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A Vast and Varied Opposition: The Shifting War Democrat - Peace Democrat Continuum in Civil War Pennsylvania

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A VAST AND VARIED OPPOSITION: THE SHIFTING WAR DEMOCRAT –
PEACE DEMOCRAT CONTINUUM IN CIVIL WAR PENNSYLVANIA

A Thesis

Submitted to the McAnulty College and
Graduate School of Liberal Arts

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts

By

Jonathan D. Neu

May 2010

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Jonathan D. Neu

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PEACE DEMOCRAT CONTINUUM IN CIVIL WAR PENNSYLVANIA

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ABSTRACT

A VAST AND VARIED OPPOSITION: THE SHIFTING WAR DEMOCRAT – PEACE DEMOCRAT CONTINUUM IN CIVIL WAR PENNSYLVANIA

By

Jonathan D. Neu

May 2010

Thesis supervised by Perry K. Blatz, Ph.D.

This thesis identifies the Democratic party in Civil War Pennsylvania as existing along a shifting political continuum. This continuum ranged from the War Democrats, whose support for the Union war effort aided the Republican administration of Abraham Lincoln, to the Peace Democrats, whose obstructionist principles aimed to derail the North's commitment to win the war. This work argues that different segments of the Democratic continuum controlled state politics at different times throughout the war, dependent upon changes in the Democracy's perception of political, military, economic, and social events that the war wrought. Furthermore, this thesis contends that the ideologies along this Democratic continuum were too varied to promote unity among Pennsylvania's party leaders, contributing to the Democracy's ultimate failure to compete successfully against their Republican opponents in wartime state politics.

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Introduction

Three years after the end of the Civil War, newspaperman Horace Greeley labeled the postwar Democratic party “a myth, a reminiscence, a voice from the tomb, an ancient and fishlike smell.”¹ Indeed, the Democracy had suffered considerable damage through the course of the war, particularly in Pennsylvania. During the antebellum years, the Commonwealth had been a bastion of Jeffersonian-Jacksonian Democratic tradition. After the war, however, Pennsylvania had emerged as one of the strongholds of Republicanism. This political conversion came as a result of the Democracy’s inability to cope with the transformative change the Civil War engendered. Although the party embodied a series of unifying principles that nearly all Democrats shared, the war presented new challenges that party adherents reacted to with disparate responses. Pennsylvania’s Civil War Democrats may be theoretically placed along a party continuum. On one end were the War Democrats who were firmly committed to a war to preserve the Union. On the other were the Peace Democrats, whose most radical members advocated the peaceable separation of the Union and even the secession of Pennsylvania. Between these extremes were a host of individuals with a diverse range of principles and fluctuating commitments to the war and its demands. This study will examine the War – Peace continuum that the Pennsylvania Democracy operated under during Civil War. The ideology of Democrats shifted along this continuum through the progression of the crisis as developing Republican war policies and Union military fortunes constantly altered perceptions on how the war was being waged. Although Democrats of all political stripes shared some common principles, the breadth of the

¹ *New York Tribune*, April 3, 1868, quoted in Joel H. Silbey, *A Respectable Minority: The Democratic Party in the Civil War Era, 1860 – 1868* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1977), x.

Democratic continuum proved too vast for the party to compete effectively against the Republicans for control of the state. Consequently, Pennsylvania Democrats were ultimately unable to counteract the sweeping political and social changes that the war wrought and that they so feared.

To understand the ideology of Pennsylvania's Civil War Democracy one must begin with that era's notions of conservatism. Chief among those principles was a Democratic faith in the doctrine of white supremacy. Although slavery was nonexistent within Pennsylvania's borders at the time of the Civil War, antipathy toward African-Americans remained. Hostility toward blacks stemmed from racist fears of miscegenation and resentment of job competition with an allegedly "inferior" race. Although few Pennsylvania Democrats openly lauded Southern slavery, even fewer spoke out against it. Whereas Whigs and Republicans often expressed their personal loathing of slavery, "similar sentiments are virtually impossible to discover among Democrat[s]."² When the Civil War unleashed the question of emancipation, Democrats were faced with the largest threat to their notions of tradition and conservative *status quo*. Although commitment to white supremacy was the Pennsylvania Democracy's most unifying trait, other conservative principles brought unity among the vast majority of Democrats. These principles included dedication to states' rights, strict adherence to the Constitution, a decentralized federal government, and utilization of hard money. All these conservative values would be challenged during the course of the war.

To examine Pennsylvania's shifting Democratic continuum, this study divides the Civil War years into five sections and examines the role of War Democrats, Peace

² John Gerring, "A Chapter in the History of American Party Ideology: The Nineteenth-Century Democratic Party (1828 – 1892)" *Polity* 26:4 (Summer 1994): 734.

Democrats, and Moderate Democrats within those periods. The first chapter surveys the Pennsylvania Democracy from its steady decline during the 1850s to the eve of war in Spring 1861. Although hostilities had not yet begun, a proto-continuum developed during this time that separated party members along three major divisions ahead of the transformative 1860 presidential election. Supporters of Stephen A. Douglas, the favorite among many Northern Democrats, are termed “Douglas Democrats” in this study and most closely represent the precursors to the War Democrats. Advocates of Southern Democrat John C. Breckinridge are divided two ways. Those who gave in to Southern demands to suppress abolitionism and expand slaveholders’ rights, but maintained a greater resolve to preserve the Union are labeled “Breckinridge Moderates.” After Fort Sumter, these Democrats would largely compose the Moderate Democrats. Those Democrats with greater Southern sympathies and even desires for Pennsylvania to secede with the South are termed “Breckinridge Conservatives.” During the war, many of these Breckinridge Conservatives would become Peace Democrats (commonly referred to as Copperheads). During the secession winter of 1860 – 1861, the Breckinridge Moderates controlled state party politics because of the influence and patronage of Pennsylvania-born President James Buchanan. By navigating a middle course, these Democrats were best able to present themselves as the defenders of constitutionalism and conciliation and the enemies of extremist Northern abolitionism and Southern secessionism.

Chapter two examines the Pennsylvania Democracy from the firing on Fort Sumter to Spring 1862. During this period, the Southern attack on federal property galvanized support for war among most Democrats. Peace Democrats were compelled to silence their opposition to the military subjugation of the South out of fear of mob attack

or arrest by the Lincoln administration. Moderates meanwhile were forced from their temporizing role and induced to join either the War or Peace wings of the continuum. The War Democrats wrested control of the party machinery and were lauded for their cooperation with the federal government in prosecuting the war. Lincoln also recognized the prudence of installing War Democrats to positions of power in the military, a number of whom hailed from Pennsylvania.

The third chapter examines the most drastic shift among Pennsylvania's Democracy during the entire war. Between Spring 1862 and Summer 1863, Republican war aims were broadened to include emancipation of Southern slaves. War Democrats, who had received praise for their commitment to preserve the Union, balked at the thought of a war to free the slave. Some of these Democrats shifted to a Moderate ideology and pestered the Lincoln administration to return to limited war aims. Peace Democrats, meanwhile, reemerged as obstructionists of Republican war policy and gained credibility when military defeats signaled an ill omen for the Union armies. Moderate Democrats who had once allied with the War Democrats shifted toward the Peace end of the continuum. They began to agitate for conciliation with the South and aimed to invite them back into the Union with slavery guarantees.

Chapter four deals with the Peace Democracy's high-water mark peaking during Summer 1863 and subsequently declining through Spring 1864. During this time, Republican preoccupation with emancipation engendered enough Democratic rancor to permit Copperheads to run one of their own, George W. Woodward, as the party's gubernatorial candidate. Moderates increasingly worked with Copperhead leaders to rouse enthusiasm for an armistice and a convention of the states to bring about a reunion

solely on the basis of the Constitution, not on emancipation. Only timely Union military victories impeded the peace movement's momentum and helped Republicans retain the governor's seat.

The fifth chapter covers the final year of the war and the last shift of the Democratic continuum. With Peace Democrats unable to lead the party to victory in the polls, War Democrats reemerged at a time when Union victory at last seemed near. The 1864 presidential campaign dominated state and national politics as Pennsylvania-born general and War Democrat George B. McClellan was widely viewed as the party's frontrunner to challenge Lincoln's bid for a second term in office. Peace Democrats, however, were still numerous enough to demand concessions for their cooperation and managed to secure the vice presidential spot on the ticket for one of their own. Although the nation voted overwhelmingly in favor of Lincoln, Pennsylvania nearly gave its electoral votes to McClellan, indicating the continued strength of the Democracy in the state. After the election, War and Moderate Democrats could do little else but acquiesce to Republican control for the remainder of the war. Peace Democrats continued their agitation to end the war immediately, though looked increasingly foolish in doing so as Union victory became certain.

This study will examine some of Pennsylvania's chief Democratic leaders and determine how they were situated along their party's continuum at various times throughout the war. The Commonwealth's Democracy provides a good microhistory from which to draw conclusions about the national party structure. As one of the most prominent states in the Union during the Civil War, Pennsylvania had a wide range of War, Peace, and Moderate Democrats in political office or in important positions to

disseminate conservative views. Among these leading Democrats are newspaper editors, military officers, state legislators and senators, congressmen, cabinet officials, and a former president of the United States. This diverse range of party leaders necessarily translates to a wide variety of political views within the conservative tradition that magnify the existence of a Democratic continuum and its relevance to the political history of the Civil War-era.

As historian Joel H. Silbey explains, the Democracy was “after 1860, the opposition party in a situation of national danger, a badly divided minority party trying to regain its place and dominance.”³ Indeed, Democratic conservatism was not uniform among party adherents and permitted sects to form within the party structure. Each Democratic sect maintained a collection of principles that changed over time as the political, military, and social events of the war unfolded. Through the course of the war, a Democrat might remain ensconced within one sect or could transcend the fluid boundaries between them to adapt to experiences during wartime. Examination of Pennsylvania’s shifting War Democrat – Peace Democrat continuum ultimately will shed light on the complexities of Civil War-era conservatism and the transformations it underwent as the conflict simultaneously threatened the Union and the antebellum traditions that Democrats so zealously guarded.

³ Silbey, *A Respectable Minority*, ix.

