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The Nomination of Warren G. Harding--1920

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THE NOMINATION OF WARREN G. HARDING-- 1920

by

Joseph Hamilton Neale

**A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of Loyola University in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts**

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LIFE

Joseph Hamilton Heale was born in Baltimore, Maryland, November 10, 1922.

In September, 1936, he entered St. Peter's Preparatory School, Jersey City, New Jersey, graduating from St. Peter's in June, 1940.

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He transferred to Loyola University, Chicago, in August, 1945, and received his Bachelor of Arts Degree from Loyola in June, 1946.

In September, 1947, he registered as a graduate student in the Department of History of Loyola University.

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CHAPTER I

1920 - - A REPUBLICAN YEAR

The dawn of the election year of 1920 cast its rays upon a discontented and turbulent scene in the United States. The Great War in Europe had been brought to a successful and unexpectedly speedy conclusion, and the average American longed for the return to his idealized concept of pre-war days, namely, a settled routine of daily life, and a state of permanent security. The strain of the numerous wartime measures had been endured for the simple reason that the American citizen looked upon the war as a crusade to protect the American Ideal of Democracy. He had not only been willing, but eager to bear hardships and deprivations to bring about victory in Europe, but now, with the sudden conclusion of the conflict, all this necessary motivation vanished. He looked about and saw the numerous unsolved problems, the heritage of every war, and a spirit of discontent stirred within him.

The immediate task of national reconversion to a peacetime status loomed as an ugly spectre. President Woodrow Wilson and Congress, with their entire attention focused on the war effort, seemingly had neglected any serious discussion of reconversion problems. The World War had been expected to last into the summer of 1919, and, with as many as 4,500,000 men in the American Expeditionary Forces, the demobilization problem became one of primary

importance. Domestic labor feared the effect of this demobilization upon the labor market, yet service men and their families were pressing for the immediate absorption of the soldier into civilian life.¹ There was the difficult problem of new workers drawn into industry by the war emergency, which now called for an equitable solution. War contracts, amounting to several billion dollars, had to be cancelled and as a result "unemployment" became an actuality.²

Besides this general over-all problem, uncertainty and unrest were evident in individual industries. The railroads were in straightened circumstances due to the fact that rates had been frozen by federal regulations, while labor, construction materials, fuel and working capital had to be bought in a competitive market. Therefore, the railroad laborer saw little chance of any pay increases, and turned to strikes and politics to settle his grievances.³

Early in 1919, over 30,000 shipyard workers in Seattle, Washington, went on strike to gain a revised wage scale and a forty-hour week. Organized

1 Dwight Lowell Dumond, America In Our Time, 1896-1946, New York, 1947, 281, 282.

2 Oscar T. Barak Jr. & Nelson M. Blake, Since 1900, New York, 1947, 265.

3 Frederic L. Paxson, Postwar Years, 1918-1923, Berkeley, 1948, 93.

labor turned out en masse on February 6 in support of their demands and, as a result, all but the essential industries were paralyzed. Fortunately, the strike was terminated in a few days by high labor officials who opposed the wholesale breaking of existing union contracts.

Following closely upon the Seattle settlement came the great steel strike of 1919 in the Chicago-Gary area, dominated by the United States Steel Corporation. Over 343,000 men walked out, and the strike spread to western Pennsylvania, where union meetings were suppressed by local officials amid bloody clashes. Taking its cue from the disorder in Pennsylvania, similar rioting was soon prevalent in Gary, Indiana. Finally, General Leonard Wood arrived at Gary at the head of the United States Army troops and, by proclaiming martial law, restored order.⁴

This same spirit of dissatisfaction spread even to the police force in Boston where, on September 9, 1919, more than two-thirds of Boston's "Finest" went on strike.

The public fancy was captured by Governor Coolidge's epigrammatic proclamation: "There is no right to strike against the public safety by anybody, anywhere, anytime." The strike was settled, but serves as another clear example of the unrest of the times.⁵

High prices also seriously disturbed ordinary working men. Needless

4 Harvey Wish, Contemporary America, New York, 1945, 278-9.

5 Barck and Blake, Since 1900, 272-274.

to say, the increase of incomes was frequently overlooked in their heated discussions, but there were enough grievances to make the complaints plausible. To add to the difficulties, at the conclusion of the war the wage adjustments stopped, and the flood of savings was released. When unemployment increased, high prices were felt more than ever.

An attempt to maintain some kind of stability in the industrial world with the establishment of The Industrial Board under the direction of George N. Peek, only resulted in further discontent. In theory, this Board was to continue the stabilizing influences of the War Industrial Board, which had been under the direction of Bernard Baruch. Created in February, the Industrial Board was disbanded in May, when it was broken down by the refusal of the railroad administrators to let it fix the price of steel. The simple fact of the case is that Baruch had previously had behind him a driving public opinion to support his war measures, but now there existed no such power to sanction the efforts of Peek and his associates.⁶

Living in an environment of such widespread difficulties and social unrest, the American people naturally blamed the incumbent administration for their ills. President Wilson soon became the primary target of civilian attacks, while Republican political leaders sought to make capital out of public disorder. Undoubtedly, Wilson had made the political blunder of his life when he appealed to the nation, before the Congressional Elections of 1918.

6 Paxson, Postwar Years, 87-88.

for a return of a Democratic majority in Congress. The effect was evident, for not only was such an appeal taken as a slur on Republican patriotism, but it also immediately alienated any Republicans who had previously cooperated with Wilson. The consequent elections gave the Republicans a majority in both houses.⁷

Following close upon this first blunder was the President's second egregious mistake, which concerned the members of the peace commission. Completely ignoring the Senate, the Republicans, and the practical politicians of his own Party, Wilson chose a commission to the Paris Peace Conference consisting of Colonel Edward M. House, Secretary Robert Lansing, General Tasker Bliss, and former Ambassador Henry White. Finally, Wilson announced that he himself would attend the Conference. Many felt that he was needed at home to deal with the problems of readjustment, and his decision caused severe criticism even at friendly hands. The Republicans quickly capitalized upon such actions, and Senator Henry Cabot Lodge of Massachusetts led the attack.⁸

Other charges were hurled at the President: he had ignored his cabinet; his administration lacked coordination; he was too independent of the Senate; he had taken us into war though elected on a platform of "He kept us out of war." And, finally, when Wilson returned from Paris, the League of Nations was bitterly assailed in the Senate. "By the first of September, 1919,

⁷ Thomas A. Bailey, A Diplomatic History of the American People, New York, 1946, 653-654.

⁸ Paxson, Postwar Years, 12.

the treaty was plainly losing ground . . . the hearings were stirring up an incalculable amount of prejudice."⁹ The Irish-Americans and the German-Americans joined with millions of others and assailed Wilson because they believed he had bartered away the aspirations of "struggling humanity" in Paris. Three times the Senate voted on the Treaty; twice with the Lodge Reservations, and once without them. All three times the Treaty was defeated. Wilson who made concessions from his principles abroad, refused to compromise with his political opponents at home.¹⁰

The Republican leaders, therefore, with an eye on the coming Presidential Election, took all these factors into consideration, and felt supremely confident of victory in November. They concluded that the Republican Party was in an ideal position, for the people would not only be voting for their candidate, but also would be voting against Wilson and Wilsonism. As William Allen White said: "We were tired of men with burning convictions, curative or palliative panaceas or reforms; ideas that might develop into causes."¹¹ Brimming with confidence, the leaders of the Republican Party turned their glance on the possible candidates. This feeling of confidence is

9 Bailey, Diplomatic History, 672.

10 Samuel Flagg Bemis, A Diplomatic History of the United States, New York, 1947, 654.

11 William Allen White, Masks in a Pageant, New York, 1928, 410.

important to keep in mind, for it explains somewhat the psychological background and the details surrounding the nomination of Warren G. Harding.

Certainly, no one who looked ahead at the coming months of the primary campaign and the Republican convention, could have foreseen the amazing events that would transpire. The purpose of this study is to portray these events. To paint a full picture, at the outset it will be necessary to examine the political background and character of the Presidential Nominee. From this an advance shall be made to the Pre-Convention Primary Campaign, in which Harding's poor showing in contrast to that of the other leading candidates will be pointed out, as well as those political tactics which helped his cause. An examination of the political manipulations of the convention will follow. In this chapter it will be shown how Harding, despite his numerous deficiencies and the popular sentiment against him, was maneuvered into the nomination. Finally, a review of the popular reaction to the nomination will be presented.

CHAPTER II

THE CHARACTER AND POLITICAL BACKGROUND OF HARDING

Toward the end of 1919, Harry M. Daugherty was attempting to persuade a skeptical Warren Harding to run for the Presidency. Finally, Harding asked: "Am I a big enough man for the race?" Daugherty adroitly begged the question by replying: "Greatness in the Presidential Chair is largely an illusion of the people."¹ The purpose of this chapter is to arrive at an answer to Harding's query. Undoubtedly the surest way to do this is to glimpse at the background and character of Warren G. Harding.

A farm in Caledonia, Morrow County, Ohio, was the birthplace of the future president. The boy, Harding, of English, Scottish and Dutch stock, passed through the local school as many did before and after him, in no way distinguishing himself for learning or acumen. The years from 1879 to 1882 were uneventfully passed at Ohio Central College in Iberia, Ohio. The only manifestation of talent during his college years was his serving as manager of the college paper. Upon graduation, Harding first attempted the study of law, but soon turned away from such a scholarly pursuit which he found much

¹ Harry M. Daugherty, The Inside Story of the Harding Tragedy, New York, 1932, 18.

too distasteful. Selling insurance proved fruitless, and six months in the classroom were sufficient to convince him that his vocation was not in teaching. His family had moved to Marion, Ohio, in 1882, and the young Harding eventually found his way into the office of the Marion Democratic Mirror, a weekly newspaper. Unluckily, Harding found his Republican sympathies contrary to those of his Democratic employers. His manifest support of Blaine for President caused his employers to lose little time in separating him from the pay roll. But Harding's vocation was beckoning to him, for at this time The Marion Daily Star, an infant paper, went bankrupt. Harding with one of his boyhood friends, Jack Warwick, borrowed \$300 and bought the paper.² Warren G. Harding had found his place.

As a newspaper editor, Harding was successful; in a newspaper office he belonged. In 1885, The Star was enlarged to a six column, four page paper. He liked the work and had the necessary talents. His managing editor stated: "Harding is an easy writer, a fine reporter, a good straight printer, the quickest and fastest makeup man I every saw."³ Added to these qualities, were the warm, friendly, human qualities that endeared him to the people of Marion. He was genial, interested in most sides of community life, a systematic promoter of civic enterprises, easy-going, frank in admitting his lack of unusual abilities or intellectual tastes. In every respect he fitted the middling, small-town environment. Perhaps, he would have passed his life

² Willis Fletcher Johnson, The Life of Warren G. Harding, printed in USA, 1923, 37.

³ Charles Willis Thompson, Presidents I've Known and I've Near Presidents, Indianapolis, 1929, 340.

in Marion if he had not met Florence Kling De Wolfe, a widow with one child.

In 1891, Warren Harding married the older Florence De Wolfe. That she had a definite part to play in the rise of Harding is certain. Samuel Adams gives a graphic picture of Mrs. Harding in the following words:

As between husband and wife, hers was definitely the stronger spirit. She was more highly energized, more industrious, more ambitious, and more farseeing . . . Without her, Warren Harding would have been content to cultivate his popularity and enjoy a moderate measure of advancement. But she must capitalize on his capabilities, goad him to efforts and aims, which left to himself, he would never have pursued.⁴

Mrs. Harding worked with her husband in the newspaper office, and assisted him greatly in transforming The Star from a weekly into a daily. The circulation increased; more efficient methods were introduced; the office staff was regimented under her control. "They appreciated her value to the paper; they respected her professionally; but they never loved her as they did her husband."⁵

The transition from a small-town newspaper man to a hack politician was quick and easy. One evening, Harding took it upon himself, in the absence of an appointed chairman, to introduce a routine Republican speaker. To his surprise, he found the experience easy and agreeable, and his fine presence and partisan passion made a hit with the audience. He then announced his

4 Samuel Hopkins Adams, The Incredible Era, Boston, 1939, 27.

5 Ibid., 27.

candidacy for the office of County Auditor, although Marion County in the nineties was irreclaimably Democratic. His series of speeches, however, availed him little against a strongly organized opposition, and he was not only soundly defeated but suffered the embarrassment of running sixty votes behind his ticket.⁶ However, his pleasing appearance and rich voice had attracted the attention of the party machine, and he was soon in demand for numerous speeches throughout the state. He aligned himself with Joseph B. Foraker and in 1898, with the backing of the party machine, was elected to the State Senate. Now, for the first time, we are able to see Harding, the politician, in action.

Harding served in the State Senate for two terms, from 1898 to 1902. What were his constructive accomplishments? During these four years, Harding sponsored fifteen bills, fourteen of which had a local or personal slant. They were put forward to get something for his town, his friends or himself. Only once, during his term in the Senate, did he show the least sign of initiative and independence. A Municipal Corporation Bill had been introduced to restore some degree of self-government to the cities, and to render some degree of self-government to the citizens. Harding sponsored the bill, and thereby provoked the temper of his machine. He was immediately called aside and given orders to say nothing when the bill came up in the legislature for reconsideration. Harding realized his mistake, and cut himself off from the bill, which eventually died.⁷

6 Ibid., 50.

7 Ibid., 52.

But now, the future path was clear. Harding was just another party tool. Never again would he be bothered by prickly principles. Theories of good government, of public service, of individual thought and conscience, could have no part in the progress of the party, and, hence, were to be discarded. He had learned his lesson well from the ill-fated Municipal Corporation Bill. Honors, then, began to increase, as he was chosen as floor-leader. He always liked people, and now popularity became his stock-in-trade, as he threw bouquets to friend and foe alike in his verbose speeches.⁸ Thus far, Harding had accomplished nothing constructive, yet because of personal popularity, party connections and the chance meeting with a certain Ohio politician-lawyer, Harry M. Daugherty, he was now destined for even higher positions of honor.

