
Pennsylvania's version of the two-party system was described thus by the New York Times in 1911: "There have always been two Republican parties there, one called 'Republican' and the other called 'Democratic.' The leaders of the two parties were in partnership, the 'Republican' leaders being the senior partners and the 'Democratic' leaders combining something of the qualities of junior partners with something of the qualities of clerks."1

The Republican senior partners took the political plums. They controlled the legislature and most of the Congressional districts. Since the outbreak of the Civil War, they had elected every United States Senator and, with one exception, every governor. They ran all the state boards and commissions, appointed the judges, and usually even got the federal patronage. Most of the time, they controlled Pennsylvania's major cities.

There were some tasty crumbs for the loyal opposition, however. Many state commissions, by law, had to have minority party representation. Only one half of the state's real estate assessors could be members of the majority party. A certain number of magistrates and registrars had to be Democrats. Each county board of commissioners had to have a Democratic representative.2 These men were appointed by Republican governors, who made their appointments after consulting with the Republican state and city bosses. The Republican leaders received recommendations of deserving Democrats from those Democratic chieftains with whom

1 New York Times, Mar. 12, 1911. I wish to express my appreciation to Prof. William E. Leuchtenburg and Richard M. Abrams of Columbia University for their helpful reading of this paper.
they found they could do business. Joe Guffey, who was close to the party leadership for more than forty years, later wrote, “As long as the Democratic Party was in the minority, there were always Democratic leaders more interested in picking up patronage crumbs from the Republican table than they were in winning elections.”

Especially deserving, from the Republican point of view, were Democrats who saw to it that their party nominated weak candidates for important elections, and who helped swing Democratic votes into Republican primaries when insurgency challenged the Republican machine.

From 1897 to 1911, the Democratic state boss was Colonel James Guffey, who also served during part of this time as Pennsylvania’s National Committeeman. Guffey rose to power as one of the leaders of the Bryan, free-silver wing of the state party. Once on top, however, he showed what one Democrat called “tendencies to deal with the enemy” within the state and with the most conservative state bosses in national politics. Only one Democrat was elected to an important state office while Guffey ran the party. It took a series of major scandals and a flood of muckraking stories to elect Democrat William H. Berry for a term as state treasurer in 1905. Reform movements had to operate without much backing from the state party. When Democrat George W. Guthrie wrested the Pittsburgh mayor’s chair from the Republican machine in 1905, he had to fight the regular organization in Guffey’s home town.

3 Joseph F. Guffey, Seventy Years on the Red Fire Wagon (n.p., 1952), 18. Guffey’s uncle, Col. James Guffey, head of the state party until Palmer took over, had his nephew made Superintendent of City Deliveries in the Pittsburgh post office in 1894, when Joe was only twenty-four but already a member of the Allegheny County Democratic Committee. Joe served his uncle until 1912, when he became one of Palmer’s most trusted assistants. He managed Palmer’s 1920 campaign for the Presidency, and succeeded Palmer as Pennsylvania’s National Committeeman. Guffey served as United States Senator, 1935–1947.


The Bryan Democratic League was forced to overcome "the bitterest possible antagonism" from Colonel Guffey and his associates in order to elect a majority of the Pennsylvania delegates to the Democratic National Convention of 1908. Guffey's last official act as National Committeeman was to join the other conservative state bosses in voting for Alton B. Parker over Bryan for temporary chairman of the 1912 convention.

By 1910, there were revolts brewing throughout the nation against conservative Democratic state regimes. Groups of young, progressive Democrats helped Woodrow Wilson topple the Smith machine in New Jersey, took the California party machinery out of the hands of Hearst and the Southern Pacific, and began the downfall of Joe Bailey's political rule in Texas, and of Guffey's in Pennsylvania. Many more progressive Democrats might have come to power, at least temporarily, had the Wilson administration not been obliged in 1913 to bolster shaky conservative machines with federal patronage in order to pass its legislative program.

In Pennsylvania, the machine had warning enough of rising opposition. The Bryan League organized a state-wide campaign in the spring of 1908 and captured fifty-two of the sixty-four delegates to the Denver convention. A group of middle-class political novices managed this coup. They were led by Roland S. Morris, a graduate of Lawrenceville Prep and Princeton, and a successful Philadelphia lawyer. Morris' lieutenants included Francis Fisher Kane, also a Princetonian and a Philadelphia attorney, Warren Worth Bailey, editor of the *Johnstown Democrat*, and Jere S. Black of York, yet another former Princeton man.