Literature Review

A proper examination of the scholarship on the Northern Democracy is a frustrating enterprise. Just as the wartime Democrats were wracked with internal schism and dissent, so too is the ongoing historiographical conversation. A complete picture is further complicated by the interpretive primacy that the Peace Democracy assumed for at least a century after Appomattox. The contentiousness of the Copperheads dominated academic circles for so long that an appropriate understanding of a War Democrat – Peace Democrat continuum has been obscured until the revisionist school of thought finally brought a more complete understanding of the party's function during the Civil War. Indeed, it was not until the 1970s that divisions within the wartime Democracy were adequately defined and the War Democrats received their own systematic study. To this day, there still has not been a study of the Northern Democracy that effectively synthesizes the shifting ideologies of the War, Peace, and Moderate Democrats. Such an undertaking would indeed be a voluminous feat of scholarship and this study makes no pretensions to satisfy the need for a careful interpretation of the Northern Democracy's vast and shifting continuum. Instead, this work will more modestly examine that continuum within Pennsylvania's Democracy, a good place to start given the state's strong Democratic tradition up to the Civil War along with the abundance and ideological diversity of its conservative political leaders.

Historians were quick to interpret the behavior of the wartime Democracy in the postwar years and have since produced varied interpretations of Lincoln's opposition. Five major schools of thought have evolved throughout the historiography of the Northern Democracy: the early traditionalists, the late traditionalists, the revisionists, the

post-revisionists, and the neo-traditionalists. The early traditionalists (1865 – 1930) experienced the war and its divisiveness firsthand, worshipped the memory of the martyred Lincoln, and denigrated his opponents, particularly Copperheads, as worse traitors than the Confederates. The late traditionalists (1930 – 1960) asserted in a nationalistic vein that Lincoln’s wartime policies were the mark of a political genius and his opponents were subversive dissidents whose ideological intransigence nearly wrecked the Union. Revisionists (1960 – 1980) emerged to vindicate the Democracy, even the Peace wing, as commendable defenders of the Constitution and loyal, albeit conservative Unionists. Importantly, the revisionists finally acknowledged the boundaries between War, Peace, and Moderate Democrats and opened up scholarship to the examination of these individual segments of the broad party continuum. The post-revisionists (1980 – 1995) balanced the two previous schools of thought and determined that Lincoln, despite a few faults, navigated the American crisis skillfully, and that his opponents were a loyal but obstructionist faction. Neo-traditionalists (1995 – present) resurrected the principles of the traditionalists and buttressed the interpretation with new sources and methodologies. All these schools reached consensus on a few important tenets:

- Abraham Lincoln was the preeminent politician to prosecute the war successfully and preserve the Union.
- Democrats were strict constitutional constructionists of the Jeffersonian-Jacksonian traditions whose primary concern was resistance to radical social change, particularly relating to race relations.
- Despite losing a majority of the wartime elections, Democrats were a fully functional and capable political entity.

* * * *

The apotheosis of President Abraham Lincoln began almost in tandem with his violent death. The completeness of Lincoln's victory over the Confederacy and his tragic demise at the pinnacle of his success characterized an American drama bordering on the theatrical. A nation bereft and in mourning soon turned to revenge. Demand for reprisal required identification of those who had ever doubted the slain commander-in-chief, who had sacrificed his life to perpetuate the American union and democracy. Those particularly in the crosshairs were the Peace Democrats. A strongly partisan literature, embodying the early traditionalist interpretation, developed in the generation after the Civil War that often vilified the Copperheads and sent them into hiding and obscurity.¹ Lincoln's unflinchingly loyal personal secretaries, John Hay and John G. Nicolay, led the assault against Peace Democrats twenty-five years after the war. "Opposition to the Government," they concluded, "formed throughout the country secret associations for the purpose of resisting the laws, of embarrassing in every way the action of the Government, of communicating information to the rebels in arms, and in many cases of inflicting serious damage on the lives and property of the Unionists."² As they delineated and censured the subversive activities of the Copperheads, these early partisan historians played a significant role in influencing later generations. Incidentally, these historians of the early traditionalist school failed to acknowledge the divisions within the Democratic continuum and failed to recognize the existence of War Democrats who had a hand in

¹ After the Civil War, countless Copperhead politicians and leaders destroyed personal letters and papers *en masse* in an effort to distance themselves from the indignant barbs directed their way. For modern-day historians, this has left an unfortunate gap in the analysis of this wing of the Democratic continuum, which has only intensified the disagreements among historians of various schools of thought.

² John G. Nicolay and John Hay, *Abraham Lincoln: A History*, vol. 8 (New York: The Century Company, 1890), 1.

buttressing Republican war policy. In the postwar era of “bloody shirt” politics, Democrats were still the opposition and it was more politically expedient to highlight the less admirable actions of members of the party.

The late traditionalist school of thought solidified during another national crisis, the Second World War. During that war effort, Americans once again turned to brilliant leaders of the past for guidance and inspiration. During the uncertain early days of the country’s involvement in World War II, a pair of historians reexamined Lincoln and his Democratic dissenters, and drew moralistic conclusions applicable to this new threat to liberty. George Fort Milton’s *Abraham Lincoln and the Fifth Column* (1942) maintained a glowing interpretation of Lincoln’s leadership and castigated the cowardice of Peace Democratic figures.³ Lincoln was a most effective war leader according to Milton because he was “peculiarly equipped with a sympathetic understanding of the people’s hearts and minds and souls” and took on a symbolic role as the nation’s “poet and prophet of the people.”⁴ Echoing the vituperative criticisms of Copperheads common in the immediate postwar years, Milton witnessed the same “common denominators” in his contemporary wartime society, embracing the “patriots and traitors...appeasers, agitators of revolution, and counter-revolutionaries too.”⁵ Ultimately, Milton considered the Copperheads to be dangerous subversives, intent on creating seditious secret societies, encouraging Union army desertion and draft dodging, and winning elections to hasten a potentially dishonorable peace with the rebellious South. *The Fifth Column* was the first

³ The term “fifth column” refers to any group of subversives with secret sympathies to an enemy of the state. It is derived from a 1936 statement made during the Spanish Civil War. During the war, four columns of insurgents were converging on Madrid, while the “fifth column” referred to the Francisco Franco sympathizers already in the city.

⁴ George Fort Milton, *Abraham Lincoln and the Fifth Column* (New York: Vanguard Press, 1942), 18, 334.

⁵ *Ibid.*

work of scholarship to bring together various government records and postwar biographies into a coherent study of Copperhead dissent. These sources were largely gleaned from collections pertaining to Lincoln, his cabinet, and his political supporters. Glaringly absent are newspaper sources and sufficient documents related to the Copperhead leaders themselves. Ultimately, this generated a work inferior to Milton's traditionalist compatriot, Wood Gray.

Gray's *The Hidden Civil War* (1942) appeared in print almost simultaneously with Milton's work. Consequently, Gray's scholarship reflects the nationalism exhibited by *The Fifth Column*, but draws fewer instructive parallels between dissent during the Civil War and in World War II-era America. *The Hidden Civil War* argued that the Copperheads were a "defeatist" segment of Northern society whose opposition stemmed from dissatisfaction with Lincoln's handling of the war, outrage at his suspension of civil liberties, and fear of freed blacks glutting the American workforce with unskilled laborers.⁶ Gray identified the Midwestern states as the main sector of dangerous Copperhead subversion and was perhaps the first scholar to classify Ohio's Clement L. Vallandigham as the most menacing Peace Democrat to the Lincoln administration.⁷ More scholarly than Milton, Gray made better use of the extant primary source material. Midwestern Democratic and Republican newspapers received greater consideration in the book and a heftier accumulation of manuscript materials provided better substance for this traditionalist analysis. Ultimately, Gray's outlook on the Copperheads matched Milton's views in that they were too willing "to sacrifice the Union rather than permit the

⁶ Wood Gray, *The Hidden Civil War: The Story of the Copperheads* (New York: The Viking Press, 1942), 14, 100.

⁷ Clement Laird Vallandigham (1820 – 1871) was an Ohio Congressman and is credited as the most outspoken of the antiwar Copperhead faction.

carrying out of a policy that had been adopted against their wishes.”⁸ Largely absent from Milton’s and Gray’s works was acknowledgement of other facets of the Democracy. The disgrace that had accompanied postwar interpretation of the Peace Democrats caused historians to neglect the activities of War Democrats and Moderates during the war. Their eagerness to demarcate Republicans as good and Democrats as evil in the story of the Civil War precluded dissecting the Democracy’s divergent ideologies. The traditionalist school of thought enjoyed a nearly two decade-long supremacy over interpretation of the Northern Democrats.

In 1960, a scholar out of the University of Wisconsin published an explosive study that may have done more to shift the historiography of Copperheadism (though still not the Democracy as a whole) than any other work. Frank L. Klement’s *The Copperheads in the Middle West* emerged as a canonical work of what would become the school of revisionist thought. In his attempt to refute the charge that the Copperheads were men “whose hearts were black, whose blood was yellow, and whose minds were blank,” Klement boldly asserted that the Copperheads had long been victims of a senseless witch-hunt.⁹ On the heels of the destructive years of the age of McCarthyism, Klement’s study aimed to vindicate the tarnished reputations of men as innocent as the “Reds” who had been persecuted in his own time. Far from the callous traitors they had been branded as, Klement painted Copperheads as peaceable conservatives whose dissatisfaction came from the radical social changes which the war was inaugurating. These conservative Democrats, according to this interpretation, operated under the banner “The Constitution as it is, the Union as it was” and wished to restore the unity of the

⁸ Gray, *Hidden Civil War*, 224.

⁹ Frank L. Klement, *The Copperheads in the Middle West* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960), vii.

nation without bloodshed and with slavery left intact to appease the seceded South. Although he agreed with Wood Gray that the Midwest was the region of the nation most disaffected, Klement believed that “the intensification of nationalism” during the 1940s had had an adverse effect on Civil War historical writing.¹⁰ *The Copperheads* employed Democratic manuscript collections much more intensively and included various campaign propoganda used by both Democrats and Republicans during the wartime congressional, gubernatorial, and presidential elections.¹¹

Quickly established as the leading Copperhead defender, Klement produced two other significant works, *The Limits of Dissent* (1970) and *Dark Lanterns* (1984). These works emerged at a time when continued distrust in the government shook the academic world as a result of America’s involvement in the Vietnam War and the Watergate scandal. In the former study, Klement narrowed his focus to reinterpret the life of Clement L. Vallandigham. Where Wood Gray blasted Vallandigham as “an epitome of arrogant political egoism,” Klement maintained that he was a conservative champion who simply “believed changes should be evolutionary and not revolutionary.”¹² In *Dark Lanterns*, Klement examined the history of the secret, Copperhead political societies that had formed during the Civil War that had been labeled as dangerous and subversive by Milton and Gray.¹³ Klement refuted the contentions of the traditionalists and claimed that these societies were ineffectual, ill-conceived, and too weak to pose any threat to the

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Because the Clement Vallandigham papers were destroyed by flood in 1913, Klement relied heavily on manuscript collections of Vallandigham’s disciples and associates, like Thomas O. Lowe of Ohio and Charles Mason of Iowa. Klement was the first Copperhead scholar to use the Lafayette C. Baker Papers which were opened in 1953. Baker was one of Lincoln’s leading wartime investigators and his papers include information concerning the government’s investigation of subversive activities.

