



# U. S. History: From the Colonial Period to 1877

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## 11.3 THE SECOND PARTY SYSTEM: WHIGS V. DEMOCRATS

<p><b>SECOND PARTY SYSTEM</b> <b>Whigs v. Democrats</b></p>	<p>OPPONENTS OF JACKSON, including EVANGELICAL PROTESTANTS and the NORTHERN MIDDLE-CLASS, formed the opposition WHIG PARTY. Over the next two decades the Whig and Democratic parties dominated politics and debated issues of economic policy, class relations, and social reform. The Whigs and Democrats competed fiercely for votes in the late 1830s and 1840s in what historians refer to as the Second-Party System.</p>
<p><b>THE WHIG WORLDVIEW</b> <b>Equal Opportunity</b> <b>American System</b></p>	<p>United by their OPPOSITION TO JACKSON, congressional leaders such as Daniel Webster, Henry Clay, and John Calhoun allied themselves in the new Whig party. They charged Jackson with abusing his executive powers and usurping authority. The Whigs supported democracy by championing EQUAL OPPORTUNITY for upward mobility, but they believed that those who did become wealthy were best suited to govern all citizens. Webster and Clay shared common economic interests in the AMERICAN SYSTEM. John Calhoun, on the other hand, believed that northern capitalists and southern planters should be allies in opposition to workers, both slave and free. The other Whig leaders disagreed with Calhoun's ideas of class warfare, and the Whig party gained its PRINCIPAL SUPPORT FROM THE NORTHERN MIDDLE CLASS.</p>
<p><b>AMERICAN SYSTEM</b> <b>High Tariffs</b> <b>High Land Prices</b> <b>Bank of U. S. Internal Improvements</b></p>	<p>A PLAN TO STRENGTHEN AND UNIFY THE NATION, the AMERICAN SYSTEM was advanced by the Whig Party and a number of leading politicians including Henry Clay, John C. Calhoun and John Quincy Adams. The System was a new form of federalism that included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Support for a HIGH TARIFF to protect American industries and generate revenue for the federal government</li> <li>■ Maintenance of HIGH PUBLIC LAND PRICES to generate federal revenue</li> <li>■ Preservation of the BANK OF THE UNITED STATES to stabilize the currency and restrain risky state and local banks</li> <li>■ Development of a system of INTERNAL IMPROVEMENTS (such as roads and canals) which would knit the nation together and be financed by the tariff and land sales revenues.</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Rationale for High Tariffs:</u></b> <b>Markets for Western Food &amp; Southern Cotton</b></p>	<p>Clay argued that the West, which opposed the tariff, should support it since URBAN FACTORY WORKERS WOULD BE CONSUMERS OF WESTERN FOODS. In Clay's view, the South (which also opposed high tariffs) should support them because of the READY MARKET FOR COTTON IN NORTHERN MILLS. This last argument was the weak link. The South was never really on board with the American System and had access to plenty of markets for its cotton exports.</p>
<p><b>LABOR MOVEMENT</b> <b><u>Supported:</u></b> <b>Democrats</b> <b><u>Opposed:</u></b> <b>High Tariffs, Chartered Corp's Bank Monopolies</b></p>	<p>Portions of the American System were enacted by Congress. The SECOND BANK OF THE UNITED STATES WAS RECHARTERED in 1816 for 20 years. HIGH TARIFFS WERE MAINTAINED from the days of Hamilton until 1832. However, the national system of internal improvements was never adequately funded. Failure to do so was due in part to sectional jealousies and constitutional scruples about such expenditures.</p> <p>Workingmen's parties emerged as more workers acquired the right to vote. By attacking legislatively chartered corporations and monopolies, workers sought HIGHER TAXES ON THE WEALTHY and FREE PUBLIC SCHOOLS in an effort to attack growing inequalities in society. WORKINGMEN increasingly BACKED THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY as it ATTACKED PROTECTIVE TARIFFS, CHARTERED CORPORATIONS, AND MONOPOLISTIC BANKS. They also created UNIONS, which became the target of employer condemnation through the blacklisting of union members. The COURTS GENERALLY SUPPORTED EMPLOYERS, determining that the closed shop was illegal.</p>

