

**The Smoke-Filled Room - I**

**Lead: One of the persistent myths of American politics was that Warren Gamaliel Harding was nominated at the 1920 Republican Convention by political bosses meeting in a smoke-filled room.**

**Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.**

**Content: The campaign for the Republican nomination of 1920 was waged during a time in which Americans, weary of war and divisions within both political parties, were ready to settle down to less intense**

tumult. U.S. Senator Warren Harding, the newspaper publisher turned politician from Marion, Ohio was a candidate suited for such a mood. He was affable, generous, and pleasant with an aggressive, gregarious campaign style. He based his political climb on offending as few people as possible. Besides, he just looked like a President. One of his earliest supporters, recalls his own reaction on meeting Harding around the turn of the century, "What a President he'd make!"

Harding's problem was that he had no money to make the run and three candidates were way ahead of him in the nominating process. Leonard Wood, backed by the Cincinnati soap

**fortune of William Proctor the founder of Proctor and Gamble was locked in a dead heat with Frank Lowden (Lauden) who had married one of the heiresses to the Pullman fortune. Hiram Johnson was a distant third.**

**From the rear of the pack, Harding and his campaign manager, Harry M. Dougherty, devised a "second-choice" strategy based on the candidate's pleasing personality. Harding had a lot of friends and supporters scattered through the various delegations. He was positioned to be the alternative choice should the convention deadlock. It did. On Saturday afternoon, June 12th, the seventh ballot was taken in the Chicago Coliseum. It was 106 degrees. Wood and Lowden were**

**deadlocked. Suddenly, a few delegates began the shift to Harding. By the tenth ballot it was over. The bandwagon effect had set in and Harding had won. Rumors began to circulate in the hall and the newspapers about a deal cut between a group of powerful Senators in the dead of the previous night to force the nomination of Harding. Next time: the real smoke-filled room.**

**At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.**

### Resources

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