¹² Gray, *Hidden Civil War*, 224; Frank L. Klement, *The Limits of Dissent: Clement L. Vallandigham and the Civil War* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1970), 315.

¹³ These Dark Lantern Societies included the Knights of the Golden Circle, the Order of American Knights, and the Sons of Liberty.

Lincoln administration. Again, it was the nationalism imbedded in World War II-era scholarship, in Klement's mind, that had made the dark lantern societies the stuff of "myths and legends."¹⁴ It did not take long for Klement's influential and well-researched scholarship to gain credence among others in the academic community. More importantly to this study, Klement's interpretation allowed other historians to delve deeper into the Democracy as a whole and recognize that the party consisted of more than just ultraconservatives like Vallandigham.

Among these groundbreaking historians was Christopher Dell, whose *Lincoln and the War Democrats* (1975) finally treated the opposite end of the Democratic spectrum that heretofore had been relegated to a marginal role in the historiography. Dell acknowledged the difficulty in reconciling the pro-war sentiments of the War Democrats with party ideology as a whole. He blamed his predecessors for "seeking shortcuts and easy explanations" that "chose to emphasize not the War Democrats but their opponents, the Peace Democrats, who professed to represent more accurately the Democratic faith."¹⁵ In Dell's view, Lincoln was "the Pied Piper of Civil War politics" who "with Conservative phraseology and Radical intent" lured War Democrats away from the conservative roots of their party to support war measures that brought the political and social changes that the Democracy had long resisted.¹⁶ Significant to this study, Dell identified boundaries between three sects of the party – the War Democrats, the Conditional War Democrats, and the Peace Democrats – and contributed to the notion that these boundaries were fluid and shifting, depending upon the progress of the war.

¹⁴ Frank L. Klement, *Dark Lanterns: Secret Political Societies, Conspiracies, and Treason Trials in the Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1984), 6.

¹⁵ Christopher Dell, *Lincoln and the War Democrats: The Grand Erosion of Conservative Tradition* (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1975), 11.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 9.

Ultimately, the work argues that between Lincoln and the War Democrats, there was “a compulsory, nervous, neurotic partnership” that nonetheless persisted thanks to pro-war conservatives’ consent “to fight against [their] own instincts and prejudices, at the expense of men and theories and principles [they] had been worshipping for many years.”¹⁷ Other revisionist historians looked beyond the Copperheads to uncover the complexities of the wartime Democracy.

Among Klement’s adherents was Joel H. Silbey whose *A Respectable Minority* (1977) advanced his belief that the Democratic party during the Civil War was a reputable and loyal political party that lost credibility when tainted with “the brush of treason” by the Republican party then in power.¹⁸ Silbey cast a disparaging light on some of the actions of Lincoln’s own party. The Republican party, Silbey claimed, “utilized every weapon and trick, fair and foul, to counter any surge to the Democrats” in an effort to “delegitimize the Democratic opposition.”¹⁹ *A Respectable Minority* underpinned the assertion that the Democratic party during the Civil War never gave in to radically subversive sentiments and remained a competitive political party throughout the war. Like Dell, Silbey recognized three divisions within the party – the War Democrats, “Legitimists” (comparable to Dell’s Conditional Moderates), and “Purists” (Peace Democrats). With Dell’s and Silbey’s studies, a Democratic continuum was gaining greater credibility and scholarly inquiry.

Arnold M. Shankman’s *The Pennsylvania Antiwar Movement* (1980) retained the crux of the revisionist interpretation but shifted the sphere of interest from the Midwest to the Keystone State. Shankman’s book affirmed that Pennsylvania had its own significant

¹⁷ Ibid, 9, 10.

¹⁸ Silbey, *A Respectable Minority*, xi.

¹⁹ Ibid, 166.

element of Peace Democrats consisting of Philadelphia elites, yeoman farmers, immigrants, and common laborers. However, he candidly admitted that he “join[ed] the ranks of those revisionist historians who reject ‘the traditional stereotype of the Copperhead as traitor.’”²⁰ In a similar vein to Klement, Shankman argued that Pennsylvania’s opponents of the Lincoln administration were simply social conservatives, not traitors. *The Pennsylvania Antiwar Movement* also employs the idea of three distinct sects working within the Democracy as a whole. The War Democrats, who fall outside the subject of the book, were “more tolerant of arbitrary arrests, newspaper suppressions, and conscription laws than peace men, [and] they thought it unwise to call for an armistice.”²¹ Shankman divides the antiwar Democrats into two groups. First were the radical “peace at any price” men who demanded an end to the war even if it meant separation of the Union. Second were the moderate antiwar Democrats who remained Unionists at heart but opposed war measures such as civil liberty suppression, conscription, and emancipation. Although Shankman’s work remains the most complete study of Pennsylvania’s wartime Democracy, it has at least two major shortcomings that hinder a full understanding of the party’s function. First, Shankman’s focus on antiwar Democrats necessarily excludes the relevance of the Commonwealth’s vigorous War Democratic faction. Second, the book does not go deeply enough into explaining how political actions in Harrisburg and Washington and military actions on the battlefield affected party members and contributed to ideological shifts as the war progressed. These are two goals of the present study.

²⁰ Arnold M. Shankman, *The Pennsylvania Antiwar Movement, 1861 – 1865* (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1980), 15.

²¹ *Ibid*, 17.

For two decades, the revisionists, under the tutelage of Frank L. Klement, had dominated the scholarship on Civil War Democrats. However, the healthy debate over the true motives of the Democracy continued with the advent of the post-revisionists. After the Vietnam War and Watergate crises of the 1970s, the 1980s and 1990s witnessed a return to relative peace and stability in America. In turn, scholarship on the Northern Democracy, particularly the Copperheads, took on a more reasoned and moderate tone. James M. McPherson published his lengthy, hugely popular, Pulitzer Prize-winning *Battle Cry of Freedom* (1988), which has often been credited as the most definitive one-volume study of the Civil War. McPherson returned Lincoln and his Republican supporters to their accustomed role as superior leaders and savvy politicians. Refusing to buy in to the revisionist assertion that the Copperheads were benign and harmless political figures, McPherson turned his attention to the gubernatorial contests of 1863 in Ohio and Pennsylvania. Clement L. Vallandigham and George W. Woodward were the Democratic candidates from the respective states, and McPherson recognized the threat they posed to the successful prosecution of the war. “The election of either [Vallandigham or Woodward],” he averred, “would revive sagging Confederate morale and might depress the northern will to win.”²² Furthermore, McPherson commented on the revisionist forebears, charging Frank L. Klement with “protest[ing] too much in his attempt to exonerate the copperheads from all such calumnies [of disloyalty]”²³ Another Pulitzer Prize-winning study, Mark E. Neely, Jr.’s *The Fate of Liberty* (1992), aimed to resolve some of the slanders leveled against the Lincoln administration by revisionists like Joel H. Silbey. Neely recognized that the administration’s suspension of certain civil

²² James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 684.

²³ *Ibid.*, 883.

liberties during the war, “threaten[ed] to undermine Lincoln’s reputation.”²⁴ Ultimately, Neely maintained Lincoln’s celebrated statesmanship by asserting that the successful prosecution of the war temporarily precluded unadulterated deference to civil liberties. Furthermore, Lincoln’s policies were not enacted to silence the Democratic opposition but simply to preserve the Union. The prudent, middle-of-the-road scholarly style practiced by McPherson and Neely soon gave way to a new breed of academic rancor against Lincoln’s detractors, particularly Peace Democrats.

A neo-traditionalist school of thought emerged in the mid-1990s and was commenced in part by David E. Long’s *The Jewel of Liberty* (1994). Long’s work focused on the presidential election of 1864 between Lincoln, the Republican incumbent, and George B. McClellan, a Democrat, popular military commander, and rabid Lincoln antagonist. The author promotes a proud, nationalistic image of Lincoln, applauding his willingness to carry out the presidential election despite the extraordinary crisis. Lincoln could have suspended the election because of the dangers involved with a potential Democratic victory, which may have guaranteed Confederate independence. To Long, Lincoln’s “behavior remains the American model for the world, especially today when executives suspend constitutional guarantees at whim, much less during civil war.”²⁵ Long delineates various traitorous activities that Copperhead figures engaged in throughout the war. Treasonous Peace Democrats furtively planned assassination attempts on Lincoln, plotted the release of Confederate prisoners of war, and engaged in

²⁴ Mark E. Neely, Jr., *The Fate of Liberty: Abraham Lincoln and Civil Liberties* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), xiii. Most potentially damning was Lincoln’s suspension of the writ of habeas corpus, which allowed the administration to arrest suspected subversives for an extended period of time without formally charging them or bringing them speedily to trial.

²⁵ David E. Long, *The Jewel of Liberty: Abraham Lincoln’s Re-Election and the End of Slavery* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1994), xi.

espionage activities with Confederate agents. To strengthen his arguments, Long uncovered manuscript collections, memoirs, and diaries of Copperhead figures, some of whom associated with Southern operatives sent North to kindle insurrection in the loyal states.

Jennifer L. Weber's *Copperheads* (2006) refocused the centrality of the Peace Democrats' behavior as a principal threat to the Lincoln administration's prosecution of the war. Dismissing Frank L. Klement's thesis that Copperhead disloyalty was the result of Republican "lies, conjecture, and political malignancy," Weber returned to the sixty year-old assertions of Milton and Gray to profess that "the danger to the Northern war effort posed by Copperhead political activities was far more than a figment of Republican imagination."²⁶ The Democratic peace movement, Weber argued, was so pervasive by the 1864 presidential election that it nearly took over the party's platform planks and resulted in a victory over Lincoln and the Republicans. The Peace Democrats became "blinkerred by ideology" and had become "obstructionists, doing little more than laying into Lincoln and his policies."²⁷ Weber's veneration of Lincoln's political ability and animosity toward the Copperhead threat hearkened back to the traditionalist school of thought. She contributed important new insights, however, by focusing on wartime events largely ignored by her academic antecedents. For example, Weber convincingly interpreted the July 1863 New York City draft riots as a dangerous threat instigated by Peace Democrats that compelled the Lincoln administration to siphon troops from the front lines to deal with a figurative "fire in the rear."²⁸ The works of neo-traditionalists

²⁶ Jennifer L. Weber, *Copperheads: The Rise and Fall of Lincoln's Opponents in the North* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), xi.