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8 New York *World*, June 25, 1912.
Equally dangerous opposition was arising among dissatisfied county chairmen and local politicians, who scented victory in the nationwide dissatisfaction with the Taft administration and in signs that Pennsylvanians were no longer content with their corrupt Republican state government. Many Democratic politicians preferred the fruits of victory to the leftovers passed down by the Republicans to the state and big-city Democratic bosses.

Guffey and his associates in the state party leadership, State Committee Chairman Arthur G. Dewalt, State Senator James Hall, and Charles Donnelly and Thomas J. Ryan, who controlled the party machinery in Philadelphia, attempted to stave off trouble with a plea for unity against the common enemy. The State Central Committee met in Allentown on April 7, 1910, to plan for the coming gubernatorial campaign, and the leaders of the Bryan League, as well as other influential Democrats, were invited to attend.  

The meeting appeared to be a success. Chairman Dewalt spoke of the need for united action if the party was to take advantage of its glorious opportunity to conquer the Republicans in November. Congressman William B. Wilson, former secretary-treasurer of the United Mine Workers and a man whose influence was appreciated and feared by the Guffey faction, agreed with Dewalt on the need for unity. A letter from Congressman A. Mitchell Palmer, then busy introducing a delegation of striking steel workers to President Taft, was read, and it, too, counseled harmony. So pervasive was the sweetness and light that the old guard was forced, after only a moderate amount of protest, to agree to Carbon delegate James I. Blakeslee's motion that a committee of five, under the chairmanship of Vance B. McCormick, be authorized to raise $20,000 to improve the state party organization. Because this money would be collected by a group outside the regular party machinery, the regular leaders

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12 *Easton Daily Express*, Apr. 6 and 7, 1910. The *Express* reported on Apr. 7: "The conference was attended by many men not hitherto identified with the State Democratic organization, prominent among them being Jere S. Black, of York; Warren Worth Bailey, of Johnstown, and Francis Fisher Kane, of Philadelphia." One of the most valuable sources of information about the reorganization of the Democratic Party is a series of three articles by Charles G. Miller, who knew many of the principal participants, in the *Harrisburg Evening News*, Dec. 21, 22, and 23, 1939. Citations of these dates refer to the Miller articles. The meeting in April, 1910, is mentioned on Dec. 21, 1939.

feared that Blakeslee’s resolution would set up the nucleus of what might become a rival organization. These fears later proved to be entirely justified.

A large majority of the state committeemen agreed that C. Larue Munson, who had startled Pennsylvania politicians by nearly winning a contest for Supreme Court justice in 1909, would be the best candidate for governor. Munson was considered a progressive Democrat, and he had the almost unanimous backing of reform groups within the party. Just before the state Democratic convention met in mid-June, Munson’s backers heard rumors that Democratic leaders had met in Atlantic City with prominent Republicans and had arranged to prevent the nomination of Munson. It was said that Philander C. Knox, Taft’s Secretary of State, desired the Republican nomination for governor, but that Republican state boss Boies Penrose wanted a less independent character in the state house. If the Democrats nominated a weak candidate, Penrose would be able to sidetrack Knox.

Some substance was given to the rumors when the Republicans decided to depart from their usual custom of holding their convention prior to the Democrats. Munson’s supporters, however, thought they knew their man, and they felt sure they had the votes to nominate him. At midnight, the night before balloting for the Democratic nomination was to begin, Munson sent word that he was withdrawing from the race because of his health. The next day, the regular organization leaders announced that they were backing State Senator Webster Grim for the nomination.
Progressive Democrats raised such an uproar that Charles Donnelly called Palmer to a three-hour private meeting, during which he offered to drop Grim in favor of the thirty-eight-year-old Stroudsburg Congressman.\textsuperscript{18} Palmer’s nomination would probably not have been a violation of whatever agreement the Guffey faction had made with Penrose. He was a first-term Congressman from the northeastern corner of the state and had never held public office before 1908. Palmer would certainly have been acceptable to the reformers: he later turned out to be the mastermind behind the reorganization movement. He had already won a reputation in Congress as one of the most progressive young Democrats, with stirring speeches for tariff reform, mine and quarry inspection, and a graduated income tax. He was known in his district as a prolabor representative, and had recently been renominated with considerable assistance from the leaders of the Bethlehem Steel strike, whose cause he had championed.\textsuperscript{19} Nor did the regulars have any reason to believe that Palmer would desert them if he won. Guffey’s first lieutenant, James Hall, had taken the precaution of sending Palmer a check for $500 to help his campaign for renomination, or “to aid you in any matter you deemed best,” and Palmer had not returned the money.\textsuperscript{20}

