

**THE FORMATION OF THE
REPUBLICAN PARTY AS A
NATIONAL POLITICAL
ORGANIZATION**

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The formation of the Republican Party as a national political organization by Gordon S. P. Kleeberg

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To My Father

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PREFACE

The lack of an adequate work on the embryonic stage of the national organization of a great political party, which only a few years ago completed its first half century of record and accomplishment, may afford a sufficient justification for this essay.

One phase of this study was undertaken by me at the suggestion of Professor William A. Dunning of Columbia University, and an essay based thereon was awarded the Chandler Historical Prize for 1905, in Columbia College, under the title of "The Formation of the Republican Party." Professor John W. Burgess then recommended an elaboration of that paper as a partial performance of the requirements for the Doctorate in the Faculty of Political Science in Columbia University. Shortly afterward Professor Charles A. Beard called my attention to another phase of this subject and upon this suggestion I began an investigation of the unexplored field of the formation and development of the national organization and machinery of the Republican party.

To my surprise I found that, although "political parties," in the words of Mr. Bryce, "are as old as popular government itself," and while certain phases of the organization of various political parties have from time to time been considered by writers on American politics, yet no attempt had ever been made to put together a systematic account of the structural development of the Republican party as a national organization.

Among the various engaging studies which the history of political institutions affords, the methods by which American political parties have created and developed their organizations from the primary to the national convention and built "a veritable network covering the United States and its dependencies," form certainly one of the most interesting. Beginning with voluntary practices without precedent or regularity, party machinery developed from generation to generation, growing constantly more definite and more complete, until, finally, it has become "a veritable government without and within the legal government,—with its own army of officials, its congresses or conventions, its rules and customs and its methods for maintaining discipline in the ranks."

The political party grew out of contention; from the very nature of its being it has been kept in the field of bitter controversy; by virtue of the functions exercised it has ever incurred a maximum of damaging criticism, while at the same time, in America at least, among all our varied and interesting institutions it has received a minimum of impartial scientific study and exposition; party machinery as such has been almost entirely ignored.

Under these circumstances I began this study.

Only that aspect of the matter which is concerned with the national organization is treated here and no attempt has been made to consider the question of Republican State organization. This work is not designed to be a political history nor an historical account either of the Republican party or of the political events of the years covered by the dissertation, but merely an attempt to give for the first time an exposition of the formation

and development of the national organization and machinery of that party, without relation to the issues which from time to time it placed before the country.

The conflict over principles out of which the Republican party was born is dead and buried and we might almost say forgotten, but the organization, the practical working machine it created with its manifold ramifications from the local district club to the national convention abides with us to-day.

With pleasure I record my grateful acknowledgment to General Stewart L. Woodford and the late Mr. Cephas Brainerd who were kind enough to favor me with interviews about their personal recollections of the early days of the Republican party; to the Honorable James S. Clarkson for valuable information concerning the national committee; and also to Professors Burgess, Goodnow, Dunning and Beard, of Columbia University, for their generous interest and guidance in my course of study and for their many suggestions given during the preparation of this work. And to Mr. E. J. Myers, who also has given me valuable and helpful counsel and has sacrificed many hours to the tiresome task of reading copy and proof, I am under special obligations.

To Professor Beard the debt is one which can be understood and appreciated only by the many students who have known his unflinching courtesy and consideration during their course of study.

G. S. P. K.

New York, May, 1911.