²⁷ *Ibid*, 6.

²⁸ *Ibid*, ix, 107-112.

like Long and Weber have, for the time being, brought Copperhead scholarship full circle, preparing the ground for future rounds of scrutiny and reinterpretation of Lincoln's dissenters.

There is much yet to be uncovered concerning the relationship between War, Peace, and Moderate Democrats, particularly on the state level. This study will seek to bring together all three sects of the Democratic continuum and relate their actions in Pennsylvania politics during the Civil War years. It will be most convenient to employ Christopher Dell's labels of "War Democrat," "Peace Democrat," and "Conditional Moderate" or just "Moderate" in the pages to follow. The term "Copperhead" will also equate with "Peace Democrat" in this study, as it has become commonplace in Civil War scholarship to use either term without implying that one so-named was necessarily a traitor or Southern sympathizer, unless specifically noted. Additionally, this study will endeavor to incorporate important political and military events and examine how they contributed to shifts in Democratic ideological commitments as the war unfolded. An assessment of the Northern Democracy is vital to a fuller understanding of Civil War politics and the complexities involved in preserving the Union.

Chapter 1: The Democratic Proto-Continuum, 1850s – Spring 1861

In the days after the tumultuous presidential election of November 6, 1860, Pennsylvania's Democratic newspapers reported the particulars of the official returns, accompanied with predictable lamentations. "That once great and powerful [Democratic] party is overwhelmed by a total, an inglorious defeat," bewailed the *Huntingdon Globe*. "Sectionalism has torn down the flag of conservatism which waved over our council halls, and internal strife and discord menace the nation. What a change in the short space of four years! How bright and hopeful everything looked then; how gloomy and foreboding is the picture now!"¹ Republican Abraham Lincoln had decisively carried the Commonwealth with a 95,000 vote majority over the Democratic fusion ticket, which had gone to Vice President John C. Breckinridge. As a result of an ideological split within the Democratic faithful between adherents of Breckinridge and those of Illinois Senator Stephen A. Douglas, the party had made impossible any chance to compete with the surging Republicans, whose presidential election victory signaled the final blow to the South's willingness to remain in a Union it deemed hostile to its interests. Lincoln's victory also marked the end of Democratic dominance in Pennsylvania and forced the party to reassess its principles in the face of sectionalism and the mounting prospect of civil war. This would not be a simple task, given the divide between the Breckinridge and Douglas devotees. Between the election of Abraham Lincoln and the firing on Fort Sumter, the rift created between Pennsylvania's Breckinridge and Douglas supporters established an embryonic Democratic spectrum that foreshadowed the better-known Peace Democrat-War Democrat continuum after the start of hostilities in April 1861.

¹ *Huntingdon Globe*, November 14, 1860, 2.

Democrats had reasons to be distraught. Since the days of Andrew Jackson the Democracy had dominated Pennsylvania politics and had consistently delivered the state's electorate to those candidates sharing an affinity for white male egalitarianism, a weak federal government, and a strict interpretation of the Constitution. As historian John Gerring explains, this antebellum Democratic ideology also encompassed a "general distrust of power, defense of property rights, praise for the virtues of tolerance and a pluralistic society, [a] proto-Marxist critique of capitalism, [and an] embrace of the interests of agriculture."² From Jackson's presidential victory in 1828 until the fragmentation of the Democratic party in early 1860, Pennsylvania had given its electoral vote to the Democratic candidate in six out of eight instances. Furthermore, the state's electorate had selected a Democratic governor eight out of eleven times. In the Commonwealth, "[t]he Democrats were usually able to maintain their supremacy, and only opposition coalitions, particularism, or party schism could unseat them."³ Even after the sectionalizing years of the 1850s, Pennsylvania retained its conservative, Democratic tendencies. In 1855, the Democratic-leaning state legislature chose former governor William Bigler as U.S. Senator. The following year, voters delivered native son James Buchanan to the White House. In 1857, the state selected conservative William F. Packer to serve as governor. Nonetheless, the Democratic dominance that had marked the preceding decades began to show signs of wear that would ultimately be overwhelmed by burgeoning Republicanism.

The disintegration of the Pennsylvania Democracy in 1860 was rooted in the sectionalizing events of the previous decade. Passage of the divisive Kansas-Nebraska

² Gerring, "The Nineteenth-Century Democratic Party," 735-36.

³ Erwin Stanley Bradley, *The Triumph of Militant Republicanism: A Study of Pennsylvania and Presidential Politics, 1860 -1872* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1964), 30.

Act in 1854 opened up the first fissures. In that year, Illinois Senator Stephen A. Douglas sought to appease Southern Democrats and unite them with their increasingly disaffected Northern counterparts. Through introduction of the doctrine of popular sovereignty, Douglas proposed to admit Kansas and Nebraska as territories with the contentious slave question left up to the vote of their future inhabitants. Because slavery was barred there by the 1820 Missouri Compromise, Douglas notoriously advised the repeal of the long-standing legislation. Although the bill passed, many Northerners seethed at the prospect of opening the archaic institution of slavery to all territories. As in other areas of the North, antagonized Pennsylvania voters sought ways to resist the legislation, which coalesced former Whigs, free-soil Democrats, and other groups into the new Republican party. By the 1856 presidential election, many Northern states threw their support behind the free-soil, Republican candidate John C. Frémont. However, Pennsylvania's persistent conservatism and the candidacy of Buchanan ensured the Democracy victory both within the state and nationally.

James Buchanan had had a long and distinguished political career even before his presidency. His service in Washington stretched back to the 1820s, during which time he consistently exhibited an ideology “in keeping with the views of his Southern friends, [because] he adamantly opposed such government programs as homesteads, river and harbor improvements, and land grants for schools; and despite the tariff needs of his own state, he even lost any taste he might have ever had for this form of protection.”⁴

Furthermore, his views on slavery garnered him support from his Southern colleagues.

⁴ Elbert B. Smith, *The Presidency of James Buchanan* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1975), 14. Buchanan began his political career in 1814 as a Federalist in Pennsylvania's House of Representatives. He served in the U.S. Congress from 1821 to 1831, switching his political allegiance to the Democrats in 1828. After a vacancy opened in the U.S. Senate in 1834, he was elected to fill the seat and was reelected to that body in 1837 and 1843.

Although he at times “expressed regret” at the existence of slavery in the republic, “there is no evidence that he ever felt any moral indignation against it or sympathy for the slaves.”⁵ He later served as Secretary of State in the James K. Polk administration (1845 – 1849) and was awarded the ambassadorship to London by Franklin Pierce in 1853. In the latter capacity, Buchanan again demonstrated his empathy for Southern interests by helping draft the Ostend Manifesto, which proposed the seizure of slaveholding Cuba from Spain. Although this proposal failed and the political fallout negatively affected the Pierce administration, Buchanan still benefited from his service as minister to England. His absence from domestic politics during the Kansas-Nebraska contretemps ensured that he was untainted by either side of the debate. Thanks in part to the support of his native state, Buchanan received a comfortable plurality of the vote over Fremont and Know-Nothing candidate Millard Fillmore.⁶

Buchanan was almost immediately faced with two major crises in 1857 that discredited his administration and engendered the decline of the Pennsylvania Democracy’s potency. First, a string of bank and business failures during the summer intensified a mild recession that had begun late in the previous year. Falling grain prices and the collapse of land speculation contributed to the Panic of 1857 and allowed Republicans to brand the Democrats’ low tariff policies as ineffectual. Buchanan, responding in a vein reminiscent of Jackson, justified his party’s anti-protectionism and blamed the “existing misfortunes” not on the low tariff, but rather on “our extravagant and vicious system of paper currency and book credits, exciting the people to wild speculation and gambling in stocks. These revulsions must continue to recur at

⁵ Ibid, 14.

⁶ In Pennsylvania, Buchanan in fact received a slim majority of the total vote. However, his 230,686 (50.1%) votes overwhelmed Fremont’s 147,286 (32.0%) and Fillmore’s 82,189 (17.9%) votes.

successive intervals so long as the amount of the paper currency...of the country shall be left to the discretion of...banking institutions, which from the very law of their nature will consult the interest of their stockholders rather than the public welfare.”⁷ Many Pennsylvanians were not convinced. From one of the nation’s chief industrial and manufacturing centers, the state’s business leaders clamored for greater tariff protection. Even Governor Packer was forced to stray from traditional Democratic economic principle and espouse the virtues of protectionism. “The present condition of the revenues of the General Government,” reported Packer in his 1859 annual message, “demonstrates the urgent necessity of increased duties upon foreign importations. The people of Pennsylvania have ever taken a lively interest in the proper adjustment of a tariff; and they have...favored such an assessment of duties, as would not only produce revenue, but furnish the largest incidental protection to the great mineral, manufacturing, and industrial interests of the country.”⁸ Although Democratic protectionism began to gain traction within the state, pro-tariff advocates saw greater promise in the burgeoning Republican movement.

The second factor contributing to the decline of the Pennsylvania Democracy during Buchanan’s term dealt with the reemergence of the Kansas conflict. At the time of Buchanan’s inauguration, two territorial governments existed simultaneously. The pro-slavery government at Lecompton was supported by Washington even though a minority of Kansans backed it. The free-soil government at Topeka was illegally formed

⁷ John Bassett Moore, ed., *The Works of James Buchanan, Comprising His Speeches, State Papers, and Private Correspondence*, vol. 10 (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1910), 130. Quote from Buchanan’s First Annual Message delivered December 8, 1857.

⁸ George Edward Reed, ed., *Pennsylvania Archives, Fourth Series*, vol. 8, *Papers of the Governors, 1858 – 1871* (Harrisburg: William Stanley Ray, 1902), 112. Quote from Packer’s Annual Message to the Assembly delivered January 5, 1859.

but heavily supported within the territory, which was increasingly populated by Northerners. In 1857, a constitutional convention was organized by the mostly pro-slavery territorial legislature, to draft the infamous Lecompton Constitution.⁹ This constitution was placed before the people of the territory for a referendum vote. The referendum was boycotted by free-soilers, enabling the pro-slavery advocates to score a resounding triumph. Siding with Southern Democrats, Buchanan endorsed the Lecompton Constitution and disregarded the free-soil boycotters whose “refusal to avail themselves of their right could in no manner affect the legality of the [constitutional] convention.”¹⁰ Douglas, with the support of many Northern Democrats, refused to back the Lecompton Constitution. His defection formed a fatal rift in the party between pro-administration and anti-Lecompton Democrats. Ultimately, the Lecompton Constitution was defeated by both a territorial referendum in January 1858 and by the U.S. House of Representatives later that year. Because of the Panic of 1857 and the Kansas conflict, the Pennsylvania Democracy and the national party were left reeling.