Mark Sullivan tells the story of the first meeting between Daugherty and Harding, of how Daugherty was so impressed by the appearance, voice, courtesy and manner of Harding, that he was inspired to the extraordinary reflection: "Gee, what a President he'd make."⁹ While it was Mrs. Harding who first regimented the activity of her husband, forcing him to expand his newspaper, and motivating him to his early advances in politics, and while it was the Ohio party machine that propelled him into the office of State Senator, it was the personal influence, driving power and work of Harry M. Daugherty that advanced Harding to the higher rungs of the political ladder. First, last and

⁸ Ibid., 55-56.

⁹ Mark Sullivan, Our Times, VI, New York, 1935, 17.

always, Daugherty was the political manipulator, the adroit fixer. Himself a disappointed politician, whose only political successes were his elections to the lower house of the state legislature in 1889 and 1894, he was a man of "courage, capacity, consistency and keen comprehension of the psychological elements of his own special brand of politics."¹⁰ Personally likeable, direct and robust, he had the strength of will to see a task to its conclusion, no matter what obstacles lay in his way. "Nobody could face him down; not the domineering Mark Hanna, nor the powerful Boss Penrose, nor the President of the United States."¹¹ When such a man was attracted to Harding and began to assist him in politics, the Ohio Senator's star was necessarily on the rise. Supported by Daugherty, in 1904 Harding was swept into the office of Lieutenant Governor of Ohio, which position he held until 1906, when he declined to stand for re-election. Again, we find Harding conspicuous only by his lack of accomplishment. H. F. Alderfer sums up these two years in the following words: "As Lieutenant Governor, Harding proved a pleasant moderator. His duties provided him with ample time to widen his acquaintanceship and enjoy society of like-minded politicians."¹² Therefore, after two terms as State Senator, and one term as Lieutenant Governor, Warren Harding had nothing more positive to show than a good number of political friends and an example of perfect obedience to the commands of his party leaders. At the completion

10 Adams, The Incredible Era, 41.

11 Ibid., 41.

12 H. F. Alderfer, The Personality and Politics of Warren G. Harding, Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Syracuse University, 1928, 137.

of his term in 1906, Harding returned to Marion and to his newspaper work, where he continued by his editorials to support the Republican policies.

In 1908, we find the example of Harding forsaking a personal friend for the sake of the party. Senator Foraker desired to carry the Ohio delegation for nomination to the Presidency, and Harding, who had always been a close friend and follower of Foraker, and who owed a great deal of his early success to the work, interest and influence of Foraker, at first gave him his support. But a swing around the circuit aroused in Harding's mind the uneasy suspicion that he was in the wrong boat, and that the boat was sinking. He discovered that the State Republican Committee, Boss Cox and his Hamilton County cohorts, had endorsed Taft for the nomination, and were opposed to Foraker. In the words of Adams: "Harding emulated the proverbial and sagacious rat; he got off in time."¹³ Harding unsuccessfully attempted to explain his action in the following words:

This is not a bandwagon climb; it is the calm recording of the trend in Ohio politics. The bandwagon is full anyway . . . Senator Foraker is licked . . . and in political honor his followers are prisoners of war . . . When politicians play the game of politics, they must play gamely, regardless of the umpire.¹⁴

The remarkable point of this affair is that Harding is the man, who, somehow, achieved a great reputation for personal and political loyalty. The truth of of the matter is that he was loyal to only one thing, and that was the

¹³ Adams, Incredible Era, 69.

¹⁴ Ibid., 69.

strongest political factor on which he could lean for support. "According to Harding, politics is a game of faction, of shifting, of strength, of opportunism. It has absolutely nothing to do with the social order or human welfare."¹⁵ In 1910, this statement to a certain extent "boomeranged" on Harding, as he made an unsuccessful bid for the Governorship of Ohio.

Harding mistakenly thought that he could easily attain the position of Governor, and entered his name in the contest. He carried on an extensive speaking campaign throughout the state, but to no avail, since the voters rejected him by 100,000 votes. He took his defeat very hard, and resolved that he would never again run for political office in Ohio. Strangely enough, he did not blame the party machine, but turned his wrath on the voters, as he lamented the morning after his defeat: "These things will happen as long as every Tom, Dick and Harry have the right to vote."¹⁶

Again, Harding returned to Marion and to his newspaper work, and the following four years were passed in comparative peace and obscurity. The only break occurred in 1912 when he was asked by President Taft to place his name in nomination at the Republican convention. During the ensuing Progressive Revolt of Theodore Roosevelt, Harding again followed the traditional party lines, and made speeches attacking Roosevelt and his independent cam-

15 Alderfer, Personality and Polit. of Hard., 144.

16 Adams, Incredible Era, 73.

paign. But Harding did not remain long in private life, and the year 1914 marked his return to politics.

Harry M. Daugherty deserves the credit, or perhaps the blame, for Harding's election to the United States Senate. Daugherty knew that in 1914 one of Ohio's seats in the Senate would be vacated, and his mind was immediately absorbed with the possibility of Harding gaining the position. Harding was, at the time, on vacation in Florida, and Daugherty summoned him back to Ohio. He explained the Senatorial situation to Harding, and urged him to run. Harding at first refused, but, finally, reluctantly gave in and announced himself a candidate. After some two weeks, Daugherty came upon Harding and found him so discouraged by the tiresome travel, speech-making and the weather, that Harding was determined to quit the race. Daugherty offered an attentive ear to the narration of his ills, and then gave the paternal advice: "Go out and get your shoes shined, your suit pressed; get a good meal and take a little rest."¹⁷ Harding followed this advice, and soon resumed his active campaign, and with the support of Daugherty, won the election to the Senate.

Harding's change of residence, however, from Marion to Washington in no way served as a challenge to improve on his negative record. That Harding was a popular Senator there is no doubt, for he was personally liked on both sides of the Senate chamber. His utterances were always characterized by friendly compliments. He was reputed to be one of the best poker players

17 Sullivan, Our Times, VI, 28.

in Washington, and he and Mrs. Harding managed to gain an enviable niche in the society of the Washington "400." Mr. Edward B. McLean, owner of the Washington Post and the Cincinnati Enquirer took the Hardings under his social wing, and introduced them to the top social set.¹⁸ But popularity does not necessarily make a good Senator.

Joseph M. Chapple, for some strange reason, was captivated by Harding, and extolled him through his long and burdensome biography and again in his shorter sketch of Harding. Commenting on Harding as Senator, Chapple states:

He was soon recognized as a Senator of balanced brain and heart. His judgment was sound, having in it the vision of the statesman, together with the common sense of a trained business man. Perplexing judicial and diplomatic questions were submitted to him, and in all situations his careful, well-poised, balanced point of view clarified the most complex situations.¹⁹

That such was not the case will be borne out by the following facts.

Mark Sullivan puts it well when he states: "Perhaps his looks did him a dis-service--no one could be as great a Senator as Harding looked."²⁰ This, in reality, was but a polite way of stating that Harding's record in the Senate was little short of disgraceful. "No one ever heard of a Harding bill

18 Alderfer, Personality and Polit. of Hard., 172.

19 Joseph Mitchell Chapple, Warren G. Harding, the Man, Boston 1920, 60-61.

20 Sullivan, Our Times, VI, 28.

hardly even a Harding Amendment."²¹ Out of a total of 2692 roll-calls, Harding failed to answer 1163. On the basis of attendance, he would have been expelled from school, for he stood seventy-eighth of ninety-six members. He occupied no position of importance in the Senatorial debates. His 225 appearances on the Senate floor were brief, and, hence, his speeches are given scant space in the Congressional Record's roster of speeches delivered. His one great effort was a speech on the Versailles Treaty, which was ignored in the Senate and neglected by the newspapers.²² Although a member of the Foreign Relations Committee, Harding never once made one statement concerning the League of Nations that had not been previously expressed by party members. In May, 1919, he delivered a speech at Carnegie Hall, New York, and the following oft-repeated statement found its way into The New York Times: "At the present time, the preservation of American nationality rests with the Senate, and I can assure you that the Senate will not fail."²³ It was said that Harding, despite his experience on the Foreign Relations Committee and the wonderful opportunity he had to make use of the best sources of information, "had little more knowledge than the average man in the street of the issues on which the world's future was to hang."²⁴

21 Ibid., VI, 29.

22 Adams, Incredible Era, 96-97.

23 The New York Times, May 19, 1919, pt.1, p.1.

24 Adams, The Incredible Era, 96.

Harding's senatorial record on other issues is equally insignificant. His suffrage record is characteristic. In November, 1915, he was interviewed by a suffrage delegation, and he stated that he was inclined to leave the question to his party. Two months later, he declared: "I am not sure how I will vote, but I think I will vote against prohibition." On April 28, 1918, Harding announced that he had made up his mind and that he had decided to vote with his state, which had twice previously voted against suffrage. But he then added: "I feel that many things have changed since their vote was cast. Perhaps, I shall vote contrary to their vote." Indeed, things had changed, for the party leaders had learned the power behind the suffrage movement, and had reversed their stand.²⁵ "So, on June 4, 1919, along with the other party machinists, Harding cast his vote in favor of suffrage."²⁶

On the prohibition question, Harding again followed the lead of the party, and supported the prohibition amendment, despite his previous public announcement to the contrary. He likewise followed his party in overriding the President's veto of the Volstead Enforcement Act; he opposed prohibition, along with the party leaders, for the District of Columbia and the Philippines, and he cast his vote against the Sheppard Amendment, which would extend the Reed bone-dry provision to the District of Columbia.

25 Nation, New York, CX, June 19, 1920, 842. (The above paragraph is a summary of an editorial appearing in this magazine.)

26 The Congressional Record, June 4, 1919, Vol. LVIII, pt. 1, p. 635.

Harding's war record follows the same party line. He voted for the espionage act, and against the exemption of religious objectors from the draft. During the bitter fight in the Senate concerning the Treaty, Harding always stood with the Lodge Reservationists. In February, 1917, he voted to raise all needed revenues by bond issues, rather than by taxation. He followed the lead of the Penrose contingent and cast his ballot against the measure which would put a tax of at least 60% on all war profits; for the same reason, he was opposed to the LaFollette amendment, which would put a graduated tax on all incomes of \$1,000,000 and more, and he again voted with the party against the measure to get added revenue from large inheritances.²⁷ These few examples are cited to make clear just how perfect a puppet Senator Harding was. Never once did he take the initiative; never once did he make a move independent of the party.

In passing, it has been stated that Harding gave unqualified support to the Reservationists on the League question. Samuel G. Blythe, however makes a categorical denial of Harding's intention to put this country into the League in any form whatsoever. In 1923, he wrote: "I can state on direct

²⁷ Nation, New York, CX, June 19, 1920, 842. (From the above it can be seen how inconsistent was Harding. First he votes for the Prohibition amendment, then votes against the enforcement of the amendment as well as its extension to the District of Columbia and the Philippines. Surely it can be concluded that his vote was cast only at the dictate of his own party, and not because of any personal conviction on the Prohibition question.)

personal authority that President Harding has no intention, idea, or plan, present or remote, of trying to put this country into the League of Nations; he never has and never will have."²⁸ Mr. Blythe does not state who his "personal authority" was, but such an assertion is certainly contrary to the real, proven support Harding threw behind the Reservationists. Harding signed the Senatorial Round-Robin instigated by Lodge, and he voted for the Knox peace resolutions which would have stripped the President of power in the peace settlement. Before he cast his vote with the Reservationists, he declared in the Senate: "I do not believe, Senators, that it is going to break the heart of the world to make this covenant right, or at least free from perils which would endanger our own independence."²⁹ That he was speaking about adopting the League with the Lodge Reservations, none did doubt. Months later, in his Presidential campaign, he advocated the Party's "Association of Nations." Such an international association was but a quasi-substitute for the League. The fact that it was never passed in the Senate, in no way alters the case of Harding's support of it.

Not only did Harding stand with the party leaders on the more important domestic issues of the day as well as on all measures, but he likewise followed their bidding on matters of less importance. For example, there is the case of the Federal Trade Commission, which was making a lengthy investigation of the meat-packing industry. A short while before the completion of

28 Samuel G. Blythe, A Calm Review of a Calm Man, New York, 1923, 46.

29 Adams, The Incredible Era, 94-96.

its work, the Penrose group suddenly decided to cut its appropriation in half. Harding immediately voiced his "yes." The Penrose group opposed the appointment by the President of George Rublee, an able Progressive, to the commission. The obedient Harding followed their lead. When Wilson named Louis D. Brandeis for the Supreme Court, again Harding stood steadfast with the Old Guard against his confirmation. The Old Guard was aligned against the appropriation of \$500,000 to create an employment bureau in the Department of Labor, and the lengthening of the working day of government employees by one-half hour, and the labor-driving bonus and stop-watch devices in the Navy yards. Again, we find Harding following their dictates.³⁰ Dr. Alderfer sums up Harding's senatorial attitude on public issues thus:

Complete indifference, a desire to follow the dictates of his party, a friendly interest in those who appear in behalf of a proposal, a period of cautious vacillation to await developments, a vote with the prevailing faction, and the use of that vote to appeal for support from the winning group -- all these are part of the method which Harding used to attack important problems concerning which he had no real interest.³¹

This portrayal of Harding is, by no means, unique. William A. White is unmerciful in his denunciation of W. G. Harding as United States Senator. He characterizes him as an "errand boy" who was ever at the beck and call of all the senators, the great and powerful, the poor and needy. He

³⁰ Nation, New York, CX, June 19, 1920, 842.

³¹ Alderfer, Personality and Polit. of Hard., 172.

states that in Harding's senatorial record there can be found "no phrase that characterizes a situation, no illuminating comment or convincing argument upon any subject."³² He is compared to a bass drum which beats the time of the hour but makes no music. "He was smart, as the word goes; had the ear of the powerful, and banked his loyalty with Boies Penrose, the boss of the Senate."³³ Samuel H. Adams states: "His official conduct just does not measure up!"³⁴ President Wilson, in speaking of Harding, characterized him as "the bungalow mind."³⁵ The highest recommendation Outlook magazine could give to Harding as a result of his senatorial years was the following: "While his Senatorship has not been marked by any decidedly original proposals, he has had valuable experience, particularly, as a member of the Committee on Foreign Relations."³⁶

Having considered, therefore, the accomplishments of Warren G. Harding as Senator, his participation in the Senatorial debates, and his completely partisan voting on major and minor domestic issues, as well as those concerned with war measures, the only rational conclusion that can be drawn is that, in the light of his record, he was in no way Presidential timber. To be fair, however, it would be well to see if Harding possessed other qualifications, which might, perhaps, cancel out his mediocre public record.

