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COURSE TITLE: GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL INSTITUTION

COURSE CODE: GST 203

MATRIC NUMBER:19/LAW01/090S

LEVEL: 200

DEPARTMENT: LAW

ASSIGNMENT: CHAPTER 7

Political parties are an essential feature of politics in the modern age of mass participation. It is an invention that first developed in the nineteenth century in response to the appearance of elections involving large numbers of voters. The first modern electoral democracy was the USA, and it was here that the first parties developed. In Britain, 1867 was the first year in which there a reasonably widespread extension of the votes. According to R.G.Gettel” political party is a group of citizens more or less organised, 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, on his part, defined political party as” an organised body with voluntary membership, its concerted energy being employed in the pursuit of political power”. Characteristics of political party

The major or central feature of political party is to capture governmental power through constitutional means. A political party has party manifestoes which guide their conduct during and after winning elections. Political party should be organised body, because it can only derive strength from an effective organizational structure.

Types of political parties ---Elitist/cadre parties: it is a political party that draws its membership from a highest level of command, authority, or rank in a country e.g., doctors, lawyers, lecturers, traditional rulers etc.

Mass political parties—it is a political party that draws its membership from all sections of the society and have wide membership. Ideological party- -- this is a political party formed with political ideology or benefits which form bases of the

party. Broker party: this is political formed with its members drawn from upper and lower classes of the society. Charismatic or personality party: this is a political party formed or led by individuals with charisma.

Functions of political party: political education, political stability, goal formation, political representation. The Clifford constitution of 1922 provided for four(4) elective seats in its legislative council, while the Richards constitution of 1946 retained the four(4) elective seats and established regional assemblies. The Macpherson's constitution established regional executive councils, and provided for a system of indirect elections.

The Nigerian National Development Party (NNDP) was regarded as the first political party that was formed in Nigeria. The elective principle introduced by Clifford constitution of 1922 gave rise to the formation of NNDP in 1923. NNDP was led by Herbert Macaulay regarded as the father of nationalism. The newspaper called Lagos Daily News launched in 1925. The Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) was formed in 1934 by Ernest Ikoli, Samuel Akinsaya and Dr. J.C. Vaughan. The party contested and won elections to Nigerian Legislative Council and Lagos Town Council in 1938. The National Council of Nigerian and Cameroon (NCNC) was formed in 1944. It was later re-named the National Convention of Nigerian Citizens in 1960 when some parts of Cameroon broke away from Nigeria. The NCNC was the first party to be organised to seek independence for Nigeria. Nnamdi Azikiwe became its president in 1946 after the death of Herbert Macaulay.

Two major political parties emerged between 1950 and 1951. These were Action Group (AG) and Northern People's Congress (NPC). The Action Group (AG) emerged from the Egbe Omo Oduduwa. Egbe Omo Oduduwa was formed in 1945, as a pan Yoruba cultural society. The main aim of the AG was to provide leadership to and capture political power in the western region. The Northern People's Congress (NPC) emerged from the Jam'iyya Mutanein Arewa. The cultural association was formed in 1949. The smaller parties include: Northern Element Progressive Union (NEPU) formed in August 1950 led by late Mallam Aminu Kano. The United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC) led by late J.S. Tarka was founded in 1955. The ban of politics was lifted in 1978.