The split among Democrats was accompanied by a fusion among all the party’s adversaries. In Pennsylvania “[a]n opposition was at work building an organization into which all souls, desirous of driving the Democracy from power, could enter.”¹¹ Not only did this opposition consist of Republicans, but also Know-Nothings, and most startlingly, disaffected Democrats. To accommodate this loose alliance of motley political ideologies, opposition leaders adopted the term “People’s party.” By eschewing the word

⁹ It should be noted that the pro-slavery legislature was not a true representation of the Kansas electorate and had only been achieved through corrupt election practices. See David M. Potter, *The Impending Crisis, 1848 – 1861* (New York: Harper Collins, 1976), 297-327.

¹⁰ Moore, *Works of Buchanan*, 10:149. Quote from Buchanan’s First Annual Message delivered December 8, 1857.

¹¹ Bradley, *Militant Republicanism*, 49.

“Republican,” the opposition leaders encouraged voters to join “without loss of face, and also it was hoped that a few promising Democrats...who had broken with Buchanan, would actively assist the new party.”¹² During the campaign of 1858, Pennsylvania’s People’s party effectively attacked the pro-administration Democrats’ unpopular stand on Kansas and aversion to tariffs. In the fall elections, Democrats suffered an ignominious defeat. The party maintained a majority of only one in the state senate and elected just thirty-two legislators in the House.¹³ Buchanan, disgruntled by the election results, wrote his niece, Harriet Lane. “Well! we have met the enemy in Pennsylvania & we are theirs,” he lamented. “This I have anticipated for three months & was not taken by surprise except as to the extent of our defeat.”¹⁴ The Democracy’s situation deteriorated further the following year. On March 16, the Democratic State Convention convened to express their confidence in President Buchanan but withheld endorsement for Governor Packer.¹⁵ The following month, ninety-nine party bolters, led by *Philadelphia Press* editor and former Buchanan supporter John W. Forney, convened separately at Altoona. There they endorsed Packer’s policies, criticized the Buchanan administration, and lauded the efforts of Senator Douglas, further exacerbating the growing rift between “Old Buck” and the “Little Giant.” Although Forney and his followers failed to nominate an anti-administration ticket for the 1859 elections, the damage had been done and People’s

¹² Ibid, 50.

¹³ At this time, the House comprised 100 annually-elected legislators. The Senate consisted of thirty-three members, one-third of whom were elected yearly.

¹⁴ Moore, *Works of Buchanan*, 10:229. Quote from Buchanan letter to Harriet Lane written October 15, 1858.

¹⁵ Packer’s rejection by the state convention came as a result of the governor’s growing affiliation with the pro-Douglas wing of the party and his private criticisms of Buchanan’s Kansas policy.

party candidates again swept the state legislature.¹⁶ On the eve of the transformative 1860 election, the Keystone Democracy had reached a nadir.

The fragmentation of the Democratic National Convention at Charleston, South Carolina in April 1860 and the nominations of both Douglas and Breckinridge at conventions separately assembled in Baltimore two months later are well-known events in the hopeless schism of the Democracy leading up to the presidential election. The Pennsylvania Democracy endured a similar rupture that ensured their defeat in the October and November elections and widened the continuum between the conservative and moderate wings of the party. The Democratic State Convention delegates convened in Reading on February 29 to select a gubernatorial candidate, choose delegates for the Charleston convention, and endorse a presidential candidate. Democrats amicably completed their first assignment, unanimously naming Henry D. Foster of Westmoreland County as their choice for the governor's chair. A cousin of John C. Breckinridge, Foster had served in both the state and U.S. House and was deemed by many as a good choice because of his pro-tariff inclinations. Democratic journals were predictably delighted by the apparent unity exhibited at the convention. "We hail it as a good omen," the *Erie Observer* celebrated, "a cheering indication that the Democracy of Pennsylvania are united, confident, and determined on victory!"¹⁷ The *Lancaster Intelligencer* reported that "[t]he Democratic party of Pennsylvania is 'itself again'....A spirit of conciliation and compromise was inculcated by everybody and the result is a united, hopeful and jubilant party from one end of the Commonwealth to the other."¹⁸ However, this

¹⁶ After the October 1859 elections, the People's party controlled sixty-seven of one hundred House seats and twenty-one of thirty-three in the Senate.

¹⁷ *Erie Observer*, March 3, 1860, 2.

¹⁸ *Lancaster Intelligencer*, March 6, 1860, 2.

assumed harmony belied the divisions that still wracked the party. Although the state convention delegates had rallied around a single gubernatorial candidate, they refrained from endorsing a presidential candidate. Furthermore, Douglas adherents felt miffed that few from their number were selected to attend the Charleston National Convention. The Breckinridge-Douglas split would only intensify as the campaign season continued.

At the national convention in April, Pennsylvania's pro-Breckinridge delegates played a major role in withholding votes that otherwise would have secured the nomination for Douglas. When the delegates adjourned and reconvened in Baltimore in June, Breckinridge supporters bolted the convention, allowing devotees of both candidates to nominate their champions separately. The rift proved especially taxing to Pennsylvania's Democracy because of "the near equal strength of the opposing Douglas and Buchanan-Breckinridge factions."¹⁹ On July 2, the Democratic State Central Committee assembled in Philadelphia intent to unify. All delegates agreed to work in harmony towards the election of Foster for the governorship, but accord was more difficult to achieve over the presidential question. Ultimately, a compromise was reached among the majority of the Democratic delegates that stipulated that the candidate who received the greater number of popular votes in the November election would receive the entirety of Pennsylvania's twenty-seven electoral votes.²⁰ Nonetheless, a small group of anti-Breckinridge dissidents led by Forney and *Harrisburg Patriot and Union* editor Richard J. Haldeman bolted to organize a Douglas ticket in September. The split proved

¹⁹ Bradley, *Militant Republicanism*, 70.

²⁰ This arrangement was called the Cresson Compromise, which was agreed to on August 9. Many historians surmise that many Democratic voters refrained from voting in the presidential election because they would be voting not for the candidate of his choosing, but rather whichever Democratic candidate proved more popular among the entire electorate. See Bradley, *Militant Republicanism*, 94-96 and Shankman, *Pennsylvania Antiwar Movement*, 32-34.

fatal. On October 9, 1860, Henry D. Foster was defeated by People's party candidate Andrew G. Curtin by a majority of more than 32,000.²¹ Even though the Democracy acted with a "surface unity" for the gubernatorial campaign, the party divisions "hampered local leaders and delayed their efforts to organize the state campaign."²² The Breckinridge-Douglas rift proved more embarrassing in the presidential election the following month. Lincoln defeated the combined votes of the Democratic Fusion and Douglas straight ticket by a margin of more than 72,000.²³ The Keystone Democracy remained too obstinate to deal with the widening chasm between pro-administration and anti-Lecompton adherents and forestalled any chance to compete with the People's party.

* * * *

Three major groups splintered within the Democratic party prior to the election of 1860, all of which would form a segment of the wartime continuum after April 1861. The first group comprised the Douglas Democrats who threw their support behind the Little Giant during the presidential campaign. Among the rank and file of this wing of the party were many of the immigrants, laborers, and farmers who had long supported the Democracy and those members of the party faithful who opposed slavery expansion in the territories.²⁴ Douglas Democrats were particularly prevalent in northern and western Pennsylvania where anti-slavery sentiment was stronger and the need for amicable Southern trade relations less important. This is not to say that these individuals were of the same moral character as Republicans when it came to racial tolerance. In a senate

²¹ Curtin netted 262,346 votes compared with Foster's 230,230. This calculates to a 3.3% margin of victory.

²² Michael Fitzgibbon Holt, *Forging a Majority: The Formation of the Republican Party in Pittsburgh, 1848 – 1860* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1969), 273.

²³ The complete election results for Pennsylvania's presidential election numbers were as follows: Lincoln – 268,030; Fusion (Breckinridge) – 178,871; Douglas straight ticket – 16,765; Bell – 12,776. Lincoln's tally comprised 56.3% of the total vote in the Commonwealth.

²⁴ Holt, *Forging a Majority*, 270.

speech delivered in February 1860, Douglas likely spoke for most of his followers when he articulated his views on race and government:

[I]n my opinion, this government was made by white men for the benefit of white men and their posterity for ever, and should be administered by white men, and by none other whatsoever....I am in favor of throwing the Territories open to all the white men, and all the negroes, too, that choose to go, and then allow the white men to govern the Territory. I would not let one of the negroes, free or slave, either vote or hold office anywhere, where I had the right, under the Constitution, to prevent it.²⁵

Nonetheless, Douglas Democrats were appalled by the Buchanan administration's heavy-handed support for the Lecompton Constitution and the Supreme Court's *Dred Scott* decision, which eliminated Douglas's doctrine of popular sovereignty. Furthermore, these Democrats were less apt to tolerate Southern radicalism and were more likely to support coercion to maintain the integrity of the Union. As historian Irwin F. Greenberg explains, "Douglas' followers were willing to grant some concessions on the slavery question, but would support the use of force to uphold the authority of the Federal Government."²⁶

The unequivocal leader of this sect in Pennsylvania was *Philadelphia Press* editor John W. Forney. Forney had broken with the president in 1857 when Buchanan failed to reward him with a patronage office or control of the administration's Washington organ. From this rebuff, Forney turned to the Douglas Democrats who helped secure for him, with the help of a handful of Republicans, the position of clerk in the House of Representatives. Perhaps out of opportunism, Forney became a Republican disciple after the 1860 election and converted his *Press* into one of the most pro-Lincoln newspapers in

²⁵ Henry M. Flint, *Life of Stephen A. Douglas, to Which Are Added His Speeches and Reports* (Philadelphia: John E. Potter and Company, 1863), 175.

²⁶ Irwin F. Greenberg, "Charles Ingersoll: The Aristocrat as Copperhead," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 93:2 (April 1969): 195.

the state. Apparently, his pro-Republican sympathies were present even when he led the movement for a Douglas straight ticket in September 1860. “I had done my utmost to elect him [Lincoln] President of the United States by the only way in my power,” asserted Forney in his 1881 memoirs, “and that was by supporting the straight Douglas electoral ticket in Pennsylvania.”²⁷ Other Douglas Democrats included former Philadelphia mayor Richard Vaux; Philadelphia ward boss Lewis Cassidy; anti-Lecompton Congressman John Hickman; and *Harrisburg Patriot and Union* editor Richard J. Haldeman. These political leaders and their followers would compose the War Democratic wing of the party’s continuum after hostilities began. Some, including Forney and Hickman, would concede to outright conversion to the Republican party when they found Democratic urgings for conciliation with wayward Southerners too submissive.

