TWO INTERESTS WITHOUT PASSIONS: PARTY AS BUREAUCRATIC ORGANIZATION

It has been those who . . . refrained the most from suffering their personal behavior from being inflamed by their political rivalries and were most willing to leave the question of their individual advancement to the quiet and friendly arbitrament of their political associates [who] have in the end been the most successful.
—Martin Van Buren

The fundamental sociological law of political parties may be formulated in the following terms: "It is organization which gives birth to the dominion of the elected over the electors, of the mandatories over the mandators, of the delegates over the delegators."
—Robert Michels

The eighth president of the United States and the first major theorist of political parties lived a century apart and shared no common political culture. Still, they agreed in their theoretical concept of political parties. To both men, a party would inevitably be a bureaucratic organization with an elite focus, seeking coalitional goals and relying on instrumental appeals by the party leadership. But they differed completely in their normative assessments of the effect of such parties on democracy. Van Buren hailed the bureaucratic party as necessary to effect popular government; Michels saw it as fundamentally subversive of democracy.

These two writers came to their conclusions from very different perspectives. Van Buren developed his theories in reaction to the factionalized, personalized politics of the early nineteenth-century one-party "era of good feelings." He saw party organization as necessary to achieve both victory for his colleagues and appropriate public policies. Putting his theories into practice, he accomplished much: the creation of the Democratic party, the election of Andrew Jackson, its first candidate for president, and then his own elevation to the White House.

Robert Michels reflected a different place and time, imperial Germany before World War I. A Marxian and a Socialist, Michels became disillusioned with his party's failure to win power and with its apparent abandonment of its radical program and egalitarian character. To explain these
failures, he developed his theory of the "iron law of oligarchy," the inevitable tendency of any organization—even one ideologically committed to socialist equality—to come under the control of a closed and conservative leadership. His pessimism deepened with the war, as Europe's working classes exuberantly marched to their mutual slaughter. Despairing of any possibility of true democracy, he eventually became a supporter of fascism in Mussolini's Italy.

PARTY AS BUREAUCRACY

The party as bureaucratic organization emphasizes coalitional goals. These typically include not only the power of office but also policy objectives, such as Van Buren's beliefs, derived from Jefferson, in states' rights rather than in strong national government or the German Socialist party's original Marxian ideology of proletarian revolution. Accomplishing these goals, however, first requires electoral victory.

In time, victory—meant to be a means to policy goals—replaces policy objectives as the primary objective of the party. Thus, Van Buren's party, "even though founded on Republican principles, became an anti-ideological force." Similarly, among Michels's Socialists, there was "a continued increase in the prudence, the timidity even, which inspires its policy. The party doctrines are, whenever requisite, attenuated and deformed in accordance with the external needs of the organization."

Pursuing the goal of victory, parties develop the characteristic features of bureaucracy. To wage successful combat against their electoral enemies, they must become hierarchical, obedient organizations. "The modern party is a fighting organization in the political sense of the term," Michels argues, "and must as such conform to the laws of tactics. . . . In a party, and above all in a fighting political party, democracy . . . is utterly incompatible with strategic promptness, and the forces of democracy do not lend themselves to the rapid opening of a campaign."

With this emphasis on combat, political parties are often described in military language—not only in Germany but also in nineteenth-century America. Parties were "organized, officered, drilled, manipulated, fitted to work consistently for power with inconsistent principles." And Richard Jensen depicts post–Civil War politics:
Parties were like armies fighting at the polls for the spoils of victory. Politicians were like generals—many had been generals or colonels in the war—whose strategy was to whip up enthusiasm among the rank and file. Parades, speechfests, all-day picnics, and continuous door-to-door solicitation maximized interest and minimized the risks of defections.

The bureaucratic party shares with a military bureaucracy an emphasis on internal discipline; orders are given and must be obeyed in pursuit of victory. As Van Buren’s associate commanded his partisan leaders, “Tell them they are safe if they fear the enemy, but that the first man we see step to the rear, we cut down . . . they must not falter, or they perish.” Van Buren’s party developed a centralized command, the Albany Regency, which would implement its decisions through local councils of the party and mass mobilization. “After the dominant clique of the party arrived at a decision, the information was ultimately transmitted to the legislators, newspapers, and politicians. Rallies and public meetings were sponsored to popularize the policy.”

