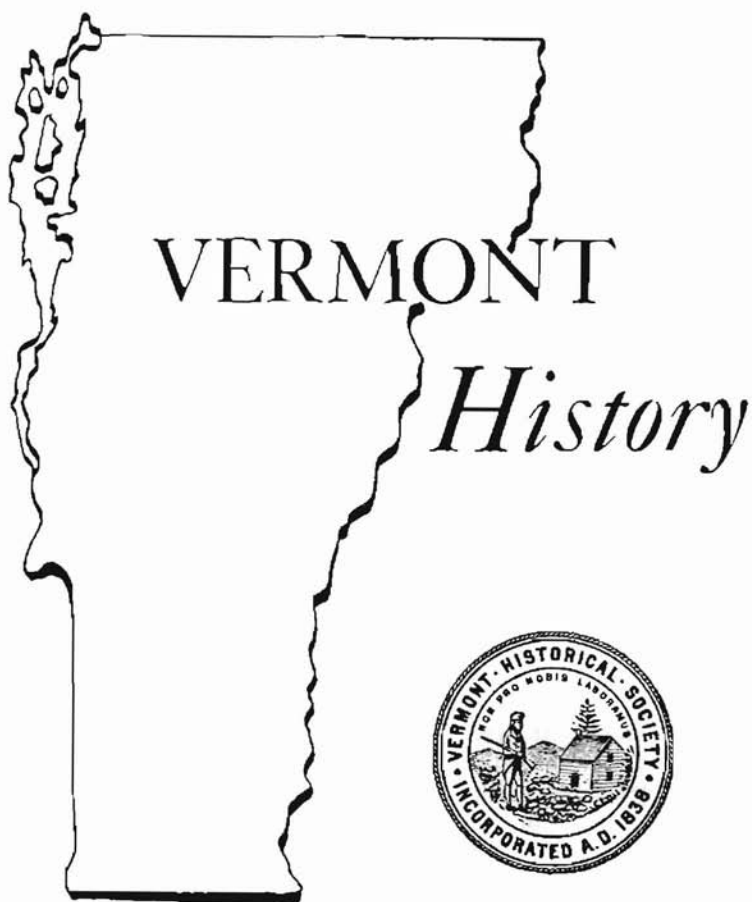


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VERMONT HISTORICAL SOCIETY



*"Dad told me it wasn't the thing to do, but I
ran as a Democrat anyway."*

Republican Vermont: An Eroding Tradition

Edited by D. GREGORY SANFORD

Montpelier Mass Meeting*

July 13, 1854

...inasmuch as there are now no great measures of Legislation or administrative policy, dividing political parties, except that of slavery, and harmony is absolutely essential to successful resistance to the alarming aggressions of the slave power, we do as Whigs, Free Soilers, and Democrats, freely relinquish our former party associations and ties, to form a new party organization, having for its object to secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, and also a wise, just, and economical administration of the Government: and as the principles for which we are contending lie at the foundation of Republicanism, as proclaimed by our fathers, we propose, and respectfully recommend to the friends of freedom in other States to co-operate and be known as REPUBLICANS.

On February 28, 1980, the Center for Research on Vermont at the University of Vermont in conjunction with the Vermont Historical Society held a research-in-progress seminar in Montpelier to present the preliminary findings of a study on the erosion of Republican hegemony in Vermont. A grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities supports the research conducted by Professor Samuel Hand, Professor Frank Bryan and Gregory Sanford, all of the University of Vermont. The Montpelier meeting sought to elicit response from an informed audience on the nature of Republican rule and its decline. The following material is based on a transcript of the presentations and audience response. Though the transcript required some editorial changes to enhance readability, it accurately reflects the oral presentations and, consequently, the vagaries of spoken conversation.

*The Vermont Watchman and State Journal, July 21, 1854.

The Mechanisms of Control: The Mountain Rule

By SAMUEL B. HAND

From the establishment of a Republican party in 1854 through present times, Vermont has elected Republican candidates with greater consistency and larger majorities than any other state in the Union. Since 1958, however, the Democrats have mounted successful challenges to Republican dominance.

In that year Harold Arthur became the first Republican ever to lose a statewide election. Conversely his opponent William Meyer, who was elected to the national House of Representatives, became the first Democrat to win a statewide office since before 1854. Meyer was defeated in 1960, but in 1962 Democrat Philip Hoff won the governorship and was twice reelected. In 1964 Vermont not only voted for a Democratic president for the *only* time in its history, but also gave him a percentage of the vote above the national average. Thomas P. Salmon was elected Governor in 1972 and reelected in 1974. That same year Patrick Leahy won election to the United States Senate seat vacated by the retirement of George D. Aiken.

The election of Leahy, who had served as Chittenden County State's Attorney, is particularly interesting. He is the only person ever elected for a *full term* to the Class II* Senate seat to come from west of the Green Mountains. Conversely Winston Prouty (United States Senate, 1959-71) was the only Vermonter residing east of the Green Mountains to *ever*, under any circumstances, hold the Class I seat. The famous Green Mountain Rule, once inflexible, had become a deadletter, even before Vermonters buried it formally by electing Leahy.** While the Mountain Rule governed Vermont politics, it was a source of great strength to the Republican Party. The rule predated the Republicans, but after 1854, they modified it and pressed it into party service.

*A full Senate term is six years with one-third of the Senate coming up for election every two years. To determine which seats will be up for election, Senate seats are designated Class I, II or III. Every seat in the same class is up for election the same year and each state has two different classes. Vermont has a Class I and a Class II seat.

**For a detailed description of the Mountain Rule, see Lyman Jay Gould and Samuel B. Hand, "The Geography of Political Recruitment in Vermont: A View from the Mountains," in *Growth and Development in Vermont*, ed. Reginald L. Cook, the Vermont Academy of Arts and Sciences, Occasional Paper No. 5 (1970), 19-24. An abridged copy of this article, without footnotes, can be obtained through the Center for Research on Vermont, University of Vermont, Burlington, Vt. 05405.

Professor Samuel B. Hand addressing the Annual Meeting of the Vermont Historical Society in 1977.



The Mountain Rule localized factional disputes through limiting the pool of eligible candidates. When it was the eastern turn, only candidates from the east were eligible. Conversely, when the west's turn came, the party only considered westerners. This rule, obviously important in regard to the United States Senate, had even more significance as applied to the governorship. Here not only did eastern governors regularly succeed western governors, but a rotation in office formula limited a governor's tenure to two years.