The second major group within the Democratic schism was the Breckinridge Moderates. Breckinridge supporters held two distinct advantages in the state. First, they controlled the Democratic State Committee, which shaped the party’s policies and selected its candidates for various state and local offices. Second, the most experienced of Pennsylvania’s politicians were almost unanimously in favor of Breckinridge’s election in the 1860 presidential campaign.²⁸ This sentiment stemmed from the enduring power of the Buchanan machine. Although Buchanan never ingratiated himself with an overwhelming majority of Pennsylvania’s Democratic rank-and-file voters, the power of

²⁷ John W. Forney, *Anecdotes of Public Men*, vol. 2 (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1881), 421-422.

²⁸ Breckinridge’s campaign platform primarily pledged protection of slaveholder rights in the territories. Although many of his backers were Southern rights extremists who voiced calls for secession, Breckinridge’s own views were more moderate and allowed him to receive significant support in the North. Although he lost the 1860 presidential election, he was elected to the U.S. Senate by the Kentucky legislature that same year and served in that body from March to December 1861. At that point, Breckinridge accepted a commission as brigadier general in the Confederate army and participated in a number of the Civil War’s chief battles. See Ezra J. Warner, *Generals in Gray: Lives of the Confederate Commanders* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1959), 34-35.

patronage and the prospect of future political plums under a Breckinridge administration ensured that most of the state's political leaders remained loyal to the President. By maintaining fidelity to Buchanan, these veteran officeholders were guaranteed job security so long as their campaigning efforts brought victory to the President's preferred successor.²⁹ Breckinridge adherents were invariably hostile to the disruptive actions of Forney and the Douglas Democrats. Many felt (perhaps rightly so, considering Forney's conversion to Republicanism) that leaders of the Douglas Democrats were surreptitiously guiding their supporters into the ranks of the Republican party in return for political favors. The pro-Breckinridge *Philadelphia Pennsylvanian* charged that the Douglas Democratic sect had been maneuvering toward the rival party since the start of the 1860 campaigning:

From the moment it took its position in the late canvass, it has been gravitating with constant...approaches to Black Republicanism. It hoped, by adroit management, to draw its partisans on with it, imperceptibly to themselves, and at the lucky moment to betray them all into the hands of the enemy. How many it has succeeded in debauching and selling we have no means of knowing – enough perhaps to fill its contract and to entitle it to its reward from the Abolitionists.³⁰

On questions of slavery, Breckinridge Moderates were more likely to concede Southerners' rights to bring their slaves into the territories and less likely to advocate "the use of force against the seceded states."³¹ Nonetheless, most Democrats of this sect were loath to witness the secession of the Southern states, preferred to maintain the integrity of the Union, and opposed the radical tendencies of both Northern abolitionists and Southern fire-eaters. Because of their moderate views, these Democrats were the most likely to vacillate between the War and Peace wings of the party once the Civil War

²⁹ See Holt, *Forging a Majority*, 270-71.

³⁰ *Philadelphia Press*, January 1, 1861, 2. Quoted in, Elwyn Burns Robinson, "The *Press*: President Lincoln's Philadelphia Organ," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 65:2 (April 1941): 158.

³¹ Greenberg, "Charles Ingersoll," 195.

commenced, depending upon the successes or failures of the war effort and the policies of the Lincoln administration.

The leaders of Pennsylvania's Breckinridge Moderates were the most numerous and powerful of the three segments of the continuum. Before and during the war, Pennsylvania's Moderates occupied some of the most important offices in the nation. Besides President James Buchanan, Jeremiah S. Black of Dauphin County served as U.S. Attorney General from March 1857 to December 1860 and as Secretary of State from December 1860 to March 1861. Former governor William Bigler of Cumberland County was one of the state's senators from January 1856 to March 1861. Charles Buckalew, who was rewarded by President Buchanan with a diplomatic post to Ecuador from 1858 to 1861, was considered to serve as the running mate to Breckinridge in 1860, and later became U.S. senator from March 1863 to March 1869.³² Charles John Biddle rose to the rank of colonel in a Pennsylvania regiment early in the war and in October 1861 was elected to the Thirty-seventh Congress, serving in that capacity until 1863. In the days after the 1860 presidential election, Breckinridge Moderates exhibited a characteristic aversion to abolitionism, willingness to grant the South guarantees on slavery expansion, and tacit acknowledgement of the right to secede tempered with a genuine preference to maintain the integrity of the Union. While serving as Attorney General, Jeremiah S. Black conceded to a friend that "a few hardened, wicked ribbald [sic] infidels" were pressing abolitionism too far but asserted that the real threat that the abolitionists posed to

³² The seemingly trivial assignment in South America was in fact a reward for Buckalew, who was ailing at the time and required the dry, mountain air for his health. See William Willits Hummel, "Charles R. Buckalew: Democratic Statesman in a Republican Era," Ph.D. diss., University of Pittsburgh, 1963, 202.

the Union was “overstate[d] somewhat.”³³ Black ultimately lamented that the Southern states’ intransigence would likely lead “[t]his great country...to be dismembered. The constitution that Washington gave his approbation to is to be broken up and destroyed.”³⁴ Bigler expressed similar views in a speech delivered on December 11, 1860 in the Senate. Willing to “offer up” any “sacrifice in the cause of the Union,” Bigler recommended that “if needs be...let the territory be divided from ocean to ocean; north of which slavery shall not go, south of which it shall not be disturbed. Let us have a deep gulf or a high wall between the North and South on this subject.”³⁵ Although unwilling to refute the right of secession, Bigler appealed to his Southern colleagues to reconsider such a disastrous course. “[E]ven if [secession] be a right,” Bigler reasoned, “is it just to the other States to resort to that remedy until redress has been sought and denied at the very fountain of political power and authority, and through the precise channels in which this Confederacy was formed? I think not.”³⁶ Although these Breckinridge Moderates often folded under the pressures of Southern demands to suppress abolitionist sentiment and expand slavery rights, they demonstrated a degree of resolve to maintain the Union.

The final group within the Democratic spectrum, the Breckinridge Conservatives, exhibited less resolve when it came to the Union’s preservation. The leaders of the Conservatives generally were of the social elite, hailed from Philadelphia, and did not hold many important public offices. However, they made their views known through speeches and pamphlets that indicated their status as the vocal minority of the

³³ Jonathan W. White, “A Pennsylvania Judge Views the Rebellion: The Civil War Letters of George Washington Woodward,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 129:2 (April 2005): 209-210.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 208.

³⁵ Speech of William Bigler in the U.S. Senate, *Congressional Globe*, 36th Congress, 2nd session (December 11, 1861), 47-48.

³⁶ *Ibid*, 47.

Democratic party. These individuals “were tied closely to the South both socially and economically and shared Southern attitudes on the issues of race and slavery.”³⁷ In general, the Breckinridge Conservatives had a stake in maintaining good relations with the South. Some were manufacturers in Philadelphia, the city which led the nation in selling finished goods to the Southern states. Others were born in the South or had married women from Dixie. Still others held land and even slaves in the South and preferred to keep their investments intact. Of course, these Conservative leaders had a loyal following of working-class supporters. In Philadelphia alone, 100,000 laborers worked in the city’s factories and feared unemployment should ties with Southern trade be severed.³⁸ Because few Breckinridge Conservatives held notable public offices, their support for Buchanan’s preferred successor was given out of more genuine support for his Democratic traditionalism and pro-Southern sympathies. Conservatives were vehemently anti-abolitionist and believed that the South had a manifest right to slavery protections and expansion rights. Before the war began, these individuals often expressed their belief that Pennsylvania was more closely tied to the South rather than New England. Some even recommended that the Commonwealth should secede along with its Southern neighbors. Once the war began, these Breckinridge Conservatives would retain their sympathies toward the South, obstruct the Lincoln administration’s war policies, and urge an end to the hostilities, sometimes acting with treasonous design. These individuals would compose the Peace Democratic or Copperhead wing of the party.

³⁷ Russell Weigley, “A Peaceful City: Public Order in Philadelphia from Consolidation Through the Civil War,” in *The Peoples of Philadelphia: A History of Ethnic Groups and Lower Class Life, 1790 – 1940*, eds. Allen F. Davis and Mark Haller (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1973), 160.

³⁸ Shankman, *Pennsylvania Antiwar Movement*, 39.

Among this group's leading figures were some of the most loyal Buchanan and Breckinridge adherents and outspoken foes of abolitionism and the Republican party. Philadelphian William B. Reed, for instance, who most recently served as minister to China, had campaigned actively for Buchanan in 1856, considering him "the most congenial candidate to national men" and decrying that abolitionism had "intoxicated the brain" of many Northerners.³⁹ During the 1860 campaign, Reed supported Breckinridge as the candidate to "conduce to our social and political well-being, and to our material interests."⁴⁰ In that same speech, Reed separated himself from the Breckinridge Moderates by siding with the South in the sectionalism controversy and voicing hostility toward the abolitionist radicalism that he believed was seizing the North. "[I]n the seventy years of the Union... what wrong [has] South Carolina ever [done] to Pennsylvania?" Reed asked. "The South has never stolen any of our property from us. It generally befriends us. When the North or the Northwest tries to take away our poor little Mint or Naval Asylum, Southern men vote with us."⁴¹ Because of the North's "vexatious, irritating, agitating fanaticism," Reed concluded that "Pennsylvania's true interests, if she only knew them, do not lie in that direction, but in the South and Southwest, from which Republicanism, and Lincolnism, and Abolitionism, if triumphant, will forever divide us."⁴²

Reed's views matched those of another Philadelphia aristocrat, the influential attorney and campaigner Charles Ingersoll. In the aftermath of the John Brown raid on

³⁹ William B. Reed, *The Appeal to Pennsylvania: A Speech Delivered at a Meeting of the Friends of Buchanan and Breckenridge, at Somerset, Pennsylvania, September 24, 1856* (Philadelphia: 1856), 4-5.

⁴⁰ William B. Reed, *Speech of the Hon. William B. Reed, on the Presidential Question: Delivered before the National Democratic Association* (Philadelphia: 1860), 3.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 12.