Nevertheless, Palmer refused the nomination. He thought he saw a clear road upward in the House, and he chose sure re-election to the uncertainties of a state-wide campaign. Palmer says he urged Donnelly to accept William Berry, the former state treasurer, whom the reformers had hastily agreed to support. But all the delegates from Palmer’s district voted for Grim, and James Blakeslee, a county chairman in Palmer’s district, was given the nomination for secretary of internal affairs, indicating that Palmer was keeping a foot in both camps. The convention chose Grim over Berry, whose nomination would have been just as offensive to Penrose as that of


\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Congressional Record}, 61st Cong., 1st sess., 697-700; App., 9; \textit{Easton Daily Express}, May 24 and June 6, 1910; \textit{Easton Daily Argus}, May 16 and 24, 1910.

\textsuperscript{20} \textit{Philadelphia Record}, May 16 and 17, 1914. The \textit{Record} printed the correspondence between Hall and Palmer concerning the contribution in its May 16, 1914, issue. The Guffey organization had carried on a long feud with Howard Mutchler, political boss of Northampton Co., whose hold on the district Palmer was trying to break. Rathgeber, 317.
Munson. A few days later, the Republicans held a one-hour convention, in which they agreed on a platform and chose a state ticket headed by John K. Tener, a former big league baseball pitcher, who had been elected to Congress in 1908.

Disgruntled Democrats, led by Bailey, McCormick, Guthrie, and labor leader John J. Casey, joined independent Republicans in forming a third party which nominated Berry for governor. Palmer chose a different role for himself. He would be a “regular of the regulars,” acceptable to the reformers and professionals alike. He saw that Grim was certain to be badly beaten, and that the Democratic leadership could afterward be overthrown. In order to take control, and to win elections once they were in power, the progressives would need the co-operation of the regular party workers, especially the county chairmen. Palmer was experienced and astute enough to know what the professional politicians thought of bolters. He refused to desert the regular organization and campaigned actively for Grim.

Palmer was a farsighted and clever man, a superb manipulator of both his opponents and his associates. Later, his career was ruined when he guessed wrong about the future, but this time he guessed right. In the November election, Palmer’s district was one of the few that gave Grim a plurality. The state-wide race between Tener and Berry was remarkably close. Tener received 415,614 votes, Berry, 382,127, and Grim, only 129,395. In contrast to Grim’s overwhelming defeat, Democrats swept the 1910 elections in most states, gaining control of Congress, even winning the governor’s chair in Maine.

21 Berry and Munson were the only two proven vote-getters in the state party.
22 American Review of Reviews, XLII (1910), 144.
24 If Berry had won, the new governor, and not Palmer, would have had control of the reform movement, and probably of the Democratic Party as well. Smull’s Legislative Handbook and Manual of the State of Pennsylvania (Harrisburg, 1911), 553, 582. Berry’s fine showing is even more impressive when allowance is made for the Republican machine’s undoubted ability to fix elections. Tener won a plurality of 21,000 votes in South Philadelphia where election returns were “made to order” by the Vare brothers. Walter Davenport, Power and Glory: The Life of Boies Penrose (New York, 1931), 139; William S. Vare, My Forty Years in Politics (Philadelphia, 1933), 115-117; A Philadelphia Manufacturer, “Wanted in Philadelphia—A Man,” The Outlook, LXXX (1905), 374; New York Times, Mar. 12, 1911.
Palmer, re-elected to Congress by a 2 to 1 majority, wasted no time in starting the ball rolling toward a party reorganization. "While I have no desire to mix into state politics," he announced, the day after the election, "I shall not run away from this problem." Two months later, he met with Vance McCormick in Baltimore, and "we sat up all night long," Palmer later recalled, "planning how we could get a spontaneous, extemporaneous movement going." Palmer had already taken the matter up with other Pennsylvania Democrats in Congress. In accordance with the plan on which he and McCormick had agreed, Palmer arranged a meeting of the five Pennsylvania Democrats in the Sixty-first Congress and the four others elected to the Sixty-second Congress. He persuaded all nine to sign a letter to McCormick's committee, calling for a meeting of the State Central Committee to discuss reorganization of the party. A similar letter to McCormick's group was sent by a majority of the Democrats in the state legislature.