From 1854 through 1870 governors usually served for two one-year terms. The apparent exception to this pattern, Erastus Fairbanks, who served a single term from 1860-61 and had previously served as governor in 1852-53, actually reinforced the strength of the system of rotation. After 1870 and until 1928 governors served one two-year term and then stepped aside. If an eastern candidate lost a primary (or a convention contest), he knew that in four years it would be his section's turn again and he would have another chance. Furthermore, he never had to worry about facing an incumbent. Two years was the informal maximum allowed any governor.

Initially the Mountain Rule assured sectional equality; that there was a new governor every two years was incidental. Over time, having a different governor every two years became an end in itself. Whether a governor came from eastern or western Vermont was less important than that he serve only two years. The fact that a former governor never recaptured office in those years when it was again his section's turn confirms the pattern. Requiring sectional rotation kept the party open at the top and inhibited long-term organized factional alliances within the Republican

Party. Although over the long run this policy may have promoted Republican unanimity, it did not necessarily promote good government. Critics of the one-term tradition argued that responsible government required greater executive continuity than a governor could achieve in two years. Governor John Weeks broke the one-term tradition when he successfully sought reelection in 1928. The Mountain Rule, in modified form, survived this election by only a few years, and the increasing factionalism that accompanied the decline in the Mountain Rule almost certainly enhanced Democratic opportunities.

Another significant factor in the demise of the Mountain Rule occurred after 1930 when Vermont was apportioned down from two seats to one seat in the United States House of Representatives. Congressional districts had previously abided by the Mountain Rule. With only one seat there were fewer opportunities for, and restraints on, ambitious candidates, and the 1958 primary provides a dismal (from the perspective of Republican Party organization) illustration of this fact. During that year six Republicans vied for the congressional seat vacated by Winston Prouty. Harold Arthur won the primary but could not overcome the residue of bitterness left over from the campaign, which contributed to Meyer's victory in the general election.

The Mountain Rule also applied to the state legislature and other offices with almost equal vigor. Of the representatives elected to the House speakership since 1870, none served for more than four terms and most served one. In the Vermont Supreme Court, sometimes the east and sometimes the west had a majority, but the court was always balanced three to two. Some towns also applied their own version of the Mountain Rule by alternating representatives to the Vermont House.

The patterns prescribed by the Mountain Rule were far too regular, and applied too consistently, to attribute to coincidence. Contemporary references to the Rule establish that political observers understood it, and its application was an important factor in promoting Republican hegemony.

Conversely the decline of the Mountain Rule (which had set in prior to the election of Democrats to statewide office) contributed to the erosion of Republican hegemony. The development of strains under which it became impossible to maintain the Rule became apparent after 1927. Having a single United States Representative, coupled with the tradition of long tenure for Vermont's national officers, was one factor. Governor Weeks' successful effort to capture a second two-year term in 1928 was another, and his two-term (four-year) precedent became "instant tradition." The fact that governors now served four years meant that once having lost a Republican primary, a gubernatorial aspirant had to wait

eight years rather than four before trying again, a longer wait that many aspirants could politically afford. Democratic victories provided another factor. What happened when a section lost to a Democrat? Did the section lose its turn, and whose turn was it to face a Democratic incumbent up for reelection? And so on.

In conclusion, students can plot out the amazing regularity of the application of the Rule and provide a credible explanation for its demise. Scholars do not yet understand, however, how it was enforced.

Charting the Erosion

By FRANK BRYAN

The research on the decline of Republican hegemony can be viewed in four different ways or divided into four different arenas. The research can observe the elite or leadership level or it can look at the mass levels, the people; leaders as opposed to the public. Another dichotomy exists between the legislature and the electorate. The pertinent information, quantifiable in various degrees, arranged by each area provides the basic design for research. (See Figure 1.)

Quantification, relatively new to social science, is even newer to the study of history. Numbers do not themselves answer questions; they do exert certain discipline and force researchers to be more precise. If one claims that Orange County was the most Republican county in Vermont in the Thirties, what precisely does "most Republican" mean? If one says that Chittenden County was heavily Democratic, what exactly does that mean? If, however, one described the value in percentage terms, Chittenden County is sixty-three per cent Democratic, the language is more precise. Quantifiers in behavioral sciences should not claim anymore than an attempt to be a bit more specific.

Using quantitative methods also can make the collection of data more demanding. The researcher encounters, for example, particular difficulty when considering the mass level in the legislature. The data on legislative races, prior to reapportionment (1965), is not gathered at the state level. Thus, in order to learn at what time in history the Democrats from Mount Tabor, for example, began to run for the state legislature, one must go to Mount Tabor to get that information. That presents a difficult problem of research logistics, especially to collect

FIGURE 1
*The Erosion of Republican
Hegemony in Vermont 1927-1974*
Designs for Research

		Level of Analysis	
		Elite	Mass
Sources of Data	The Legislature	Biographical Characteristics of Legislators	Voting Data on Legislative Races
	General Elections for Statewide Offices	Candidate Selection Patterns (i.e. The Mountain Rule The Apprenticeship System)	Voting Data on Statewide Candidates

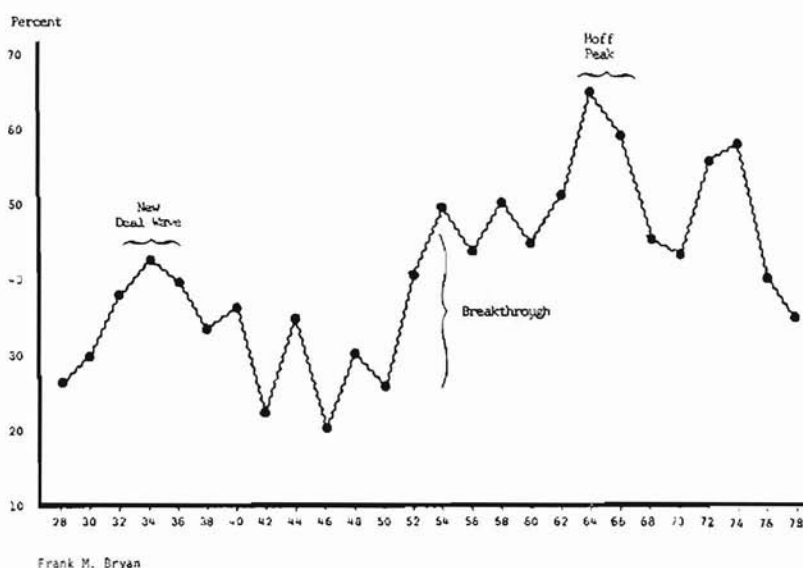
the data statewide over a long time frame. It is, however, absolutely essential to know, not only when Democrats began to run, but also when Democrats dared to call themselves Democrats. It is easy, of course, to ascertain when they began to win, for then they show up in the legislature.

