**THE BEGINNING OF POLITICAL PARTIES**

**The First Parties Are Organized**

A political party is a group of people sharing similar ideas about how the government should be run. Each political party works to get its candidates elected to office.

Most public officials today, whether at the local, state, or national level, belong to the Democratic Party or the Republican Party. Although there have been many political parties during the history of the United States, there were none at the time George Washington became President in 1789. Washington’s ability and popularity made him a natural choice as the nation’s first Chief Executive. Since no one ran against him in the election, he was chosen by unanimous vote in the Electoral College.

Two members of President Washington’s Cabinet – Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson – had different ideas about how the government should be run. They disagreed on many issues having to do with domestic and foreign policy. The followers of Hamilton called themselves Federalists. Those who sided with Jefferson were known as Democratic-Republicans. These two groups became the first political parties in the United States.

**Election Campaign of 1800**

George Washington served as President from 1780 until 1797. John Adams, a Federalist, succeeded him to office. When Adams ran for reelection in 1800, he was opposed by Jefferson of the Democratic-Republican Party. Adams and Jefferson took part in what became the first presidential campaign in American history. It turned out to be one of the bitterest campaigns ever. Adams’ vice presidential running mate was Charles Pinckney. Aaron Burr was the Democratic-Republican candidate for Vice President.

Besides having very different views on many issues, both sides hurled accusations and ugly remarks at each other. Adams and the Federalists attacked Jefferson for wanting to weaken the national government by giving too much power to the states. The Democratic-Republicans replied that Adams favored rich people and ignored the “common man.” They also pointed out that the Federalists passed the Alien and Sedition Acts, which made it a crime to criticize President Adams and the Federalist-controlled Congress.

As the campaign wore on, personal remarks were made about each candidate. The Federalists charged that Jefferson obtained his property illegally, robbed a widow of land worth thousands of dollars, and behaved in a cowardly manner during the Revolutionary War. Hamilton, the founder of the Federalist Party, described Jefferson as “an atheist in religion and a fanatic in politics.” At one point, the Federalists delighted in circulating a story that Jefferson had died, but it turned out that a slave by the same name had passed away. The Democratic-Republicans, for their part, called President Adams a fool, criminal, and tyrant, and said he planned to reunite the United States with Great Britain.

Directions: The chart on the next page compares the Federalist and Democratic-Republican parties in the election campaign of 1800. As you read the information on the chart, underline or highlight important words, names, and ideas.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Federalist Party** | **Democratic-Republican Party** |
| Party supporters were the rich and well-born, the old aristocratic families, large landowners, and wealthy businessmen. The party was strong in the New England states. | Support came from farmers, the poor, small businessmen, city workers, and southern plantation owners. The party’s strength was in the southern states. |
| Favored a strong national government and weaker state governments. | Favored a weak national government and stronger state governments. |
| Thought the government should be controlled by the rich and well-born because they were better educated and better prepared to run the government. | Thought the government should be controlled by the “common man.” |
| Supported Hamilton’s financial program, which was designed to collect money to run the government and pay off U.S. debts from the Revolutionary War. Money would be raised by: (a) a tariff, or tax on foreign-made goods entering the U.S. (b) an excise tax on American-made whiskey. Hamilton also organized the Bank of the United States. | Opposed Hamilton’s program, which they said favored the rich. |
| Sided with the British in the conflict between Great Britain and France. | Sided with the French in the conflict between Great Britain and France. |
| Controlled the government from 1789 until 1800, and claimed to have accomplished these things:   1. Established good credit for the United States by paying off money owed to other countries 2. Created a dependable money system 3. Increased trade and industry 4. Set up a smooth-running government 5. Added the Bill of Rights to the United States Constitution 6. Created a system of courts and a postal system 7. Ended the Whiskey Rebellion 8. Admitted three new states to the Union – Vermont, Kentucky, and Tennessee 9. In foreign affairs, followed a policy of peace by signing Jay’s Treaty with Great Britain and the Pinckney Treaty with Spain 10. Took a stand against France during the XYZ Affair 11. Earned the respect of foreign nations | Differed from the Federalists on these points:   1. Considered farming interests to be more important than business and industry 2. Opposed the Alien and Sedition Acts for taking away individual freedoms and rights, especially the right to criticize the government. 3. Attacked Jay’s Treaty with Great Britain for not solving the problem of the impressments of American seamen by the British. |

**Chart Questions**

Decide which political party each of the following is associated with. Fill in the space with **F** for Federalist or **D** for Democratic-Republican.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ aristocrats and large landowners
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Bill of Rights
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Thomas Jefferson
4. \_\_\_\_\_ in power since 1789
5. \_\_\_\_\_ the “common man”
6. \_\_\_\_\_ ended the Whiskey Rebellion
7. \_\_\_\_\_ New England states
8. \_\_\_\_\_ tariff and excise tax
9. \_\_\_\_\_ Charles Pinckney
10. \_\_\_\_\_ opposed the Alien and Sedition Acts
11. \_\_\_\_\_ the rich and well-born
12. \_\_\_\_\_ strong state governments
13. \_\_\_\_\_ Hamilton’s financial plan
14. \_\_\_\_\_ favored the French
15. \_\_\_\_\_ John Adams
16. \_\_\_\_\_criticized Jay’s Treaty
17. \_\_\_\_\_ farmers and city workers
18. \_\_\_\_\_ system of courts
19. \_\_\_\_\_ southern states
20. \_\_\_\_\_ Aaron Burr