, "stopped short in the pursuit of a bad principle, and the whigs reformed the abuse of a good one... The revolution was a fire, which purged off the dross of both parties; and the dross being purged off, they appeared to be the same metal..." (1)

The Revolution of 1688, then, was in Bolingbroke's view the point at which all real distinction between the two parties disappeared. Of it he wrote:

> "... both sides purged themselves on this great occasion, of the imputations laid to their charge by their adversaries; that the proper and real distinction of the two parties expired at this era, and that 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 on the stage of the world under the present constitution, except those of churchmen and dissenters, those of court and country." (2)

Having thus anticipated our modern view of the revolution as a national triumph over James II, rather than a Whig triumph over Tory, Bolingbroke proceeds to show that, as a consequence

(1) Dissertation upon Parties, Letter VII.
(2) Dissertation upon Parties, Letter VII.

of the revolution, both parties had really lost their "raison d'être" and had in consequence exchanged rôles. Of the reign of William III he wrote:

> "... I shall take leave to produce some principles, which in the several periods of the late reign, served to denote a man of one or the other party. To be against a standing army in time of peace, was all high church, Tory and Tantivy. To differ from a majority of b[ishe]ps was the same. To raise the prerogative 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, Whiggish and moderate. To make the least doubt of the pretended prince being supposititious and a tiler's son, was, in their phrase, "top and topgallant," and perfect Jacobitism. To resume the most exorbitant grants, that were ever given to a set of profligate favourites, and 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..." (1)

Having thus insisted that the true distinction between Whig and Tory had been dissipated at the time of the Revolution, Bolingbroke proceeded to explain why the names of the parties had survived in the years following 1688. His point may best be illustrated by a quotation from his own work.

"But whatever the state of parties was at the revolution, and for some time afterwards, the settlement made at that time having continued, that state of parties hath changed gradually, though slowly, and hath received at length, according to the necessary course of things, a total alteration. This alteration would have been sooner wrought, if the attempt I have mentioned, to defend principles no longer defensible, had not furnished the occasion and pretence to keep up the appearances of a tory and a whig party. Some of those who had been called tories furnished this pretence. They who had been called whigs seized and improved it. The advantages to one side, the disadvantages to the other, the mischiefs to the whole, which have ensued, I need not deduce. It shall suffice to observe, that these appearances were the more

(1) Examiner - Volume IX of Swift's Works, p. 286.

easy to be kept up, because several men, who had stood conspicuous in opposition to one another before the revolution, continued an opposition, though not the same, afterwards. Fresh provocations were daily given, and fresh pretences for division daily taken. These contests were present; they recalled those that had past in the time of king Charles the Second, and both sides forgot that union which their common danger and their common interest had formed at the revolution. Old reproaches were renewed, new ones invented, against the party called whigs, when they were as complaisant to a court as ever the tories had been; against the party called tories, when they were as jealous of public liberty and as frugal of public money as ever the whigs had been. Danger to the church, on one side, and danger to the state, on the other, were apprehended from men who meant no harm to either; for though dissenters mingled themselves on one side, and jacobites on the other, and notwithstanding the leanings of parties in favor of those, by whom they were abetted, yet it is a certain truth, that the struggle was in the main for power, not principle; and that there was no formal design laid on one side to destroy the church, nor on the other the state..." (1)

(1) Dissertation upon Parties, Letter IX.

Pursuing his argument through the developments of his own day, he endeavoured to show that, since the time of their inception, the two parties had completely exchanged rôles. His Article 105 in the Craftsman exemplifies his thesis, discussing the tenets of the Whig party as they had originally been - opposition to the proceedings of the Court, disapproval of standing armies, adherence to the Protestant religion, insistence on freedom of elections and liberty of the press, opposition to the exalting of the prerogative over the liberties of the people, and to the imposition of exorbitant taxes, and, above all, enmity to the growth of the power of France. Against these original Whig principles he sets the political creed of a modern Whig.

> "Article I. That the People of England ought to enjoy an absolute Liberty, under a Tory Administration, not only to act and write against Ministers, but even to abuse the Person of the Prince, if They think fit; but that when Men, who call themselves Whigs, succeed in Power, a Restraint ought to be put upon such Practices.
>
> 2. That the Liberty of the Press, without any Limitations, is the Birth-right of every free Briton, when the Tories are in Power; but degenerates into Faction and Licentiousness, under a Whig-Administration.
>
> 3. That as long as the Protestant Religion continues to be established amongst us, our civil Liberties can never be in Danger.
>
> 4. That it is the undoubted Privilege of every Subject

in these Kingdoms to ridicule, vilify, and expose the whole System of Christianity, though established, in the most solemn Manner, by the Laws of the Land; but if any Man presumes, even by Innuendo, to censure the Conduct of any Minister (though He is a Creature, who subsists only by the Pleasure of his Prince) he ought to be severely fin'd, pillory'd, and imprison'd.

