

ment when they gave protection to civil rights and the right to organize. President Madison warned that political parties would become a tyrannical majority that could be avoided through a representative form of government — an elected body of wise, patriotic citizens. He considered democracy akin to mob rule.

Party organization became more formalized at the turn of the century; until then no one group had a name that was accepted nationally. Jeffersonians were referred to as Republicans and branded by their opponents as Anti-Federalists, disorganizers, Jacobins, Democrats, all considered unflattering terms linking them to mob rule. The formation of Federalists, Anti-Federalists and Democratic-Republican parties were the first to emerge officially.

The label Democratic-Republican was used by Jefferson in several states but never widely used as a party label. Historians refer to Jeffersonians as Democratic-Republican to avoid confusion with the unrelated Republican party founded in 1854.

The rise of parties forced a change in the selection of the President. Delegates to the Constitutional Convention in 1787 settled on the electoral college system as a compromise because of the diversity of the states in regard to size, the issue of slavery, distrust of government, etc. Rather than trust the people with a direct vote, the choice was entrusted to electors, looked upon as wise leaders. This led to the formation of the caucus system. Strong political parties developed, removing presidential elections from the electors. From 1796 to 1824, congressional caucuses chose candidates for President, then the electors chose the candidate from the party nominees. From 1800 to 1824, this was decided by the House of Representatives.

The first election in 1789 centered in the electoral college, each member casting two votes. The one with the majority was named the candidate for President, the runner-up for Vice President. By this time, the two party system was emerging with considerable strength supported by such stalwarts as Van Buren, who was convinced that "we must always have party distinctions."

The Whigs, in 1840, appealed to the voter in a new style of political campaign. Whoop and holler parades, torchlights, campaign slogans, witty and raucous songs aroused the electorate and brought 40% more voters to the polls than in any previous presidential election.

The birth of the national convention system occurred in 1831 when the Anti-Masonic Party held a meeting in Baltimore. Another minor party, the National Republican Party, followed suit a few months later. The first major party of that time, the Democratic Party, held their first national political convention in that same city in 1832, nominating Andrew Jackson.

Conventions continued to play an important role in the political life of our Country. While the subject of much criticism, no substitute has been found for nominating candidates for a presidential ticket, adopting a party platform, or for attending to the many housekeeping duties required for the smooth operation of Party functions. British historian Sir Denis William Brogan, in "Politics in America," (1954), wrote ". . . the convention, imperfect organ of representative government as it is, is an essential part of the American system. It has rendered far more good service than it has done harm, and no really effective substitute for it has ever been suggested. . . . They are, in fact, a consequence of the separation of powers and of the federal system."

Maryland's own, H. L. Mencken, reflecting on the National Convention system, in 1924, had this to say: "There is something about a national convention that makes it as fascinating as a revival or a hanging. It is vulgar, it is ugly, it is stupid, it is tedious, hard upon both the cerebral centers and the gluteus maximus, and yet, it is somehow charming. One sits through long sessions wishing heartily that all delegates were dead and in hell and then suddenly there comes a show so gaudy and hilarious, so melodramatic and obscene, so unimaginably exhilarating and preposterous that one lives a gorgeous year in an hour."