Meanwhile, McCormick's committee carried on its part of the plan. A report was issued stating that the committee had been unable to raise funds because Pennsylvania Democrats believed that money donated to their party was turned over to the Republicans. The report concluded that new party leaders were needed in order to regain the trust of the membership. McCormick's committee followed its report with a letter, sent January 24, 1911, to every Democratic county chairman urging an immediate meeting of the State Central Committee. A telegram was dispatched to State Chairman Dewalt with the same request. Dewalt, of course, refused. Pressure on the State Chairman mounted, however, as a large majority of the county chairmen and most of the state's Democratic newspapers came out in favor of a meeting. Guffey had recently gone into bankruptcy and was too busy trying to straighten out his tangled financial affairs to deal with an incipient revolt within the party. Hall and Donnelly persuaded Dewalt to call a meeting while there was still a chance that they could hold their power. Five days

25 Monroe Democrat, Nov. 16, 1910.
26 Pittsburgh Gazette-Times, Apr. 13, 1914, clipping in Pinchot Papers, LC.
after he had refused to act, Dewalt called a meeting of the Central Committee for March 2, 1911, at Harrisburg.  

A week before the Central Committee met, the reorganizers rallied their forces at a meeting in the Bellevue-Stratford Hotel in Philadelphia. The occasion was the anniversary dinner of the Democratic Club of Philadelphia, an organization controlled by the progressive wing of the city party. Speakers included Guthrie, Palmer, Senator Thomas P. Gore of Oklahoma, and the newly elected governor of New Jersey, Woodrow Wilson. Wilson was already well acquainted with the reorganization movement in Pennsylvania and with many of its leaders. Morris and Kane, who acted as toastmaster at the Bellevue-Stratford dinner, were among Wilson's leading supporters in his squabbles within the Princeton administration.  

"I cannot tell you how often I look back with interest and gratitude to that little conference at Mr. Kane's house," Wilson wrote Morris in 1910, "and to all the intimations I have had of your own influence. I am very grateful to you and hope that the future will bring us still closer together." Joe Guffey, the Colonel's nephew, who became one of Palmer's most valuable assistants in 1912, had arranged a dinner in 1908 at which Wilson met with Pittsburgh alumni sympathetic with his Princeton reforms. Jere S. Black of York and William W. Roper of Philadelphia were other reorganizers who had been among the Princeton alumni active in Wilson's behalf. These men, with Bailey, Palmer, and McCormick, spearheaded one of the earliest important state-wide movements aimed at making Wilson President.  

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28 New York Times, Mar. 12, 1911; Harrisburg Evening News, Dec. 22, 1939; Pittsburgh Gazette-Times, Apr. 13, 1914. Warren Worth Bailey took some of the credit for the success of this movement to force the old guard's hand. He sent daily copies of his Johnstown Democrat, which was rabidly in favor of reorganization, to "every Democratic and every independent newspaper in Pennsylvania and on occasion [to] every man who had been prominently identified with the Bryan Democratic League in 1908." Bailey to Palmer, Mar. 7, 1914, Bailey Papers, PUL.  
29 Baker, "Memorandum of an interview with Roland Morris," Baker Papers, LC.  
30 Wilson to Morris, June 16, 1910, Roland Morris Papers, LC.  
31 Guffey, 15.  
32 Baker, "Memorandum of an interview with Roland Morris," Baker Papers, LC. Roper was also a Philadelphia attorney, and, like Wilson, was a former Princeton football coach. Vance McCormick recalled that after Wilson was elected governor in 1910, "We took him through ... one of our Congressional districts on a speaking tour." McCormick to Baker,
At the Bellevue-Stratford dinner, Palmer’s speech was very different from those delivered by his fellow reformers. He was neither angry, triumphant, nor inspirational. His line was that of a shrewd politician seeking the votes of other politicians. His speech was aimed beyond a large part of his audience; it was meant to be heard and read by wavering Democratic state committeemen. His promise was of party unity and victory, rather than of revolt and reform.

I speak as a regular of the regulars. I have followed the organization in this state in good times and bad, although always to defeat and never to victory. I supported with my voice, and my vote, the nominee [Grim] of the Allentown convention. . . . I speak for a body of Democratic voters who have grown sick and tired of always following their leaders to defeat in the State.

There is no necessity for any man’s head to drop into the basket. It is not a case which calls for an operation. It demands treatment. Those of us who have loyally followed the organization in the past have a right to demand that the unswerving confidence which we have reposed for years in those who have held official places in the party’s organization shall now be justified. . . .

