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Department of Political Science - Theory and history of political movements and parties course

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The genesis of the modern form of the political party and the consequences: the crisis of the bicameralism in Italy

ABSTRACT

As the societies of XIX century needed to be represented, the people started to organize themselves, in order to express their own motions in the political system. These new social unions, as a new connection between “legal Country” and “real Country”, took-charge of the claims and the renovation desires presented by the society, by organizing it into groups always more specialized into the political, economical and social field. The path towards the realization of their modern form hasn't been the same in each European country. On the contrary, especially in the anglo-saxon and continental regions, the development has been diametrically opposite.

The fundamental objective of the present work is to sound out the causes and the manner which brought to the lack of alternation in the Italian bicameral system during the period of the First Republic. The dualist structure of the political system turned into a three-pole structure, a model characterized by immovable centrist majorities, in order to exclude the extremist parties from the Government. Subsequently, the work aims to explain how this “bipartisan anomaly” has been transformed into a “bicameral

anomaly”, and how this fact originated the crisis of the Italian bicameralism, which has been the subject of many reform project.

For this purpose, the work has been divided into three chapters. In the first one, terminological and content issues have been clarified, in order to study the way the modern political party’s structure has been constituted. According to the theories of Easton, Panebianco, Duverger, Michels, Montero, Gunther, Downs e Weber, the political party could be defined as *the institution that intervenes in the political decision, as a regulation channel of political obligation*. Laid the methodological premises, it has been analyzed the case of the genesis of the party in Great Britain, which was born in the Parliament as a natural response of the system for modernizing pressures coming from below. Through the three fundamental developments of the electoral law established by the Reform Act between 1832 and 1885, it is possible to draw a parable of the evolutionary history of the parties which starts from the earliest political formations of the Whigs and Tories, the so-called “fluid groups”, characterized by the particularity of not being rigidly confined within specific ideologies, and comes up to the formation of the conservative and liberal parties, who were born respectively in 1834 and in 1839. After having framed the English political case, the paper focused on reconstructing the genesis of the modern form of the party in continental Europe, particularly in France, Germany and Italy. The fundamental difference between the two types of system in the development of political parties is to be attributed to the different type of fractures that crossed, respectively, the Anglo-Saxon and the continental world. After the French Revolution, the perception of the deep distance between politicians and the rest of the population has been strongly felt both in Italy and in Germany, and this is why the society started to form coalitions against a system by which it felt excluded. Consequently, this specific aspiration brought to the launch of the first modern form of the political party.

The second chapter aims to study the connection between the concepts of “power” and “*consensus*”, to analyze the case of the lack of alternation among political majority and opposition in Italy.

The analysis moves from the phenomenon of the so-called “transformism”, initiated by Agostino Depretis in 1882. The “transformism” has his grassroots in the

so-called and deeply debated “connubio” created by the Count of Cavour, exactly thirty years before, in 1852.

Thereafter, this phenomenon is scrutinized in his salient aspects, in a period included between the political elections of 1913 and the end of the so-called “First Republic”, caused by the institutional earthquake of 1992-1994. The centrist practice, ingrained into the structure and the operation of the last fifty years of the Italian political system, has originated a polarized system, in which the political struggle is radicalized.

Finally, the first chapter talks about the causes and the consequences which are produced by the transformation of the bipartisan anomaly into a bicameral anomaly. It analyzes the origins, the malfunction, and the reform perspectives of Italian bicameralism, focusing on the development and the specialization of the Senate, and his connection with the Chamber of Deputies.

In conclusion, the logic of alternation is the unavoidable characteristic which makes the bicameral system work, because it safeguards the healthy parliamentary dialectic. Conversely, its absence affects the efficiency of the entire political system, because the relationship between the majority and the opposition result in a continuous research of compromises which frustrate the regular execution of the functions of the Parliament.