The attempt to discover why and how a state so stitched in one political pattern apparently changed swiftly into another pattern is aided by the fact that Vermont's political system has fairly clear boundaries. Vermont does not present problems like New York and California where profound sectional differences break up the whole concept of polity. Vermont is a nice, neat little package, which provides an excellent laboratory for looking at the phenomena which caused the breakthrough in the political system. Arnold Toynbee considered Vermont as isolated above the optimum climatic area; in its internal political life it has remained isolated enough to be protected from a lot of contamination from other sources.

The time of the break in Republican hegemony presents the first important problem. Most observers consider that the Democratic breakthrough occurred with Philip Hoff's election as Governor in 1962. However, a close look at the percentage of the vote received by Democrats in the gubernatorial contests between 1928 and 1972 (See Figure 2.) shows Hoff's vote to be consistent with the Democratic votes of 1958 and '60 and to be related to the fact that historically fewer Republicans vote in

off-year elections than in presidential years. Too much has been made of the Hoff charisma in that election. The breakthrough probably occurred in 1952 when the Democrats made a substantial leap of over twenty points and then maintained that advance. Several other studies also point to 1952 as the crucial year. Douglas Hodgkin compared the minority party breakthrough in Vermont to a series of other states. Samuel Miller wrote an M.A. thesis at the University of Vermont which examined the phenomena, while Fred Maher, who studied Vermont elections, also agrees that the breakthrough occurred in 1952.*

FIGURE 2
Democratic Percentage for Governor 1928-1976

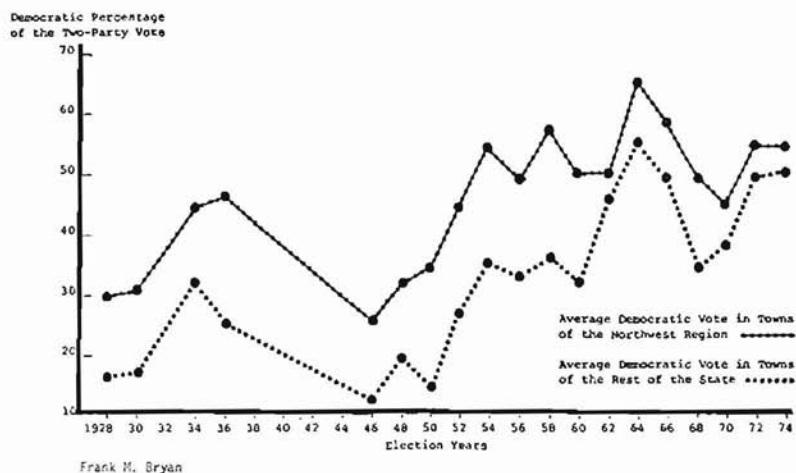


James L. Sundquist in *Dynamics of the Party System; Alignment and Realignment of Political Parties in the United States* (Washington, D.C.:

*Douglas I. Hodgkin, "Breakthrough Elections: Elements of Large and Durable Minority Gains in Selected States Since 1944," Ph.D. Diss., Duke University, Durham, North Carolina, 1966; Samuel L. Miller, "The Vermont Democratic Party and the Development of Intra-Party Responsibility," M.A. Thesis, University of Vermont, Burlington, 1960; and Frederick J. Maher, Jr., "Vermont Elections," Ph.D. Diss., Columbia University, New York, 1969.

FIGURE 3

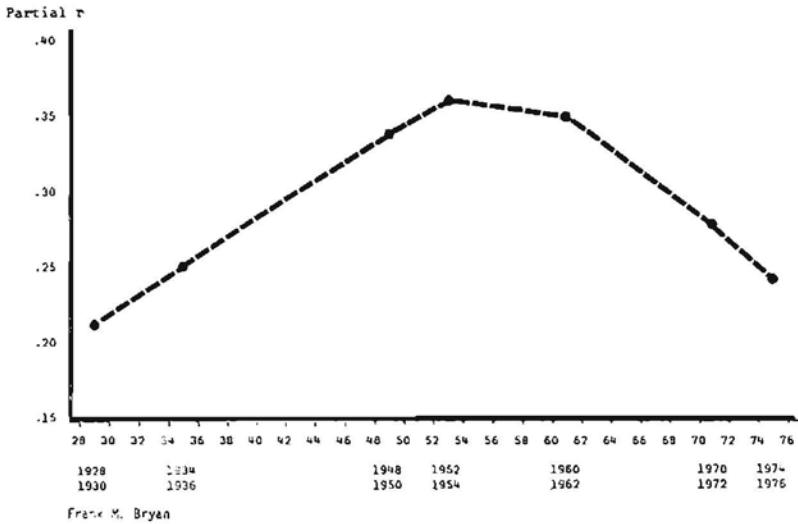
*The Demise of Regionalism in the Vermont
Two-Party Vote: Gubernatorial Elections 1928-1974*



The Brookings Institution, 1978) made one of the most interesting suggestions about the Democratic breakthrough. Sundquist, looking at one-party states other than Vermont where Democrats made gains in the New Deal, correlates those gains with Democratic breakthroughs which occurred soon after World War II. He investigated states like Iowa and North Dakota and found strong, positive correlations between the breakthrough vote after the war and what he calls the Democratic New Deal Wave. In those states the localities, towns, and counties in which the Democratic Party gained the most during the New Deal were also the towns in which they gained the most immediately after World War II. These towns experienced an initial increase during the Depression followed by a latent smoldering period; then the same people supported the Democratic Party again after the war. In Vermont, however, there is little correlation between the towns in which the Democrats gained the most between 1928 and 1936 and the towns in which they gained the most between 1946 and 1952. Something different happened. Between 1928 and the 1970's, the Vermont Democratic Party gradually reached a maturity which coincided with the demise of the regional Democratic vote in the north-western counties. Historically the Democrats experienced an important gap between the percentage of their vote in the counties of the northwest—Grand Isle, Franklin and Chittenden—and the rest of the state. Over time the gap has decreased so that now the Democrats frequently do equally well throughout the state. (See Figure 3.)

