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How the Mayflower Compact has Influenced Today's Democracy

While living in the nation of America today it is often humbling to trace back the timeline and remember our becoming. It is important to question how the development of our political practices have flourished, fluctuated, and failed. The story of the journey of the pilgrims all the way from the sea, to fruitful civilization will forever be an insightful piece in understanding today's Democracy, and the traditions of the American Constitution.

As pilgrims set off to America they brought along merchants, craftsmen, servants, and their families in hopes of a successful journey. As the journey lengthened and rough seas steered them off track, the non-pilgrims were no longer within the jurisdiction of the charter granted to them prior to the beginning of the journey, thus while aboard the ship the Pilgrims drafted an agreement now known as The Mayflower compact (also commonly known as the Plymouth combination), that was signed on November 11th, 1620. The Mayflower Compact specifically pledged to, ““covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil Body Politick, for our better Ordering and Preservation, and Furtherance of the Ends aforesaid: And by Virtue hereof to enact, constitute, and frame, such just and equal Laws, Ordinances, Acts, Constitutions and Offices, from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the General good of the Colony; unto which we promise all due submission and obedience.””, (Vile). This Compact was signed by approximately 41 men on the ship, notified as new regulation to assist the body of people aboard to act in unity with each other and with God, while abiding by the same laws. Soon after this, the first governor of the new colony was elected, John Carver. When John died

shortly after being elected, Willioam Bradford became the new governor and was re-elected 31 times total. Bradford began frequently deciding how colonies should be run, however as immigration continued and towns expanded less and less people were able to attend the General Court. As a result of this, each town would send deputies to the general court sessions. This routine birthed both self-rule, and representative government (used today) in America. These tactics furthered the Mayflower Compacts very popular doctrine, “law made by the people”. The vision of this formed government in the 1600’s, was the first temporarily successful example of “balanced powers” that has trickled into today's American politics and encouraged current democracy. While the pilgrims and the other passengers spent many days in isolation among a new land, the only option was to end the day in agreement with one another in order to achieve a successful colony and way of life, because of this necessity to survive, harmony was achieved while much power was in the hands of the people.

These profound doctrines practiced during the upbringing of North America, indeed had an influence on today's US Democracy. In westeren history, the Pilgrim's strategies mark the first experiment between individuals performing consensual government without a Monarch being present, as historian Rebecca Fraser explains in her book regarding the Mayflower. Ever since September 16th, 1787, America has been a Federal Government, which some believe to be the most current, rewarding example of power dividing throughout the people of a Nation.

Considering each state has the ability to maintain their own government, and leadership, we as a large body of people remain free from *complete* control of the federal government as the Pilgrims once did. “The Mayflower Compact ended up laying the foundations for two other revolutionary documents: the Declaration of Independence, which stated that governments derive

their powers “from the consent of the governed,” and the Constitution”, (Pruitt). The constitution and declaration of independence values some of the same aspects of freedom that were valued years ago. The Compact induced submission of law while still giving the pilgrims (Separatists), and others (from the Church of England) freedom of religion which is a value Americans have kept alive until this day. We live reminded more of our protected individual liberties through the Bill of Rights, stating our right to freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom of assembly, and freedom to petition. Through the preamble of 1787 in our constitution we are continually reminded as a nation that as one body of people we must promote the act of ensuring domestic tranquility, as the pilgrims and those from the Church of England also practiced and understood. Although much of the Compact was protected by the pilgrim founders, the common theme of the Mayflower Compact was, “for the general good of the colony”, and still in today's American Government the sought out theme remains being “for the general good of the people".

While diving into American history, and the bravery of the voyage that the pilgrims and other passengers set forth on while aboard the Mayflower, we are able to see how the evolution of democracy in our country traces back hundreds of years through developed and critiqued fundamental principles of self-government and common consent. By studying this story we are also reminded of how lucky we are to live in a nation today that is able to value individual liberties and sacrifice to keep our nation safe. These pilgrims remind us to value our privileges, and to remember that it's necessary for us to cherish a divided power to live a prosperous life.

Work Cited

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