5. That a Libel is, whatever may happen to give Offence to a great Man.

6. That the Proceedings of the Star-Chamber, and other arbitrary Courts, in former Reigns, are proper Precedents, under a free Government, for the Punishment of Men, who are guilty of such Writings.

7. That a Tory Minister, who manages by Bribery and Corruption, ought to lose his Head; but when Whigs are at the Helm, They become necessary for the good Order and Government of the State.

8. That the Humours of Men, however vicious, must be indulged, even at the Expence of Virtue and Morality.

9. That Men of great Vices and little Abilities are generally of more Importance to the State, than others of the most shining Virtues and exalted Capacities.

10. That it was a plain Sign of Male-Administration, and highly criminal in Sejanus, Wolsey, and Buckingham to engross the publick Honours and Employments; to

to amass immense Wealth; build sumptuous Palaces; and vie with their Princes in Magnificence; but the same Practices in a Whig-Favourite are undeniable Marks of publick Spirit, Frugality, and good Management.

11. That large, standing Armies, composed of mercenary Troops, are, under a Tory Administration, great Grievances, and very dangerous to the Liberties of the People; but, under the Direction of Whigs, nothing can be more desirable, or a better Security to our Constitution.

12. That Ignorance is the Parent of Obedience in the State, in the same Manner that it is said to be the Mother of Devotion in the Church; and therefore that the People ought not to be made acquainted with any Transactions of State.

13. That it is most for the Advantage of Great Britain to rely on those Nations, which are naturally its most inveterate Enemies." (1)

In short, "... modern Whiggism is only the Practice of the worst Principles that were ever imputed to the Tories..." (2)

(1) Craftsman, no. 103.
(2) Craftsman, no. 103.

IV.

In Bolingbroke's mind, his analysis of English party history since 1660 was the indispensable basis for his criticism of Whig corruption in his own day. The greater part of his criticism was levelled at the corruption exercised by Walpole as a means of commanding a majority in the legislature, and it is in his analysis of the causes of this situation that Bolingbroke made his cardinal error.

The situation as created in 1688 had made the Crown dependent on the legislature for supplies, while leaving it free to choose its ministers at will. We, who have had the advantage of seeing the system of party government worked out in its entirety, can see that such an arrangement must inevitably have led to a deadlock, had not the ministers thus chosen found means to command a majority in the legislature.

Our modern solution has been to give parliament indirect control of policy by giving it indirect control of the choice of ministers; and this is done by providing that ministers shall be taken automatically from the party which can command a majority in the Commons. In Bolingbroke's day, however, there were no organised political parties with leaders independent of the Crown, and ministers were selected by the Sovereign from a number of oligarchic Whig groups, who, once they had possessed themselves of the influence of the Crown, used it to create for themselves the necessary majority in the Commons.

This corruption was clearly perceived by Bolingbroke, but he did not perceive that it was, in a sense, an historic necessity, without which a deadlock would be bound to ensue between a parliament theoretically sovereign in the control of legislation and supply, & whose members were bound by no formal party ties, and an executive theoretically sovereign in the control and determination of policy.

As a remedy for this state of affairs Bolingbroke advocated a return to the position of 1688, in the belief that such a move would maintain the British Constitution in its pristine purity and avoid the corruption which, to his mind, had no place in a free constitution and was purely evil.

> "... 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 agonising 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 on one another... that the publick safety depends on the equal balance of the power of the king, and of 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." (1)

This insistance on a balanced constitution Bolingbroke stressed again in his Dissertation upon Parties. Here he wrote:

> "... 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 independency of one part can be so little said to arise from the dependency of another, that it consists properly and truly in the free, unbiassed, uninfluenced and independent exercise of these 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 the private influence, but to the public control of the other parts. Before this point, the independency of each part is meant by

(1) History of England, Letter II.