32 White, Masks in a Pageant, 402.

33 Ibid., 402.

34 Adams, Incredible Era, 89.

35 Thompson, Presidents I've Known, 334.

36 The Outlook, New York CXXV, June 16, 1920, 372.

Perhaps, his personality was such that this alone would win for him the nomination. Undoubtedly, Harding had the ability to make friends, but, certainly, the President of the United States should be something more than a mere "hand-shaker." In 1916, he was chosen as Chairman of the Republican Convention, and as a speaker for Hughes in the Presidential campaign, he made friends.³⁷ In the Senate, he was personally popular on both sides of the floor, and numbered Democratic Senators John S. Williams and Oscar Underwood among his close friends.³⁸ Although he never carried his home county in any election, previous to the Presidential Election in 1920, he was locally popular and considered one of the first citizens of Marion. But Charles W. Thompson comes nearest to the reason for such popularity when he states: "As for Harding's personality, I cannot recall that anybody was ever passionately fond of Harding. He was merely a man who had no enemies."³⁹ Certainly, it is not difficult to get along with a man who, like Harding, was blessed with a strikingly handsome appearance, a natural geniality, who wore a perpetual smile, and who was ever satisfied to follow the lead of others, never making himself obnoxious by any original thoughts or independent actions. That he had a naturally pleasing oratorical voice, is true, but he never learned how to put it to good use. Of the old school of oratory, he required much time

37 Daugherty, Harding Tragedy, 11.

38 Alderfer, Personality and Polit. of Hard., 172.

39 Thompson, Presidents I've Known, 332.

to adorn a simple idea by means of cumbersome, at times bombastic, phrases. "Given four minutes wherein to say something, Harding might well have choked to death. On the other hand, he could use up two hours in saying practically nothing."⁴⁰ Henry L. Mencken once asserted: "Harding's is the worst English I have ever encountered. . . it reminds me of a string of wet sponges."⁴¹ Senator William G. McAdoo graphically described Harding's oratorical attempts in the following words:

His speeches leave the impression of an army of pompous phrases moving over the landscape in search of an idea; sometimes these meandering words actually capture a straggling thought and bear it triumphantly, a prisoner in their midst, until it dies of servitude and overwork.⁴²

And Charles W. Thompson condemned Harding for his school-boy gestures, his rolling voice, and his complete lack of sincerity.⁴³

As for Harding's intellectual ability, at best it could be ranked as ordinary. W. F. Johnson, despite his constant eulogy of Harding's other characteristics, admitted that "he could not be classed among the elegant and polished scholars."⁴⁴ Merely judging from his career in the Senate would give one sufficient evidence to arrive at the conclusion that the above eval-

40 Adams, Incredible Era, 115.

41 Ibid., 115.

42 Ibid., 116.

43 Thompson, Presidents I've Known, 333.

44 Johnson, The Life of Harding, 38.

nation is a vast under-statement. White stated that "Harding never wrote a line that has been quoted beyond the confines of his state, and has rarely taken a position which has attracted more than local notice."⁴⁵ Thompson, who frequently heard him speak in the Senate, stated that his speeches gave the impression that there was nothing stirring in his brain.⁴⁶ Yet, despite such obvious deficiencies, Harding would be prevailed on to enter his name in the primary campaign for nomination. Left to himself, he would not have done so, for, all things considered, he knew himself well enough, and, as will be seen, neither expected nor very much wished to be President. But Harry M. Daugherty had plans quite to the contrary.

Ever since their first meeting, Daugherty had nurtured in his mind the idea that Harding was the man to be President. For Daugherty, politics was but a game, and he was in it to win the highest possible stakes. What greater accomplishment could there be in his life than to make a President? He had, however, a thorough, profound knowledge of Harding, and he knew that he would shrink from such an idea. Therefore, he went to Harding and told him that a rival group in Ohio was threatening the Republican state organization, which was supposedly under the control of Harding and himself. Since

⁴⁵ White, Masks in a Pageant, 339.

⁴⁶ Thompson, Presidents I've Known, 332.

it was a presidential year, the rival group, he told Harding, had decided to contribute their support to the candidacy of General Leonard Wood. Wood enjoyed much popularity in Ohio, and the rival group, therefore, would be able to elect delegates pledged to Wood. Such an occurrence would automatically give them control of the Ohio Republican Organization, and this was even more serious, since Harding would later in the year come up for reelection to his seat in the Senate. Loss of control of the organization would necessarily mean loss of the Senate post for Harding. Therefore, Daugherty argued, our best chance is to put forward a "favorite son" from Ohio for the Presidential nomination. This will enable us to gain the Ohio delegates, and, thereby, to keep our political leadership. Daugherty stressed the fact that such a procedure would by no means demand that the favorite son seek the actual nomination, but, with the state once won, he could cease campaigning. And the logical choice could be none other than Harding himself.⁴⁷ At first, Harding shrank from the task, although he could see the force of Daugherty's argumentation. He was perfectly satisfied with his position in the Senate, and had no desire to be President. Finally, however, he agreed. Daugherty was then quick to follow up with another suggestion. To show good faith and gain the confidence of his friends in Ohio, and as a mere matter of strategy, Harding should run in a few states outside of Ohio. Harding consented, though reluctantly.⁴⁸

47 Mark Sullivan, Our Times, VI, 32.

48 Ibid., 33.

Daugherty's plan was in actuality greater. He fully understood the difficulty General Wood faced in securing the nomination. The country fresh from a war in Europe, would naturally distrust a military man in the White House. "There's not enough money in the world to buy the nomination for a man who wears epaulets in 1920," he later told Harding as he divulged his full plan.⁴⁹ It was argued that Frank O. Lowden was personally popular and would garner a great number of votes, but he married into the railroads. By himself, he'll never win. As for Johnson: he could never obtain the nomination because of his treatment of Hughes in California in 1916. The Republicans will never forgive him. Therefore, the convention will be deadlocked, and then will come Harding's chance.⁵⁰ By such argumentation and keen political foresight, Daugherty persuaded Harding to enter the race.

It is interesting to note that early in the summer of 1919, Boise Penrose summoned Harding to his office, and asked him if he would like to be President. Harding objected, stating that he had no money and had troubles enough back in Ohio. Penrose assured him that he himself would take care of the expenses, as well as any difficulties in Ohio. From then on, Penrose began to eulogize Harding, until the Ohio Senator made a speech before the Manufacturers' Association in Philadelphia. Penrose immediately lost interest in Harding as a possible candidate, remarking: "Harding isn't as big a man

49 Daugherty, Harding Tragedy, 17.

50 Ibid., 17-18.

as I thought he was. He should have talked more about the tariff, and not so much about playing cymbals in the Marion brass band."⁵¹

Mrs. Harding, who had a solidly realistic knowledge and appreciation of her husband's qualifications and potentialities, felt that he had already gone far beyond his capabilities, and was in no way enthusiastic over the proposed plan for the Presidency. She was completely satisfied with her social status in Washington, and had no wish to surrender it because of the vague possibility of gaining the Presidency. "And besides," she said to Daugherty, "I've a presentiment against this thing. Don't ask him to run."⁵² After an examination of the political background, personality and talents of Harding, there is no doubt that her presentiment was well-founded. Her husband was a man of little talent. He had a poor record in the Ohio State Senate, in the office of Lieutenant Governor, and again in Washington as United States Senator. The story of how such a candidate succeeded in winning the nomination will be the subject of the following chapters.

51 William Allen White, A Puritan in Babylon, New York, 1940, 204.

52 Daugherty, Harding Tragedy, 15-16.

CHAPTER III

THE PRE-CONVENTION CAMPAIGN

It was deemed necessary to devote considerable space to the political background of Warren Harding because without some knowledge of his previous political fortunes, subsequent manipulations and manoeuvres of the politicians behind the scenes, as well as the other factors surrounding his nomination, cannot be placed in their proper perspective. This chapter will deal with the primary campaign, and will discuss the relative strength of the various candidates before the Republican National Convention. The influence of the money scandals on the nomination of Harding will follow, and, finally, a survey of the pre-convention forecasts will fill out the political picture.

General Leonard Wood was one of the most distinguished Americans of the time. His natural talents, strong character and wide experience equipped him for the role of a leader at that time when America badly needed leadership. He had entered the Army as a medical officer in the 80's, and during the Spanish-American War had served as Colonel above Theodore Roosevelt and the Rough Riders.¹ At the conclusion of the war with Spain, he had

1 Hermann Hagedorn, Leonard Wood, I, New York, 1931, 160-183

material prosperity when he espoused the daughter of George Pullman, one of the richest men of his day. For many years Lowden had been an ardent member of the Republican National Committee, and as Governor of Illinois he had proved himself to be a capable and popular executive. When he took the Governor's office, he was faced with multifold unpaid bills, and only \$500 in the treasury. Four years later, the State was completely free from debt, and Illinois boasted of several million dollars in her treasury.⁴ He had served with distinction in Congress from 1906 to 1911. A keen intellect, an upright character, and a charming personality won him an enthusiastic following at home. With such an enviable record, it is easy to conclude that he was one of the best of the type from which the United States had been accustomed to choose its Presidents. Moreover, "It was a period that needed a business administration in Washington to straighten out the aftermath of the World War."⁵ It was certainly evident from his record in Illinois that Governor Lowden could supply the need. Consequently, that he would prove to be a powerful candidate, none did doubt.

Third in importance and strength was California's two-term Governor, Hiram Johnson, a man who first caught the public eye as a criminal prosecutor in San Francisco. In 1912 he had run as the Vice-Presidential candidate on the ill-fated Roosevelt Bull Moose ticket, and from 1917 he served in the

⁴ Herman Henry Kohlhaas, From McKinley to Harding, New York, 1923, 226.

⁵ Ibid., 227.

United States Senate. As senator, he favored governmental control, voiced radical views on Labor, and showed little understanding of international problems. On the League question, he was a bitter "Irreconcilable," and delivered forceful, sarcastic speeches in the Senate against Wilson. His oratorical skill and his strong, virile personality won him great popularity among the masses.⁶ Although Johnson gained some support from the more progressive part of Roosevelt's followers, his association with Roosevelt, and his excessively liberal ideas deprived him of any real chance for nomination.⁷

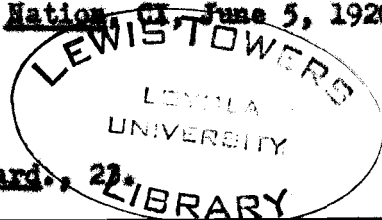
Fourth among the candidates was Herbert Clarke Hoover, whose lax party spirit, and unpopularity among politicians, gave him only an outside chance for the nomination. He enjoyed, however, wide popularity because of his humanitarian work in Belgium and his unselfish and skillful handling of the National Food Administration project. Numerous former associates, though scattered throughout the nation, formed a spontaneous, inspirational organization to rally support for Hoover.⁸ Under J. F. Lucy, the Hoover National Republican Club was organized. Campaign funds were raised and headquarters were established in the Vanderbilt Hotel in New York City. Hoover, however, refused to take any active part in the primaries, and his chances for nomination became even more dim.⁹

6 The Outlook, New York, CXXIV, April 21, 1920, 696-698.

7 Oscar G. Villard, "Hiram W. Johnson," Nation, CI, June 5, 1920, 478-479.

8 Adams, The Incredible Era, 134.

9 Alderfer, Personality and Polit. of Hard., 22.



Harry Daugherty, meanwhile, had been expending endless energy to get the political ball rolling for Harding. In December, 1919, the Republican National Committee met in Washington, where Daugherty personally secured rooms at the Willard Hotel for fifty Republicans from Ohio. These men were then delegated by Daugherty to contact the members of the National Committee and sound them out on their attitude toward Harding. Then, Daugherty himself spoke with each individual member of the Committee. He first asked each one to support Harding as first choice; if he was met with a refusal, he then requested every member to agree on Harding for second or third choice.¹⁰ The seed had been planted. Daugherty then busied himself with arrangements for establishing headquarters in Columbus, Washington, New York City and Indianapolis. He informed Harding that he would attempt to raise money in Ohio and St. Louis, and likewise, through his friend, Ringling, who was a business partner of the notorious Jake Hamon of Oklahoma.¹¹ Thus, with five major candidates for the nomination, the active campaign got under way.

Speaking tours were mapped out for the candidates; advertising by means of handbills, bill-boards, circulars, personal telegrams, buttons and newspaper coverage was arranged by the managers; and the usual women's societies, young people's associations, businessmen's leagues, and college clubs were organized. Wood excelled in organization; Johnson emphasized

10 Ibid., 16.

11 Daugherty, Harding Tragedy, 26.

personal tours; the other three candidates limited their activities to certain states and depended upon their standing with the party organization to develop strength.¹²

General Wood's campaign was by far the most active and extensive. He toured the majority of states which had preferential primaries, entering even into states which had favorite sons in the race. He made no effort to compromise himself by paying obeisance to the time-honored political amenities, and for this reason he found opposition from the regular party machine in almost every state.¹³ At first, his campaign had been under the management of John T. King, an orthodox planner, who was opposed to Wood's attempt to secure a large number of instructed delegates. The manager felt such action would needlessly arouse the antagonism of state leaders and the favorite son candidates. His plan, rather, was to strive to win as many second and third place votes as possible, and then through negotiations with the Party Elders after the first few ballots, to swing to Wood the votes of the favorite son candidates. General Wood, however, with all his vitality and desire for open-handed methods, was diametrically opposed to King's plan. Shortly, Wood changed campaign managers by appointing the inexperienced but financially powerful William C. Proctor of Cincinnati. The result was a million dollar pre-convention campaign, which brought Wood to the people, but at the

¹² Louise Overacker and C. E. Merriman, The Primary Election, Chicago, 1928, 130-134.