To assure discipline, the bureaucratic party relies on individual, material rewards. The most conspicuous in American politics has been patronage, the filling of public offices on the basis of party service. William Marcy defended his allies in the Van Buren organization: “They boldly preach what they practice. When they are contending for victory, they avow their intention of enjoying the fruits of it . . . If they are successful, they claim, as a matter of right, the advantages of success. They see nothing wrong in the rule, that to the victor belong the spoils of the enemy.”

Appointments to party positions, as well as to public office, are also important, in Michels’s view, in strengthening leaders within the party bureaucracy. These leaders recruit new talent into the party, as “the influence which they exercise and the financial security of their position become more and more fascinating to the masses, stimulating the ambition of all the more talented elements to enter the privileged bureaucracy of the labor movement.” Patronage can also be used to placate potential foes within the party: “The leaders of the opposition receive high office and honors in the party, and are thus rendered innocuous—all the more so seeing that they are not admitted to the supreme offices.”

In later years, patronage would come into disrepute, restricted by civil service laws, self-protective administrative agencies, and the courts. Even
in modern times, however, it could still find a few champions, such as Supreme Court Justice Lewis Powell. Dissenting in a case restricting patronage appointments, he echoed earlier endorsements of the bureaucratic party’s individualistic rewards: “Patronage appointments help build stable political parties by offering rewards to persons who assume the tasks necessary to the continued functioning of political organizations.” (We will return to this discussion in chapter 8.)

Although these parties use personal patronage, the important feature of any bureaucracy is its emphasis on coalitional victory, not individual rewards. Its campaign is directed toward the success of the entire party, not any individual’s or even any combination of individuals. When personal interests become predominant, the pattern Michels criticized among the German Socialists, the party has been perverted, becoming more of a personal coalition than a party bureaucracy.

More in keeping with the model was Van Buren’s behavior, subordinating individual claims to party goals. In place of the personal factions of individual leaders typical in his day, he saw a political party as the agency of broader interests. Thus, the New Yorker organized Jackson’s successful presidential bid in 1828, not principally for personal gain but “because he could use the General to reform the party, eliminate Federalist principles from the national government, and oust [John Quincy] Adams from office.”

When Van Buren himself later ran for president, his candidacy was based on his party leadership, not on his individual characteristics. The emphasis was evident in the Democrats’ protoplatform in 1836: It mentioned Van Buren’s name only once, cited other party leaders thirty-two times, and referred to the party itself most frequently, in thirty-four instances.

Bureaucracies, including parties, have two different aspects. They ostensibly exist to perform a particular task—in the case of parties, to achieve electoral victory. They are also social systems, however, involving affective and psychological relationships both among their members and between the bureaucracy and its external world. Michels understood this second relationship and saw psychological influences as major causes of inevitable oligarchy within parties. They included “the tendency of the leaders to organize themselves and to consolidate their interests, . . . the gratitude of the led towards the leaders, and the general immobility and passivity of the masses [all reinforcing] the technical indispensability of leadership.”
Affective relationships, inevitable in any bureaucracy, can also have beneficial effects. In Van Buren's party, democratic relationships were fostered among the leadership, who made decisions jointly. By insisting on a united front, participants subordinated their individual interests to the perceived general interest of the party.  

On the federal level, Van Buren's party was able to overcome sectional rivalries, develop the most truly national coalition yet evident in America, and stimulate a competitive party system that was balanced and competitive on the state, regional, and national levels. On the individual level, Van Buren's party democracy taught an important "moral discipline, putting a high premium upon loyalty, fidelity, patriotism, and self-restraint." By extending its organization at the local level, it taught its partisans also to be citizens. Their heritage is the model of party as bureaucratic organization.

THE CONTEMPORARY PARTY BUREAUCRACY

Abstract concepts differ from empirical reality, and thus a comparison of the model of party as a bureaucratic organization to contemporary American parties is in order. These parties increasingly evidence the character of bureaucracies, but basic environmental factors of American politics limit their bureaucratic character.

A bureaucracy manifests such features as specialization of labor, professional expertise, hierarchical organization, objective and internal recruitment of leadership, and the availability of resources. These features are directed toward particular objectives, most importantly the achievement of designated tasks and the maintenance of the bureaucracy itself. Bureaucracies exist both in government and in the private world—the civil service and the modern corporation are similar organizations; even their purposes may be as similar as providing social security benefits or selling retirement annuities.