> the constitution to be absolute. From this point, the constitutional dependency of each part on the others commences..." (1)

In all these examples appears Bolingbroke's failure to realise that the corruption he denounced, although undoubtedly an evil, was a necessary evil. We know now that in order to achieve harmony between the legislature and the executive, the cabinet must be chosen from the party in majority in the legislature, but in 1730 this fact had not been realised and for practical purposes the employment of corruption had been the best means of obtaining the necessary link between the executive and the legislature. Bolingbroke, however, should not be too severely criticized for his errors in this respect, for he was too close to the situation to be able to see it in its true perspective.

There is one other source in which Bolingbroke suggested a positive remedy for the evils of his time. "The Spirit of Patriotism" and "The Patriot King", although perhaps the best known of his works, are not to be placed in the same category with his "Dissertation upon Parties", for they contain neither the depth nor the sincerity of the latter. Nevertheless, they did make clear the fact that the old idea of divine indefeasible right was absurdly out of date. Bolingbroke intimated, however, that a wise and public spirited monarch may nevertheless make judicial

(1) Dissertation upon Parties, Letter XII.

use of his prerogative, while still observing the spirit of the constitution.

> "To espouse no party, but to govern like the common father of his people, is so essential to the character of a PATRIOT KING, that he who does otherwise forfeits the title... For faction is to party what the superlative is to the positive: party is a political evil, and faction is the worst of all parties..." (1)

In this appears Bolingbroke's failure to realise that if a king were to dissociate himself completely from party "to espouse no party but to govern like the common father of his people" he would have only one possible means of achieving his end - i.e. to rule without Parliament as Charles II had done. That Bolingbroke never intended to suggest any such return to pre-Revolution monarchy is certain.

> "... the revolution" he had written "is looked upon by all sides as a new era; but the settlement then made is looked upon by the whole country party as a new Magna Charta, from whence new interests, new principles of government, new measures of submission, and new obligations arise... To this Magna Charta, and these principles, let us adhere inviolably, in opposition to the two extremes mentioned by me at the beginning of this letter, viz: to those who disown them, and to those who betray them. Let neither

(1) Patriot King, p.93.

> the polemical skill of Henly, nor the antique erudition of Bedford, persuade us to put on again those old shackles of false law, false reason, and false gospel, which were forged before the revolution, and broken to pieces by it...." (1)

In short, we reach this position. Bolingbroke desired a patriot king who should govern as well as reign. If the king was to govern, however, he could only do so in one of two ways: either he must be in a position, in the last resort, to override parliament, a solution which, as we have seen, Bolingbroke everywhere repudiated; or, he must govern with the consent and collaboration of parliament, and he who governs with a parliament must govern with a party. Yet Bolingbroke had begun by positing a king who should be above all party.

In Bolingbroke's time, then, the connection between cabinet government and the majority in the Commons had certainly been perceived, but the fact which had not been made clear was that harmony between cabinet and legislature could best be achieved by the selection of an executive from the party in the Commons which had acquired a majority of members independently of the power of the Crown. Ever since the accession of George I corruption had been the means by which Walpole, backed by the Crown, had obtained the support he needed, and to Bolingbroke this was suggestive of a revival of the prerogative. Much as he disliked Cabinet govern-

(1) Dissertation upon Parties, Letter I.

ment as worked under Walpole, however, it is possible that Bolingbroke had some dim vision of cabinet government as it was ultimately to develope.

> "... The House of Commons" he wrote in the Craftsman "consider'd 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 the Commons; nor the King independent of the Lords and the 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 any Thing 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 allow'd, one Branch of the Legislature would gain such an Ascendent over the others, that the Ballance 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." (1)

(1) Craftsman, no. 258

In other words, he was not contending for that absolute independency, which, if exercised by every branch of the Crown-in-Parliament would, as we have seen, have led to deadlock; but simply against a dependency of the one part on the other created by corruption.

The idea of non-party government, then, died hard in England. During the reign of Anne the Queen and the ablest of her ministers adhered to it, not only in theory but in practice. After the accession of George I, circumstances led to the abeyance of the practice, but the theory was still retained by some of the foremost minds of the time. Faulty as was Bolingbroke's analysis of the corruption which he denounced, and impractical as were his suggested remedies, his work should nevertheless serve to remind us of the bewilderment and reluctance with which he and his contemporaries faced the development of the system of government by a party which was then in process of uncertain evolution.

APPENDIX I

Letters illustrative of Anne's attitude to party.

Queen Anne to the Duke of Marlborough

Coxe II, p.344. 1707.