¹³ Alderfer, Personality and Polit. of Hard., 11.

same time eventually cost him the nomination.¹⁴ "Proctor built up an organization with branches in two-thirds of the states, and he gave lavishly of his own wealth to an enterprise which he regarded as a patriotic service."¹⁵

Wood's platform was general and oftentimes vague, but by his sincerity and blunt manner of speech he met with instant success and won a large following. He advocated aid to the farmer, an increase in pay for teachers, encouragement to big business as long as it was American, universal military training, an increase of the army to between 200,000 and 250,000 and a restriction on immigration.¹⁶ Further, his program called for law and order, and reduction of living costs by eliminating the middleman and private speculators. He offered no solidly concrete methods; and the New Republic opined that Wood's mind contained "not a single guide to action; it begs every question it touches."¹⁷ Nevertheless, he made a tremendous impression on the American people and his chances brightened.

Lowden's campaign was under the management of Louis J. Emerson. This favorite son of Illinois was content to make use of the funds at his disposal to swing the votes of numerous doubtful delegates, while he re-

14 Recce Michael Paone, The Presidential Election of 1920, Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Georgetown University, 1950, 144.

15 Hagedorn, Leonard Wood, II, 339.

16 Paone, Pres. Election of 1920, 163.

17 New Republic, New York, XXII, May 5, 1920, 301-302.

stricted his campaigning to the mid-western states, where he hoped to build up a powerful following of instructed delegates. Like Wood, Lowden commanded a large personal following; unlike Wood, he was, at the beginning of his campaign, highly regarded by the Republican leaders. His platform called for practical agricultural reforms, support of the prohibition amendment, and alignment with the Reservationists on the League issue. His prestige increased as his campaign reached the people.

Hiram Johnson found no party support outside of California, and had no real organization. He launched into the campaign, however, relying on his personal magnetism, his great oratorical skill, and the outstanding talents of Senator Borah of Idaho. He stood stoutly against the League as well as against the Reservationists, and determined to bring the issue to the people by a series of speeches across the nation. Johnson's opposition to General Wood was manifest. He stumped the same states as Wood, and thereby attempted to weaken Wood's delegation strength at the Convention.

Hoover, on the other hand, preferred to stay in the background and to hope for a popular stampede to his standard at the Convention. He spoke only in California, but that state was already lost to Johnson.

Harding was a direct antithesis to Johnson, Wood and Lowden. He was the least active of these major candidates, although he did tour Kansas, Indiana and Ohio. He styled himself as a strong reservationist, but often made no mention of the League in his speeches. Actually, he offered no constructive program on important issues, including that of the League. A course, which was calculated to create no enemies, actually won him few

friends.¹⁸ Daugherty was a contrasting picture of activity. He secured a list of all the possible delegates and sent them Harding campaign literature. He himself got up a biographical pamphlet of Harding, which, Daugherty claimed, was "well written, beautifully printed and illustrated."¹⁹ He planned to have Harding enter the primaries of Ohio, Indiana and Montana, stating that he would not be able to raise the funds for campaigns in other states.²⁰ He boasted that through his planning, three-fourths of the 984 delegates were personally approached in behalf of Harding.²¹ Daugherty himself eventually negotiated with Jake Hamon of Oklahoma, controller of over fifty delegates, and won from him the promise that if Lowden could not be nominated, and if Harding was then found to have a real chance, Hamon would then throw his support to Harding.²² Perhaps this was the motivating reason for Daugherty's most remarkable prediction about the "smoke-filled room" which appeared in the press in late February.²³

Michigan, Illinois, Ohio and Indiana were the most significant primaries. Ohio and Illinois were pivotal states, and both had favorite sons. Michigan had joined the Bull Moose movement of Roosevelt in 1912, and both

18 Paone, Pres. Election of 1920, 166-167.

19 Daugherty, The Harding Tragedy, 27.

20 Alderfer, Personality and Polit. of Hard., 22.

21 Daugherty, The Harding Tragedy, 33.

22 Ibid., 33-34.

23 New York Times, Feb. 21, 1920, pt. 1, p. 1.

Wood and Johnson claimed the support of the Roosevelt followers. The Indiana primary listed the names of the four major candidates, and was calculated to test their comparative strength.

The Michigan primary was held on April 6. Johnson's sweeping victory over Wood by a plurality of 43,000 votes convinced him that his position on the League was the right one and that this was the main reason for his victory. The New York Times stated that Johnson's victory was indeed curious, and something that few of his supporters had expected. Searching for the reason, the Times concluded that the weather had prevented numerous Wood supporters in rural areas from reaching the polls.²⁴

The Illinois primary was the occasion of prolonged speculation. The Lowden, Wood and Johnson trio met in bitter opposition at the polls. Though Lowden had conducted a vigorous campaign in his own state, nevertheless he feared that opposition from Mayor Thompson, of Chicago, would hurt him in the primary. The point of difference between Lowden and the Chicago Mayor was Lowden's stand in favor of prohibition. The inhabitants of Chicago, the Irish especially, were definitely "wet." Thompson, however, had declared that despite his strong opposition to Lowden, he would not interfere in the campaign; his lieutenants, nonetheless, campaigned widely in behalf of Johnson. The outcome of the vote was disappointing to Lowden who received 236,802 to 156,719 for Wood, and 64,201 for Johnson. Lowden, however, received forty-three of the fifty-eight delegates, and hoped to win fourteen

²⁴ New York Times, April 7, 1920, pt. 1, p. 9. (General Wood was especially strong in the country districts of the state.)

of the remaining delegates who were uninstructed. Commenting on the unexpected showing of Wood and Johnson, the New York Times stated that Lowden's showing despite concentrated opposition was far short of what it should have been for a favorite son in his own state. Wood actually carried Cook County, garnering 97,679 votes to Lowden's 78,344, while Johnson accomplished the remarkable feat of winning 40,000 votes in Chicago.²⁵ Wood and Johnson were winning wide acclaim for their showing in Michigan and Illinois, whereas Governor Lowden, though still high in public esteem, was now holding a rather poor third position.

The eyes of the nation were turned on Ohio as the primary in that state approached at the end of April. Anxiety was evident in the Harding camp, for Wood had invaded the state and was seriously threatening to capture some of the delegates from the favorite son. This was foreseen by the New York Times, which predicted a preferential vote for Harding, with Wood obtaining from six to ten delegates.²⁶ The final results of the election verified this prediction to the letter. Although Harding managed to carry the state, he actually received less than fifty percent of the votes cast. Wood ran an extremely close second to Harding, capturing 108,565 votes to 123,257 tabulated for Harding; Johnson was a poor third, with 44,000.²⁷ Senator Harding carried Cincinnati, Toledo, Dayton, but failure to win the important cities

25 New York Times, April 15, 1920, pt. 1, p. 11.

26 New York Times, April 26, 1920, pt. 1, p. 9.

27 New York Times, April 27, 1920, pt. 1, p. 1.

of Cleveland, Columbus and Youngstown could be interpreted as a semi-defeat. He was to receive thirty-nine delegates at the Convention, as compared to Wood's nine, but a "split delegation at home was an inauspicious start, indeed."²⁸ His campaign-manager, Daugherty, running for delegate-at-large, was defeated by a Wood man. Despite a relatively poor showing in his own state, Harding, declared Daugherty, had won a remarkable victory.²⁹ The Marion Star hailed the result as "highly gratifying," a comment, as pointed out by the New York Times, which had been missing from the other newspapers of the state, including those which had supported Harding.³⁰ Harding's showing was judged far worse than Lowden's in the neighboring State of Illinois, for Lowden had a far greater plurality than Harding, and also would gain delegates from other states, especially Iowa, Kentucky, South Dakota and Missouri. Such was not the case with Harding. The Chicago Journal admitted that his plurality was so small that it might well eliminate him from public life altogether,³¹ while the New York Times declared that he was an impossible candidate and was actually eliminated from the race. It suggested that he withdraw peacefully beforehand.³²

It is significant that Wood, despite his fine showing in the Ohio

28 Adams, Incredible Era, 125.

29 New York Times, April 29, 1920, pt. 1, p. 3.

30 New York Times, April 30, 1920, pt. 1, p. 10.

31 Chicago Daily Journal, April 29, 1920, pt. 1, p. 1.

32 New York Times, April 29, 1920, pt. 1, p. 10.

primary, was severely admonished for incurring the wrath of the supporters of the favorite sons, and therefore could scarcely hope for their necessary second and third place votes.³³ This, of course, meant that Wood would have to carry the convention on the first few ballots, or else go down to certain defeat. That he realized this is evident from his renewed activity in the primary states in May, as he attempted to win as many pledged delegates as possible.³⁴

The Montana primary followed close upon Ohio's, and Harding was given a derisory vote of 723 out of a total of more than 40,000. Johnson received 21,034, Wood 6,804, and Lowden 6,503. Harding's press slumped, and he was all but counted out of the race.³⁵

The results in the neighboring state of Indiana, from a practical point of view, tolled the death of Harding's campaign. He had entered that state with the hope of splitting the vote, so that neither Wood nor any other rival could win a majority. Under Indiana law, this would mean an unpledged delegation. Then, Harding hoped that Harry S. New, his senatorial friend, would be able to use his local influence to good purpose.³⁶ But the results were disastrous. Wood received 85,708 votes, Johnson 79,840, Lowden 39,627,

33 Paone, 1920 Presidential Election, 185-186.

34 Ibid., 186.

35 Adams, Incredible Era, 126.

36 Ibid., 125.

and Harding a meagre 20,782.³⁷ The story is told that the Hardings were at the home of Senator New in Indianapolis on the night of the election. As the returns came in, it became painfully evident that Harding would not receive a single delegate. Several of Harding's close political friends present advised him to give up the contest and stand for re-election to the Senate. The completely discouraged Harding went to the telephone and put through a call to his Ohio headquarters to announce his decision of retiring from the race. Mrs. Harding quickly crossed the room, snatched the telephone from his hand and placed it back on the hook. He owed it to his friends in Ohio to continue in the race, she argued.³⁸ The New York Times commented: "Harding's boom, never more than a manoeuvre, seems exploded."³⁹ But Harding's managers were not downhearted. Wood had received ten pledged delegates, Johnson four, which left sixteen unpledged. Harding's managers now put their faith in Senator New to swing the sixteen remaining unpledged delegates to the cause of Harding.⁴⁰

Nevertheless, at the conclusion of the Ohio, Montana and Indiana primaries, Harding seemed definitely eliminated from the race. "The candidacy of Senator W. G. Harding was hardly taken seriously . . . He had run unimpressively in the primaries, and only the prodding of his wife and . . .

37 Chicago Tribune, May 6, 1920, pt. 1, p. 1.

38 New York Times, Nov. 22, 1924, pt. 1, p. 1.

39 New York Times, May 7, 1920, pt. 1, p. 10.

40 Chicago Tribune, May 6, 1920, pt. 1, p. 9.

friends kept him from closing his headquarters in Chicago.⁴¹ Wood and Johnson loomed as the popular favorites. General Wood had won an extremely close and bitterly fought race in New Jersey, defeating Johnson by 1300 votes,⁴² and he had also been victorious in West Virginia, South Dakota, and Maryland, in which last state his vote outnumbered Johnson's by two-to-one.⁴³ In Nebraska, on the other hand, Johnson had overcome Wood by 21,000 votes. Governor Lowden, however, still commanded much respect and was considered the best possibility in case of a deadlock between Johnson and Wood. This was the picture as the fourth week of May began. Suddenly, the entire picture changed in complexion.

The investigation of the campaign expenditures was a cheap though powerful political move to kill the chances of General Wood for the nomination. On May 20, Senator Borah, a staunch backer of Johnson's campaign, made an eloquent speech in the Senate demanding an immediate investigation by a Senatorial Committee of the vast expenditure of money in the primary campaigns.⁴⁴ Harry Daugherty attributes to himself the dubious credit of suggesting this plan to Borah.⁴⁵ Adams, however, gives credit for it to Charles M. Lincoln, managing editor of the New York World. Lincoln is said to

41 Thomas A. Bailey, Woodrow Wilson and the Great Betrayal, New York, 1945, 303.

42 New York Times, April 28, 1920, pt. 1, p. 1.

43 New York Times, May 4, 1920, pt.1, p. 1.

44 New York Times, May 21, 1920, pt. 1, p. 1.

45 Daugherty, Harding Tragedy, 30.

have gotten the idea from one of his reporters, Louis Seibold, who then undertook a private investigation and received a list of the contributors to the Wood campaign from John T. King, deposed manager of the Wood forces.⁴⁶ Be that as it may, the Senate, without any debate, resolved to direct the Committee on Privileges and Elections to conduct an inquiry into the pre-convention expenditures. On the following day, a sub-committee was appointed under the direction of Senator Kenyon of Iowa.⁴⁷ "The ease with which the resolution passed the Senate indicates that the Republican senators were not adverse to the investigations. They believed that such a step would impair the chances of Wood."⁴⁸ As a matter of fact, the Kenyon Committee's findings not only impaired the chances of Wood, but almost ruined Lowden's hopes for victory.

Startling facts were quickly brought to light. On May 27, the news reached the nation that the Wood fund was near \$1,000,000, and that Proctor had lent Wood \$500,000, \$77,000 of which had been spent in Ohio.⁴⁹ On June 3, Wood himself was personally implicated by the testimony of Charles H. Duell, a New York lawyer, who testified that Wood was present at the meeting where plans were formulated to raise \$500,000, and again at a second meeting

46 Adams, Incredible Era, 127-128.

47 New York Times, May 21, 1920, pt. 1, p. 1.

48 Alderfer, Personality and Polit. of Hard., 30.

49 New York Times, May 27, 1920, pt. 1, p. 1.

to raise \$1,000,000.⁵⁰ The following day it was announced that the Wood fund was now up to \$1,252,919.⁵¹ The New York Times tried to calm the rising uproar by an analysis of the generous motives of Proctor, explaining that he believed it his patriotic duty to contribute liberally to the campaign of a man whom he considered the best qualified for the position of President of the United States. "Mr. Proctor belongs to that type of campaign manager that has more than once entered generously and sincerely into political campaigns only to injure instead of benefitting."⁵² But the Kenyon Committee had scored a body blow on Wood and it was not to be easily shaken off.