Party leadership, said Palmer, should be turned over to the reorganizers, because they could win.33

The day before the Central Committee met, Palmer was asked by a reporter what would happen if the Committee rejected demands for a reorganization. “Well, it probably means a third party, that’s all,” he replied, raising once again before the professionals the specter of certain defeat in coming elections.34 When the meeting began, Blakeslee immediately offered a resolution to give Democratic Congressmen who were present the privilege of the floor, but not the right to vote. After some wrangling, the resolution passed—the Guffey-Hall-Donnelly group did not wish to antagonize

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the seven Congressmen present, even though their appeasement meant that Palmer would have a chance to speak.\textsuperscript{35}

McCormick’s committee made its final report. Its conclusion this time was that a committee of seven should be appointed to name a new chairman of the State Committee and a new National Committeeeman. Three of the seven would be appointed by the present chairman, Dewalt, three by the McCormick committee, and one by the Democratic Congressmen. A group appointed in that manner, of course, would split 4 to 3 in favor of reorganizer candidates. When a motion was made that the committee’s recommendations be adopted, members of the old guard launched a bitter attack on McCormick and his associates, charging them with trying to take over the party after attempting to wreck it in 1910, a party to which they had contributed next to nothing and which they were too inexperienced to manage.

Few state committeemen dared openly defend McCormick and his plan. A newspaper which supported neither faction described the scene: “The regulars were confident and hilarious and took advantage of every opportunity to jeer the apparently small delegation which surrounded McCormick and Palmer.”\textsuperscript{36} When Palmer finally addressed the meeting, he spoke in the same vein as he had at the Bellevue-Stratford. “My position,” he said, “is a little different from that of the vast majority of the men who are calling for a new deal. I have stood for party regularity. I have followed the party in good and bad. I have no fight or quarrel with the Chairman of this State Committee and with the member of the Democratic National Committee, but I have my ear to the ground.”

The Democrats could win Pennsylvania if they adopted the report of the McCormick committee, he said. “We are now on the verge of a great Democratic victory,” and he urged the committeemen not to throw it away.

He assured his listeners that no ulterior motives lay behind his support of the reorganizers. People who said otherwise were guilty of “a base and outlandish slander and falsehood. In the first place, they say that Palmer wants something, to be leader, Chairman, or

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., Mar. 3, 1911; Northampton Democrat (Easton), Mar. 3, 1911; Philadelphia Press, Mar. 3, 1911.

\textsuperscript{36} Philadelphia Press, Mar. 3, 1911.
God knows what else. I can’t find words strong enough to characterize its falsehood. I am not a candidate.”

When he finished, "The ovation accorded Palmer was a surprise to the regulars, who had thus far commanded all the applause."

The State Committee was tense and quiet as a vote was taken on the McCormick committee’s plan. According to Palmer, just as voting began, a delegate from Pike County arrived at the hall, walked down the aisle and slipped into a vacant seat. He had heard neither the resolution nor the debate. "How shall I vote?" he asked the man in the next seat. "Aye," advised his neighbor. He voted "Aye," and the resolution carried by a vote of 41 to 40. Two years later, Palmer obtained a postmastership for the tardy Pike County delegate.

Two weeks later, the seven-man committee met under the chairmanship of Congressman William B. Wilson. It went through the necessary parliamentary motions and then set about choosing Guthrie to replace Dewalt as state chairman and Palmer to succeed Guffey as National Committeeman. The meeting quickly degenerated into five and one-half hours of “washing of the dirtiest kind of political linen.” Charles Donnelly, leader of the old guard representatives on the body, reminded the other committeemen that only two weeks before, they had all heard Palmer disclaim any desire for state office; now he was to be made National Committeeman. He went on to accuse Palmer of having solicited votes for Congress in the recent primary election on the grounds that his opponent, J. Davis Brodhead, was a Catholic. A reorganizer member of the committee, Joseph O’Brien, district attorney of Lackawanna County, jumped to his feet to deny the story, his face “purple with rage.” One of Donnelly’s two old guard colleagues on the committee disassociated himself from the accusation. Chairman Wilson said he did not believe a word of Donnelly’s tale, but if it were true, he declared, he would repudiate his friendship with Palmer, and reverse his vote. Pressed to reveal his source, Donnelly named Howard Mutchler, political boss of Northampton County and Brodhead’s campaign manager.

