

VOX POP Newsletter

of Political Organizations and Parties

An official section of the American Political Science Association
Produced by the Ray C. Bliss Institute of Applied Politics, The University of Akron

THEME – WOMEN IN PARTIES

A ROOM AT A TIME: HOW WOMEN ENTERED PARTY POLITICS

Jo Freeman (Rowman & Littlefield 2000)
Kira Sanbonmatsu, The Ohio State University

Jo Freeman has written an important book. The result of 13 years of research, Freeman offers an insightful study of how women entered party politics. *A Room at a Time* is an ambitious book that spans over a hundred years and examines major and minor parties at the local, state, and national levels of government. Freeman makes an invaluable contribution to political science that will be of great interest to scholars of parties, political history, and gender politics.

The book is a history of the nature and extent of women’s involvement in the parties from the early 1800s to the 1960s, with an emphasis on the period since suffrage. Freeman relied primarily on newspapers as well as secondary sources in a research effort she likened to “panning for gold.” She deserves tremendous credit for digging so deeply and piecing together a rich account of such an understudied and poorly documented subject. Freeman traces women’s partisan involvement across time and space. The book proceeds first chronologically, then topically, with chapters on subjects such as the women’s divisions, female appointments, the national conventions, etc.—each of which proceed more or less chronologically. She presents a wealth of historical data on the women’s auxiliaries to the parties and the numbers, locations, and timing

of women’s independent clubs, with particular insights into women in New York City. She profiles key female leaders and activists and documents women’s political activities—their role in campaigns and committees, their efforts to mobilize and influence voters, their advocacy on behalf of and against machines, and their work on reform and women’s rights issues. She also chronicles the outcomes of attempts to influence party rules, platforms, and presidential appointments. It is a remarkable book in its breadth and depth.

Freeman identifies patterns that help us understand the opportunities and constraints facing party women over time. She situates the place of women in party politics by connecting social

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movement to party systems. Social movements have tended to come in clusters, including women's movements. These movements can lead to party realignments—and when they do not, they still leave a lasting impact on politics. Women have participated in reform movements as well as women's rights movements. Most of Freeman's story takes place during what she calls the "conservative period between social movement clusters." It was during this lull in social movement activity that party women came into their own.

Freeman distinguishes between three types of political women: feminists, reformers, and party women. Party women are at the heart of her story. At times, these three groups overlapped, but at other times they were quite distinct. Reformers and feminists declined after the 1920s and divided on the issues of protective labor legislation. But party women thrived. Unlike party women before them, these women were not mobilized out of social movements first and into party politics second. This new breed of party women emerged in the early 1900s and were primarily loyal to the party.

In her work on the contemporary parties, Freeman argues that there has been an elite realignment on women's rights, with the Democratic and Republican parties essentially switching sides on feminism. In *A Room at a Time*, Freeman was surprised to discover what she terms the "depth of the Republican roots" in feminism. She knew that the Republican Party had historically been more supportive of suffrage and the ERA than the Democratic Party. Yet she finds that this legacy extends further back in time than she thought, to the 1800s. The Republican Party, which had been the party of reform, was usually more sympathetic to women's rights policies and more supportive of the role of women in politics. Most active suffragists in the 1800s were Republicans. Republican women were more likely to be active in politics because of their middle-class status and educational attainment, and the national party was more encouraging as well. In addition, the South, dominated by the

Democratic Party, has historically been weak in women's political activities.

Throughout the book, Freeman finds that Republican women out-organize Democratic women. For example, Republican women's clubs persisted in between elections in the late 1800s while the Democratic women's clubs did not. As the twentieth century progressed, Republican women continued to be more likely to form clubs across the country and attract more members. It was Black women who created the first Republican women's club in New York City, and they organized dozens of Republican clubs across the country.

The metaphor used throughout the book is that of a "political house," borrowed from Democratic National Committeewoman Daisy Harriman. Women's incorporation into political institutions was slow, and they infiltrated the house one room at a time. Although women found a place for themselves and took over what Freeman terms "the basement," being the workhorses at the grassroots level, the rooms where the real decisions were made remained elusive. Women were largely the servants of the house, unable to rearrange the furniture.

The Progressive Movement helped women win suffrage and enter the political house. The minor parties were the most sympathetic to women's concerns and accepted women into their ranks first. Women won the vote despite the major parties—not because of them. But women did gain a foothold in both major parties and gradually worked their way inside political institutions. On the eve of suffrage, both parties became interested in women's votes.