Far beyond the expectations of Senators Borah and Johnson, the Committee unearthed some facts about Governor Lowden's campaign which, practically speaking, eliminated him from the race. His campaign fund amounted to \$414,000, but it was discovered that Lowden himself had personally contributed \$379,000.⁵³ This in itself was a startling revelation, but even more injurious was the discovery that Lowden had spent \$38,000 in Missouri, a non-primary state, and that his manager, Louis L. Emerson, had handed \$5,000 to two delegates from St. Louis for the purpose of stimulating Lowden sentiment. The fact that the two recipients, Nathanael Goldstein and Robert E. Moore, were delegates threw the spotlight of bribery on the incident.⁵⁴ Although

50 New York Times, June 4, 1920, pt. 1, p. 1.

51 New York Times, June 5, 1920, pt. 1, p. 1.

52 New York Times, May 28, 1920, pt. 1, p. 1.

53 Dunand, America: In Our Time, 276.

54 Alderfer, Personality and Polit. of Hard., 14.

Governor Lowden claimed he knew nothing about the incident, and averred that he would not accept their votes, his cause had suffered grave injury.⁵⁵ Borah and Johnson, by their astute political move, had done irreparable harm to two of the leading candidates.

The total findings of the Committee showed the following campaign expenditures: Wood: \$1,773,303; Lowden: \$414,000; Johnson: \$194,000; Hoover: \$173,000; Harding: \$113,000.⁵⁶ By comparison, the campaign costs of Johnson and Harding were insignificant. The investigations were of tremendous help to the faltering Harding, "whose qualifications for the Presidency appeared so dubious that no one had cared to contribute substantially to his campaign."⁵⁷ Daugherty was quick to seize upon his opportunity. It was no secret that the Harding workers were sending out numerous telegrams and telephone calls to the Bosses and Delegates from other states, saying:

Harding is not tainted by the traffic in delegates, his expenditures have been modest and entirely within the law. We believe that the Ohio Senator is now the most available man,⁵⁸ and that if nominated is the only candidate that can be elected.

What influence these telegrams had it is impossible to estimate. Certainly it was evident that if second place votes should be necessary for the nomination, Harding, despite a relatively poor showing in the primaries and an unimpressive record in the Senate, now stood in a far more favorable light

⁵⁵ Chicago Daily Journal, June 3, 1920, pt. 1, p. 1.

⁵⁶ Adams, Incredible Era, 129.

⁵⁷ Hagedorn, Leonard Wood, II, 351.

⁵⁸ Chicago Daily Journal, June 3, 1920, pt. 1, p. 3.

with the delegates than either Lowden or Wood. For these last-named candidates, if nominated, would carry into the Presidential Campaign taints of the money investigations.

It would be a grave mistake to underestimate the importance of the Kenyon Investigations in the Convention. The Chicago Tribune attempted to explain the gifts of Proctor as inspired by patriotic motivation,⁵⁹ and the New York Times declared:

Fair minded men will not forget that this investigation at Washington was inspired by no large patriotic motives, by no aversion to fat campaign funds, but simply and solely to injure General Wood and Governor Lowden.⁶⁰

Nevertheless, the individual delegates knew only too well that the average voter was often far from "fair-minded," and that a candidate, tainted by "corruption," might prove a severe handicap for the Party. The Literary Digest gave a survey of national opinions that indicated the widespread influence of the Kenyon findings:

The big thing brought to light. . . cynically remarks the Columbus Dispatch is that "politics is not a poor man's game. . . ." And the Pittsburg Sun agrees that "if republican institutions are to endure, precautions must be taken against the possibility of money becoming the deciding factor." . . . "The moral sense of the people is simply outraged. . ." thinks the Houston Post. . . . Such an expenditure. . . is denounced by the Syracuse Herald as "morally indefensible." . . . "Are contributions to the campaign funds of Presidential candidates to be regarded as gifts, as speculation or as investment," pointedly inquires the Norfolk Virginian-Pilot. And the Philadelphia Evening Public Ledger replies that "even rich men do not give gobs of money away for nothing; campaign money is usually bread upon the waters."⁶¹

59 Chicago Tribune, May 28, 1920, pt. 1, p. 11.

60 New York Times, May 28, 1920, pt. 1, p. 9.

61 The Literary Digest, New York, LXIV, June 19, 1920, 20.

This adverse publicity could scarcely be ignored, though other questions soon preoccupied the mind of the nation. Could General Wood capture enough delegates to insure his early nomination? Was he of such outstanding calibre that the Republican leaders would be compelled to make him their choice? Was Governor Lowden's political and administrative record strong enough to enable him to win the confidence of the voters, despite the campaign scandals? Were the Republican Senatorial leaders so powerful and confident of victory in November that they could put up a weak but untainted candidate? Would Hiram Johnson command enough delegated strength to gain the nomination, despite the opposition of Wood, Lowden and the party chieftains to his liberal, progressive views? As the convention approached, the forecasts were many and varied.

During the first week in June, as the Republican delegates poured into Chicago, gigantic headlines met their eyes: "Lowden, Wood, and Johnson claim victory; Harding and Hoover still hoping."⁶² The Outlook declared: "The Republican Party needs to nominate a man who has a genius for organization, and whose record, experience and practice justify confidence in his capacity to set the country on its feet."⁶³ Who would this be? The Chicago Tribune named Johnson, Lowden, Wood and Hoover as the outstanding candidates and added: "All the candidates are so good that even the women are perplexed."⁶⁴ In the Literary Digest poll, Wood led with 277,468 votes; Johnson was second with 263,087; Hoover was third with 240,468, and Lowden a

62 Chicago Tribune, May 30, 1920, pt. 1, p. 1.

63 The Outlook, New York, CXXV, June 16, 1920, 307.

64 Chicago Tribune, June 4, 1920, pt. 1, p. 1.

poor fourth with 120,391. Harding was far down with a meagre 36,795 votes to his credit.⁶⁵ Dr. Alderfer points out that it is significant that the three men, who had overwhelming leads in this poll, were candidates in opposition to the Republican organization.⁶⁶ The New York Tribune remarked that the pre-convention campaign could be reduced to the simple terms of "Anything to beat Wood . . . The opposition has significantly degenerated into a mere negation."⁶⁷ That this would also be the story of the convention was implied by The New York Times, when it stated: "The supporters of the other leading candidates . . . are willing to bury their differences to prevent Wood from carrying off the prize."⁶⁸ The Wood managers, however, were eminently confident, and predicted that Wood would win 350 votes by the third ballot, which would be some 130 votes short of a majority.⁶⁹ The New York Times went a step further and predicted that "Wood would poll 400 votes on the third ballot, and that his chief competitor, Johnson, was virtually eliminated."⁷⁰ The seasoned Republican convention veterans, however, did not expect the delegates to name either General Wood or Senator Johnson. They felt that the General was in a well-nigh impossible position, aligned against a

65 The Literary Digest, New York, LIV, June 5, 1920, 19.

66 Alderfer, Personality and Polit. of Hard., 26.

67 New York Tribune, June 3, 1920, pt. 1, p. 11.

68 Chicago Tribune, June 7, 1920, pt. 1, p. 9.

69 Chicago Tribune, June 5, 1920, pt. 1, p. 7.

70 New York Times, June 9, 1920, pt. 1, p. 9.

volume of opposition and therefore was slated for an early elimination.⁷¹ Nevertheless, arriving delegates continued to make personal calls on Wood, and by June 9th he seemed to be their favorite.⁷² The New York Times now pointed out that the Old Guard leaders, who but forty-eight hours before were confident of victory, felt that General Wood was far more formidable than they had anticipated, and they now feared an early nomination.⁷³

The forecast for Lowden was not heartening. The New York Times declared: "Governor Lowden appears on the surface to be in the running, but few, who are disinterested, are inclined to put much faith in his claims."⁷⁴ Then, to make his chances ever more slim, and to throw fear into the Wood supporters Senator Borah threatened to bolt the party if either Lowden or Wood should be victorious. He stated: "If either Wood or Lowden is nominated, the issue before the American people will not be the platform of the party; it will be the issue of corruption of the electorate."⁷⁵ Even the mere mention of a party split, Borah knew would cause panic among the most staunch Republicans, who remembered all too well the disastrous third party in the 1912 election. That this was another political manoeuvre on the part of Borah and Johnson to kill off the two leading candidates is evident.⁷⁶

71 Chicago Tribune, June 9, 1920, pt. 1, p. 11.

72 Chicago Tribune, June 9, 1920, pt. 1, p. 1.

73 New York Times, June 9, 1920, pt. 1, p. 3.

74 New York Times, June 10, 1920, pt. 1, p. 11.

75 New York Times, June 12, 1920, pt. 1, p. 1.

76 Hagedorn, Leonard Wood, II, 357.

Hiram Johnson was given a tremendous ovation and wide press-coverage on his arrival in Chicago. He immediately declared that there would be "no pussyfooting on the League question."⁷⁷ The Los Angeles Times and the New York World had been looking for such vehement statements from Johnson and Borah in their hope for a third party as a result of a Johnson-Borah bolt from the party. This, they forlornly hoped, would bring the nomination to Hoover.⁷⁸

For the most part, the forecasts for Harding painted a dismal picture of his chances. The Outlook stated that despite the fact that Senator Harding is more acceptable to organized leaders than any other candidate, "he is now probably out of the running because of his poor showing in his own State of Ohio."⁷⁹ The New York Times declared that Harding "according to the general view, is already out of the race . . . nobody is talking Harding in Chicago."⁸⁰ The Nation erroneously concluded:

As for Harding, he was Winthrop Murray Crane's first choice in 1916, and while Uncle Murray still pretty nearly runs the Republican Party, his endorsement curiously enough is a well-nigh fatal handicap. Another disqualification is that Harding was the "keynoter" at the last convention. Many of the 1916 delegates will sit again at Chicago, and those who heard him then will not vote for him now.⁸¹

77 The New York Times, June 12, 1920, pt. 1, p. 1.

78 Current Opinion, New York, LXVII, June, 1920, 732.

79 The Outlook, New York, CXXV, June 2, 1920, 199.

80 The New York Times, June 7, 1920, pt. 1, p. 11.

81 Nation, New York, CX, June 5, 1920, 754. (Murray Crane was one of the Old Guard leaders and an ex-senator from Connecticut.)

The Chicago Daily Journal, however, was far nearer the truth, when it stated that Senator Harding is still very much in the race. "He was Senator Penrose's first love, and is one of Penrose's kind. The Old Guard would not be adverse to Harding."⁸²

Just before the convention assembled, there was great speculation about "dark horses" and second-choice candidates. The headlines of the Chicago Tribune read: "Dark Horses prancing as Lowden gains."⁸³ Governor William C. Sproul of Pennsylvania had previously been given little consideration because he was from the rock-ribbed G O P State of Pennsylvania. But, now, The New York Times claimed that Sproul looms up as the chief contender with Wood, and that Penrose would back him to the limit.⁸⁴ Also from Pennsylvania was Senator Philander Knox, who had served with distinction in the Senate and the Cabinet. Despite his advanced age, he too was receiving consideration in the pre-convention forecasts.⁸⁵ Nation commented on several possible "dark horse" candidates. It observed that Nicholas M. Butler, being a university president was disqualified for the race. Governor Coolidge's record, it claimed, was too vulnerable to stand scrutiny. As for Lowden and Harding, they also ought to be considered as "dark horses;" "both are

82 Chicago Daily Journal, June 5, 1920, pt. 1, p. 3.

83 Chicago Tribune, June 6, 1920, pt. 1, p. 1.

84 New York Times, June 9, 1920, pt. 1, p. 1.

85 Alderfer, Personality and Polit. of Hard., 24.

honorable and either would be agreeable."⁸⁶ As for Governor Sproul; the Nation felt that his chances were nil. "To the country at large, Sproul is nobody."⁸⁷

Therefore, as the delegates arrived at Chicago, they were as uncertain of the outcome as was the nation at large. A recapitulation of primary findings showed that Wood and Johnson enjoyed a large popular following, while Lowden had failed to do as well as expected, though his record as Governor remained unimpeached. The senatorial exposures of the Kenyon Committee had caused great hard feeling among the candidates, and tarnished not a little the pre-convention campaigns of Wood and Lowden. Senator Harding had little or nothing to offer other than a personal popularity and an attractive philosophy, as Stephan Lorant points out: "Harding's philosophy was neatly summed up in a statement which he made a few weeks before his nomination: 'America's present need is not heroics but healing; not nostrums but normalcy; not revolution but restoration.'⁸⁸ The story of the nomination of the advocate of this philosophy will be unfolded in the following chapter.

⁸⁶ Nation, New York, CX, June 5, 1920, 754. (The reason for the observation concerning Nicholas Butler was that Woodrow Wilson had been a college president and was now in the bad graces of the people. Therefore, Nation argued that Mr. Butler's chances of being nominated were slim.)

⁸⁷ Nation, New York, CX, June 5, 1920, 754.

⁸⁸ Stephan Lorant, The Presidency, New York, 1951, 544.