37 Philadelphia Record, Mar. 3, 1911; Harrisburg Patriot, Mar. 3, 1911; Northampton Democrat, Mar. 3, 1911.
40 Harrisburg Patriot, Mar. 15, 1911; Northampton Democrat, Mar. 17, 1911.
Palmer was a hard, often a ruthless, campaigner, but he was too clever to raise such an explosive issue in a campaign he was almost certain to win, and did win, easily. Nor was he likely to have brought up the question out of strong personal feeling. He and Brodhead had been friends for years. Later, Brodhead served under Palmer in the Alien Property Custodian’s Office.\textsuperscript{41} As Attorney General, Palmer was accused of overstocking the Justice Department with Irish-Catholics,\textsuperscript{42} and a year after his first wife died in 1922, he married a Catholic. Mutchler’s accusation was largely a reflection of the animosity he felt toward Palmer as a result of the primary campaign during which the Congressman had directed his fire largely against the Northampton boss, rather than against his registered opponent, Brodhead. The religious issue had long been a divisive one in Pennsylvania Democratic politics,\textsuperscript{43} however, and it was fortunate for the reorganizers that it blew over quickly.

Guffey and his associates refused to accept the Wilson committee report as binding. William Berry was approached by one of Guffey’s associates with a proposal that Dewalt would resign in favor of Guthrie, if Guffey were allowed to serve out his term as National Committeeman. When that offer brought no response, Donnelly suggested that both Palmer and Guffey surrender their claims to be National Committeeman and that Judge James B. Gordon be named as a compromise choice.\textsuperscript{44} Most of the reorganizers considered Gordon a member of the old machine and, furthermore, they saw no need to compromise.

In an interview in Stroudsburg, Palmer tried to explain how a man without ambition had come to such a high post. “I desire to say that any man who asserts that my course in endeavoring to effect a reorganization of the party in this state has been actuated by a desire for personal advancement . . . is a willful and malicious liar. Every man of intelligence in the state who reads the daily

\textsuperscript{41} The two men had studied law in the same office and had campaigned for each other in previous primary elections. \textit{Easton Daily Argus}, May 19, 1910; \textit{Stroudsburg Times}, Sept. 29 and Oct. 27, 1904; \textit{Easton Daily Express}, Apr. 6, 1908. \textit{Alien Property Custodian Report}, 65th Cong., 3rd sess., Senate Document 435 (Washington, 1919), 256.

\textsuperscript{42} See, for example, United States Senate, Committee on the Judiciary, \textit{Charges of Illegal Practices of the Department of Justice, Hearings . . .}, 66th Cong., 3rd sess. (Washington, 1921), 526.

\textsuperscript{43} Rathgeber, 84.

\textsuperscript{44} Berry to Bailey, Mar. 29, 1911, Bailey Papers, PUL; \textit{Philadelphia Record}, June 13, 1911.
newspapers knows that I am not a candidate for National Committee man; that I earnestly besought the Committee of Seven not to name me for that position and it was only after Democrats all over the state insisted that I should take it . . . that I finally decided to accept the place temporarily."45 Once he accepted the place "temporarily," Palmer kept it and ran the Pennsylvania party with an iron hand until 1921, when he decided he had had enough of politics and stepped down.

Another meeting of the full State Central Committee was called for July. It was called to end the dispute by voting to accept or reject the Wilson committee report. By this time, the committeemen were more fully aware of which way the political winds were blowing. Palmer predicted the reorganizers would have a majority of from 15 to 18 votes, and he was probably not far off.46 When the Committee met, it quickly divided into two meetings, with the old guard withdrawing to another location. The Committee had eighty-three members, and forty-seven of them stayed with the reorganizers. By electing substitutes for all absentees, and counting some with doubtful credentials, the rump meeting held under Dewalt was able to muster thirty-eight. The old guard elected its own state chairman to replace Dewalt, but when Guthrie's administration, with James Blakeslee as party secretary, started functioning, no one questioned its authority.47

The fight against Palmer, on the other hand, was carried into the National Committee. There, William Jennings Bryan of Nebraska and Josephus Daniels of North Carolina led the fight to seat Palmer, while conservative bosses Tom Taggart of Indiana and Roger Sullivan of Illinois supported Guffey's right to retain his seat. It was Taggart who made the telling point that state committees had the right to fill vacancies on the National Committee, but not to create them, as the Pennsylvania committee was trying to do. Homer Cummings recalled that he and several other committeemen, whose sympathies were on Palmer's side, voted for Guffey because, according to National Committee rules, the Colonel's term ran until the next National Convention. After Daniels' motion to seat Palmer

