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*Party Responsibility
in a Democracy*

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Address by
Hon. James A. Farley
Chairman of the Board
The Coca-Cola Export Corporation
at the
Annual Dinner and Victor Banquet
of the
Bronx County Bar Association
Hotel Commodore, New York City
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ADDRESS

BY

HON. JAMES A. FARLEY

Mr. KEOGH. Mr. Speaker, under leave to extend my remarks in the RECORD, I include the following address delivered by Hon. James A. Farley at the annual dinner and victor banquet of the Bronx County Bar Association at the Hotel Commodore on December 8, 1945:

You have extended to me a very great compliment in asking me to address this distinguished gathering of lawyers. I am not a lawyer and I have a layman's respect and apprehension in the face of a lawyer's learning and skill. I have never yet won an argument with a lawyer, and I don't propose, for one moment, to start an argument here tonight. And, may I say, I never, in my early days, could have conceived of a day when lawyers would actually want to sit and listen to me.

But of one thing I am certain. I am not here to talk about the law. I am not going to carry coals to Newcastle or law to the Bronx Bar Association. I want to speak on a subject which has been a major concern in my life—that is, party responsibility in a democracy.

Since I am speaking to lawyers, permit me to say, however, that I know enough about the administration of the law in Bronx County to feel an added sense of respect for this particular group. There is no county in the State of New York or, in fact, the Nation, where so little criticism can be leveled at the administration of the law—particularly in the office of the district attorney. It is a great tradition you have here, that of selecting the ablest available man for district attorney, of backing him up and permitting him to administer his office without fear, favor, or politics. The quality of that service

over the years has been shown by the great jurists who have been elevated from the office of district attorney here to the higher courts of the State. They have a worthy successor in the present incumbent, Samuel J. Foley, and I think we can all assume that the end of his distinguished service in the district attorney's office will be but the beginning of a still more distinguished service on the supreme court bench of the State of New York.

It is a profoundly important thing to keep the administration of the law, especially the administration of criminal law, on a non-political plane. We have all been distressed in the past when, in some other countries that I need not mention, it has been found that political influences have prevented the enforcement of the law.

There are two ways in which politics can obstruct and impair the administration of criminal justice. The first is when the scales of justice are weighted with personal favor, and guilty men go free. The second is when men entrusted with the enforcement of the law use their great official power to seek votes by bringing charges, no matter how false or unfounded, against their political opponents. The grand jury, for example, is an honored institution, and justly so. District attorneys have a sacred responsibility to use the grand jury only as tradition dictates that it shall be used. To use it in the midst of a political campaign to bring forth, not indictments, but vague charges is a shameful and reprehensible misuse of official power. Such base actions befoul the purity of justice and bring the law and the courts into disrepute. We must not let the guilty escape. But we must not callously accuse or smear the innocent. In this, I am not talking theory. I have in mind, as I am sure you must have, some events in another country in the not too distant past.

The high tradition in Bronx County, which justly holds the district attorney's office in high respect, derives more definitely from a sense of party responsibility. For party responsibility means the capacity of an organization to establish and build traditions and to sustain them through the years. A party is something more than a mere dispenser of patronage; it is the means through which a free people control their government in a republic.

As an illustration of what I mean, my own party in New York City has, this year, been challenged by a vote of overwhelming confidence in its candidates for city office—General O'Dwyer, Senator Joseph, and Mr. Impellitteri. The party in these five boroughs owes a great obligation to the voters of the city of New York, which it can pay only in terms of good government at the least possible cost and with the greatest efficiency. If it fails in that responsibility, it will be cast out into exterior darkness, as it has been in the past, and fittingly so, and there will be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth among the selfish and shortsighted ones. But if a party in the metropolis builds its principles on a sound foundation—if it serves the people well—it will be rewarded with a continued opportunity to serve the public.