CHAPTER IV

THE REPUBLICAN CONVENTION - 1920

It was the first week of June, 1920, and the city of Chicago was overflowing with delegates and party supporters. The hotels were filled; the streets were crowded. There was an atmosphere of joyful confidence. This was a Republican year! Bands played; men, women and children marched and sang: 'Oh, Wilson went over the Ocean.'¹ Scalpers were receiving \$50 for convention seats, and were boldly selling their tickets immediately in front of the gigantic Coliseum, the location for the convention.² One could not move without bumping into a politician, for they were everywhere. And "everyone had a different forecast, and everyone seemed to fear a deal."³

In all, there were 984 delegates, and each must vote individually. Each state was represented by four delegates-at-large, and by two delegates for each representative in Congress. If, however, any individual district had cast less than 7500 Republican votes in the preceding Congressional Election, then, that district was represented by only one delegate.⁴ Votes

1 Paone, Presid. Election of 1920, 209-210.

2 New York Tribune, June 9, 1920, pt. 1, p. 1.

3 Alice Roosevelt Longworth, Crowded Hours, New York, 1933, 311.

4 The Outlook, New York, CXXIV, June 9, 1920, 245-6.

pledged to the leading candidates totaled 348, with Wood having 125, Johnson 112, Lowden seventy-two, and Harding thirty-nine.⁵ With 130 votes pledged to the favorite-son candidates, 506 were unpledged. The experts speculated that Wood was likely to garner 350 votes on the first ballot, Lowden 241, Johnson 123, and Harding eighty-seven. Since a simple majority was necessary for the nomination, the successful candidate had to secure 493 votes.⁶

The Harding camp was a center of activity. Daugherty boasted a staff of over 2000 zealous volunteers in the Harding cause. Moreover, the astute political chieftain placed lookouts in every Chicago hotel, and managed to hide spies at the headquarters of rival candidates. Harding staff-members met every incoming train, greeted each arriving delegate, and plugged for the Ohio Senator at every turn. All delegates were listed according to state, hotel and room number.⁷ Harding's energetic manager was entertainer enough to bring the Columbus Glee Club to Chicago, and to invade rival headquarters by the effective and popular tactics of a serenade. "They sang no 'Harding songs' . . . Every man was in full evening dress. Their good humor and fine singing captured the crowds."⁸ Daugherty, in the meantime, approached Hiram Johnson with the proposition of an alliance to bring about the defeat of General Wood, but he met with no success. "Johnson was deaf to all

5 Chicago Tribune, June 7, 1920, pt. 1, p. 1.

6 Chicago Tribune, June 10, 1920, pt. 1, p. 1.

7 Daugherty, Harding Tragedy, 37.

8 Ibid., 43-44.

overtures, and we got no support from him during the convention," stated Daugherty.⁹ The same proposition, however, was acceptable to Louis Emerson, Lowden's manager. Daugherty bluntly stated that his first aim was to defeat Wood. Hence, he assured Emerson: "We'll loan you every vote we can until you pass Wood. The minute you do this, Wood is out of the race, and all friendship on the floor of the convention ceases."¹⁰ Undoubtedly, the Lowden manager expected little competition from Harding, and expected a bang-wagon climb to Lowden once Wood was eliminated from the race.

Meanwhile, far from the crowded streets and active manager, a small group of men was meeting to draw up the Party Platform. This was the Committee on Resolutions, whose chairman was Watson of Indiana, a United States Senator and Old Guard leader. This Committee, though solidly united against the Wilson Administration, was far from agreement on a positive program concerning the League of Nations.¹¹ Senators Lenroot, Kellogg and ex-Senator Murray Crane were strong Reservationists, opposed to Johnson and Borah, who were Irreconcilables. A deadlock resulted, and Borah again threatened to bolt the party. When Lawson of Massachusetts backed Borah, Senator Lodge agreed to repudiate his own reservations, and thus prevent a revolt by keeping the League question off the agenda of the Convention.¹² For three days

9 Ibid., 50.

10 Ibid., 36.

11 Paone, Presid. Elect. of 1920, 143.

12 Ibid., 222.

and two nights the committee wrangled.¹³ A special meeting was called at 2 A.M. on Thursday, at which were present Crane, Mills, Stimson, Pepper, Harvey, Borah, Smoot, Brandegee, and Lodge. It was during this conference that a compromise plank, prepared by Elihu Root before his departure for Europe, was found acceptable. It called for a "vague International Association of Nations,"¹⁴ which

. . . must be based upon international justice, and must provide methods which shall maintain the rule of public right by the development of law and the decision of impartial courts, and which shall secure instant and general international conference whenever peace shall be threatened by political action, so that the nations pledged to do and insist upon what is just and fair may exercise their influence and power for the prevention of war.¹⁵

Exactly what the Republicans were trying to express by this masterpiece of ambiguity is impossible to determine. Thomas A. Bailey justly attacks this part of the platform "a mumbo jumbo about international justice, international association and general international conference . . . All one had to do was to pick one's favorite paragraphs and be happy."¹⁶

On Thursday evening, after the early morning conference, Senator Watson read the entire platform to the assembled delegates, and the League evasion was accepted. The planks contained a stinging indictment of President Wilson and the Democratic Party on the score of Wilson's disregard for

13 Bailey, Wilson and the Great Betrayal, 301.

14 Paone, Presid. Elect. of 1920., 222.

15 Chicago Tribune, June 11, 1920, pt. 1, p. 1.

16 Bailey, Wilson and the Great Betrayal, 302.

American lives and American interests. Wilson was further charged with maintaining an executive autocracy, causing America's motives to be suspected, her moral influence to be impaired, and the Government to be discredited and friendless. The positive part of the platform contained the following proposals: 1. Dissemination of information and advice to the farmer for cessation of unnecessary price fixing and arbitrary reduction of farm products; 2. Reduction of the executive budget; 3. No tolls on American ships passing through the Panama Canal; 4. Prohibition to be enforced by the Constitution; 5. An effective policy towards Mexico to insure respect for the American flag and protection of the rights of American citizens; 6. Recognition of collective bargaining as just; 7. Condemnation of any strikes against the Government; 8. Disapproval of compulsory arbitration between labor and capital; 9. Freedom of speech, press and assembly demanded for all; 10. No early reduction in taxes to be fostered.¹⁷

Over one-third of the platform was given to the denunciation of Wilson and his administration. The Current Opinion commented: "Except in the denunciation of the Wilson Administration, the platform gives the impression of men walking on eggs. Nothing is clean cut."¹⁸ President Wilson replied:

I suppose I should feel flattered over being made the issue of the Presidential campaign by the Republican Party. But even the effort of the platform makers at Chicago to confer the distinction of being not only a burning but a living issue by camouflaging and ob-

17 Republican Textbook of the 1920 Campaign, 55-106.

18 Current Opinion, New York, LXVIII, July, 1920, 6.

scuring the real issues, will not deceive the people.¹⁹

With the adoption of this platform, the Convention could now proceed to the nomination of its candidate. And with Senator Lodge installed as Permanent Chairman, one of the senatorial leaders would be in a position to steer the remaining activities to the senatorial way of thinking.

Friday, June 11th, was nomination day. Hour after hour, in the steamy, crowded Coliseum, the accredited delegates followed the cheap, tiresome formula, which custom and tradition have ordained as the suitable method of showing their enthusiasm for the respective nominees. Governor Allen of Kansas delivered the nominating address for General Wood, and a forty minute rehearsed demonstration ensued. Governor Lowden was nominated by Governor Murray of Kentucky, and a thirty-five minute ovation was staged. Judge Nathan Miller of New York spoke for Hoover, and the carefully primed Hooverites in the galleries raised such a clamor that Senator Smoot actually split the top of the table with his gavel, as he attempted to restore quiet. Hiram Johnson was nominated by Senator Charles Wheeler of California, and cheers, guffaws and questions again turned the convention into a madhouse.²⁰ Frank B. Willis, Ohio Congressman, gave a demonstrative nominating speech for Harding, which was followed by a favorable, though more restrained, demonstration.²¹ It was not until 4:58 P.M. that the weary delegates were able to turn to the more

19 America, New York, XXIV, June 26, 1920, 217.

20 Los Angeles Times, June 12, 1920, pt. 1., p. 7.

21 Sullivan, Our Times, VI, 51-52.

serious business of balloting.²²

The results of the first ballot were: Wood 287; Lowden 211; Johnson 133; Sproul, Pennsylvania's favorite son, eighty-four; Butler sixty-nine; Harding sixty-five; and Hoover five and a half. Wood lead comfortably over Lowden, but he had hoped for up to seventy more votes.²³ The subsequent ballot started the attempt to "kill off" Wood. Daugherty loaned Lowden votes on the next three ballots,²⁴ as did Senator Wadsworth, Chairman of the New York delegation. The Wood adherents later claimed that this manoeuvre on the part of the New York Senator was part of the senatorial strategy. Wood had counted Wadsworth as one of his supporters, and had even invited him to be his floor leader at the convention. When Wadsworth released fourteen delegates from Butler and allied them with some thirty colored delegates from the southern states, Wood's chances for nomination began to fade.²⁵ On the second ballot, Lowden jumped to 259½, and on the third he advanced to 282½, but Wood also managed to increase his votes on this ballot, advancing to 303.²⁶ Lowden and Wood both advanced slightly on the fourth ballot, with the following results; Wood 314½, Lowden 287, Johnson 140½, and Harding sixty-

22 Chicago Tribune, June 12, 1920, pt. 1, p. 1.

23 Chicago Tribune, June 12, 1920, pt. 1, p. 1.

24 Daugherty, Harding Tragedy, 143.

25 Hagedorn, Leonard Wood, II, 358.

26 Chicago Tribune, June 12, 1920, pt. 1, p. 1.

one and a half.²⁷ The party leaders now saw their opportunity of controlling the convention. On the surface, there was a deadlock. Senators Smoot and Lodge went into a huddle on the platform. "Then, came one of those afternoon adjournments that decide a political fate."²⁸ Senator Smoot made a motion for adjournment. In response, there were a few scattering "Ayes," and a roar of "No's." Lodge turned calmly from the desk and stated: "The 'Ayes' have it. The convention is adjourned until ten o'clock tomorrow morning." The delegates, surprised and somewhat stunned, at first started to protest, especially the followers of Wood. But the cooler, more self-controlled delegates prevailed, as they accepted Lodge's clearly false decision "in the spirit of father knows best."²⁹ This set the stage for the greatest and most important political tactic of the entire campaign, a manoeuvre to defeat General Wood, Lowden and Johnson, and to bring about the nomination of Warren G. Harding.

Senator Harding, however, had no suspicion of what a change would be brought to his fortunes in a few hours. Discouraged because of his poor showing that day, "dishevelled, unshaven and lonely, the candidate wandered unhappily about the streets."³⁰ He was certain that the nomination could never be his. The only alternative was to file his entry for the Senate race that evening, for the deadline was midnight. Harding, therefore, went to

27 New York Evening Post, June 12, 1920, pt. 1, p. 1.

28 Chapple, Life and Times of Warren Harding, 110.

29 Sullivan, Our Times, VI, 57.

30 Adams, Incredible Era, 142.

Daugherty and told him of his decision. Daugherty was adamantly and immediately opposed, for such a move would release his delegates from their obligation of support. Finally, when Harding stressed the fact that a loss of the nomination would mean the loss of his senatorial post, Daugherty relented.

"An agent was sent on to the State Capitol at Columbus, and at 11:58 P.M., Friday night, two minutes before the deadline, he filed Harding's name."³¹

Meanwhile, the conference, predicted by the New York Times³² some two months previously, and by the Los Angeles Times a few hours before,³³ was taking place in Room 404 of the Blackstone Hotel. Before advancing to the details of the meeting itself, it would be well to give a brief explanation of the position of the senatorial group in the Republican party, as well as the basic reasons which motivated its course of action.

The Senators had come to the foremost position of leadership in the Republican Party. Therefore, they naturally aspired to control the nomination of their candidate for the Presidency. Numbered among these influential and peculiarly dominating senatorial leaders were Penrose and Knox of Pennsylvania; Wadsworth and Calder of New York; Watson and New of Indiana; Smoot of Utah; Brandegee of Connecticut; and Lodge of Massachusetts. Although masterless and unorganized, Penrose was looked upon, and acted, as group leader.³⁴

31 Sullivan, Our Times, VI, 57.

32 The New York Times, May 10, 1920, pt. 1, p. 11.

33 Los Angeles Times, June 12, 1920, pt. 1, p. 1.

34 Alderfer, Personality and Polit. of Hard., 4-5.

Their determination to control the nomination of the Presidential candidate did not spring from any un-American principles, at least, to their way of thinking. They professed the conviction that to have a President who was independent of his Congress was both unsound policy and diametrically opposed to the intention of the Founding Fathers. They argued that the Constitution stipulated representative government, not rule by an individual. The Senate, they felt, held a position of primary importance, and in matters of national and international policy, the President should have a real responsibility to this body, and respect it as the ultimate source of power.³⁵ Therefore, the Senators concluded that they had an obligation to themselves and to the Constitution to choose a man who was the direct antithesis of Woodrow Wilson. This man would have to be of such a character and temperament that he would allow the Senate to assert its supposedly Constitutional position. With this explanation in mind, it is easier to understand and appreciate the main reason why the leading Senators called a special conference on the night of June 11th. That it excuses them for their final choice, is quite another question.

Senators Watson, Lodge, Brandegee, Curtis, Smoot, Wadsworth, Weeks, McCormick, Herrick and Grundy met in the room of Colonel George B. Harvey at the Blackstone Hotel. ³⁶ Harry Daugherty was not present, as is evident from his own testimony,³⁷ and there is no indication that Wood was represented.³⁸

35 Hagedorn, Leonard Wood, II, 354.

36 Alderfer, Personality and Polit. of Hard., 41.

37 Daugherty, Harding Tragedy, 303-306.

38 Alderfer, Personality and Polit. of Hard., 41.

The Senators agreed that a deadlock was evident the next morning, and in order to avoid a chance candidate, they determined to select a man friendly to their philosophy of government, and to see to it that their man should have the first "pick-up" of votes. Through the long, hot, sticky hours of the night, the meeting dragged on. General Wood, after a brief consideration was rejected as too independent of the Senate. Lowden, despite predictions that he would be the Senators' choice, was likewise cast aside because he was considered too great a liability in the campaign due to the money scandals connected with his primary efforts. Hughes, Knox, Sproul, and Will Hays, Chairman of the Republican National Committee, were then considered, but no agreement could be found. Finally, and dubiously, they discussed Warren Harding. Again, there was lack of agreement.³⁹ They decided to reconsider General Wood. He was called into the meeting, and close friends of Senator Penrose promised him the latter's support if he would consent to Penrose's naming of three cabinet members. Wood refused.⁴⁰ The hours slipped by, and still there was no agreement. At about midnight, scouts were sent out to the headquarters of the candidates to approximate the probable strength of Lowden. They reported that, unless he secured the support of the Pennsylvania delegation and more than fifty votes from New York, he could never get within striking distance of the nomination. Again, their thoughts turned to Harding, who was finally summoned. Colonel Harvey informed Harding that there was a possibility of

39 Sullivan, Our Times, VI, 60-61.

40 Alderfer, Personality and Polit. of Hard., 47.

his nomination the following day, and asked him if there was anything he knew of that might be brought up against him, or any impediment that might disqualify him, either as a candidate or as a President. Harding, after ten minutes alone with his conscience, informed Harvey that there was no such impediment. Finally, the senatorial group concluded that they would make Harding their candidate. As Mark Sullivan says: "It was more of a negation of other candidates, than an affirmative agreement on Harding."⁴² Joseph B. Keeling, who had been the organizer and general manager of the uninstructed and unpledged delegates, was then sent for and informed of the senatorial decision. He was advised to get his delegates in line for Harding. The same information was conveyed to National Committeeman Hert of Kentucky, and to David W. Mulvane of Kansas.⁴³

A decision had been reached; an apparent deadlock avoided. So confident was the senatorial cabal of their easy success that Senator Smoot detailed how the wires were to be pulled at the coming session. Wood and Lowden would be permitted to make a showing. Then, in the afternoon, when the other candidates had been appeased, Harding would be pushed through to victory.⁴⁴ Early that same morning, Colonel Harvey telephoned Irvin R. Kirkwood and Henry J. Haskell, of the Kansas City Star, and invited them to his suite.