On both the state and the national levels, American parties have become more bureaucratic. Reviewing the development of state party organizations over two decades, the authors of a major study argue that "party organizational change in a period of profound concern for the future of parties has been in the direction of strengthening the organizational attributes of individual party units, and the patterns of relationships among the units." To test the character of state parties, the authors use a series of indicators of
strength for the party bureaucracy. These include a permanent headquarters; autonomous powers of state chairpersons; large full-time and long-term staffs with specialized divisions of labor; a variety of institutional support activities (e.g., voter mobilization and publication of a newsletter); a variety of activities in support of candidates (e.g., campaign seminars and polling); and significant party spending. Some of these indicators certainly show an increase in the capacity of state parties as bureaucratic organizations. Illustratively, in the early 1960s only half of the Democratic state parties had even a single full-time, professional employee, and only one-third conducted a state voter-mobilization campaign. By 1980, 85 percent of the Democratic state parties had some full-time staff, and two-thirds conducted voter campaigns.

Republicans were more fully organized in both time periods. Even in the 1960s more than two-thirds of their state parties had some full-time staff, and six out of ten had voter programs. By 1980 party bureaucratization had progressed so that virtually every Republican state organization had professional staff, and eight of ten conducted voter mobilization. 22

These changes, however, still leave the state parties as only limited bureaucracies. The average number of full-time staff, for example, was only 4.5 for Democratic organizations, and 7.0 for Republicans—scarcely measures of elaborate bureaucracies. Moreover, party organizational development appears to have slowed or reversed in more recent years, particularly among Democrats. Even over the longer period, there is some reason to doubt bureaucratic growth if we examine party spending, perhaps the most reliable indicator because it is measured in hard coin. Party budgets actually decreased during this period, once inflation is taken into account. 23

The national parties have become extensive bureaucracies in their own right and are more impressive than the state organizations. "Contemporary national party organizations are larger, better financed, more stable, and more internally diversified than ever before. In a word, they have become institutionalized." 24 Among them, the six leading bureaucracies of the major parties (national, senatorial, and congressional committees of each of the two parties) spent total budgets of $209 million in the nonpresidential period of 1989–1990. In direct campaign spending, this amount represented more than a fourfold increase over the previous twelve years. 25

These national organizations now bear all the marks of a true bureaucracy. Their staffs are relatively long-term, professional, and large, num-
bered in the hundreds, and housed in permanent party buildings in Washington. They engage in general party activity, such as issues research; provide financial and administrative help to state and local organizations, in the process reversing the traditional subordination of the national parties; furnish extensive help to individual candidates, including recruitment, training, polling, and media production; and provide both direct funds and financial brokerage between contributors and candidates.

This bureaucratic development is probably the most significant change in contemporary American politics. Moreover, these are national bureaucracies that may well diminish the traditional decentralization of U.S. parties. This change was probably inevitable as the nation itself became centralized. "Strong national party organizations," Epstein concludes, "are new American phenomena. Now that they have finally begun to be substantial, it is easy to believe that they are here to stay and their previous absence was an anomaly in a political and social system already predominantly national in so many other respects." The new national parties reflect basic changes in American life, such as the shift to a cash economy in politics and the parallel dependence on campaigning through the mass media. The nature of American politics, however, imposes inherent limits on the bureaucratization of the parties.

THE LIMITS OF BUREAUCRACY

Leadership is the most vital aspect of any organization. Typically, bureaucracies seek internal control of the selection of leadership by imposing professional standards of expertise for recruitment and ultimately for the choice of top managers. To illustrate, an educational bureaucracy will insist that only experienced teachers can be school principals or superintendents. The claims of expertise can also be raised in a party bureaucracy, as Michels observed: "In proportion as the profession of politician becomes a more complicated one, and in proportion as the rules of social legislation become more numerous, it is necessary for one who would understand politics to possess wider experience and more extensive knowledge." The party bureaucracies in the United States, however, ultimately cannot select their own leadership. The real head of an American party bureaucracy is the elected executive of the constituency—the governor for a state party, the president for a national party. The formal chairs of these organ-
izations are in effect not only named by the elected politician but dependent for their power on his or her favor. If party bureaucracies controlled the selection of public officials, this dependency would be only a formal relationship, equivalent to the formal power of the British king to name the prime minister. In reality, the bureaucracies lack this control, for they neither nominate nor elect officials bearing the party label. Since virtually all party nominations are made in primaries, candidates can—and do—win the party designation without support from the party bureaucracy. Indeed, running against the “party bosses” is a common and often successful practice.

The freedom of candidates from party control is even more dramatically evident on the national level. With the extension of primaries, presidential campaigns are conducted entirely by individual candidates, who bypass state organizations to make direct appeals to interest groups, contributors, and individual voters. The national committees do not participate in these contests—they only set the rules or provide services impartially to all candidates (even shared opinion polls). They do not enter the arena of the struggle but passively await capture as secondary prizes of victory.