Harper's Ferry in December 1859, Ingersoll spoke at a Philadelphia rally and advocated that abolitionists be prohibited from delivering public speeches because of the sectionalizing and treasonous nature of their content.⁴³ During the 1860 campaign, Ingersoll urged that concerning the slavery expansion controversy "the Democratic North must yield every inch of the ground" to slaveholders because of the South's role in acquiring southwestern territories during the Mexican War.⁴⁴ Another of Pennsylvania's Breckinridge Conservatives was Robert Tyler, the Virginia-born son of President John Tyler, who as early as 1850 had expressed that "salvation" for the South could only be found "in one line of policy, terrible as it may appear, and that is *secession*."⁴⁵ As a native Virginian, Tyler brought to Pennsylvania his devotion to states' rights and limited government. In January 1860, he apprehended that the federal government could be "perverted into an instrument of oppression and insult to the people of Pennsylvania" and feared that the Republican party would warp "into a military Dictatorship or despotism, in which...the independence of each State...would be overwhelmed and subordinated by the combined force and corruptions of armed and consolidated power."⁴⁶ State supreme court justice George W. Woodward was one of the most important Breckinridge Conservatives. In a letter on the secession crisis written to Attorney General Black, Woodward demonstrated a radical desire for his native state's future. "As a Northern man," reasoned Woodward, "I cannot in justice condemn the South for withdrawing from

⁴³ Greenberg, "Charles Ingersoll," 193.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 194.

⁴⁵ Philip Gerald Auchampaugh, *Robert Tyler: Southern Rights Champion, 1847 – 1866, A Documentary Study Chiefly of Antebellum Politics* (Duluth, MN: Himan Stein, 1934), 20-21. After graduating from the College of William and Mary, Robert Tyler established a law practice in Philadelphia in the 1830s. After serving as his father's private secretary in the White House (1841 – 1845), Tyler returned to Philadelphia where he became a leader in the state's Democracy. The peak of his political career in Pennsylvania came in 1859 when he was selected as chairman of the Democratic State Committee.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 306-07, 309.

the Union. I believe they have been loyal to the Union formed by the Constitution – secession is not disloyalty to that, for that no longer exists. The North has extinguished it....Dissuade [the South] if you can, but if you can't, let them go in peace. I wish Pennsylvania could go with them. They are our brethren.”⁴⁷ The Breckinridge Conservatives seemed to sense the irreconcilable gulf between North and South better than their Moderate counterparts. Nonetheless, if the Union were indeed in peril, they preferred to see their native state throw its lot with a South they deemed more amenable to their interests than their abolitionist neighbors to the North.

* * * *

During the interval between Lincoln's election and the attack on Fort Sumter, Pennsylvania's Democracy shifted almost unanimously in favor of compromise, peace, and a policy of noncoercion toward the South. Although nearly all Democrats of the proto-continuum preferred peace, the three major segments differed in their acquiescence to Southern demands. Douglas Democrats continued to look to the Little Giant for guidance. Douglas, still a powerful political figure in the Senate despite his recent electoral defeat, attempted to straddle twin goals during the secession winter. As historian Robert W. Johannsen explains, “[n]ot only the Union had to be restored, but the [Democratic] party had to be rebuilt, and Douglas saw these as wholly compatible tasks. Democracy and Union were still one in his mind.”⁴⁸ Because the Republican party was a strictly Northern political faction, Douglas saw the Democracy as the only entity that could achieve accord between the sections. In the Senate, he worked assiduously with William Bigler and Kentuckian John J. Crittenden to formulate a series of compromise

⁴⁷ White, “Letters of Woodward,” 207.

⁴⁸ Robert W. Johannsen, *Stephen A. Douglas* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1973), 854.

amendments amenable to Southern demands for additional slaveholders' assurances.⁴⁹ Nonetheless, Douglas retained a steely resolve to threaten coercion should the Southern states shun compromise efforts and resort to open rebellion. "We are told that the authority of the Government must be vindicated; that the Union must be preserved; that rebellion must be put down," Douglas announced to the Senate in January 1861. "I agree to all this....No man shall go further than I to maintain the just authority of the Government, to preserve the Union, to put down rebellion, to suppress insurrection, and enforce the laws."⁵⁰ After Lincoln's inauguration in March, Douglas drifted closer toward the new administration and appeared to desire a place in the new president's inner circle. "I do not wish it to be inferred from anything I have said or omitted to say," Douglas explained, "that I have any political sympathy with [Lincoln's] administration...but on this one question, that of preserving the Union by a peaceful solution of our present difficulties...if I understand his true intent and meaning, I am with him."⁵¹ At this early stage, Douglas' supporters were limited because of a widespread reluctance among Democrats to endorse an ideology very similar to the opposition Republicans. Those adherents he did retain, however, would form the nucleus of the War Democrats and would gain followers among the Moderates after hostilities began. Once compromise measures had failed, they were more likely to support Lincoln's war policies and tolerate the administration's curtailment of civil liberties.

Breckinridge supporters meanwhile toiled to set forth a coherent policy toward the wayward South during the secession winter. Although Breckinridge Moderates and

⁴⁹ These amendments were heavily weighted toward the South and had little hope of passage because of Republican majorities in Congress.

⁵⁰ Flint, *Life of Stephen A. Douglas*, 204.

⁵¹ Johannsen, *Stephen A. Douglas*, 846.

Conservatives were unwilling to commit to coercion should compromise measures fail, only the Moderates were disinclined to condone the peaceable division of the Union. Initially, the Buchanan White House struggled mightily to take a dispassionate approach to the crisis and to defuse the extremism of Northern abolitionists and Southern fire-eaters. In his fourth and final annual message to Congress on December 3, 1860, Buchanan doled out criticisms to fanatics of both extremes. “[T]he incessant and violent agitation of the slavery question throughout the North,” argued Buchanan, “has at length produced its malign influence on the slaves and inspired them with vague notions of freedom. Hence a sense of security no longer exists around the family altar.”⁵² Southern radicals did not escape censure, however. Buchanan reminded Southern discontents that “[t]he late Presidential election...has been held in strict conformity with its express provisions. How, then, can the result justify a revolution to destroy this very Constitution?...The stern duty of administering the vast and complicated concerns of this Government affords in itself a guaranty that [Lincoln] will not attempt any violation of a clear constitutional right.”⁵³ Attorney General Black further developed the Moderates’ stance in the looming secession crisis. His legal opinion on secession simultaneously prohibited the constitutional right to secede while forbidding the federal government to intervene in the protection of public property within a state that was not under attack. Black advised Buchanan that he could resort to the use of the militia to enforce federal laws but only with “strict subordination to the civil authority, since it is only in the aid of

⁵² Moore, *Works of Buchanan*, 11:7. Quote from Buchanan’s Fourth Annual Message delivered December 3, 1860.

⁵³ *Ibid*, 11:9.

the latter [the civil authority] that the former [the militia] can act at all.”⁵⁴ Indeed, Buchanan and Black walked a fine constitutional line in order to retain a tenuous peace until Lincoln’s inauguration.

Meanwhile, conservative Pennsylvanians engaged in a series of peace rallies throughout the state during the winter and called upon leading Democrats to use their oratory to quell the growing sectional resentment. Philadelphia mayor Alexander Henry called for an assembly of conservative-minded citizens to meet at Independence Square on December 13 to address the crisis and discuss means by which to dissuade Southerners from their destructive aims. Under a banner reading “Concession before Secession,” an impressive gathering “numbering tens of thousands” congregated around Independence Hall to hear an array of political luminaries.⁵⁵ The speakers unanimously resolved that concessions were vital to the maintenance of the Union. Some advocated a determination to vigorously enforce the contentious Fugitive Slave Act, while others recommended the repeal of Pennsylvania’s personal liberty laws. Breckinridge Conservative George W. Woodward painted the South’s use of slaves as “an incalculable blessing” to the North and “an indispensable element of all our future prosperity.”⁵⁶ Concerning the question of secession, Woodward insisted on peaceable separation of the Southern states if no other course of action could be agreed upon. Because of the poisonous “sophisms of infidels and Abolitionists,” he adduced that the South was being driven to contemplate secession. “The law of self-defense includes rights of *property* as well as of *person*,” he asserted, “and it appears to me that there must be a time...when

⁵⁴ John T. Hubbell, “Jeremiah Sullivan Black and the Great Secession Winter,” *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine* 57:3 (1974): 258.

⁵⁵ *New York Times*, December 14, 1860, 1.

⁵⁶ George W. Woodward, Speech of the Hon. George W. Woodward, Delivered at the Great Union Meeting in Independence Square, Philadelphia, December 13, 1860” (Philadelphia: 1863), 9.

slaveholders may lawfully fall back on their natural rights, and employ in defence [sic] of their property whatever means of protection they possess or can command.”⁵⁷ With this bold assessment, Woodward combined his abhorrence of abolitionist agitation with his conservative, states’ rights belief that secession was legitimate and constitutional. Although pro-Republican newspapers branded the Philadelphia Union meeting as “craven, cringing, sycophantic, and humiliating,” conservative organs lauded the efforts of the participants.⁵⁸ “It was fit,” proclaimed the *Lancaster Intelligencer*, “that in this City of Independence the initiative of that grand conservative step which, if anything may, is to conciliate the South and restore harmony to our country.”⁵⁹ More peace meetings were held in cities across the state for several weeks after the Independence Square gathering, indicating the pervasiveness of conciliatory sentiment. Although most were attended by Democrats of all stripes, Breckinridge Conservatives organized at least one meeting that demonstrated their uniquely ultraconservative views.

In response to a January 1861 rally held in support of the government’s defense of Fort Sumter, Breckinridge Conservatives organized a meeting at Philadelphia’s National Hall on January 16. Attended by about 4,000 supporters, the assembly featured keynote speeches by some of Philadelphia’s conservative elites. A banner reading “NO CIVIL WAR. JUSTICE TO THE SOUTH. EQUAL RIGHTS IN THE TERRITORIES” stretched across the stage where anti-coercionist orators like Reed, Ingersoll, and attorneys George M. Wharton and Charles Macalester expressed their views. This meeting differed from other peace meetings held throughout the Commonwealth because of the speakers’ expressed support for Pennsylvania’s secession from the Union under

⁵⁷ Ibid, 6.

⁵⁸ *Pennsylvania Daily Telegraph* [Harrisburg], December 20, 1860, 2.