FIGURE 4

*Partial Correlation Coefficients Between
the Democratic Base Vote and Town Size
Controlling for Voter Turnout, Per Capita
Farmers and Population Increase 1928 to 1976*



The essential hypothesis on breakthrough developed by scholars over the last thirty years suggests that political change does not take place unless accompanied by change in the social and economic variables in the state. The social scientist might ask, then, if something exhibited in the changing social and economic character of Vermont caused the Democratic breakthrough, or did the Democrats break through in the social, economic environment which already existed? Did the Democrats break through because new kinds of people moved into the State? Did the Democrats break through because Vermont industrialized and blue-collar workers, who generally vote Democratic, came into the state, as happened in New Hampshire where the Manchester to Concord industrial base supports much of its Democratic strength?

Many scholars point to urbanization (which increases with industrialization) as necessary to the Democratic vote. In the early period, 1928-1938, the relationship between the Democratic vote and the size of the town was very weak; the Democrats did not do much better in large towns than in small ones. (See Figure 4.) Scholars who expected future Democratic victories in Vermont waited for Vermont to urbanize; they were certain that major change would wait until the farmers died away and the cities



Robert W. Larrow

gained strength. In the middle period (1939-1960) Democratic strength grew in the larger towns. By 1952 the relationship between Democratic success and the size of the town was relatively stronger, irrespective of the number of farmers, the number of people voting, or the rate of growth for a town. In the most recent period (1961-1976) the relationship between town size and the Democratic vote decreased, which indicates that the Democrats began to make gains in the smaller towns away from Chittenden County, Rutland, and the Barre-Montpelier area. Further, in attempting to analyze as many socio-economic characteristics of Vermont towns as possible in relating to the base Democratic vote or to Democratic gains, no serious correlations emerge.

One may draw the very tentative conclusion, recognizing that much study remains to be done, that overall, the Democratic party has not made its gains because Vermont has changed radically in terms of its socio-economic base. The socio-economic influence on the breakthrough is limited; the Democrats achieved success primarily because of leadership. Philip Hoff, Robert Larrow and others campaigned hard, believed they could win, and addressed important issues. Their success suggests one incredibly difficult variable to measure—communication. The statistic of the television antennas per capita might help explain Democratic gains. In 1964, the year of Lyndon Johnson's breakthrough, for example, for the first time in an organized fashion in Vermont Democrats found their way into the living rooms of practically every house in small Vermont towns. And Lyndon Johnson did not look that bad. Measurement of the impact of communication remains imprecise. Vermont, therefore, has not witnessed Democratic gain because of great change in the socio-economic base. The gains are the results of people who made the difference.

FIGURE 5
*Percentages of Democrats, Catholics,
 and Farmers in the Vermont Legislature 1947-1977*



SOURCE: Data compiled by the author from: *Vermont Legislative Directory and State Manual* (Montpelier, Vermont), 1947-1977. Frank M. Bryan, *Politics in Rural America*. (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, forthcoming)

An analysis of the legislature (an elite analysis because it merely measures the per cent of various types of people in the legislature) reveals that between 1947 and 1973 the number of farmers who served was practically wiped out. (See Figure 5.) Reapportionment helps to explain their decline. When some of the towns lost their seats, the farmer delegation declined considerably. The number of farmers, however, were decreasing prior to reapportionment, but the rate of decrease became much faster during the reapportionment period. After reapportionment the decrease continued. In this case the reapportionment phenomenon served as a catalyst—it speeded up a reaction already well under way.

Did reapportionment help the Democrats? In the 1966 special session, the first session after reapportionment, the Democrats did not realize a great increase in the House. The percentage gain was even less than in 1965. Since that time, however, the Democrats have made strong gains, but those gains cannot easily be tied directly to reapportionment. The number of Catholics in the legislature has also grown. Some political scientists would point to that development as a classic example of a

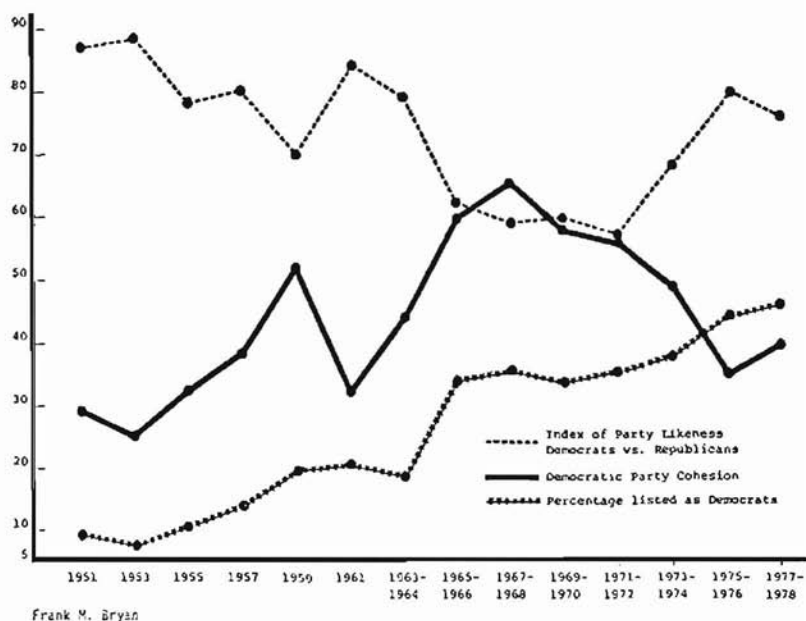
minority group using a political party to gain a measure of political power. In that view the Democrats brought the Catholics a degree of numerical parity in the legislature; again, in this case reapportionment had a catalytic role.

