NAME: OPAFUNSO ESTHER OLUWASEUN

DEPARTMENT: PHARMACY

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POLITICAL PARTIES IN NIGERIA

Political parties are important features of politics in the modern age of mass participation. In liberal-democratic systems, they help to keep governments accountable to public opinions; and in autocratic system of government, they help the government to maintain its holds in power. Political parties are links between government and the people (Dickerson and Flanagan 2002).

The first democratic party was in The United States of America, and the first parties were developed there. Political parties in Nigeria was developed due to the increase of nationalist consciousness and sentiments and nationalist movements in 1920s.

Conceptual Clarification of the Idea of Political Parties

Political parties are defined differently by many thinkers which one of the is; according to R.G Gettel, “political party is a group of citizens more or less organized, who act as a political unit and who by the use of political power aim at controlling the government and carrying out its general policies”. Herman Finer also defined political parties as “an organized body with voluntary membership, its concerted energy being employed in the pursuits of Political Power”. The tasks usually performed by a political party during political process is so many that a single definition is hard to establish. According to Agbaje (1999), a political party is a group of people bonded in policy and opinion in support of general political cause, which essentially is the pursuit, capture and retention, for as long as democratically feasible, of government and its offices. However, a Political Party is a group of officials or would-be officials who are linked with a sizable group of citizens into an organization; a chief object of this organization is to ensure that its officials attain power or maintain power (Shively,2008).

Some of the characteristics of political parties are;

1. The major feature of central feature of political party is to capture governmental power through constitutional means.
2. Political parties always have a broad principles of public policy adopted by its organization, which is referred to as party ideology.
3. Every political party must be national-minded, i.e., in aims and functions it must take into consideration the interest of the nation. Etc

Types of political party; 1. Elitist/Cadre Party 2. Mass Party 3. Ideology Party 4. Broker Party. 5. Charismatic or Personality Party.

Functions of Political Party

1. Political mobilization and recruitment;
2. Political education;
3. Political representation;
4. Interest aggregation. Etc

Political Parties in Nigeria: Ikelegbe (2010)-The National Congress of British West Africa Territories (1920)-The West African Students Union (1925)- Lagos Youth Movement in 1934. Herbert Macaulay, H.O. Davies, Ernest Ikoli, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowoand others were the precursors of political parties in Nigeria.

Early Political Parties: The Nigerian National Development Party (NNPD) was the first political party in Nigeria which was formed in 1923 which was led by Herbert Macaulay. The Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM0 was formed in 1934by a group of young Nigerians led by Ernest Ikoli,and a few others to mention. The National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon (NCNC) was formed in 1944 and was later re-named the National Convention of Nigeria Citizen in 1960.

Problems that Confronted Pre-independence Political Parties;

i.the political parties were without national outlook.

ii. the political parties placed much emphasis on personalities ather than issues.etc.

Political Parties in the Second Republic in Nigeria: they include; The Party of Nigeria (NPN), The Nigerian Peoples’ Party (NPP), The Great Nigeria Peoples’ Party (GNPP), the Peoples’ Redemption Partyof Nigeria (UPN).

Political Parties in the Third Republic Nigeria: General Ibrahim Babaginda promulgated the transition to civil rule decree through which two political parties were registered in accordance with the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The two parties are the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the National Republican Convention (NRC).