Nor, once candidates are nominated, do party bureaucracies control their election. Although party committees are increasingly active in services to candidates, the dominant role is held by the candidates themselves. Technology, particularly television and computerized campaigning, has permanently established “the ability of politicians to affect their own destinies. Parties thus can be only as important as candidates permit them to be.”

Even when parties are important initially, once candidates are elected they develop their own strengths as incumbents and become increasingly self-sufficient.

Money, the crucial resource of contemporary politics, precisely measures the relationship. Although the parties have increased their financial role, it is still quite limited since the overwhelming proportion of campaign contributions, particularly for incumbents, comes from individual donors or from political action committees. For example, in 1989–1990, total spending for the congressional elections was $445 million, of which only 5 percent came directly from the six nationwide party committees.

The role of the party bureaucracies is further limited inherently by the structure of American elections. Elections are extraordinarily diffuse, comprising some ten thousand partisan offices just on the state and national levels and hundreds of thousands of local offices; moreover, for most of
these positions there are nominating primaries. Both primaries and general elections are easily entered by candidates and easily influenced by voters uncommitted to the party. A bureaucracy seeking to control these multitudinous elections is likely to suffer from overload or breakdown.

Still another complication is that these elections are considerably distinct from one another in time and space. The contests for separate offices may be held at different times of the year and on different cycles so that a typical community may have spring elections for municipal offices, summer primaries, and fall general elections, with terms of office encompassing different periods of one, two, or four years. Furthermore, the geographical constituencies are distinct—the boundaries of a congressional district do not necessarily coincide with those of state legislative districts or even with those of local towns and cities. Conducting elections in these conditions is a daunting task for a party bureaucracy, akin to General Motors trying to convince the same customer to buy a Chevrolet and a Pontiac and an Oldsmobile and to buy them at different times in the same year.

A bureaucracy also seeks permanence and regularity, but the electoral calendar undermines these goals. Political activity in the United States has a troublesome periodic ebb and flow. Like a seasonal business, a party bureaucracy will have its busy and slack periods; in a party, however, the temporal cycles of activity are more difficult to manage than in a seasonal business. Because elections occur at fixed periods (unlike parliamentary parties, which may face an election at any time), the party has no need to maintain its staff continually, limiting its efficiency. Moreover, the two-year and four-year cycles between the major contests for state and national offices are so long that the party bureaucracy will suffer repeated expansions and contractions in size, activity, and opportunities to sharpen skills. It is as if baseball players had pennant races only every other year; would such teams be cohesive and disciplined?

Party bureaucracies, like others, require resources, especially skilled personnel and money—money that can also buy skills. In the more traditional party bureaucracy of Van Buren, the most important resources were individual local campaigners with strong interpersonal skills. The party secured this resource through patronage, which amounted to a hidden public subsidy to the parties. In contemporary times, patronage is less respected and less common; even where it remains, studies have shown that in practice patronage employees are not hired, rewarded, or punished on the basis
of their contributions to the party. Patronage is no longer used effectively by the parties to promote bureaucratic goals.

For reasons to be considered in chapter 5, patronage always had severe limitations. In contemporary politics, it is even less useful, as the nation has shifted from labor-intensive to capital-intensive politics. The skills now required—such as media or polling expertise—are of a different order and must be purchased through direct and substantial cash payments rather than through low-paying jobs with indirect benefits of friendship or graft. Parties, however, have no assured sources of cash nor any substantial public subsidies; their bureaucratic development is consequently always uncertain.

In the end, parties cannot be full-scale bureaucracies because they lack a bureaucratic environment. The ideal bureaucracy lives in a closed world, where it controls its internal life, operates by fixed and impersonal rules, and relates to outsiders as uncontroUing clients. In its beneficial aspect, a bureaucracy behaves like an impartial judiciary; in its pathological aspect, it becomes the rule-bound tribunal depicted in Franz Kafka’s novel, The Trial.

Parties, however, are ultimately dependent on different, external controls. They must meet the tests of elections and are subject to the wishes or whims of the voters. They operate in a political marketplace, not in a closed bureaucratic environment. To this extent, they are more similar to economic competitors such as corporations. Like corporations, they must be assessed by their results, not by their bureaucratic neatness. As the corporation judges its success ultimately by the market test of profits, the party must judge its success by the market test of votes. On these grounds, bureaucratic development is not always beneficial to parties. State parties that are stronger by bureaucratic standards, for example, show hardly any greater ability to win elections. It may be that hierarchical, self-contained bureaucracies are ill-adapted to the dispersed nature of the American electoral system.