Does a political breakthrough have any importance, if it does not bring a change in public policy; what if there were a Democratic breakthrough and nothing happened? It is hard to link political change to policy change. Figure 6 presents one method to analyze the relationship. The press makes the same mistake once each year commenting on the cohesion of the Democrats or Republicans in the legislature. They either claim the historical existence or absence of cohesion or the Democrats have cohesion and the Republicans do not, or that one party or the other has lost its cohesion. The Democratic cohesion in the Vermont legislature based on all competitive (when at least twenty per cent of the membership disagrees with the majority vote) roll call votes taken shows cohesion scores from zero to one hundred. One hundred means all the members of the party voted together all the time; zero means a fifty-fifty split in the party. The Democrats displayed cohesion during the Hoff period. In comparison to other states, even some urban states with fairly strong cohesive parties, the Vermont Democratic party acted as a legislative force in the mid-sixties. The index of party likeness, (The dotted line on the top of Figure 6 compares Republican behavior to Democratic behavior. As that goes down, it means the parties are becoming dissimilar or less like one another, and as it goes up, it means the parties are becoming similar in their voting patterns.) demonstrates that when Hoff came in and the index fell, the parties were less alike. There was some party conflict then, but in recent years the index of likeness has increased.

It becomes interesting to examine Democratic cohesion when the numerical strength of the party increases. (See the starred line on the bottom of Figure 6.) The Democrats have made steady gains, but Democratic cohesion is not a function of Democratic strength. During Governor Salmon's administration, Democratic cohesion was all but destroyed. He enjoyed no party cohesion, and there has been no real cohesion in the Democratic party since. The Republican cohesion (not included in Figure 6) increased very slightly during Hoff's term, and a little bit more during the Davis years, before it fell off again. The Republicans have never enjoyed the degree of cohesion as the Democrats. The phenomena is particularly interesting because many social scientists have argued that the strongest party system emerges from one-party control for a long period of time, followed by a minority party breakthrough for a short period of time, and then the return of the first party to power. They claim that the minority party will engender cohesion as it breaks through.

FIGURE 6

*Democrats in the Vermont House. Democratic Party Cohesion
and the Democratic-Republican Index of Group Likeness - 937 Roll Calls 1951-1978*



That thesis may obtain in Vermont. The party government in the mid-sixties is attributable, in my opinion, to Philip Hoff and other leaders who produced a sense of strong Democratic cohesion and a considerable amount of policy.

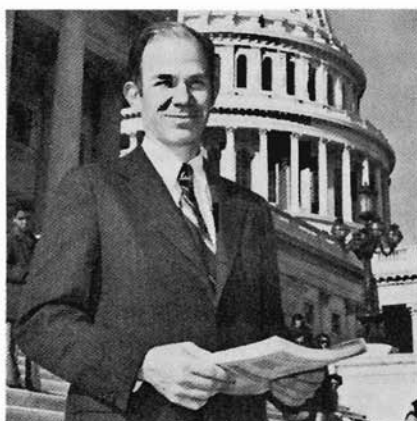
Though Vermont has changed from a one-party to a two-party state, a more accurate statement is that it has changed to a state where a person, calling himself either a Democrat or Republican, can win an election. That is different from being a two-party state with healthy, organized parties.

The Not So Taciturn Yankees: The Audience Responds

Following the presentations of Professors Hand and Bryan, the audience offered its observations. Most participants spoke from the experience of having campaigned for and served in political office in Vermont.

Hand: We say a person calling himself a Democrat can now win; equally striking is that candidates would now call themselves a Democrat. In the 1930's, for example, the records reveal, invariably, heavy Republican majorities in the legislature. Yet we know that in some cases a Republican incumbent has been challenged in the general election by an Independent, or whatever else he chooses to label himself, and gets knocked off. The Independent then goes to Montpelier and presto—becomes a Republican. The agitation and the disruptiveness which often characterized Republican Party politics in the 1930's is not revealed in the data on party membership within the legislature. When Professor Bryan spoke about having to go to the towns to find the data, he referred not only to Democratic voting returns but also to Republican primaries. Anecdotal information, the literature, familiarity with some of the personalities involved, and increasingly the research of D. Gregory Sanford indicates that, at the local level, some towns always experienced a great deal of agitation and turnover. Simply counting the town representatives from these towns as Republicans, and they can be counted no other way, disguises the degree of agitation. Today that challenge would likely be mounted by someone called a Democrat, and the very fact that the candidate will call himself a Democrat is important, though I do not know precisely what it means. Perhaps some part of the socio-economic climate has changed significantly if candidates in Cavendish can now call themselves Democrats.

Bryan: Candidates can call themselves Democrats, but that is not because there are a bunch of new folks in Vermont who will support them. The great gains Hoff registered in 1962 came in some of the outlying towns in the farming communities.



Richard W. Mallary

He broke through by convincing farmers to vote for him, not by soaking up like a sponge certain kinds of Democrats, "socio-economic Democrats," who had not previously been in Vermont.

Hand: During part of the Hoff administration (1963-1969), Richard Mallary,* you served as Speaker. At that point you established the concept of a majority leader in the Vermont House of Representatives. Did it exist previously?

Mallary: There was a majority leader prior to that time; though it was not really meaningful. I think 1966 was the first year in which the majority party in the legislature, which was then the Republican party, developed and pushed through a program independently of the governor's program. I do not see the figure for cohesion for the Republicans in 1966. Probably the fact of the Republican program also resulted in greater party cohesion of the Democrats who stayed with the governor.

Bryan: You are correct, Dick. I did not know that the Republicans had a program in 1966. [Laughter] My research indicates that 1966 is, in fact, the time when Republican cohesion emerged; though statistically not as much as the Democrats

*Richard W. Mallary, Secretary of Administration in 1971 and 1977-1980, served as a member of the Vermont Senate in 1969 and of the House in 1961-69. He was Speaker of the House from 1966-69 and United States Congressman from 1973-75.

because the Republican party was bigger and would not stand out in the figures quite so much. That is, however, the time something happened, and I would not be a bit surprised if the Republican program kicked up a Democratic response. But why did the Republican choose 1966 to initiate a legislative program? Was it you or was it the times? Why did it not occur ten years earlier?

Mallary: There was of course a difference in leadership and personality; there was also reapportionment.* The personalities involved carried a sort of growing contamination of Vermont by the concept that legislative parties ought to have some meaning as far as programs. It was a concept I had held and certain of my predecessors as speaker had not held. Enough Republican members of the legislature were willing to participate in that effort to develop a legislative program.