Party women were in the most demand in the 1920s—during what Freeman dubs "the golden era"—because women could help the parties win the loyalties of the new women voters. Women had been active in politics long before the vote and they honed their civic skills in the women's club movement. They were the experts on women's issues and organizing the woman voter. The national parties and most state parties created women's divisions—spaces for loyal party

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women. Party women advocated for women within the parties and educated women voters about electoral politics, serving as intermediaries between the parties and women voters. They trained women on policy issues, public speaking, and organizing.

In addition to the women's divisions, independent women's clubs were common until the 1960s, and women had more control over these clubs. In the 1920s, Democrats claimed 1,000 to 2,500 clubs, and 2,500 to 3,000 in the 1950s. The Republicans had more: the National Federation of Republican Women (NFRW) claimed 4,000 clubs and 500,000 members. Men feared the independent influence of these clubs, discouraging women from building their own machines. Women elected their own leaders, but party men could replace disloyal women with women they could control. Ultimately, men controlled the sponsorship of the women's clubs. For example, even the NFRW, which was independent from the Republican National Committee (RNC), depended on the RNC for funds. Thus the women's auxiliaries and independent clubs offered women spaces for political involvement and opportunities to train other women. But Freeman argues that they could be ghettos. Women did not occupy leadership positions over men, and they had to answer to men in the end.

Freeman argues that while Republican women were more likely to work through clubs, Democratic women were more likely to work through committees. Women in both parties frequently asked for and received "50-50"—equal representation on the party committees—at the local, state and national levels by law or party rule. Freeman argues that in states where women did not have 50-50, they wanted it. But equal representation did not mean equal influence. Freeman argues that "it was precisely because real influence arose from informal rather than formal relationships that women were so readily admitted onto the formal political committees." Over time, women became disenchanted with 50-50 when they realized that it did not come with influence.

Regardless of the rules, the major decisions were made by men. Adding women to the party structure did not mean a loss of power for men, who remained at the top of the hierarchy. Party men wanted loyal women committed to service—not women interested in leadership, patronage, policy, decision making, or reform. Women were lectured constantly about party loyalty, and disloyal party women were frequently replaced with loyal ones. Party men disparaged the idea that women had common interests based on gender or needed to organize politically as a group, denigrated the possibility of a women's voting bloc, and discouraged gender solidarity.

Power rested in the informal male networks, from which women were excluded. Women were usually ignored, unappreciated, and stereotyped. Their work frequently went unrewarded, and their activities and funds could be eliminated altogether if the men so chose. Women met with considerable resistance within the parties, often frustrated by the limits men placed on their activities and power.

Despite these tremendous obstacles to their influence, Freeman argues that party women advanced the role of women within the parties and spoke for women voters. They served the party and helped win elections; they were the workhorses. They pioneered new election techniques and helped move voting from the saloons to churches and schools. They had some success in garnering female appointments and particular platform pledges. These female appointees became the "woodwork feminists" identified in Freeman's *The Politics of Women's Liberation*. Party women were poised to take advantage of new political opportunities when the women's movement emerged. Thus party women won not only incremental changes, but they had a long-term and significant impact on women's role in politics as well. Party women paved the way for other women.

This is a carefully researched and extremely comprehensive book; it is also a compelling read. We await Freeman's next book picking up where *A Room at a Time* leaves off.

FROM HEADQUARTERS

Dear Pop Members:

When the American Political Science Association meets in Washington for its annual conference, the Political Organizations and Parties section will take center stage. This year is the 50th anniversary of the seminal APSA report on "Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System." On behalf of the APSA, Political Organizations and Parties is sponsoring a number of workshops and panels commemorating the report. On Wednesday afternoon, August 30th, before the regular program gets underway, POP is holding a workshop on the responsible parties report and I hope all of you coming to the convention will make an effort to attend this special event. We have a distinguished group of party scholars participating and I'm sure it will be one of the highlights of this year's APSA conference. We're all deeply indebted to John Green and Paul Herrnson who coordinated this year's workshop.

Our regular POP program at the convention will include three other panels and roundtables on responsible parties. Thanks to Program Chair Paul Beck for putting together an outstanding set of POP panels on parties and interest groups. All of this will culminate in an edited book on the responsible parties report being put together by Green and Herrnson.

As noted in the last issue of Voxpop, a POP web site on the responsible parties report is now up and running. John Coleman, a member of the POP Executive Council, did an excellent job in constructing the site and you're encouraged to visit it at <http://www.polisci.wisc.edu/~party>.