The United States is a Federal Union. Not only in its Government but in its political organizations, it consists of 48 units and a single national unit. The duty alike of a State party and a city party, in a national campaign, is to support loyally the choices of the national convention. But between the quadrennial elections, the governments, as well as the political organizations of the States and the cities, carry on their own individual existences. I served long enough as chairman of one of the great national parties to realize how much national political organizations depend on State and city organizations. And that is as it should be, for it would be an inversion of the proper

order of things, if ever the State and city organizations should become dependent upon the national organizations. State and city organizations must select candidates for State and city offices on their own responsibility. They have to live with them and they have to stand or fall on the record their candidates make. They not only have to select candidates and conduct elections, but State and city organizations must have a definite philosophy of government. They must have principles which they create and maintain and which are appropriate to their own special needs and, naturally, in harmony, whenever possible, with the national organization. And I have seen enough of politics to know that no party can long endure and be successful unless it has such principles.

My Republican friends here tonight will not be surprised if I say, very seriously, that for many years the Democratic Party of the State of New York has not only had such principles, but in a very definite sense has helped to bring our State among the States of the Nation in promoting wise policies of government dedicated to efficiency and humanity. New York has, in a brilliantly constructive way, given to the Nation an example of a State that is leading its people to the light of freedom, order and truth. May the State and city of New York bear this responsibility seriously in the months and years to come. A party cannot merely wait for its opposition to make mistakes and fall from public favor. It must consistently, not only in the light of the past but in the light of obvious present needs, lead public opinion. I have said in the past, and I say again, that Government must seek to contribute to those broad social needs which an advanced civilization places upon Government. It must not only be efficient, but it must be humane. It must be administered by one with a head and a heart.

It is only fitting and proper to point out that the leader in this State who first most

nearly achieved these two ideals of government was Alfred E. Smith. We shall never forget, not only those who worked with him, but those who saw him at a distance, that in his appointments he required inflexible honesty and sound qualifications. He fought for a simplified government in order that government might perform its services to the public at a minimum cost and with maximum effectiveness. With government thus established on a sound, business-like basis, he extended the activities of that government to meet new and developing human needs in the commonwealth. That great record stands. It is an inspiration and a challenge to those who succeed him.

I cannot say too earnestly that no party can long succeed in the State of New York whose leader or leaders take only one page from the book of Al Smith. They may speak in ringing and inspiring terms of what they have achieved. They may exhibit an administration that is honest and efficient, but if that administration is a mere machine seeking to perform in a routine manner functions of government, without realizing that the true end of government is to serve humanity, then that administration cannot long hold the interest and the imagination of the people. It will only have done half of its job, if it turns government into an impersonal machine.

In the State of New York a great beginning was made in the administrations of Alfred E. Smith, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Herbert H. Lehman. Over many years a confident people supported these great Governors. There was built up, in the Governor's office and in the legislature, the broadest program of social and economic justice that any State has seen. Year after year New York lighted the way to progressive ends. As a member of the party which these great men represented, I hope this service may continue, that new goals may be reached and that the governmental instruments cre-

ated in the past may be perfected. For only by fostering such progress can any party play its great role in a democracy.

I said a little earlier that only by fixing party responsibility can a democracy retain the benefits of freedom and, at the same time, provide the people with what they legitimately expect from government. When, as in some countries of the world, there is substituted for responsible parties a multitude of bitter factions, liberty is endangered. It was Washington himself who warned his people, in his Farewell Address, of the dangers of factions in a republic. Washington did not mean that he opposed the formation of responsible political parties. His fear was that the experience of other countries, in which parties had degenerated into factions, might be repeated here. And only in the past decade have we seen, in the fate of France, the danger in breaking down the responsibility of parties. For a country which depends on many parties will, in the long run, have no parties at all, but rather endless civil strife between selfish fragments of the population. We have witnessed in this war that only the United States and Great Britain, true democracies built on the two-party system, have most extensively retained freedom for the individual.

In a two-party system it is always possible for a victorious party to be the legitimate and really representative majority of all the people. There is strength and permanence and responsibility in such a party control.