41 Sullivan, Our Times, VI, 63-64.

42 Ibid., 62.

43 Chicago Tribune, June 12, 1920, pt. 1, p. 1.

44 Thompson, Presidents I've Known, 326-327.

A number of Senators were still present. Harvey explained how they had decided upon Harding. After reviewing the deficiencies of Wood, Lowden, Hughes, Knox, Johnson and Hays, Harvey alleged they had determined upon Harding. "He came from a strategic state," Harvey explained; "He had ample political experience; he had made a favorable impression in the Senate; he was a man of impressive appearance, and Congress could work with him."⁴⁵

That political wires were definitely pulled for Harding is also proved from the testimony of Jacob A. Meckstroth of the Ohio State Journal, and from additional testimony by George Harvey. Meckstroth had sought an interview with Harding after the adjournment following the fourth ballot. At that time, Meckstroth reports, "Harding showed great mental distress . . . Discouragement hung about him like a cloud. He was not interested in anything."⁴⁶ But that same night at eleven o'clock, when Meckstroth met Harding coming out of the Ohio headquarters on the arm of Myron T. Herrick, he was the picture of exultation. Herrick called to Meckstroth and said: "You can say that Senator Harding will be nominated on the first ballot tomorrow." Then Harding and Herrick were whirled away in a car.⁴⁷ What had brought about this tremendous change? Harding himself had not as yet been called to the suite of Colonel Harvey at the Blackstone some two blocks away, so he had no personal knowledge of the transactions there. It seems that Herrick, hav-

⁴⁵ Hagedorn, Lennard Wood, II, 360-361.

⁴⁶ Adams, Incredible Era, 151.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 153-154.

ing attended the early conferences, saw the possibility of Harding's nomination, and so informed him.

Mrs. Alice Longworth, who breakfasted with George Harvey on Saturday morning following the conference, substantiates the story of Senator Warren G. Harding's nomination.⁴⁸ Finally, the events of the senatorial meeting were highlighted in the columns of leading metropolitan newspapers throughout the nation.⁴⁹

The Republican Senators undoubtedly chose a man "who would listen," but was this the only reason for their choice? At the time some suspected that Oil also had a large part to play in the selection of Harding. The Sinclair and Doherty interests were conspicuous at the convention, and it is known that they approached General Wood and Governor Lowden, and promised political and financial support if they would appoint Jake Hamon to the cabinet post of Secretary of the Interior.⁵⁰ Both Wood and Lowden refused to betray their country by accepting any such offer.⁵¹ And it is equally well known that Daugherty sought and received the support of Hamon. Whether he

48 Longworth, Crowded Hours, 311.

49 The New York Times, June 12, 1920, pt. 1, p. 10. Chicago Daily Journal, June 12, 1920, pt. 1, p. 1. Boston Evening Transcript, June 14, 1920, pt. 1, p. 7. Chicago Tribune, June 13, 1920, pt. 1, p. 1. Los Angeles Times, June 12, 1920, pt. 1, p. 1. New York Tribune, June 13, 1920, pt. 1, p. 1.

50 Adams, Incredible Era, 150. Also White, Masks in a Pageant, 404-405; Alderfer, Personal. and Polit. of Hard., 55-56; Hagedorn, Leonard Wood, II, 363-364.

51 Adams, Incred. Era, 150; Hagedorn, Leonard Wood, II, 362.

did so in exchange for the post of Secretary of the Interior, cannot be proved from the facts that have been made public, nor from any such appointment, since Hamon was murdered by his mistress shortly before Harding's inauguration. Dr. Alderfer observed: "However, it was said that Hamon knew that Fall had been chosen before he died, and he was sorely disappointed."⁵² Adams states categorically: "Hamon was in Chicago to buy a cabinet position . . . he represented Oil . . . He had been a guest of Daugherty's . . . and a friend of Harding's . . . and he told his friends he had signed the check which enabled Harding to run for the Presidency."⁵³ Dr. Alderfer maintains that circumstantial evidence points to the conclusion that Albert B. Fall was appointed as Secretary of the Interior as a result of collusion between politicians in Chicago and Oil interests. It was this collusion, he states, "which made possible the first swing to Harding at the convention of 1920."⁵⁴ And Adams adds that although "a Scotch verdict of not-proven" was given by the senatorial investigation committee of this charge, "the suspicion was ineradicable."⁵⁵ It is impossible, therefore, to determine how weighty was the influence and support of Oil in the decision of the Senate cabal to nominate Harding, but that it did have some influence seems more than likely.

On Saturday morning following the famous conference, Colonel William Proctor learned of the previous night's proceedings. Immediately he was

52 Alderfer, Personality and Polit. of Hard., 56.

53 Adams, Incredible Era, 138-139.

54 Alderfer, Personality and Polit. of Hard., 43-45.

55 Adams, Incredible Era, 203-204.

asked to support Harding, and immediately he refused. Then, General Wood was propositioned in the same way. His answer was a flat refusal to withdraw from the race. Instead, he visited Hiram Johnson and appealed for support, only to be rebuffed. Undaunted, Wood visited Governor Lowden at the Blackstone, and offered him the vice presidency if he, in turn, would throw his delegation behind Wood. Lowden rejected the offer immediately, saying that he did not intend to cheapen himself by taking second place, and that he had nothing to trade. Finally, General Wood, dejected and downcast, left Lowden, but was all the more determined to carry the fight to the floor of the Convention.⁵⁶

The Convention again assembled, and the voting began amid an atmosphere of exciting expectancy. On the fifth ballot, Lowden, with new found strength, drove past Wood, and Harding also gained. The tabulation of votes read: Lowden 303; Wood 299; Harding seventy-eight.⁵⁷ The odds on Harding immediately dropped from ten-to-one to five-to-one.⁵⁸ It was on the fifth ballot that a traitor in the Ohio delegation attempted to eliminate Harding. When the roll for the Ohio vote was called, he jumped to his feet and shouted: "Gentlemen, Senator Harding last night refiled for the Senate," but, before he could add "and he is now out of the race," Daugherty's trained followers drowned out his voice with a united denial.⁵⁹ Ohio then proceeded to vote

⁵⁶ Boston Evening Transcript, June 14, 1920, pt. 1, p. 7.

⁵⁷ Chicago Tribune, June 13, 1920, pt. 1, p. 1.

⁵⁸ New York Evening Post, June 12, 1920, pt. 1, p. 1.

⁵⁹ Daugherty, Harding Tragedy, 44-45.

as it had previously, casting thirty-nine for Harding, and nine for Wood.

On the sixth ballot, Wood and Lowden were raised to 311½, while Harding climbed to eighty-nine.⁶⁰ Again a political enemy from Harding's own state tried to stop his rise, by casting four of Harding's pledged votes for Wood. But Daugherty had been expecting such an insurrection. He had carefully planted his henchmen at strategic positions in the galleries. As the traitor, a certain man by the name of Hynicka of Cincinnati, turned towards Wood's section to receive an expected ovation, Daugherty's well-placed and alerted henchmen burst out with a storm of yells of derision. The delegates immediately joined in. Although Harding's Ohio vote dropped to thirty-five, the revolt had been successfully crushed.⁶¹

On the seventh ballot, while Lowden and Wood stood still, Harding continued his steady and well-planned climb.⁶² One more ballot and the outcome was clear to all. For on the eighth, Lowden was dropped to 307, Wood to 299, and Harding now stood at 133½. Wyoming gave the first indication of a break to Harding, as it cast its solid delegation for the Ohioan.⁶³ The Wood camp was now thrown into a panic, and demanded an adjournment. Against Daugherty's vehement opposition, the Chairman declared the motion adopted and the Convention recessed. Lodge explained to Willis and Herrick, that

60 Chicago Tribune, June 13, 1920, pt. 1, p. 1.

61 Daugherty, Harding Tragedy, 46.

62 Chicago Tribune, June 13, 1920, pt. 1, p. 1. (The tabulation of votes on the seventh ballot read: Lowden 311½; Wood 312; Harding 105.)

63 Ibid., pt. 1, p. 1.

such a recess might be beneficial to Harding. Daugherty admitted that it gave him "an opportunity to go to the delegations and urge them to put over Harding on the next ballot."⁶⁴

During this respite, Wood made one last and desperate move to overcome the organized opposition to his cause. He telephoned Governor Lowden, and asked him to meet him for a conference. Lowden agreed. According to Wood's biographer, Lowden thought well of a plan to extend the convention's recess until Monday for the purpose of forming a coalition over the week end to defeat Harding. Wood declared that he could guarantee 300 of his delegates while Lowden claimed he was certain of 150.⁶⁵ An immediate meeting was arranged for Lowden, A. T. Hert, Chairman of the Kentucky delegation, and Proctor, Wood's manager. At this meeting, A. T. Hert agreed to make the motion for adjournment when the convention re-assembled at 4 P.M. Wood then informed Will Hays, the Chairman, who was convinced that it was necessary to stop Harding and thus save the Party. Therefore, he readily agreed to hold the convention until Hert's arrival.⁶⁶ The delegate from Kentucky, however, was interested more in the defeat of Wood than in the exclusion of any particular candidacy. A coalition between Lowden and Wood would, he argued, necessarily result in Lowden accepting second place on the ticket.⁶⁷ Although

64 Daugherty, Harding Tragedy, 48.

65 Hagedorn, Leonard Wood, II, 364.

66 Ibid., 366.

67 Ibid., 366.

Hays managed to lengthen the recess until 4:46 P.M., Hert was still late in arriving. He reached the Coliseum just as Kentucky was being called for its roll. Hert, a staunch backer of Lowden, immediately voted his entire delegation to Harding.⁶⁸ Undoubtedly Lowden, after his conference with General Wood, having become convinced that an adjournment to Monday would throw the nomination to Wood, instructed Hert to act in this manner. Lowden himself admitted that he had released his delegates after the eighth ballot, and defended his action by saying:

After the eighth ballot, it was represented to me that the delegates were becoming restive under the deal. Fearing a protracted deadlock . . . I released the delegates, and advised them to use their best judgment as to whom they should support.⁶⁹

Did the party leaders influence the decision of Lowden? No definite proof can be given, although Johnson, in his biography of Harding, states that the party leaders were the influential factors in causing Lowden to withdraw from the contest.⁷⁰ A. T. Hert, who released the Kentucky vote to Harding, declared: "Governor Lowden withdrew in the interest of party harmony."⁷¹ Certainly, Wood and Proctor had no foreknowledge of Lowden's change of heart which effected the final defeat of Wood's chances.

With Kentucky's defection to Harding, the convention was thrown into pandemonium. From then on, it was "a sickening scramble to see who

68 Ibid., 367

69 New York Tribune, June 13, 1920, pt. 1, p. 1.

70 Johnson, Life of Warren G. Harding, 81.

71 New York Tribune, June 13, 1920, pt. 1, p. 1.

could be first to stand with the winner."⁷² Louisiana gave her twelve delegates to Harding; Missouri cast her thirty-six votes for Harding, and New York contributed sixty-six. At the end of the ninth ballot, Harding had gone into the lead with 374½; Wood was in second place with 249, and Lowden now occupied third position with 121½. The Wood delegates rose to ask for a recess, but Lodge refused to recognize them, and immediately called for the tenth ballot.⁷³

The tenth and last ballot was a mere formality, as the delegates stampeded to the standard of Harding. The final tabulation read: Harding 647.7; Wood 157½; Johnson eighty and four-fifths; LaFollette twenty-four; Lowden twelve; Hoover ten and a half; Coolidge five; Butler three; Sproul two; Knox one.⁷⁴

It is said that no candidate ever received so little cheering in the convention which had nominated him. After one roar of joy that the end had come, and with it relief from the long, tiresome hours in the torrid atmosphere of the Coliseum, "the thousands in the galleries stood in utter silence. There was plenty of enthusiasm to be let loose in the Coliseum, but no one to give it to."⁷⁵ The delegates had voted for Harding, but in reality did not know why.

72 Hagedorn, Leonard Wood, II, 368

73 New York Tribune, June 13, 1920, pt. 1, p. 1.

74 New York Tribune, June 13, 1920, pt. 1, p. 1.

75 Oswald G. Villard, "The Unbossed Republican Convention," Nation, New York, GX, June 19, 1920, 816.

CHAPTER V

THE NOMINATION OF HARDING: THE PUBLIC PASSES JUDGMENT

Absent were the traditional hysterical scenes that customarily follow upon a presidential nomination. The usual cheering crowds, the spontaneous music, and the joyful impromptu speakers were conspicuous only by their absence. "Having nominated Harding without enthusiasm, the convention adjourned without enthusiasm."¹ In fact, there was actually a feeling of apprehension in Chicago. A Democratic victory which, but a short time before, had been considered an absolute impossibility, was now, in the light of the nomination, spoken of as not out-of-the-question.² But, perhaps, it was the fatiguing work at the convention and the sweltering Chicago heat, that tended to dampen the spirits of the Republican supporters. Quite the contrary was the fact, for, as the press reports from across the nation were received, this spirit of depression only deepened.

The New York Evening Post observed: "The nomination of Warren G.