Bryan: Then the Republican platform was not a tactic to sandbag Hoff, or the response to worry about Hoff doing something and wanting to beat him to the punch?

Mallary: This was, in essence, an effort to be positive rather than negative and to enact things the party was pushing rather than giving credence to the characterization, as we have been regularly viewed by the press, as being negative or adverse to the Hoff program for party reasons. It was to show some positive image of the party rather than a negative one.

Bryan: Following his first election in 1962, Hoff during his first legislative session had study groups and really did not have a program. In 1964 he called a special session to introduce a program. The figures for Democratic cohesion take off in that year, and it was clearly Phil Hoff's leadership which caused it.

Downs:** Dick [Mallary's] comments were interesting. As Dick said,

*In 1965 the Vermont Legislature was changed from one town / one vote to one man / one vote apportionment to meet a federal mandate. The reapportionment reduced the House from 246 members to 150. The Senate continued to have thirty members although some districts were redrawn.

**John H. Downs, an attorney now practicing in Burlington, was elected to the Vermont House from St. Johnsbury in 1961 and 1963.

Governor Philip H. Hoff



his predecessors as speaker visualized themselves primarily as presiders, efficient operators of the process without worrying about responsibility for the substance. The Hoff election brought the first change in Republican domination in years. Dick was the catalyst who eventually said, "My God, if there is such a thing as a two-party system, then there had better be something done about it." There were certainly fundamental differences in the views of Democrats like Ben Collins* and Phil Hoff and Republicans like Dick Mallary over what should be done by state government. Dick had all of the ability, brass and follow-through to develop a Republican presence.

Hand: How did that situation affect the appointment of Democrats to legislative committees?

Mallary: Although I did not appoint any Democratic committee chairmen, that precedent had been previously established by Bill [Franklin] Billings [Jr.], who had appointed essentially all Republicans. There may have been one exception

*Benjamin M. Collins served as a special assistant to Governor Hoff from 1964-66 and as his Secretary of Civil and Military Affairs, 1966-69.

during my tenure which occurred in 1963. Prior to this time, in the days when it was assumed the Republicans would control and the Democrats would cooperate, the Speaker appointed legislative chairmen on the basis of seniority, respect, and so forth, rather than making any attempt to have cohesive party leadership among chairmen.

Collins: I have never been particularly good at the big picture, at conceptualizing things. I tend to live from day-to-day and react to what I see. I was a [Ernest] Gibson-Republican when I came to Vermont in 1947. If one wanted to be effective on a statewide basis, one needed to be a Republican. George Aiken and Governor Gibson made it a very comfortable place for liberal Republicans. I agree with Frank Bryan's observations; I did not see broad social and economic changes in Vermont. They do not explain the Democratic breakthrough. What I saw instead was Ray Keyser, going directly from speaker to governor. Had Keyser let Lieutenant Governor Bob Babcock become governor, there would not have been a Phil Hoff in 1962. Babcock was like Phil Hoff, so there was no chance Hoff could have ousted Bob Babcock. He could oust Ray Keyser because Ray, as a relatively conservative Republican, was not in tune with the Gibson wing and was not trying hard to get along with us. He lost a lot of his Republican support, which is why Phil Hoff was able to knock him off in 1962. Hoff was charismatic; he had all the qualities the Democrats had to have to defeat Ray Keyser. Had there been somebody else [other than Keyser], he might not have had any chance of winning. Like Bob Larrow back in the fifties; if it had not been for Lee Emerson, Bob Larrow would not have done as well. And if Bernard Leddy had only known what a relatively weak candidate Bob Stafford was (and had he campaigned on eastern side of the state*), he could have licked him hands down.

*In the 1960 Republican primary F. Ray Keyser, Jr., the Speaker of the House, narrowly beat Lieutenant Governor Babcock in a four-way race. Keyser won in the general election but was beaten in 1962 in his re-election attempt by Democrat Philip Hoff. Robert Larrow was the Democratic candidate for governor in 1952, the contest frequently identified as the breakthrough election for the Vermont Democrats. Lee Emerson was the Republican incumbent challenged by Larrow. Bernard Leddy narrowly lost to Robert Stafford in the 1958 gubernatorial contest, an election which resulted in the first statewide recount in Vermont history.

Governor F. Ray Keyser, Jr.



Bryan: Do you see that old Proctor versus Aiken/Gibson kind of conflict in the Republican Party as still strong in 1960 and hurting Keyser?

Downs: Keyser hurt himself.

Bryan: Do you think that Leddy could have beaten Keyser in 1962?

Downs: Maybe, if he had realized the potential and worked like hell for it, but he would not have worked as Phil Hoff did.

Collins: I do not think Leddy would have attracted the same degree of support that Hoff did. I do not like to say this, but I think the Catholic question would have arisen.

Bryan: How close was Keyser to the Proctor crowd?

Downs: Certainly closer than he was to the Gibson crowd.

Mandigo:* I think we have left out an issue in consideration of the Keyser campaign, the Whiting Milk collapse.** It had a tremendous impact on the farm communities in 1962.

Hand: Bob Babcock advocated a sales tax in 1960; does that make him a liberal in 1960? If Bob Babcock had not come out for a sales tax, he might have defeated Keyser in the primary. The great liberal of the group of "Young Turks", (a group elected to the Vermont legislature in 1960), which consisted of people like Mallary, Downs, Hoff and Billings, was [William Jay] Smith, a poet who has subsequently left Vermont who wrote a wonderful article on Vermont politics in *Harper's Magazine*.*** [In 1961] he voted against the bottle ban. By current standard would he not be labeled a liberal? He said he was voting against the prohibitionists. And as I analyze Bob Babcock's platform, I think it is very hard to define him as a liberal. The labels of liberal and conservative create analytical difficulties. By current standards this would not be labelled a liberal.

Mallary: One has to define people as liberal or conservative in the context of their particular time. Babcock was perceived as being liberal at that time, and at that time the sales tax was to him a vehicle to raise more money in order to spend it on more public programs. It was not an issue of a sales tax versus an income tax. The issue was about another tax in order to have more money to expand the government services. I considered that position liberal compared to the other candidates.