We're now moving to the next stage, which is to develop a POP web site that will go beyond the responsible parties anniversary to a broader array of resources. I asked the Nominating Committee of the POP Executive Council to form a committee to develop this enhanced web site and it selected Scott Furlong of the University of Wisconsin, Green Bay, to head it. Joining Furlong on the committee will be Ken Janda of Northwestern University and John Green of the University of Akron. Let me extend a public invitation to all POP members: If you are interested in working on this web site for the political organizations section of APSA, please let Scott or I know. We'd love to get more people involved. You can reach me at jeffrey.berry@tufts.edu and Scott's email address is furlongs@uwgb.edu.

Our next business meeting is on Friday, September 1, 2000, at 12:30; the location will be announced in the conference program. I hope that I will see all of you there.

Jeff Berry, Chair

FROM THE FIELD

TOWARD A MORE RESPONSIBLE TWO-PARTY SYSTEM: Fifty Years Later

50th Anniversary Commemoration of the APSA Responsible Parties Report

We are pleased to announce the POP program to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the APSA "Responsible Parties" report at the 2000 APSA meeting in Washington, D.C. This program includes the traditional POP workshop on the Wednesday before the official meeting begins as well as special panels and workshops as part of the regular APSA program.

All POP members, colleagues, and friends are cordially invited to attend the workshop and other events.

For more information on the commemoration, see our website www.polisci.wisc.edu/~party.

SHORT COURSE #15 POP WORKSHOP:

Wednesday, August 30, 2000

- 1:30 - 3:00 **Panel I: Party Responsibility and National Politics**
- Chair:** Paul S. Herrnson,
University of Maryland-College Park
- Paper:** "A Persistent Quest: Reflections on Responsible Parties"
Leon D. Epstein,
University of Wisconsin-Madison
- Discussants:** Joseph Schlesinger,
Michigan State University
Donald Fowler,
Fowler Communication, Inc.
Paul Beck,
Ohio State University
- 3:00 - 3:30 Coffee Break
- 3:30 - 5:00 **Panel II: Party Responsibility and National Government**
- Chair:** John J. Coleman
University of Wisconsin-Madison
- Paper:** Presidential Leadership in the Government of Parties"
Charles O. Jones,
University of Wisconsin-Madison
- "The Dream Fulfilled? Congressional Parties 50 Years After the APSA Report"
Barbara Sinclair, University of California, Los Angeles
- Discussants:** John K. White, Catholic University
E.J. Dionne, *Washington Post*
Gerald Pomper, Rutgers University
- 5:00 - 6:00 Reception

APSA Short Course

The Center for Congressional and Presidential Studies' Campaign Management Institute at American University is sponsoring a short course at the APSA convention on the topic "Teaching About Campaigns and Elections." The short course will include materials and data assembled by CCPS as part of the "Improving Campaign Conduct" project we are conducting funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts.

The short course will begin at 9:30 a.m. on Wednesday, August 30, 2000 (exact location will be determined at a later date) and will consist of two panels. The first panel will feature presentations by James A. Thurber (American University), Paul Herrnson (University of Maryland), Robin Kolodny (Temple University), and Burdett Loomis (University of Kansas) on approaches to teaching about campaigns and elections in the undergraduate curriculum. The second panel will feature presentations by two prominent political consultants: Ray Strother (Strother, Duffy, Strother - Democratic Media Consultants) and Carol Whitney (Whitney & Associates - Republican General Consultant).

We will host a lunch for all participants at the conclusion of the panels. We also hope to create a network among attendees that can be maintained through listservs, web sites, and ongoing material dissemination to those who express an interest in continued involvement.

For more information or to reserve a place at the short course, please email us at ccps@american.edu or call (202) 885-3970.

New Journal on State Politics Announced

The State Politics and Policy organized section of the APSA proudly announces the establishment of a new journal, *State Politics and Policy Quarterly*. *SPPQ* will be the official journal of the section, published out of the Illinois Legislative Studies Center at the University of Illinois at Springfield. Christopher Z. Mooney of the University of Illinois at Springfield will be the Editor, and Kevin B. Smith of the University of Nebraska will be the Associate Editor.

The mission of *SPPQ* is to stimulate research on state politics and policy, and to provide institutional structure for developing a progressive and coherent research agenda for the field. *SPPQ* will publish high quality academic studies that develop general hypotheses of political behavior and policymaking and test these hypotheses using the unique methodological advantages of the states. *SPPQ* has begun accepting manuscripts for the first issue, which will be published in March 2001. Manuscripts on all aspects of political behavior and policy in the states are sought, with no restriction on methodological or theoretical approach. Qualitative, quantitative, single-state, and multi-state studies will all be considered, but only those manuscripts that meet the most rigorous methodological and theoretical academic standards will be published in *SPPQ*. Studies that deal with other sub-national units of government in the U.S. and elsewhere will also be considered for publication. All manuscripts submitted for consideration will be double-blind reviewed. The editor will place a high priority on keeping review and publication turnaround time to a minimum.

