

## LOCAL POLITICAL PARTIES

In miniscule the two-party system that has held sway in America has also remained the political reality in Maynard. Threats to its supremacy have been cipher, though efforts nationally and locally have risen to attempt changing the status quo. It has consequently created a stability in political affairs that is conservative and unchanging.- a prudence that is commendable to most people.

In the quadrennial elections for National office, our town remained firmly Republican until 1928. Slowly through the decades the Democratic Party forces gained strength - possibly for two reasons (1) the emergence of the foreign born and their off-spring into the political life of the community and (2) the growing Catholic element (particularly the Irish) set against the Yankee Protestant founders of Maynard. The Protestant founders having pre-empted the Republican banner from Civil War days, Left only the Democratic Party (with some exceptions, of course) to the late-comers. A deeper study of the situation in Maynard we think might illuminate what has happened in Massachusetts as a whole.

In 1920 Rep. Harding & Coolidge received 1013 votes

Dem. Cox & Roosevelt	"	423	"
Soc. Labor	"	2	"
Socialist	"	120	"

Close to 2-1/2 to 1 Republican.

In 1924 Rep. Coolidge-Dawes received 1083 votes

Dem. Davis-Bryan	"	462	"
Ind.Prog. LaFollette-Wheeler		283	"
Communist		20	"
Soc-Labor		0	"

Close to 2-1/2 to 1 Republican.

In 1928 Rep. Hoover-Curtis - 1115 votes

Dem. Smith-Robinson		1049	"
Soc.		80	"
Communist		20	"

Just about even. Remember Al Smith was a Catholic. Remember also it took

thirty-two years (1960) for a Catholic to enter the White House - a tribute to both sides for a live and let live atmosphere finally.

<u>1932</u> - Dem. Roosevelt-Garner	1237
Rep. Hoover-Curtis	1022
Prohibition	6
Socialist	160
Communist	31
Soc.-Labor	3

A majority for the Democrats.

<u>1936</u> - Dem. Roosevelt-Garner	1712
Rep. Landon-Knox	1010
Soc.Labor	5
Socialist	19
Communist	24
Prohibition	3
Union Party - Lemke-O'Brien	130

This was clearly a Democratic town by then. Notice the supply of small minority parties - five of them - a sign of frustration on the political spectrum from right to left during the Great Depression.

<u>1940</u> - Dem. Roosevelt-Wallace	2139
Rep. Willkie-McNary	1131
Prohibition	1
Soc.-Labor	1
Socialist	8
Communist	13

Nearly two to one Democratic by now.

<u>1944</u> - Dem. Roosevelt-Truman	2033
Rep. Dewey-Bricker	1131
Soc.-Labor	4

Nearly two to one Democratic.



The dominance of the local Democratic Party has remained to the present (1968) - though a phenomenon has grown - the emergence of an Independent vote tied to neither party - voting for individuals only. Apparently neither party has what it needs to attract this large unorganized bloc of voters to its standard.

The two parties function through town committees elected by the registered voters of both parties. Party caucuses nominate candidates for the general elections - with Independents being able to get on the ballot through nomination papers with a certain minimum amount of signatures. In 1941 the Republican Town Committee requested of its Democratic counter-part that a Citizens Caucus be instituted in place of the two-party caucuses for local elections. This meant one caucus to which all voters could go to vote. This lasted through 1943 but was discontinued as so many of the defeated candidates got on the ballot by securing signatures. (Jan. 31, 1941 - Feb. 7, 1941 - Feb. 14, 1941 - Feb. 19, 1942 - Feb. 11, 1943 - Maynard News) This Citizens Caucus to this writer seems a ploy by the minority party to get more Republicans voted into town office.

Minority parties have never played any role in town government. However, with the increase of the Finnish population in town, a sizeable Socialist group emerged concerned with National and International questions and living and working conditions. A Socialist Hall was erected on Parker Street (Parker Street Hall) - plays, athletics, dances were held. Voses Pond was purchased by them for summer use. The Imatra Band had its home at the hall. A Finnish speaking Socialist Party was organized within this grouping and English-speaking locals came and went with regularity organized through the efforts of the Finns. Socialist speakers came regularly to Post Office Square (corner of Main and Walnut Streets). Up to the advent of the second World War - a span of forty years - the Socialist image was vigorously projected in town but passed on with the aging of the foreign-born Finns.

A split-off group from these Socialists organized themselves in 1922 as the Workers Party (Communist) as a result of the Russian Revolution. They met in Eagles Hall - purchased the site of the burned-out Maynard House to build a hall but later built the Waltham Street Hall instead. This hall burned down in May 6, 1932 and

they rented the Powder Mill Road Hall (present home of the Elks for some years. This group nurtured an English-speaking Communist Party in town and during the depression year of 1933 ran four candidates for local office. The Town Clerk refused to allow them to run as Communists so they ran as Independents. This was the first and last time that a local minority party ran candidates. The vote was not spectacular but indicated frustration during the Great Depression.

Selectman 254 votes

Board of Public Welfare 197 "

Board of Health 122 "

Tree Warden 431 "

(Feb. 2, 1933 - Feb. 16, 1933 - Maynard News)

I am indebted to Raymond Sheridan and Ralph Sheridan for information plus the Maynard News of the following dates: Aug. 26, 1904 - Oct. 29, 1909 - Oct. 14, 1910 - Feb. 21, 1913 - April 11, 1913 - Aug. 21, 1914 - April 9, 1920 - April 30, 1920 - Feb. 18, 1921 - Feb. 25, 1921 - Feb. 3, 1922 - March 24, 1922 - March 31, 1922 - Oct. 5, 1928 - May 6, 1932 - Feb. 2, 1933 - Feb. 16, 1933 - May 18, 1933 - March 24, 1939 - Jan. 31, 1941 - Feb. 7, 1941 - Feb. 14, 1941 - Feb. 19, 1942 - Feb. 11, 1943. Also town reports of the Quadrennial Elections.

Read at the October, 1968 meeting

of the MAYNARD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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