Bryan: The whole question of issues fascinates me. How much do issues really matter? Were there factors at work in Vermont which determined the Democrats would breakthrough,

*Melvin H. Mandigo, Senator from Essex-Orleans County, has served in the Vermont Senate since 1975. He was a member of the Vermont House of Representatives in 1966 and 1969-1974.

**The collapse of the Whiting Milk Company and the question of whether to reimburse the company's patrons for the money they lost was a major issue in the 1961 Legislature. For further information, see *Journal of the Senate of the State of Vermont, Biennial Session, 1961* (Montpelier: Capital City Press, 1962).

***William Jay Smith, "My Poetical Career in Vermont Politics," *Harper's Magazine*, Vol. 288 (January, 1964).

Emory Hebard



and, thus, issues did not matter too much in the long run? Communications, changing times, or new leaders in the Democratic party, who, as Sam Miller* says, took over the Democratic party with second-generation ethnics, and really wanted to win could all explain the Democratic success. But Senator Mandigo points to an issue, the collapse of Whiting. This leads me to ask what has been the most important issue ever to affect a Vermont election: What issue had the most impact, irrespective of the year or the candidate?

Hebard:** I do not think the answer ever lies in a big issue; it lies rather in a conglomeration of little things. Caledonia County went Democratic, for example, because Lyndon College was going to be closed.

Bryan: Was that as important as W. Arthur Simpson raising hell up there?

*Miller, "The Vermont Democratic Party and the Development of Intra-Party Responsibility."

**Emory A. Hebard is State Treasurer. A member of the House in 1961-68 and 1971-76, he presided as Chairman, Ways and Means Committee, 1967-68 and of Appropriations, 1973-76.

Hebard: No, Simpson was upset because of the move to close the college. Also the legislature dragged into the first of August that year. I think the power of this state rests in the legislature, and politics is weakening now because there are no longer 251 independent politicians, one from every town. Now there is a group. In 1961 we returned to Montpelier until the first of August, we came back because Asa Bloomer would not accept the Ways and Means offer.* We waited until the last week in July, and then a compromise came through; it could have just as well come through in May. We came back two and three days a week. I am sure a lot of those people supported a bill on the simple grounds, "My God, we aren't going to have any more of this." I suspect if we drag this [the 1980 session] legislature into the first of July, which is possible, that something like that could happen again.

Hand: The first contested Democratic primary occurred in 1960.** Then in 1962, former Congressman Meyer wanted to run for the Senate. Democrats like Hoff and Leddy said, "Oh my God, he's going to get Aiken out campaigning," and so they staged a primary fight and knocked Meyer off in the primary. There is actually primary campaign literature in which the Democratic organization speaks of Meyer as "this nut; he wants to end the draft; he wants to recognize Red China. Do you want a man like this representing the Democratic party?" They managed to knock him off the ticket.

The question which follows is, if they hadn't gotten Meyer off the ticket—recognizing the problem posed by if's, if Whiting had not collapsed, if the legislature had not lasted till August, and so forth—and Meyer had forced Aiken to campaign, would anybody ever have heard of Phil Hoff? The Democrats obviously thought not; thus, they forced

*Mr. Hebard is referring to the 1961 session of the legislature in which Asa Bloomer, Senator from Rutland County, was Vice-Chairman of the Appropriations Committee.

**In 1960 when Fred Richmond challenged U.S. Congressman William Meyer. Meyer won the primary but lost to Robert Stafford in the general election. The second contested Democratic primary occurred in 1962 and also involved Meyer. In that year W. Robert Johnson beat Meyer in the primary contest for the U.S. Senate nomination.

Meyer out. How important was forestalling a campaign by Aiken?

Mandigo: Isn't it true that Phil Hoff was anybody's candidate? At the time he announced, nobody wanted [the nomination]. He took it as a last resort, because the Democrats could not find anybody else. Then he came on and worked.

Downs: I remember February of 1962 when Hoff ran; he contemplated running in 1966 or thereabouts, but things happened to Ray Keyser which convinced him that there was a time to run, and the time was now. The situation had changed from what it was a month or two before, and he ran.

Hand: Senator Mandigo is correct, when we talk about the breakthrough. Hoff is the candidate who won. Yet would any attractive, non-Catholic Democrat, who worked hard, have won in 1962? Did the breakthrough result from the erosion of the Republican party? I agree with Ben Collins' argument that a Catholic could not have won in 1962 as a Democrat, and maybe not even as a Republican, were that conceivable.

Collins: There had to be a Phil Hoff.

Bryan: Couldn't the candidate have been a Catholic in 1962?

Collins: I do not think so. Remember the close vote, within a thousand.

Bryan: But in the three preceeding off-year elections, the Democrats did better and better each time. Leddy got more votes in losing in 1958 than Hoff got in winning in 1962.

Downs: Leddy would have won if he had known how close the results would be. Leddy did not really campaign on the eastern side of the state.

Bryan: I would like to ask about my figures on Democratic cohesion. (See Figure 4.) They show that Phil Hoff's cohesion in the legislature really plummeted in the 1968 portion

of the 1967-1968 session. In other words, he had a good solid Democratic legislative support in 1965, 1966, and 1967, and then in '68—zippo. I believe the decline in cohesion followed his announcement that he would not run again.

Collins: I think that explains part of it, but there were many national issues which also had an impact on the Democratic party in Vermont, including the national convention.

Manchester:* One must remember that the old-time Democrats were not really liberal. They did not like Hoff; the Republicans elected Hoff, the liberal Republicans and some of the moderates. I know that because the first time I went to the legislature, in 1955, I went for the Town of Waterville as a Democrat.

Collins: In 1955 I came to Vermont and watched the legislature and could not understand why you were a Democrat. [Laughter]

Manchester: Well, I'll tell you. Of course, my dad has always been a Republican, and I had always been a Republican. A fellow who worked for me that year wanted to run for the legislature. It became obvious to me that he would not win the nomination, and they had closed the nominations. So I got a couple of the other boys who worked for me to write my name in on the Democratic ticket, and so my name was on the ticket, and I went to work and got elected. The Republican party that year offered a plaque to the town that got out the highest percentage of votes. The Town of Waterville got that plaque.