For submission, subscription and other information on *SPPQ* please visit our website at: www.uis.edu/~sppq.

**Call for Papers for the 2001
Texas A & M State Politics**

Christopher Z. Mooney

On March 2-3, 2001, the Department of Political Science at Texas A & M University and *State Politics and Policy Quarterly* will co-sponsor a conference on the study of politics in the American states. The conference, to be held at Texas A & M University, will coincide with the publication of the first issue of *SPPQ*, and is designed in part to be a celebration of that event. A stipend will be awarded to paper givers and discussants to cover a major portion of their expenses for the conference.

The focus of the conference will be on using the states to study general questions of politics and policymaking. The conference sponsors are seeking papers that use evidence from the states to study questions under the following general topics:

- What are the impacts of public policy?
- Do institutions matter?
- How well does public policy reflect public opinion in a republic?
- Where should the state politics field go from here?

In addition to traditional papers presented to the entire conference, a graduate student poster session will be held.

Proposals should outline the research question to be addressed by the paper or poster, explain its importance, and lay out the proposed method of answering that question. Proposals should be no more than two pages long. The conference organizers are happy to field inquiries prior to the submission of a proposal. Send proposals and inquiries to Kenneth J. Meier, Department of Political Science, Texas A & M University, College Station, TX 77843, Phone: (409) 845-4232, Fax: (409) 847-8924, Email: kmeier@polisci.tamu.edu.

Events on the Regular APSA Program:

35-1 ROUNDTABLE ON

**CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN POLITICAL PARTIES:
50TH ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATION
OF THE APSA RESPONSIBLE PARTIES REPORT
SATURDAY, 1:30 PM TO 3:15 PM**

CHAIR: Paul S. Herrnson
University of Maryland, College Park

PAPERS:

Control and Service:

Party Organizations in the 20th Century and Beyond
Paul S. Herrnson, University of Maryland, College Park
John C. Green, The University of Akron

Competitors or Companions?

Parties, Consultants, and the Control of Elections
in the 21st Century

David B. Magleby, Brigham Young University
Kelly D. Patterson, Brigham Young University
James A. Thurber, American University

Election Laws and Party Rules:

Contributions to a Stronger Party Role?

L. Sandy Maisel, Colby College
John F. Bibby, University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee

Voters and the APSA Report:

The Evolving Bases of Partisanship

Gerald M. Pomper, Rutgers University, New Brunswick
Marc D. Weiner, Rutgers University, New Brunswick

Strength Through Financial Wizardry:

Problems and Dilemmas for the Major American Parties

Frank J. Sorauf, University of Minnesota

The Party in the Electorate as a
Basis for More Responsible Parties

Herbert F. Weisberg, The Ohio State University

DISC: John C. Green, The University of Akron

35-2 RESPONSIBLE PARTIES IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

SATURDAY, 3:30 PM TO 5:15 PM

CO-SPONSORED BY COMPARATIVE POLITICS SECTION

CHAIR: Susan E. Scarrow, University of Houston

PAPERS:

Party Cohesion, Democratic Accountability,
and Responsiveness

Herbert Kitschelt, Duke University

Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System:

The British Party System Reconsidered

Patrick Seyd, University of Sheffield
Paul F. Whiteley, University of Sheffield

Mrs. Smith Runs for President

Jo Freeman

When Elizabeth Dole was thinking about running for the Republican nomination for President, the press usually described her as the first woman to seriously seek the nation's highest office. Their historical memory was very short.

In 1964 Senator Margaret Chase Smith of Maine did what Elizabeth Dole only talked about doing in 1999: she actively ran in the primaries and her name was put into nomination at the Republican convention.

On January 27, 1964 the Republican Senator from Maine stood before a luncheon of the Women's National Press Club held at the Mayflower Hotel and said she was running to set a precedent. "Through me" she pointed out, "for the first time the women of the United States have an opportunity to break the barrier against women being seriously considered for the presidency of the United States -- to destroy any political bigotry against women on this score just as the late John F. Kennedy . . . broke . . . the political barrier on religion and destroyed once and for all such political bigotry."

Smith told the women reporters her other reasons for running. She had more experience than any of the other candidates. The voters wanted a wider choice than they offered. Lacking money, machine or party backing, she was independent of others' control. But most important to Smith was the opportunity her candidacy gave her to pave the way for future women to seek the nation's highest office unburdened by the assumption that their sex was a limitation.