"... I can think of but one thing to be added, which is, a resolution to encourage all those, who have not been in opposition, that will concur in my service, whether they be whigs or tories, which is a thing I wish might be put in practice, believing it might do a great deal of good..."

Queen Anne to the Duke of Marlborough

Brown, p. 252. 3 July, 1708.

"... the parties are such bugbears that I dare not venture to write my mind freely of either of them without a cipher for fear of any accident. I pray God keep me out of the hands of both of them."

Queen Anne to the Duke of Marlborough

Brown, p. 253. 22 July, 1708.

"... I can never be convinced that Christianity requires me, nor that it can be for my service to put myself entirely into the hands of any one party..."

APPENDIX II

Letters illustrative of the attitude of the Triumvirate to party.

The Duke of Marlborough to Sarah

Coxe I, p. 202. 3-4 June, 1703.

"... There is nothing more certain than what you say, that either of the parties would by tyrants if they were let alone; and I am afraid it is as true, that it will be very hard for the queen to prevent it..."

The Duke of Marlborough to Sarah

Coxe I, p. 205. 30 September, 1703.

"... all parties are alike... I think both parties unreasonable and unjust... I shall... endeavour to recommend myself to the world by my sincere intentions of governing all my actions by what I shall think is for the interest of my queen and country..."

The Duke of Marlborough to Sarah

Coxe I, p. 348. 20 October, 1704.

"... my pretending to be of no party is not designed to get favour, or to deceive any body, for I am very little concerned what any party thinks of me; I know them both so well, that if my quiet depended upon either of them, I should be most miserable, as I find happiness is not to be had in this world, which I did flatter myself might have been enjoyed in a retired life. I will endeavour to leave a good name behind me in countries that have hardly any blessing but that of not knowing the detested names of whig and tory..."

The Duke of Marlborough to Godolphin

Coxe I, p. 482. 6-17 July, 1705.

"The composition of parliament seems to be such, that neither party can carry any point against the other by their own strength. One sort of gentlemen have behaved themselves so, that there remains very little room for debate which the queen should make her's. The care seems to be only that she may not be in the power of a party; for there are indifferent and unlisted men enough, who will be content and zealous to promote the queen's affairs, though they see persons of a different party from themselves employed; but though they will be content to see the queen govern, it will be uneasy to them to see a party govern. But I doubt not care will be taken to satisfy every person that deserves it."

Harley to Godolphin

Coxe II, p. 161. 16 November, 1706.

"... I hope your lordship will rescue us from the violence of either party; and I cannot forbear saying, I know no difference between a mad whig and a mad tory... It will be very hard ever to bring the nation to submit to any other government but the queen's. In her they will all center, and another election will shew that the party, as a party, are very far from being a majority though clothed with all manner of authority that can be given it..."

APPENDIX III

Letters illustrative of the moderation of Harley's intentions in 1710.

Journal to Stella, p. 22. 6 October, 1710.

"... We now hear daily of elections; and, in a list I saw yesterday of about twenty, there are seven or eight more Tories than in the last Parliament; so that I believe they need not fear a majority, with the help of those who will vote as the court pleases. But I have been told, that Mr. Harley himself would not let the Tories be too numerous, for fear they should be insolent, and kick against him; and for that reason they have kept several Whigs in employments, who expected to be turned out every day..."

Minutes of Messenger, p. 74.

"And now Mr. H--- was cast entirely upon the Tories, and yet so impossible it is for politick Men to part with their own Schemes, that he never so entirely came into them, as to take their Measures wholly: nor did they ever come in so far to him, as to believe him entirely their Friend; and this mutual Distrust and Dislike drove hundreds from him, increased his Opposers, and divided the whole Party."

Peter Wentworth to his brother

Wentworth Papers, p. 144. 26 September, 1710.

"... They say he [Somerset] own he has been deceived by Mr. Harley, for all he intended to do was to free the Queen from the power of the two great men, and was promised that things shou'd be carried no further... when they came to dissolve the Parliament, 'twas what he cou'd never consent to, and Mr. L-- told me this morning that 'twas very true he was much sett upon having the Parliament continue, and had the vanity to think he cou'd manage that house of Commons as he pleased, and because they wou'd not believe him in that particular he was angry. 'Tis odd an enough (sic) for him that has been running down those that wou'd be telling the queen upon every rub they met to their will they must lay down, that he so soon shou'd be at the same game himself. He has met with the junto, and they all made him believe they receive him very cordially, and he has declared he will give all the interest he has in every place he has any influence in to Whigs."