So I got to the legislature. Dad told me it was not the thing to do, but I thought it did not make any difference. In Montpelier I discovered that whether I wanted to be a Democrat or not, I was a Democrat. The Republicans wouldn't touch me with a ten-foot pole. So I went to the Democratic caucuses, and on most things they were more

*R. Henry Manchester, a member of the House in 1955 and 1965-70, has served in the Senate since 1977.

conservative than the Republicans. The Democrats were liberal on labor matters, but not on other things. That hurt Hoff, many Democrats could not take him.

Allen:* In support of Senator Manchester's remarks about running as a Democrat in 1955, one must take into account the flexibility of local politics, particularly in House contests. For example, in 1972 when I returned to Vergennes, I thought it would be interesting to see what was going on in Montpelier. There were two Republican incumbents, and I had the choice of being the third man in the Republican primary or running as a Democrat. I think I could have won by either method, but it was probably more difficult to win in the Republican primary, while I could have won very easily as a Democrat. At least in House contests, the individual counts, especially in a town or village. Known views and the personal nexus become far more important than party or any changes in the socio-economic climate.

Bryan: It is very difficult to get town data, and I have not done that in an organized fashion. Some things are just not quantifiable; one has to talk about them.

Mandigo: For those years you have studied [1927-74], one can scarcely identify a Republican or Democratic philosophy. You have talked about years during which Vermont experienced a gradual erosion of membership in political parties and diminishing respect for political party platforms. We have a process for adopting and filing platforms, but nobody in either party really adheres to a party platform or concocts a program to carry out the proposals or principles of the party platform. At a time when declining party affiliation has gradually hurt the Republicans and as a growth of the spirit of independence becomes popular, we changed the laws to make it easier to be independent and become active in whichever political party appears appealing at the moment.

*William G. Allen has served in the House since 1973 as the Representative from Vergennes.

Bryan: Dick [Mallary], did you work from the Republican platform when, as Speaker, you formed a legislative program?

Mallary: I do not recall. I suspect the Republican platform at that time was sufficiently flexible, as it usually is, to have a specific program within its confines. I remember few Republican platforms which outlined highly specific programs. Ours was a Republican legislative program worked out between the party leadership of both houses.

Bryan: As a social scientist, I believe the most important change in the way we govern ourselves since World War II has been the demise of the party system, though the parties were never that strong. We had a stronger Democratic party during the Depression, for example, but we have never had a party system like Great Britain, for instance. The United States has always had loose, amorphous parties. We never have really needed government to plan ahead; we had the frontier and just expanded the economic pie. Now, in a time of scarce resources and when the technological imperatives of modern life demand some kind of coherent, rational, planned action, we need leadership. We can't have leadership without organization. No one is a good enough leader to consistently exercise leadership without organization.

Downs: Now we have a hundred and fifty leaders in the Vermont House of Representatives in Montpelier. That is one of the problems.

Hebard: The country also needs "followership"; a need one could attribute to education. Prior to World War II, only a small percentage of people went to college. In Vermont towns, if one were the only college-educated fellow there, they may say, "We may not exactly favor him, but he sure is smart and we ought to send him down to Montpelier." Now everybody says, "Hell, I know as much as that next guy. I took just as many courses in college as he did, so why should I listen to him. He ought to listen to me."

- Doyle:* I am not willing to buy the proposition of "how weak the parties are." In 1980 and 1978 the parties financed legislative races. The parties recruit candidates, publish newsletters, and conduct candidate workshops. I think there is more organization in 1978 and 1980 in political parties than ever before. Why do you think the parties are declining; why do you think they are weaker in 1978 and 1980 than they were in 1962?
- Bryan: There is a proliferation, both in Vermont and nationally, of candidates and primaries financed from their own personal sources. There is also a national drop in the cohesion of parties.
- Doyle: No person has tried harder in recent years than Steve Morse** to build a party program in the legislature. And the Democratic party in the legislature plans to organize a program of its own. I also observe more of that than ten or twenty years ago.
- Bryan: The newspapers carry daily reports on Morse's efforts; he is trying, but Governor Snelling has a legislative program that the Republicans have generally stood behind. Has not Snelling counted on his fellow Republicans to help him do it? Does any linkage exist between being a Republican and what comes out at the policy end? It seems to me that the people use the party label to get elected, and, once elected, they are apt to forget about it.
- Downs: Assuming Bill Doyle's view of harder-working parties, there are still fewer people in them. There are more people in that gray area of independents, and they are going to go either way. They refuse to be categorized and they refuse to be counted.
- Ogden:*** I wonder what the division between the parties or so-

*William T. Doyle has been a member of the Senate since 1969.

**Steve Morse, representative from Windham County, served as Republican majority leader, 1970-1980.

***Herbert G. Ogden has been a member of the Vermont Senate from Windsor County since 1973.

called "teams" is? I wonder whether the difference in the "teams" is becoming more and more urban versus rural, and it just so happens that a large number of Democrats are in the urban areas.

Bryan: The legislative facts do not suggest that hypothesis. I have conducted cohesion tests testing urban versus rural, rather than parties, and then urban Democrats versus rural Democrats. Much of the literature in political science suggests the urban-rural variable has more importance than the party label. But as weak as the party label is in Vermont, it is consistently more important than the rural-urban dichotomy. The only time, in most states, the rural people vote against the urban people are on certain kinds of morality issues such as horse racing, gambling, abortions, marijuana, or alcohol. Even the importance of those issues have diminished in the Vermont legislature. The one exception to that is the urban Democrats in the Senate during the first part of this decade, at least, 1971 through 1977. The urban Democrats in the Senate were very cohesive, though it is not clear this was because they were urban or because they were Democrats.

Bassett:* Is Bill Doyle [Montpelier, Republican] an urban Democrat? [Laughter] I think that's where the difficulty lies. The data rests on municipal boundaries which have large or small populations, but "urban" does not mean that.

Bryan: That is a pertinent point. Am I a rural person because I live in Starksboro at the end of the road without a telephone? Am I urban because I work at the University of Vermont? I have debates with economists and sociologists every day—about the operative definitions of "urban/rural." Is it an attitude set, or is it a spatial computation? I believe the only way one can define "rural" that is analytically meaningful is space. I define "rural" as someone who is living apart from his neighbors, irrespective of where he works and what he does. The urban-rural variable, however, as an analytic tool is getting to be less helpful, although, I think, it still matters.

*T.D.S. Bassett, archivist and Vermont historian, now works as the editor of the volumes published by the Committee for a New England Bibliography.