Of course, Kennedy wasn't the first Catholic to run for president and Smith wasn't the first woman. In 1872 Victoria Claflin Woodhull created the Equal Rights Party as a platform for her own candidacy, and in 1884 and 1888 attorney Belva Lockwood head a ticket with the same name. During the following decades several women were slated by third parties as vice presidential candidates.

But Senator Smith was the first woman to run for a major party nomination, and the first to run as a Republican. Thus, she was more of a trail blazer than JFK, who, after all followed in the footsteps of another Catholic, 1928 Democratic presidential nominee: Alfred E. Smith. By breaking the barrier of disbelief and prejudice, Senator Smith made it possible for Elizabeth Dole's candidacy to be taken seriously and Dole, in turn, made it easier for other women to aspire to the top governmental job.

Although she considered herself a conservative, Smith was used to breaking traditions and making prece-

dents. While she had been elected to the House in 1940 to fill the seat vacated by the death of her husband Clyde, she had been elected to the Senate on her own in 1948, and re-elected in 1954 and 1960. In 1964 she was serving on three important Senate committees: Appropriations, Armed Services, and Aeronautical and Space Sciences.

As a minority of one (two for the six years Maureen Neuberger [D. Ore] also served) in the most exclusive club in the world, she was always in the public eye. But never so much as on June 1, 1950, when she stood before the Senate and accused the Senator from Wisconsin, Joseph R. McCarthy, of turning her beloved chamber into a "forum for hate." Her Declaration of Conscience, signed by six other Senators, was the first Republican opposition to McCarthy's reign of terror through gratuitous accusations of Communist sympathies.

Smith also spoke up for women. While serving in the House Naval Affairs Committee during World War II she supported women working in war industries, the Equal Rights Amendment, and women in the military. She took these concerns with her to the Senate.

During the six months she campaigned, only a few commentators asked whether a woman, any woman, should run for President. But more than a few took side-swipes at her age. Although 66 was within the normal range for heads of state, and women usually outlive men, many writers observed that it wasn't the optimal age for U.S. Presidents. That, they said, was late forties to early fifties, when most women went through menopause. Reporters who asked whether Smith would have the stamina to serve in the world's most demanding office.

As if to answer them, Smith, who had the best attendance record in the Senate, spent a week campaigning in New Hampshire while the temperature was below zero. Unlike the men, she didn't wear pants. In a field of seven candidates in the Republican primary, Smith got 2.4 percent of the vote.

Smith did better in subsequent primaries, getting 25 percent of the Republican vote in Illinois. No one, including her, believed she would win the nomination. But no one believed most of the men running for President would either. Smith lasted to the bitter end of the contentious Republican Convention held in San Francisco in July. After being formally nominated for President she got 27 votes.

JO FREEMAN is a political scientist and author of: *A Room At A Time: How Women Entered Party Politics*. (Rowman & Littlefield, 2000). She thanks James Banner for critiquing her earlier drafts.

FROM THE FIELD:

35-2 RESPONSIBLE PARTIES IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE (continued from page 6)

Responsible Parties in Comparative Perspective
Matthew Shugart, University of California, San Diego

Strong Institutions, Weak Parties:
The Paradox of Canadian Political Parties
Eric M. Uslaner, University of Maryland, College Park

DISC: Susan E. Scarrow, University of Houston

35-13t ROUNDTABLE:

RETROSPECTIVE ON THE 1950 APSA REPORT
"TOWARD A MORE RESPONSIBLE TWO-PARTY SYSTEM"
SATURDAY, 6:00 PM TO 8:00 PM

CHAIR: David R. Mayhew, Yale University

PARTICIPANTS:

David S. Broder, *The Washington Post*
James MacGregor Burns, Williams College
Ralph M. Goldman, Center for Party Development
Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, Georgetown University
Nelson W. Polsby, University of California, Berkeley

SPECIAL INTERESTS:

NEW WEBSITE **"Responsible Two-Party System"** **Report 50th Anniversary**

"Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System," the celebrated and controversial report of the American Political Science Association's Committee on Political Parties, issued a frontal assault on the suitability of American political parties for a modern, activist state.

APSA's Organized Section on Political Organizations and Parties, in conjunction with APSA, is coordinating a series of workshops, panels, and publications to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the report.

Workshops and panels at the 2000 APSA Annual Meeting in Washington, DC, will assess the report, its legacy, and the status of American Parties at the turn of the century.

Visit <http://www.polisci.wisc.edu/~party> for updates, conference paper drafts, downloads of the report and commentaries on the report, and other news related to the anniversary events.



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