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## Tourtellot: AN ANATOMY OF AMERICAN POLITICS

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AN ANATOMY OF AMERICAN POLITICS. By *Arthur Bernon Tourtellot*. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill. 1950. Pp. 349. \$3.

The structure of the American system of government, with its historical and philosophical background, is presented by Mr. Tourtellot in a very readable book. The author, an ex-journalist, biographer and documentary movie producer, has used methods from all three fields of his experience in his dissection of the body politic. The interrelation of the three branches of government is first discussed, with the presidency given the most attention. According to Mr. Tourtellot, a strong president is truly democratic, while a weak one, dominated by Congress, is subject to so many pressures from sectional and other factional interests that he cannot carry out the wishes of his electorate. The great presidents (Lincoln, Washington, Franklin Roosevelt, Wilson, Jefferson, Jackson and Polk in that order) were those who extended the scope of their office through use of implied Constitutional powers rather than being limited by express powers. Congress, Mr. Tourtellot dismisses as being, for the past hundred years at least, a collection of middling to mediocre men, entirely parochial in outlook and so jealous of its rights that it more often impedes progress than implements it. The Supreme Court is also criticized for its hindrance of progress, although its function as the conscience of the government is given grudging credit. The Court is the most venerated and untouchable of our institutions, but Mr. Tourtellot feels that very rarely are its members in tune with the times. The political parties next are analyzed. In the main the Democrats are the innovators, in the tradition established by Jefferson and Jackson, and those presidents such as Cleveland who opposed this trend were really Republicans by another name. Conversely, the Republicans have generally been conservatives, and Theodore Roosevelt and Willkie were sailing under false colors in their party affiliations. Both were repudiated by the G.O.P. Mr. Tourtellot concedes that conservatism is not only necessary but at times preferable. McKinley is the golden example of a true conservative, in tune with his times, who did the people a service in keeping the superficially and emotionally progressive Bryan out of office. McKinley was paternalistic toward both capital and labor, with the interests of the many at heart. Before and since, Repub-

licans, according to the author, believed in letting benefits work their way down from the propertied class, while Democrats espoused the reverse. In conclusion, Mr. Tourtellot admonishes the G.O.P. to be less critical and more creative if it expects to survive. The last section of the book is devoted to conventions, campaigns, and elections. The first are regarded as a necessary evil of democracy which should be amended but not abolished. The uproar of the second the author believes is a small price to pay for the service it does in focusing the attention of the electorate on the issues at stake. The discussion of elections is limited to a vehement argument for the elimination of the Electoral College. This book does not offer many new ideas about American politics, but it presents the accepted ones in an orderly, fair-minded and interesting fashion.