Moreover, with a two-party system, the party out of power can be sufficiently large to extend its influences on a broad basis. It can be, in truth, an effective critic and corrective of the actions of the party in power. Without strong and intelligent opposition, a party in power grows careless, inefficient, indifferent to public sentiment and, all too soon, dishonest. Conceive, if you can, a Nation or a State in which one party is large enough to be a majority, and the opposition

is broken into five or six small groups. The majority party can safely ignore the splinter parties of an unorganized, discordant opposition, no one of which is strong enough to challenge the ruling party at the polls. Ultimately, such a one-sided party system loses all of the characteristics of a free government, and from a one-party system there is developed a one-man system. Today, every schoolboy knows that dictatorships rise on such unstable foundations.

Moreover, the best government is usually found in those nations and states in which the parties are fairly equal in size. That, it seems to me, has been the great virtue of our party system in New York. State elections have never been cut-and-dried affairs. There has always been a real contest, and the control of government has passed, from time to time, from one party to another. Much of the progress that this State has made in the affairs of government has been due to this close race for public favor by two strong parties.

The relations between a sound and healthy party organization in the State and the national organizations is also a matter which deserves careful consideration. The Democratic Party in New York State has repeatedly provided the national ticket with substantial majorities. It has invariably recognized the great authority of the national Government in matters of foreign affairs and, ordinarily, loyally supported the foreign policy of the President, regardless of his party affiliation. It has recognized as a great principle that politics stops at the water's edge.

In the last analysis, a party depends upon the vision, the honesty and the character of its officers. Men who hold high places in a party organization for a long time develop, in the main, these qualities in an even greater degree than in most callings and professions. For the public is a hard and exacting task master.

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I grow a little impatient with those who seek to discredit the political leaders because some leadership has failed in its responsibility. I have the same feeling for those who seek to discredit the profession of politics that I have when I hear the profession of the law condemned because there are some dishonest lawyers, or the medical profession because some doctors do not do their duty. By and large, the politician is as honest as any man. In the work of political organizations, as in other human activities, good character justifies itself; energy and loyalty pay dividends and intelligence and education open the road to high honor. The parties owe it to the Nation to seek by every legitimate means to induce able and honest young men and women to join the party, to work with it, to exert what influence they can, and to seek, through the party, to improve the state of the Nation and the condition of everyone in the Nation.

To attain their proper role in a democracy, the political parties must do much more than merely get out the vote and win elections. They must, through research and consultation, develop beneficial and wise policies to be embodied in their appeal to the voters. Furthermore, they must carry on a twofold educational program. They must provide instruction for voters and prospective voters. And they must intelligently train party workers. A political party must, if it is to be useful and successful, operate on a schedule of 6 days a week, 12 months in the year. It is not a diversion, a sport, or a hobby. It is a serious undertaking for earnest and intelligent people.

Its ideal is justice and its end is human freedom.

If a man is a political animal, as a great philosopher has said, then it is his sense of justice which distinguishes him from the brute. Without this ideal of justice, men would be baser in character, poorer in soul. He would find no companionship in such vir-

tues as truth, mercy, honor, courage, and wisdom. But when he seeks to bring the reality of these virtues into political life, he is too often confused by his energy, blinded by expediency and betrayed by ambition.

For justice is not the stepping-stone to power. It is a vibrant, living ideal. It is not a dusty collection of laws and precedents fanned by quibbling arguments in tired courts. Rather, it is a warm and human restraint on power. For power without justice is tyranny, and tyranny is foreign to this republic.

The highest ideal of party government is like the great objective of our Constitution—to establish justice. The political party is the collective expression of the aspiration of many men and women.

The changing conditions of society create, year by year, new stresses and strains among

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the people, new injustices that need correction, new needs for government service, and new solutions for old problems. The political part is the link between these conditions and the government.

Governments without the living force of political parties would be cold and unresponsive mechanisms. When parties fail in their duties and ideals governments fail. When parties seek only power tyranny grows in public offices. When parties fail to educate the public governments betray the people's interests.

"Justice," said Edmund Burke, "is the great standing policy of civil society, and any eminent departure from it, under any circumstances, lies under the suspicion of being no policy at all."

Our political parties must meet this high test.