

Les Partis Politiques. By Maurice Duverger. (Paris: Librairie Armand Colin. 1951. Pp. xi, 476. 1,100 fr.)

Professor Duverger of the Institut d'Etudes politique of Paris, author of several works on public law and of a recent study on the influence of electoral systems on politics, aims in the present work to establish a general theory of political parties upon an empirical base. His facts come principally from France, the Low Countries, Scandinavia, and Great Britain, to a lesser extent from the Soviet Union, Germany, Italy, and the United States, and then briefly from some other countries. Although much of the continental material will be new to American political scientists, perhaps the outstanding contribution of the book is the logical clarity with which some of the most fundamental propositions about political parties are related to facts. The total structure of the work is admirable. It has two major divisions: Party Structure and Party Systems. Within the first part, we find chapters on the internal party *machinery and hierarchy*, on the nature ~~of~~ and intensity of participation of the *party* membership, and on the selection, power, and parliamentary influence of party leaders. Within the second division, we discover chapters on the dual-, multi-, and single-party systems, on party size and party alliances, and on the influence of parties upon candidates, public opinion, and the actual constitution of government. Among the detailed conclusions set forth by M. Duverger, one may select for illustration several that seem to this writer of significance in the context of the documentation which the book offers. The party system, writes Duverger,

is less a photograph of public opinion than public opinion is a projection of the party system. Political institutions--including election systems and party structures--determine political behavior in important respects. Although all governments are oligarchic (the author contributes new material to the Michels thesis), the Marxist distinction between formal and real liberty is not accurate; under conditions of party competition, some real liberties may be achieved. Indeed the elimination of communist parties from democratic regimes, believes Duverger, would <sup>threaten</sup> risk the equilibrium established by the pluralist party system. The profound meaning of party government is not government of the people by the people, but "government of the people by an elite springing from the people." Thus Duverger develops the democratic side of Michels' theory of oligarchy. The parties arose historically as the masses began to enter politics, and the parties formed the cadres for the political blocs into which the masses became divided. Democracy today is threatened not by party government but by the present tendencies of parties to acquire centralized and disciplined internal government resembling military, religious, and totalitarian organizations. This and other conclusions, reminiscent of the warnings of Bagehot, Lowell, and Michels and supported by contemporary evidence make of Duverger's book a valuable contribution to the growing science

of political parties. The techniques employed by the author in reaching such conclusions are fairly simple, and, as he says, not newly devised.

For the most part he uses tables, graphs, and bar charts, with a few diagrams and pie charts; they are designed expertly, and effectively assist his

historical and comparative generalizations. He does not employ sample

surveys, correlational techniques, original socio-political maps, nor in-

tensive case studies of the type that has become indispensable in American

writings during the past twenty years. The brief bibliography misses im-

portant literature on American political parties and Professor Duverger's

statement that scarcely any periodical literature of significance to his

bibliography exists is questionable. In respect to techniques and to full

coverage of materials, then, the book lacks fullness, and one may wish that

the author, whose skills are so apparent within his scope, might be invited

to the United States for a prolonged <sup>academic</sup> visit.

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