

# THE AMERICAN BRAND OF DEMOCRACY

It Is Representative And Functions Effectively By Virtue Of The Two Party System

By Rev. Dr. Owen B. McGuire

I see that Dr. Mortimer Adler in his lecture at Aquinas Institute gave a definition of Democracy and from the definition showed it was easy to show that this system of Government of ours is not and never has been a Democracy. The question is of some practical importance at present. It has interested me also because of a speech by Mr. Farley at Syracuse five or six weeks ago and an editorial in the New York Times on Nov. 6 two days after the elections.

In his speech Mr. Farley said: "The genius of our representative democracy is in the two party system. The alternative to the two party system is a jumble of special interest groups who, even in coalition, are in disagreement and in crisis are too disunited to act."

In its editorial of Nov. 6, the Times had this to say: "The two party system was one of this country's most important contributions to political science. Strong rival parties acting as a check upon each other, have constituted an effective guarantee of our democracy. The experience of other countries has shown that when there is only one party democracy perishes, and when there are too many parties as was the case in France democracy ceases to be effective."

In general terms Democracy is a system of government where the will of the people prevails, or as Webster defines it: "That form of government in which the supreme power rests with the people ruling themselves directly as in the New England town meeting or indirectly through representatives." How Mr. Farley was quite right when he described our system of government as a "representative democracy" and both he and the Times were right in claiming that the successful functioning of representative democracy depends on the two party system. But Dr. Ad-

ler is wrong when he denies that our form of government is a democracy, and if he were not a philosopher and University professor for both roles I have great respect. I might accuse him of quibbling, with words. America is a democracy in the sense in which Americans understand the term and in the sense in which Webster defines it in the second meaning. The American concept of democracy is sound. That is proven by the fact that it works. The essential of democracy is that the will of the people prevail. How this can be made secure is another question.

Both in theory and in the facts of history it is clear that a pure democracy democracy in Webster's meaning cannot function in a large populous community. The United States is and always has been a large community, and accordingly it was made and remains a representative democracy, and it has succeeded because it has functioned under a two party system. This system has become traditional in America. It is as the Times says our contribution to political science. If there is any other system in which democracy can be made to function effectively, it has not yet been discovered. A parliamentary system depending on a multiplicity of political parties or groups has been since the Napoleonic wars the curse of most countries in Europe and it also made dictatorships inevitable once the people were allowed to a sense of the manner in which they were misgoverned. They did not resist but submitted to dictatorships temporarily as they believed to be escape from a chronic evil and political and moral chaos.

Why then, is the two party system necessary to the effective functioning of representative de-



**CATHOLIC DEDICATORY RITE** at new interdenominational chapel at Camp Upton took place Sunday. Lt. W. E. Capron, Catholic chaplain is in center above. With him (from left) are: Capt. Clarence A. Rycraft, Honoree Falls; Lt. James S. Kelly, Lt. G. M. White, Captain J. H. McCabe, Capt. S. T. Amraz, Rev. James V. Rogan, Father Capron, Rev. J. Stack, Rt. Rev. Francis W. Walsh, Vicar Delegate, Diocese of Army and Navy; Capt. F. J. Quigley, Capt. F. J. Wight, Capt. F. P. Kreber, Lt. C. E. Navy; Capt. F. J. Quigley, Capt. F. P. Kreber, Lt. C. E. Hopkins, Corp. Clarence Batist, Lt. Emil V. Heggel, Captain Rycraft was a member of the CATHOLIC COURIER staff before he was called to active duty.

ocracy in a large community? I will try to answer that question here in general terms and in another article to show it by concrete examples.

Let us see first what happens when there are two and only two parties in the state. One is in office and the other is opposition. This one has been elected by the people pledged to carry out a certain program of "platform" as we say in this country. Hence it has a sense of responsibility to the electorate for it knows the electorate can punish it if it fails to fulfill its pledges. This responsibility is well known to the party's leaders. They will keep their ears to the ground to know what the people are thinking and saying of their performance. The leaders know well they are being watched and will be held to account for their acts.

In this the rival opposition party plays an effective role while out of office. Its leaders and press are the watch dogs, or rather "leash dogs" to prevent out and keep down the first failure mistakes and incompetence of the party in power. There is in fact a constant progressive debate and a constant vigilance. Some what like the people in a this as an evil. But it is on the contrary a healthy feature of our political life. It keeps the common people on the

alert. People are far more influenced by action than by theory. The constant active debate influences them far more than all the theoretical books and papers that pour out from the presses. The normal man is more impressed by a drama that he sees acted on the stage than by reading a book on the same subject, or by reading the play itself. The daily political debate in the country is a daily drama for the American people. They daily see political democracy in action. As the Times said in the article referred to: "Two strong rival parties acting as a check upon each other have constituted an effective guarantee of our democracy."

In a State with a multiplicity of parties, democracy is not guaranteed, nor has it ever functioned effectively. The sense of responsibility to the whole people is never present. Nor can the people ever punish except by revolution the groups responsible for the evils of government. The will of the majority never prevails. Hence, the people despite of reform or use the system and lose faith in its promises when no one party is responsible. And even if they turn the reins out into the hands of Charles A. Lindbergh in the fall of 1933, they cannot put a responsible party in place for the opposition. It also means, up of

## Son Officiates For Mrs. Doran

With her priest-son officiating, solemn funeral services for Mrs. Mary A. Doran were held at Our Lady of Good Counsel Church, Saturday Nov. 8 at 10 o'clock.

Mrs. Doran, mother of a priest and a nun died Wednesday Nov. 5, 1941 at her home 82 Brookside Ave. She was the widow of Peter Doran.

Solemn Requiem Mass was offered by one of her sons, the Rev. William A. Doran pastor of St. Ann's Church, Palmyra, assisted by the Rev. John M. Ball, Deacon and the Rev. Gerald G. Kelly, Sub-deacon.

In the sanctuary were: the Rt. Rev. Msgr. William M. Hart, V. G., the Rt. Rev. Msgr. George V. Burns and the Rt. Rev. Msgr. Charles F. Shay, the Rev. Edward T. Meagher, the Rev. William Nolan, the Rev. William J. Killackey, the Rev. Thomas Lochren, the Rev. George V. Pradmore, the Rev. Frank W. Mason, the Rev. Francis W. Ludy, the Rev. William J. Naughton, the Rev. Edward Lyons, the Rev. John E. Maseeth, the Rev. William Cannon, the Rev. Charles Connell and the Rev. Patrick J. Lewis, C.B.B.

Father Pradmore presided at the organ and a Priests' Choir sang the Mass responses. Many religious communities were represented.

At the grave in Holy Sepulchre Cemetery, Monsignor Hart gave the final blessing assisted by Father Doran, the Rt. Rev. Msgr. Joseph E. Grady, Fathers Meagher, Nolan, Kelly and Masseth.

Mrs. Doran is survived by three sons, the Rev. William A. Doran, Thomas F. and John B. Doran; two daughters, Sister M. Esther of the Sisters of St. Joseph and Mrs. Fred S. Reidel.

## Martinique Bishop

Vatican City. The Rev. Henri Marie Vire de la Brunelere of the Holy Ghost Congregation has been named Bishop of Saint Pierre, Martinique.

agical interest and irresponsible groups. Why this so can be seen in the history of parliamentarism in Europe since the Napoleonic wars.

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