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The idea of non-party government in England,  
1702-1761, with some special reference

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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 1706-1710 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, that 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 <sup>on</sup> 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, every-thing 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. Harlborough, on the other hand, being in less immediate touch with the parliamentary situation at home, was slower to realize 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.291.

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 left the process, by 1708 they had completely re-  
 constructed the government on this line.  
 In 1708, however, the final breach occurred in this juncture  
 of four moderate Tories who had governed England since 1702.  
 Marlborough and Godolphin had come to realize the practical  
 necessity, if not the theoretical implications of party gov-  
 ernment, while the Queen and Harley refused to acknowledge  
 the implications of a system of government by parties, and  
 thus tentatively 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 drawn 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 ex-  
 treme of one faction to another which is the nature  
 of consequence of party government, and renders the  
 Government like a door which turns both ways upon  
 its hinges to let in each party as it grows str-  
 ongher, and in truth this is the real danger and



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 light 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.552.

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.

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

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

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.

Charles II and James II the two parties had been much nearer  
together than would be shown if they were of the same

(1) "The Party"

and a necessary departure from the other, who de-  
termined of one party, who claim these principles;  
on principles of liberty, in opposition to an opposite  
the bulk of both parties are really united; united  
they daily forget that character by their actions,  
professed and his position the name of which, which  
change formerly, as it would be to suppose to the  
the parties the principles, which were told to that  
and it would actually be as usual to suppose to  
order; non-comparisons force themselves upon us;  
distinct sets of ideas are exhibited out of their  
but now... These associations are broken; these

the same manner, with the idea of a party.  
to be, and seemed inconsistent and inconsistent in  
were associated in every mind to the idea of a  
justice, equality, and sometimes justice too,  
excitement, passive obedience, prerogative, non-  
divine, hereditary, inflexible rights, unjust

with the idea of a party.  
every thing to be inconsistent, and inconsistent  
at that time, to the idea of a party, and supposed by  
opposition, deposition, these were ideas associated,

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.

over long, Bolingbroke proceeds to show that, as a consequence  
 as a national triumph over James II, rather than a civil triumph  
 having thus anticipated our modern idea of the Revolution  
 men and dissenters; those of court and country." (2)  
 under the present constitution, except those of church-  
 among those who are come on the stage of the world  
 conciliatory with common sense, and common honesty,  
 nor can be any division of parties at this time; re-  
 do us so many years afterwards, let there neither be,  
 although their efforts have continued to hunt and dis-  
 tion of the two parties expired at this era; and that  
 their adversaries; that the proper and real distinc-  
 tion; of the impositions laid to their charge by  
 "... both sides purged themselves on this great oc-  
 appeared. Of it he wrote:  
 point at which all real distinction between the two parties dis-  
 the Revolution of 1688; then, was in Bolingbroke's view the  
 or; they appeared to be the same party..." (1)  
 purged off the gross of both parties; and the gross being purged  
 formed the basis of a good one. The Revolution was a fire, which  
 led short in the pursuit of a bad principle; and the wise re-  
 they were not Republicans. "The Tories" Bolingbroke wrote; "stop-  
 the charge of favouring Popery; and the Whigs demonstrated that

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 Tantiy. To differ from a majority of bishops 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 these grants were known to be acquired, by sacrificing the honour and the wealth of England.

In most of these principles, the two parties

time to observe, that these appearances were the more  
 which have ensued, I need not deduce. It shall not  
 advantages to the other, the advantages to the whole,  
 improved it. The advantages to one side, the disad-  
 vantage. They who had been called upon to defend and  
 of those who had been called upon to furnish the  
 up the appearance of a body and a white party. Some  
 had not furnished the occasion and presence to keep  
 stoned, to defend principles no longer defensible,  
 have been sooner brought, if the attempt I have men-  
 of things, a total abolition, this abolition would  
 received at length, according to the necessary course  
 ties hath changed gradually, though slowly, and hath  
 made at that time having continued, that state of par-  
 tion, and for some time afterwards, the settlement  
 "But whatever the state of parties was at the revolu-  
 tion, and for some time afterwards, the settlement  
 made at that time having continued, that state of par-  
 ties hath changed gradually, though slowly, and hath  
 received at length, according to the necessary course  
 of things, a total abolition, this abolition would  
 have been sooner brought, if the attempt I have men-  
 stoned, to defend principles no longer defensible,  
 which have ensued, I need not deduce. It shall not  
 time to observe, that these appearances were the more

other the state... (1)

right side on one side to destroy the church, not on the  
 power, not principles; and that there was no formal de-  
 a certain truth, that the struggle was in the main for  
 favor of those, by whom they were elected, yet it is  
 other, and notwithstanding the language of parties in  
 mingled themselves on one side, and Jacobites on the  
 who meant no harm to either; for though dissenters  
 to the state, on the other, were apprehended from men  
 had been. Danger to the church, on one side, and danger  
 liberty and as trust of public money as ever the whigs  
 called Tories, when they were as jealous of public  
 a court as ever the Tories had been; against the party  
 party called whigs, when they were as complaisant to  
 doctrines were removed, new ones invented, against the  
 common interest had formed at the revolution. Old de-  
 forget that union which their common danger and their  
 in the time of King Charles the second, and both sides  
 tests were present; they recalled those that had past  
 fresh provisions for violation daily taken. These con-  
 afterwards. Fresh provisions were daily given, and  
 dition, continued an opposition, though not the same,  
 conspicuous in opposition to one another before the rev-  
 easy to be kept up, because several men, who had stood

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 103 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