BUREAUCRACY AND DEMOCRACY

The critical issue, however, is not the organizational effectiveness of party bureaucracies but their possible contribution to effective democracy. In
their most evident features, bureaucracy and democracy would seem to be incompatible.

Bureaucracy emphasizes the specialized knowledge of the expert; democracy assumes that all men and women are sufficiently knowledgeable to share in decisionmaking. The first is characteristically hierarchical; the second stresses equality among persons. Bureaucracy focuses on limited, organizational tasks, but democracy concerns the general and common political interests of the populace. A bureaucratic organization relies on paid labor, but a democratic organization assumes its members will volunteer time and effort.

Political parties that follow the model of a bureaucratic organization may merit democratic suspicion, as Michels argues. Leadership in a bureaucratic party typically differs from the rank and file in perspective. For followers, the party is a means to such ends as public policies or group satisfactions; leaders tend to see the maintenance and success of the party as itself the primary goal. "From a means, organization becomes an end. To the institutions and qualities which at the outset were destined simply to ensure the good working of the party machine . . . greater importance comes ultimately to be attached than to the productivity of the machine. . . . As the party's need for tranquillity increases, its revolutionary talons atrophy."

Party bureaucrats also may have somewhat different interests from their followers or the voters. As experts in politics, they come to share a craft and a professional technical specialization across parties that can become more important than their ostensible ideological differences. For example, at postelection conferences sponsored by Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, rival campaign managers meet to evaluate strategies, slogans, and advertisements for their electoral impact, ignoring party programs and philosophies. For these leading party bureaucrats, the art of politics replaces its substance.

There also are more immediate interests. A party bureaucrat "lives 'off' politics as a vocation," and "strives to make politics a permanent source of income." Party bureaucrats are always, even if not always primarily, jobholders. Even if they are ideologically committed to the party cause, they need to protect their jobs, promoting their particular economic interests, such as higher pay or career mobility, that may not parallel the party's more general goals.

In a political organization, moreover, power itself becomes an individual
psychological reward apart from the party’s interests. Michels’s observation of the German working class may be true of all party careerists: “For them, the loss of their positions would be a financial disaster, and in most cases it would be impossible for them to return to their old way of life. They have been spoiled for any other work than that of propaganda. Their hands have lost the callosities of the manual toiler, and are likely to suffer only from writer’s cramp.”

Party bureaucrats are also likely to be inaccessible to control by the rank and file. Possessed of skills necessary to the party, bureaucrats cannot be easily dismissed; unelected, they cannot be voted out of office. Control depends greatly on the bureaucrats’ own devotion to their party. Self-interested, they cannot be trusted always to further the party’s goals. Even when conscientiously seeking victory for the party, they may subvert its program.

A more general problem with party bureaucracy is its potential effect on democratic participation. In the bureaucratic model, the electorate is a resource to be mined for votes, not an integral element within the party itself. Carried to its logical conclusion, this perspective legitimizes the manipulation of voters in order to win elections. Contrasting their own political expertise and commitment to the voters’ limited knowledge and sporadic involvement, bureaucrats can easily come to disparage voters and then to exploit their alleged “weakness for everything which appeals to their eyes and for such spectacles as will always attract a gaping crowd.”

Even when more gentle, however, party bureaucracy is likely to limit citizens’ involvement. With its emphasis on efficiency, bureaucracy is prone to centralize authority, lessening the opportunities for individual and local activity. Because of its internal focus, voters are placed outside the party as spectators of the political struggle, not as participants, as audiences of political debate, not as debaters. A bureaucratic model, as McWilliams observes, defines “the party as a species of private property and voters as political consumers” and restricts the public to “an interest in the product but not in the process.” For the citizenry, party becomes relevant only as a guide to periodic voting decisions but marginal to community life.

Despite these many problems, bureaucratic parties may contribute to democracy. At its root, democracy means that ordinary people can affect government, but ordinary people must join together to be effective. Those people who have individual wealth, status, and power can sometimes take care of themselves, but “organization, based as it is upon the principle of least effort... is the weapon of the weak in their struggle with the
strong." To achieve mobilization, a bureaucracy must be not simply an agency of technicians but a group with some commitments of its own. With such commitments, party bureaucrats can act as the vital links between mass opinion and public policy. Increasingly, in fact, the leaders of American parties are assuming this role, even as they become more electorally efficient.