1 Thompson, Presidents I've Known, 328.

2 Ibid., 329.

Harding is an affront to the intelligence of the American people."³ The New York World critically remarked: "A more respectable figurehead than Warren G. Harding has never been nominated for President of the United States by either party."⁴ The New York Times commented: "Crowds here greet ticket with apathy. There is no show of emotion by the crowds in Times Square."⁵ In a front page editorial, this same paper stigmatized the nomination of Harding as "the fine and perfect flower of cowardice and imbecility of the Senatorial Cabal . . . What has befallen the Republican Party of the early days . . . when it was possessed of moral purposes?"⁶ The following day, The New York Times characterized the action of the convention: "Government of the Senate, by the Senate, and for the Senate. That motto and intent could hardly be written plainer upon the nomination of Harding."⁷ The Boston Evening Transcript devoted much space to Calvin Coolidge, but was content to contribute a polite write-up on Harding.⁸ The New York Tribune sadly reflected: "We had hoped that a man of undaunted courage, vision and executive ability would be chosen, but we have instead Warren G. Harding It would be hypocritical for the Tribune

3 New York Evening Post, June 14, 1920, pt. 1, p. 10.

4 Chicago Tribune, June 14, 1920, pt. 1, p. 3.

5 The New York Times, June 13, 1920, pt. 1, p. 1.

6 The New York Times, June 13, 1920, pt. 1, p. 1.

7 The New York Times, June 14, 1920, pt. 1, p. 11.

8 Boston Evening Transcript, June 14, 1920, pt. 1, p. 3.

to pretend that it is satisfied with the result."⁹ The Chicago Daily Journal noted: "It is a statement of fact, without a tinge of malice, to say that Senator Harding has a lot of handicaps, which would have put him out of the race very early if it had not been for the Senate influence in his favor."¹⁰

It is interesting to note that even those newspapers which tried to find words of praise for Harding, found it difficult to do so. The Chicago Tribune sought refuge in such vague phrases as: "A foursquare American . . . a man of unblemished character . . . His experience is many-sided . . . Harding will bring firmness and breadth to the government."¹¹ The Atlanta Constitution offered the hollow praise: "The Republicans might have gone further and done much worse."¹² And the Louisville Courier Journal added: "Harding's chief qualification for leadership is an amiable willingness to be led . . . He is another McKinley, though he lacks the experience and mentality of McKinley."¹³

Among the leading periodicals of the day, only Current Opinion managed to express any real enthusiasm over the Senators' choice. Considering the nomination of Harding as a momentous event in American political progress, it painted a ridiculous, laudatory portrait of Harding which com-

9 New York Tribune, June 14, 1920, pt. 1, p. 12.

10 Chicago Daily Journal, June 14, 1920, pt. 1, p. 9.

11 Chicago Tribune, June 13, 1920, pt. 1, p. 10.

12 Chicago Tribune, June 14, 1920, pt. 1, p. 3.

13 Louisville Courier Journal, June 14, 1920, pt. 1, p. 11.

pared the insignificant Ohio Senator to George Washington.¹⁴ The Literary Digest curtly judged the nomination of Harding as a "Senatorial victory in more senses than one."¹⁵ The World's Work observed: "It is difficult to recall any man ever nominated for the Presidency whose career has given him so little claim upon that office."¹⁶ The Nation was far more caustic over the results in Chicago:

Plainly, the Old Guard was convinced that the country was so outraged by the Democratic mal-administration, that they could afford to nominate one of the most colorless men in public life . . . a hide-bound partisan of the narrowest Republican school, who will react to all the conservative pressure that may be brought to bear upon him.¹⁷

The Outlook gave a favorable interpretation to the nomination with a paradoxical observation that: "The people are tired of a Government at odds with itself. Chicago has nominated a leader who will not lead, but who will cooperate." And it then commended the work of the senatorial cabal: "It is the best and only power which the Republicans have developed in the nation leading up to the convention."¹⁸

The comments of Mr. and Mrs. Harding are eminently characteristic. Mrs. Harding, who only a few days before had said it would be a great tragedy if her husband were nominated, now remarked to the press: "They told me

14 Current Opinion, New York, LXIX, August, 1920, 185-190.

15 Literary Digest, New York LXV, June 26, 1920, 20.

16 World's Work, New York, XL, August, 1920, 324.

17 Nation, New York, CX, June 19, 1920, 816.

18 Outlook, New York, CXXV, June 16, 1920, 378.

in Washington my husband should be able to do anything he wants with that smile of his."¹⁹ And Senator Harding said with surprise and relief: "We drew to a pair of deuces and filled."²⁰

Senator Borah was non-committal on the question of supporting the ticket; Johnson, likewise, declined to reveal his attitude.²¹ Governor Coolidge sent the following cryptic telegram: "Please accept my sincerest congratulations and the assurances of every support from Massachusetts."²² Governor Lowden was more unrestrained in his praise: "I have great confidence in the ability and character of the successful candidate. I shall support him with all heartiness."²³ Senator Lodge's comment is especially striking: "I am much pleased with the ticket. It is an especial pleasure to me that the convention should have chosen my good friend, Governor Coolidge, for Vice President. He is a very able man."²⁴ Senator Brandegee's remark was more to the point: "This year we had a lot of second-raters. Harding is no world-beater, but he's the best of the second-raters."²⁵ Colonel Harvey remarked: "Harding was nominated because there was nothing against him, and be-

19 Chicago Tribune, June 13, 1920, pt. 1, p. 1.

20 Clinton W. Gilbert, The Mirrors of Washington, New York, 1921, 9.

21 Chicago Tribune, June 13, 1920, pt. 1, p. 3.

22 New York Times, June 13, 1920, pt. 1, p. 3.

23 Chicago Tribune, June 13, 1920, pt. 1, p. 3.

24 Chicago Tribune, June 13, 1920, pt. 1, p. 3.

25 Gilbert, Mirrors of Washington, 5.

cause the delegates wanted to go home."²⁶ And Harry Daugherty, as if to offer an excuse for the manner in which Harding was nominated, added: "All Presidents are made by organization. Our system of Party Government makes this inevitable."²⁷ General Wood, who knew all too well what had happened, merely issued this one public statement: "I congratulate Senator Harding on his nomination."²⁸

While the Republican leaders were cool and reserved in their reactions to the nomination, the political writers were shackled by no restraints. William A. White's first reactions were comparatively mild, as is seen from the following quote from a letter to Leonard Wood on June 21, 1920: "It is hardly necessary to say that Harding is not the type of man I desire for president . . . neither do I think it is proper that the United States Senate should nominate the president."²⁹ Later, White was far more vitriolic:

Our democratic theory seems to be based upon the proposition that if you put one red shot and two hundred black ones in a double-barreled shotgun, and fire both barrels at a National Convention of Elks, the man hit by the red shot will make a good President. Occasionally . . . it works. But in Harding's case it failed. The man hit with the red shot had a weak heart and a thick head.³⁰

Samuel H. Adams, with customary sarcasm, remarked: "As a Senator, Harding was a second-rater. As a potential President, he was a tenth rater. Not a man

26 Paone, Presidential Elect. of 1920, 258.

27 Daugherty, Harding Tragedy, 8.

28 Chicago Tribune, June 14, 1920, pt. 1, p. 3.

29 Walter Johnson, William Allen White's America, New York, 1947, 328

30 White, Masks in a Parson's, 421.

who was mentioned in the Convention but was better qualified for the job than he."³¹ Thomas A. Bailey was no less critical: "People were saying that the country was so fed up on Wilsonism that all the opposition had to do was to nominate a rag baby or a yellow dog. They nominated Harding."³² Charles W. Thompson adds: "I was at first astounded, and then disgusted."³³ Osear T. Barck evaluates the nominee as a man who "was not a deep thinker, who knew little about national domestic problems and less about international affairs. He was genial and easy-going to the point of weakness."³⁴ Nevertheless, this was the man whom the Republican Party nominated, and who would be elected to the Presidency by a plurality of nearly seven million votes!

31 Adams, Incredible Era, 163.

32 Bailey, Wilson and the Great Betrayal, 307.

33 Thompson, Presidents I've Known, 325.

34 Barck and Blake, Since 1900, 286.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

With the traditional two party system in the United States, the Presidential Nominee of either party naturally assumes a position of tremendous national importance and responsibility. The vast majority of voters look upon him as the legally nominated and most outstanding representative of his party. Therefore, the party, and especially the party leaders, shoulder a heavy two-fold responsibility. Their task is to seek to nominate a man who will be of service to the interests of the party, while at the same time to offer a candidate who can most adequately serve and promote the interests of the nation.

The numerous difficulties and adjustments of the immediate post-war era more than ever demanded a national leader of prominent stature, talents and background. The intricate problems of demobilization and restoration of domestic financial stability, and the question of what was America's place in international politics, were crying for an immediate solution. The existence of these problems was patent to the American people as well as to the leaders of the Republican party. Therefore, the obligation of nominating a man of outstanding caliber was all the greater in June, 1920. Because of a philosophy of government, however, which had as a primary principle the superiority of the Senate to the chief executive, the delegates were willing to unburden themselves of this obligation, and go to almost any lengths to nominate a

man who would fit the pattern of their political philosophy.

The nomination of this man, Warren G. Harding, is, therefore, the story of the power and strategic manipulations of politicians who put the apparent good of the party before the good of the nation. Harding was a "made" President. He was a man of winning personality, who possessed some qualities of a small town newspaper editor, but who could boast of political capacities only of a negative character. The Republican leaders and Harry M. Daugherty knew Harding, and they knew his record. To suppose that they were not fully acquainted with his mediocre showing in the Ohio State Senate, as well as his negative record in the United States Senate, would be ludicrous. And they were undoubtedly aware of the influence of the Republican machine in Ohio on the rise of Harding, and the promotion of Harding by Harry M. Daugherty. It is impossible to imagine that the leading members of the Republican party, as well as the delegates assembling for the convention in Chicago, were not cognizant of these facts.

The initial step towards the nomination of Harding was the shrewd argumentation of Daugherty, by which he persuaded the Senator to enter the race in order to maintain control of the party machine in Ohio. Even granting the possibility that Harding was fully convinced of the truth of this argument, if he had been a man of presidential character, he would never have consented to carry out such a plan. Nevertheless, he acquiesced, and chose Daugherty as his campaign manager.

Harding's poor showing in his restricted pre-convention campaign was sufficient to warrant his withdrawal from the race. Running in three mid-

western states, he was unable to secure one pledged delegate in either Montana or Indiana, while his own state of Ohio did not give him a full vote of confidence. Daugherty, however, was playing the game of politics for the highest stakes, and Harding continued in the race.

The carefully planned tactics of Johnson and Borah deserve no less condemnation. They were men in positions of high trust, being representatives of their respective states of California and Idaho in the United States Senate. Despite this fact, they used their positions in the Senate to create a Senatorial Investigation Committee for the purpose of eliminating Wood and Lowden, two outstanding candidates, from the race. It is evident that they had no intention of contributing assistance to the cause of Harding, but this proved to be the actual fact.

General Wood had run well in all the states he entered. He had created a nationwide sensation by his straight forward manner and his honest record. Although Governor Lowden had not matched the General in his campaign, he, too, was esteemed as a man of integrity and ability, and would ordinarily have merited serious consideration at the convention. However, the Senatorial Investigation, made public at the opportune time of one month before the convention, was sufficiently explosive to create doubts in the minds of many of the delegates concerning the ability of either Wood or Lowden to capture the presidency in the November elections.

Hiram Johnson was not personally popular among his party members because of his defection from the ranks in 1912, and his cold shoulder treatment of Hughes in 1916. But he was a man of far loftier stature than Harding

and in the primaries had far outstripped the Ohio Senator in popular appeal. Hughes, Knox, Sproul and Hoover were likewise available candidates, and gifted with great ability. Nevertheless, not one of these candidates was considered worthy of nomination by the party leaders.

The incidents of the convention only serve to emphasize this same political influence and power. As is evident from the pre-convention forecast, Harding was considered as having little chance for the nomination. Nevertheless, through the machinations of Daugherty and the Senate leaders, a cleverly planned deadlock was brought about. When the adjournment motion after the fourth ballot was passed over the heads of the assembled delegates, the way was clear for the infamous conference in room 404 of the Blackstone Hotel.

The open methods employed by the Senators is without parallel. As they discussed through the long hours of the night the potentialities of the available candidates, no pretense was made at secrecy. Politicians passed in and out of room 404, and then frequently returned to ascertain what progress had been made in their absence. Thus, a few Senators were taking it upon themselves to nominate a man of their own choice, and they were fully confident that the delegates would carry out their orders.

Although Harding himself had come to the patent conclusion that, practically speaking, he was out of the race, the Senators concluded otherwise. In their discussions, there seems to have been no effort to consider their own responsibility to the country and the needs of its people. They were interested solely in picking a candidate who would be subservient to the Senate. The fact that their choice fell upon one of the most unqualified men in

the party, is proof of their confidence in the power of their political organization.

The carefully staged session the following day, as the delegates voted like well manipulated puppets, was a perfect example of a controlled political organization in action. Ostensibly, the convention was an assembly of delegates striving to nominate a man whom they, in their individual estimation, considered worthy of the position. Actually, it was an example of supposedly rational men blindly and irrationally casting their votes in strict accord with the orders received from the Blackstone Hotel. Any attempt at independent thought, which to the party leaders was equivalent to rebellion, was immediately crushed by carefully pre-arranged tactics. This is evident from the unsuccessful attempts of members of the Ohio delegation to change the tide of the convention. Thus, was Harding pushed into the nomination by a political machine.

It is clear from the reactions of the public, as reflected in the newspapers, periodicals and comments of individuals coupled with Harding's lack of appeal in his pre-convention campaign, that Harding was not the popular choice. But such reactions were as impotent as was the courageous, though fruitless, fight of General Leonard Wood to stem the onrushing surge of the political machine.

The story of the nomination of Warren G. Harding is not a pleasant chapter in our political history, but it is a story that should be known and understood. A political organization can be a tremendous instrument for good if directed and utilized in attaining the principal end for which it was es-

established, namely, the prosperity and advancement of the nation. But if it is used solely to satisfy the narrow, partisan interests of the few, as is evident in the nomination of Harding, then, it can destroy the very fundamentals of the Democratic way of life.

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APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by **Joseph Hamilton Neale** has been read and approved by three members of the Department of History.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Sept. 26, 1952
Date

Charles H. Metzger
Signature of Adviser