

interested primarily in control of office, patronage, and honest graft had a strong incentive to appeal to the center of the body politic. In that way lay the path to victory and attainment of the associated material goals. Even with a largely inactive citizenry, competitive parties would achieve socially satisfactory conditions—at least relative to conceivable alternatives. When party competition failed, social suffering was often the result.⁴³ Many in our profession continue to take a positive view of parties, and calls for party renewal periodically resound.

But today's parties are part of the problem, not the solution. Primary elections, civil service coverage, unionization of government workers, conflict-of-interest laws, investigative journalism, and other developments have combined to diminish the material incentives for party activism. Ideological incentives appear to have filled the void. But only a minority are so motivated, and this minority is unrepresentative: "maximum feasible participation" turns out to be pretty minimal, and "power to the people" means power to minorities of extremists.

What Is to Be Done—New Modes of Participation?

If strengthening political parties is not the answer, what is? Perhaps surprisingly, I think the answer may lie in going further down the path of popular participation. To paraphrase John Dewey, the answer to the problems created by increased civic engagement is even more civic engagement. In part, I am led to this position because there is no turning back; any argument to restrict popular participation would be met with incredulity, if not ridicule. One of the more interesting observations of Hibbing and Theiss-Morse is that although voters rarely participate, they value the opportunity to participate in the abstract and would oppose any restrictions on that opportunity.⁴⁴

Thus, the only possibility is to go forward and raise various forms of civic engagement to levels where extreme voices are diluted. Studies of voter turnout have concluded that despite its older, whiter, and wealthier character the actual presidential electorate does not differ significantly in partisanship or presidential preference from the potential universal voting electorate.⁴⁵ Given that the actual electorate is about half its potential size,

43. This is Key's classic argument in *Southern Politics* (1949).

44. Hibbing and Theiss Morse (1995, p. 19).

45. Wolfinger and Rosenstone (1980, chap. 6); Teixeira (1992, chap. 3).