The contribution of party bureaucracy to democracy is still more basic in its stimulation of electoral participation. Voting turnout depends on many factors, including registration laws and demographic characteristics. Turnout is closely related to party efforts also; where parties are active, voting participation increases, particularly among groups of lower socioeconomic status. Party mobilization thus promotes democratic equality of access among the population. Historically, the close relationship can be seen in the United States: When parties were stronger, voting turnout was high; as the parties have weakened, turnout has declined. The same relationship is evident today, not only within the country but in international comparisons as well. Among the major democracies of the world, the United States has the lowest level of voter participation even though its citizens show relatively high levels of political sophistication and interest. One significant element in explaining this discrepancy is the limited degree of party mobilization.

Party bureaucracies not only can stimulate voting; they can also make that voting more meaningful. Van Buren’s party bureaucracy was important because it made parties more than the personal followings of a dominant leader and more than closed caucuses of the self-interested. Although self-interest was certainly a motive, the New Yorker exemplified how a party bureaucracy could broaden the popular base of politics, bringing new voters to the polls and new meaning to the vote. As Van Buren’s party-building efforts illustrate, a bureaucracy can democratize politics on an individual level through the opportunities it creates. In their ideal form, bureaucracies recruit talent on the basis of merit, not ascribed or inherited status. Even Michels acknowledged that the Socialist party had provided new, although wasted, opportunities for political leadership by the German working class.

In Van Buren’s America, the Democratic party became a vehicle for social mobility among new classes. One critic grudgingly acknowledged
that party politics "provided a ladder for the 'new men' who had not enough influence and, perhaps, merit to climb up of themselves." In place of the traditional landed aristocrats, there emerged more democratic, "modern political professionals who loved the bonhomie of political gatherings, a coterie of more-or-less equals who relied for success not on the authority of a brilliant charismatic leader but on their solidarity, patience and discipline."  

Party bureaucracy also can promote democracy more generally. Even at a minimal level of participation, it serves democracy by making political opposition legitimate. Given its many social divisions, the United States has been particularly wary of political conflict and apt to agree with George Washington that parties serve but to "render alien to each other those who ought to be bound together by fraternal affection." Yet professional politicians like Van Buren take a different attitude toward parties, urging the nation "to recognize their necessity, to give them the credit they deserve, and to devote ourselves to improve and to elevate the principles and objects of our own and to support it ingenuously and faithfully." Because it has a self-interest in promoting conflict, a party bureaucracy renders opposition as acceptable to the society and thereby provides even a passive electorate with a choice of contenders for power.

A party organization's contributions can go still further by enlisting persons into more active participation in politics. One means is through party principles, which give citizens an understanding of public issues, even when they are distorted by campaign rhetoric. To both Michels and Van Buren, the ultimate purpose of a party is to promote its ideological principles. Only a program can give direction to a party, they agreed, but only a party can mobilize majorities in support of a program.

Withal, party bureaucracies are still limited in their contributions to democracy because of their doubtful ability to arouse passions. In its more extensive forms, a party engages not only voters' heads but their hearts. It provides a source of allegiance deeper than programmatic conviction, forged in conflicts with the common enemy, able to withstand division and defeat. These affective loyalties are difficult for party bureaucracies; emotions seem to conflict with their rationalist task orientations.

In any organization, to be sure, affective loyalties do develop, but they are likely to be directed inwardly toward preserving the social relations within the group and to exclude those not regularly engaged on the job. Extending these emotional bounds will occur only when entrance to the
group is open and participation is simple. Organizations do not often evidence these characteristics, but they can exist. The extensive local committee structure of the Van Buren party promoted affective bonds in its day, just as the decentralized and participatory Japanese factory does today; in both cases, significantly, affection has promoted organizational success. Contemporary centralized bureaucracies may also be successful, but they will not be loved.

The ultimate problem for a party bureaucracy is that it will be only a bureaucracy, that it will develop the characteristic pathologies and lose the compensating advantages of organization. Its opportunity for social advancement may become a closed door, its task orientation a soulless striving for success, and its affective support a resource for emotional manipulation.

To achieve the good and avoid the evils of party bureaucracy, we must remember Michels’s fatalistic yet hopeful admonition: “The democratic currents of history resemble successive waves. They break ever on the same shoal. They are ever renewed. This enduring spectacle is simultaneously encouraging and depressing.”