45 Easton Argus, July 3, 1911.
46 Stroudsburg Times, July 14, 1911.
was defeated, 30 to 18, Bryan warned Guffey that the Nebraskan and his supporters meant "to see to it that there is another National Committee chosen which will not have any Guffeys on it." Woodrow Wilson wrote Palmer that he thought the decision of the National Committee "in the long run will do not harm, but good," by further arousing reform sentiment in the country.48

Guffey kept the formal trappings of power on borrowed time. Palmer took no chances in 1912. Before the state convention, which would elect delegates-at-large to the national convention and recommend a candidate for National Committeeman, Palmer called Guthrie, McCormick, Blakeslee and Bailey to a conference in the House Ways and Means Committee room in Washington.49 He feared that trickery by the old guard might enable them to win part of the delegation to the Baltimore convention and force the election of a compromise candidate for National Committeeman. There were one hundred eighty-three delegates to the state convention, and the Guffey faction claimed one hundred and twelve as their own.50 It seemed possible that the old guard might divide the reorganizers' coalition, especially by drawing off the professionals who were trying to follow what looked like a winner by first casting doubt on the fact of the reorganizers' majority, then by putting forth a multiplicity of candidates with a variety of appeals. Already, Judge Gordon, who had been one of the most respected Democratic politicians in the state before the Guffey regime took over,51 was being widely touted as a compromise candidate for National Committeeman. Gordon was trying to win Bryan's potent support.52

The day before the state convention met, the reorganizers caucused until midnight. Palmer, who knew how to manage such meetings so


49 Philadelphia Record, Apr. 24, 1912.

50 Philadelphia Inquirer, May 6, 1912, clipping in A. Mitchell Palmer Scrapbooks, Monroe County Historical Society, Stroudsburg. I am grateful to Dr. John C. Appel, president of the Society, for assistance in the use of these books, which deal chiefly with the 1914 election campaign.

51 Gordon had been the brains behind the last Democratic state administration. Rathgeber, 95, 99, 260.

52 Philadelphia Public Ledger, Apr. 23, 1912.
that the right voices were heard, the right questions discussed, and so that everyone left knowing his obligations, acted as chairman.\textsuperscript{53} So efficient was Palmer at this sort of work that he was later selected as chairman of the Democratic caucus in the Sixty-third House, which was faced with the task of passing Woodrow Wilson’s legislative program.\textsuperscript{54} Some of the reorganizers protested that forcing delegates to vote as a caucus majority decided, on a great number of candidates and issues, including platform planks, smacked of the methods of the old guard. Vance McCormick’s newspaper called it an “unprecedented method of procedure in the recent history of the Pennsylvania Democracy.”\textsuperscript{55}

Nevertheless, the caucus decisions stuck. The reorganizer delegates met again in a theater at ten the next morning. They were given another pep talk and then marched to the convention hall, accompanied by a loud brass band. An extraordinary number of ushers were on hand, instructed not to allow anyone into the delegates’ section who could not show one of the carefully distributed delegates’ tickets. The galleries were thoroughly packed with reorganizer supporters well before the convention opened. As a result of this thorough organization of their already superior forces, the reorganizers were completely victorious. The old guard put forth its only candidate with a wide appeal, Judge Gordon, for presiding officer, in an effort to divide its opponents in the first test of the convention. Gordon lost by thirty-seven votes to the caucus choice, Joseph O’Brien. Palmer read the platform he had prepared as chairman of the resolutions committee, and then debated its provisions with Gordon.\textsuperscript{56} “His voice was husky from much speaking both on the floor and in the committee, but he was heard all over the hall,” a reporter noted.\textsuperscript{57} The platform was adopted as presented, and all the reorganizers’ candidates were elected by large majorities.