<p><b>Disintegrated with Depression of 1837-1843</b></p>	<p>Workers resisted publicly and often convinced local juries to side with labor rights. The American economy slid into a severe DEPRESSION IN 1837 when ENGLAND BEGAN TO RESTRICT INVESTMENT IN THE UNITED STATES AND DECREASED ITS COTTON PURCHASES. The labor movement disintegrated as unemployment rose, but workers did achieve a victory in court as unions were declared not to be inherently illegal. Workers then turned to politics as a way to achieve their goals.</p>
<p><b>Whig Victory in 1840</b></p>	<p>The Whigs campaigned by ASSOCIATING THE DEPRESSION WITH THE DEMOCRATS and by running their own version of a MILITARY HERO AND SELF-MADE MAN, William Henry Harrison. For the first time in American history, both parties conducted a campaign of popular public spectacle, the Whigs even inviting women to campaign rallies. The WHIG CAMPAIGN SUCCEEDED, WINNING BOTH THE PRESIDENCY AND CONTROL OF CONGRESS, but Harrison's sudden death led to his succession by John Tyler, who blocked the Whig program by opposing tariff increases and a national bank. In the 1840s, DEMOCRATS FORGED A NEW COALITION OF SMALL FARMERS, SOUTHERN PLANTERS, URBAN LABORERS, AND IMMIGRANT WORKERS. Thus, two national parties, each claiming to be the better democrats, organized to gain mass electoral support. The new system continued old problems of excluding women, Indians, and African Americans, but revolutionized American politics by enfranchising the majority of adult white males.</p>
<p><b>DISCUSISON QUESTIONS</b></p>	<p>See the attached table for the contrast between the Whigs and the Democrats.</p> <p><b>Did Henry Clay's American System have the potential to serve all sections of the country? If so, why was it incapable of holding the country together?</b></p> <p><b>When the party system was invented in the 19th century, it was considered by many Americans to be one of the great political innovations in the history of the world. Others strongly disagreed. What positive and negative contributions did the major national political parties (especially the Democrats and Whigs) make before the Civil War?</b></p>

	<b>WHIGS</b>	<b>DEMOCRATS</b>
<b>SUPPORT</b>	The same conservative property interests that had supported the Federalists, including evangelical Protestants and the northern middle class	A new coalition of small farmers, southern planters, urban laborers, and immigrant workers
<b>LEADERSHIP</b>	Henry Clay was the principal leader: Had the ability to reconcile sectional interests (e.g., American System, Missouri Compromise, Compromise of 1833) Favored the Bank of the United States in order to give the country a common currency and stable credit.  Other leaders: Daniel Webster and John Calhoun.	Andrew Jackson was the principal leader: Gained popular support as the “common man” Distrusted all banks and paper money
<b>IDEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE</b>	Shared a democratized version of the liberal republicanism fashioned in the revolutionary struggle (liberty, independence, self-government) Disagreed over the proper role of government in securing liberal republican ends and in shaping American culture	
<b>MAIN ISSUE: ECONOMIC REVOLUTION</b>	Looked upon the revolution favorably: Praised growth and industrialization Supported economic expansion through corporations and credit Believed that government should encourage the development of society through humanitarian reforms  Party variations: Northern Whigs supported economic expansion and humanitarian reforms Southern Whigs supported economic expansion but not humanitarian reforms	Grieved over the loss of a simpler past: Emphasize limited government to insure individual liberty Distrusted government tinkering Humanitarian reformers seen as meddling (they interfere with individual liberty)
<b>IN THE SOUTH: REVERSAL OF ALIGNMENTS</b>	Termed the “other South” by historian Carl Degler, merchants, bankers, professional men, and many wealthy plantation owners who voted Whig moved against the current of southern life: They were against its violence, crude living conditions, touchy egalitarianism, and obsessive hatred of Yankees. They favored a diversified economy, orderly cities, and a more modernized lifestyle.	The “host culture” (the majority) identified with everything typically southern: Slaveholding A single crop economy A widely dispersed, individualistic, and almost frontier existence.