\textsuperscript{53} Harrisburg \textit{Patriot}, May 7, 1912; \textit{Philadelphia Inquirer}, May 9, 1912, clipping in Palmer Scrapbooks.
\textsuperscript{54} \textit{New York Times}, Mar. 6, 1913.
\textsuperscript{55} Harrisburg \textit{Patriot}, May 7, 1912.
\textsuperscript{57} \textit{Philadelphia Inquirer}, May 8, 1912, clipping in Palmer Scrapbooks.
The triumph of the Pennsylvania reformers did much to make possible Woodrow Wilson's nomination in 1912. The leaders of the old guard had also declared their support of Wilson, but had Guffey and Donnelly retained control of the party and elected their own delegates, ostensibly pledged to Wilson, there can be little doubt that a wholesale shift of Pennsylvania's convention votes would have occurred as soon as Guffey, Sullivan, Taggart and Boss Charles Murphy of New York believed the time was ripe. When Joe Guffey informed his uncle that he was for Wilson, the Colonel quietly bumped Joe from his list of delegates. The three men on the Colonel's list who did go to Baltimore voted against Wilson on every ballot. As it was, the seventy-three certain convention votes Wilson had from Pennsylvania enabled him to remain a contender for the nomination despite crushing primary defeats in April and May in Illinois, New York, Massachusetts, California, and many other states with smaller delegations. Wilson picked up forty votes in Texas just after his Pennsylvania triumph, and these, plus twenty-four from New Jersey, were the large blocks that enabled Wilson's managers to begin the negotiations which eventually brought their man the nomination.

In many states, Wilson's triumph allowed conservative regimes to turn back progressive challenges through the use of federal patronage. In Pennsylvania, the reformers won in time to get the spoils. They were thereby enabled to make a strong bid to impose a progressive Democratic government on the state, long before Pennsylvanians were ready to desert the party of protection. Many careers were advanced by the reorganization and its role in Wilson's victory. Palmer became floor leader of the Wilson forces at the Baltimore convention, then chairman of the executive committee.

58 Philadelphia North American, June 11, 1911, clipping in Palmer Scrapbooks; Stroudsburg Times, July 14, 1911. In 1908, at the last minute before filing, the old guard listed its candidates for delegates to the National Convention as Bryan supporters. None of them voted for Bryan at the convention, however.

59 Guffey, 34-37.

of the National Committee, and finally Attorney General and a strong candidate for President. McCormick was made chairman of the Democratic National Committee in 1916, and declined offers of three cabinet posts. Guthrie was made Ambassador to Japan. Morris, who succeeded Guthrie as state chairman, also succeeded him as ambassador. Blakeslee was given an important post as Postmaster General Albert Burleson’s assistant, dealing chiefly with patronage matters. Berry was handed the key position of Collector of the Port of Philadelphia, and Kane became United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania. William W. Roper was appointed Appraiser of Customs at Philadelphia. Samuel Graham, a reorganizer from Pittsburgh, was made an Assistant Attorney General.

Dozens of other Pennsylvanians who took part in the reorganization movement were rewarded by federal patronage funnelled through Palmer, and obtained mainly through his energetic and constant importuning. He assigned the task of screening applicants for less important jobs to dependable Joe Guffey. Indeed, there were complaints that no Pennsylvanian could obtain a federal job without first seeing Guffey. Thus the reformers, under Palmer’s leadership, cemented their organization with the spoils of office, using once more the tactics of the urban machines, so despised by progressives.

An account of the complete victory of the reorganizers, and of Palmer’s key role, is not a story of the triumph of innocent idealism. Rather it is an illustration of the practical political activity necessary

61 McCormick was chosen as a direct result of an urgent, last-minute telegram to Wilson from Palmer. Colonel House, Wilson’s chief adviser in such matters, had decided on Homer Cummings, and there was a strong movement within the National Committee for Cummings. House to Wilson, June 13, 1916; telegram, Palmer to Wilson, June 14, 1916, Wilson Papers, LC. McCormick to Josephus Daniels, Mar. 24, 1941, Papers of Vance McCormick, Yale University.

62 Charles Seymour, ed., The Intimate Papers of Colonel House (Boston, 1926), I, 129. Palmer to Wilson, Feb. 24, 1913; Palmer to Bryan, Mar. 8, 1913; Wilson to Palmer, Mar. 25, 1913; McAdoo to Wilson, Apr. 8, 1913; J. Dwyer to Tumulty, Apr. 20, 1913, and enclosed clipping from Philadelphia Public Ledger, Apr. 19, 1913; Palmer to Wilson, Jan. 30, 1914; Palmer to Wilson, Mar. 31, 1917; Dwyer to Tumulty, Sept. 4, 1917, Wilson Papers, LC.

even for a reform movement if it is to win and hold power. Palmer's essential part in this triumph was to bridge the gap between the reformers and the professional politicians. He was progressive enough to satisfy the former, yet shrewd and sometimes ruthless enough to control the county chairmen and their organizations. His success in capturing control of the reorganization movement enabled him to emerge as titular head of the state party, and to rise to a position of great national power, power which some have said he misused as have few men in our history.

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