⁵⁹ *Lancaster Intelligencer*, December 18, 1860, 2.

certain circumstances. For instance, Reed indicated that Pennsylvania would “be always ready to pacificate” tensions between the sections “whether she be detached [from the Union] or not – whether she is compelled for a time to go with the North or South, or stand by herself.”⁶⁰ Wharton asserted that his native state’s “interests are with the South – mine are at any rate. The South and the West are our best friends and if there is to be a breaking up, we shall have a word to say as to which we shall go with. We can’t be brought up by Boston and New York.”⁶¹ During the assembly, a series of resolutions were passed demonstrating the participants’ commitments to strict constitutional construction, the Crittenden Compromise, the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions, and allowing slaves in all United States territories. Most radical was a resolution authored by Reed himself:

That, in the deliberate judgment of the Democracy of Philadelphia, and, so far as we know it, of Pennsylvania, the dissolution of the Union, by the separation of the whole South... may release this Commonwealth to a large extent from the bonds which now connect her with the Confederacy, except so far as for temporary convenience she chooses to submit to them, and would authorize and require her citizens, through a Convention, to be assembled for that purpose, to determine with whom her lot should be cast whether with the North and East, whose fanaticism has precipitated this misery upon us, or, with our brethren of the South, whose wrongs we feel as our own; or whether Pennsylvania should stand by herself, as a distinct community, ready when occasion offers to bind together the broken Union, and resume her place of loyalty and devotion.⁶²

Of course, sentiments expressed at the National Hall rally represented the views of only a small minority of Pennsylvanians, and Reed’s proposed secession convention would have been met with overwhelming opposition by Pennsylvanians of many political stripes. Nonetheless, the assembly indicates that Breckinridge Conservatives remained a determined, vocal minority of Pennsylvania’s electorate that at times refused to temper

⁶⁰ Quoted in Shankman, *Pennsylvania Antiwar Movement*, 42.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Philadelphia Press*, January 17, 1861, 3.

their radical views with the more reasonable stance proffered by Douglas Democrats and Breckinridge Moderates. Nascent Copperheadism, however inconsequential at this stage, had begun even before the war began.

With some Douglas Democrats perplexed and alienated by the Little Giant's apparent collaboration with the Lincoln administration and Breckinridge Conservatives too few to assume leadership of the party, Breckinridge Moderates took hold of the Democracy and asserted their own principles in the early months of 1861. Pennsylvania Moderates took their cue from Buchanan, who had grown more resolute since his December message to Congress. After the resignation of several Southern cabinet members and with the aid of his increasingly pro-coercion attorney general, Buchanan launched a newfound determination to deal more firmly with the Southern states already seceded or threatening to do so. In a special message delivered to Congress on January 8, 1861, Buchanan continued to assert that he had "no right to make aggressive war upon any State" but judged that he did have the "clear and undeniable" duty "to use military force defensively against those who resist the federal officers in the execution of their legal functions, and against those who assail the property of the federal government."⁶³ In keeping with Democratic efforts at concession, Buchanan continued to advocate slaveholders' rights as a conciliatory measure and urged Congress to legislate a compromise "by letting the north have exclusive control of the territories above a certain line, and to give southern institutions protection below that line."⁶⁴ The tone of Buchanan's message suggests that Black had a hand in its creation and indicates that the attorney general's increasingly vehement stand against Southern intransigence was being

⁶³ Moore, *Works of Buchanan*, 11:96. Quote from Buchanan's Special Message to Congress delivered January 8, 1861.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 11:97.

reflected by the president's policies. In a letter penned on January 17, Black exhibited a drift away from the traditionally conservative and conciliatory view of a Moderate Democrat toward a proto-War Democratic attitude. "It would undoubtedly be a great party move as between Democrats and Black Republicans to let the latter have a civil war of their own making," Black surmised. "But can we avoid doing something? Is not the business altogether beyond party considerations?...I am not in favor of war but I cannot resist the conviction that when war is made against us a moderate self-defense is righteous and proper."⁶⁵ Black's outlook epitomized the growing exasperation many Northern conservatives felt as conciliatory proposals continued to be ignored by the South's political leaders.

Most of Pennsylvania's Democratic politicians meanwhile continued to chart a middle course, advocating concessionary measures toward the South and a patriotic commitment to preserve the Union. On February 21, 1861, the Democratic State Convention assembled at Brant's Hall in Harrisburg to communicate the party's views in light of recent declarations of secession that brought the number of seceded states to seven. Among those gathered at the convention were a mix of Douglas Democrats and Breckinridge Moderates including 1860 gubernatorial contender Henry D. Foster, former Philadelphia mayor Richard Vaux, and railroad tycoon Asa Packer. The absence of Breckinridge Conservatives from the ranks of the delegates indicates the sect's numerical insignificance and the unpopularity of their opinions at this time. The convention opened with a speech by the Reverend John W. Nevin of Lancaster who saw in the meeting's assembly "the universal conservative spirit of Pennsylvania."⁶⁶ Nevin argued what had

⁶⁵ Hubbell, "Jeremiah Sullivan Black," 273.

⁶⁶ *Republican Compiler* [Gettysburg], March 18, 1861, 1.

been the sentiment of Moderates since the secession crisis began. Advocating continued efforts at concession, the reverend warned that if the North “will not consent to respect the Constitutional rights and reasonable demands of our brethren in the South – if we shut them up to the necessity of a general separation from us as the penalty and price of refusing to surrender basely what they conceive to be their proper, civil and political rights – let us not then be so insane as to think of compelling them to remain with us still.”⁶⁷ Convention delegates next set forth a series of resolutions that largely matched attitudes expressed during the peace rallies. They reaffirmed their commitment to uphold the Fugitive Slave Act, work toward a satisfactory compromise bill, and “prevent any attempt on the part of the Republicans in power to make any armed aggression upon the Southern States.”⁶⁸ Therefore, the Democracy largely retained a policy of moderation for the remainder of the secession winter until the outbreak of war in April.

* * * *

Between the election of Abraham Lincoln in November 1860 to the eve of the attack on Fort Sumter in April 1861, the Pennsylvania Democracy remained divided in their response to the secession crisis. The factions that developed during the 1860 campaign between Douglas and Breckinridge supporters remained after the election and created mixed responses to the Democracy’s attitude toward the wayward South. Democratic reaction to secession could be loosely classified into three major categories, all of which combined into a continuum that would materialize and mature once the Civil War began. Fundamentally, Douglas Democrats, Breckinridge Moderates, and Breckinridge Conservatives were the precursors to the War Democrats, Moderate

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ *Lancaster Intelligencer*, February 26, 1861, 2.

Democrats, and Peace Democrats, respectively. During the secession crisis, the far wings of the pre-war continuum temporarily lacked the ideological clout and political leadership to greatly influence the bulk of the electorate. Douglas Democrats, though less likely to give in to many Southern demands for compromise, found it difficult to endorse the Little Giant's tenuous cooperation with the Lincoln administration. These individuals were still the progeny of traditional Jacksonian beliefs that clashed with the spirit of Republican policy. During the secession winter, Douglas Democrats struggled to establish their identity. They stood unwilling to concede too much to the South while remaining equally reluctant to follow Douglas himself into loose collaboration with the Republican opposition. Although a sizeable part of the electorate, Pennsylvania's Douglas Democrats also faltered during this time because they lacked a powerful, charismatic leader within the state who could launch a political movement that encompassed both conservatism and a firm stand against Southern radicalism.

Breckinridge Conservatives, on the other hand, had vocal, influential leaders but lacked a large following that agreed with their ultraconservative views. The Conservatives maintained such a fanatic hostility to abolitionism and Republican sectionalism that they often expressed desires for Pennsylvania to reconsider its fidelity to its Northern neighbors. Although they remained more prescient in anticipating the irreconcilability of the secession crisis, their sympathies with the South attracted few Pennsylvania Democrats, most of whom remained offended by the South's aggression to secure slaveholders' rights and the region's anti-tariff stance. Ultimately, Breckinridge Moderates steered the Pennsylvania Democracy during the winter of 1860-1861. Because many of the Moderates in the state were Buchanan disciples reliant on Old

Buck's patronage, they dutifully reflected the president's policies. The Moderates were endowed with a host of experienced politicians, well-funded and ensconced within the state party machine. They aimed to present themselves to their constituents as devotees of the Union, advocates of conciliation and constitutionalism, and enemies of Northern and Southern radicalism. Although compromise remained their *modus operandi* through April 1861, some Moderates including Buchanan and Black took a barely perceptible shift toward a proto-War Democratic stance that would manifest itself vigorously after the Confederates' attack on Fort Sumter. Once war began, Democrats found themselves forced from the middle ground mentality that had characterized most party members during the secession crisis.

Chapter 2: The War Democrats Ascendant, Spring 1861 – Spring 1862

The fall of Fort Sumter on April 13, 1861 galvanized widespread patriotism in Pennsylvania and throughout the North. Diarist Sarah B. Wister of Philadelphia observed four days after the attack that “Chestnut Street is a sight; flags large & small flaunt from every building, the dry-goods shops have red white & blue materials draped together in their windows, in the ribbon stores the national colors hang in long streamers, and even [at] the book sellers place the red, white, and blue bindings [are arranged] together.”¹ The Southern attack on federal property confirmed that a policy of conciliation had failed and that war between North and South had commenced. In the weeks and months after Fort Sumter’s surrender, the Lincoln administration mustered the greatest degree of bipartisan support that it would enjoy for the remainder of the war. Another Philadelphia diarist, Sidney George Fisher, noted on April 18 that “[f]ortunately, the sentiments of the people are so generally loyal to the government that, tho [sic] we are to have the curse of civil war, we are not likely to suffer from the greater evil of partizan [sic] war among ourselves.”² In fact, a degree of “partizan war” had already begun, directed against leading Breckinridge Conservatives who had previously sympathized with the South. Two days after the attack on Fort Sumter, Fisher recorded that Philadelphia was “in a state of dangerous excitement. Several well-known persons who had openly expressed secession opinions had been assaulted in the streets. . . . Prominent individuals known to sympathize with the South are threatened.”³ For about a year after the Confederate attack, Republicans and most Democrats in Pennsylvania viewed the war as just and

¹ Fanny Kemble Wister, ed., “Sarah Butler Wister’s Civil War Diary,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 102:3 (July 1978): 277.

² Jonathan W. White, ed., *A Philadelphia Perspective: The Civil War Diary of Sidney George Fisher* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), 84.

³ *Ibid.*

demonstrated a commitment to fight. The most conservative Democrats were compelled to remain silent during this period, for fear of abuse from a near-united populace intent on subjugating Southern rebels. From April 1861 through Spring 1862, Pennsylvania's Democracy shifted decisively toward the War Democratic wing of the continuum, sweeping many Moderates into that camp and temporarily suppressing the Peace Democrats' pernicious antiwar sentiments.

Initial outrage to the attack on Fort Sumter manifested itself in violence against Southern sympathizers in Philadelphia, the bastion of Breckinridge Conservatives. On April 15, a large mob gathered, intent on exacting revenge against those Democrats who had once expressed fondness for the South. "Thousands assembled furious at the news of the surrender," recorded Wister, "& swearing revenge on all disunionists or disaffected. They marched through the streets their numbers swelling as they went, & visited the houses, stores & offices of some of the leading Loco Focos who of course have been especially odious in the last few days."⁴ Among the first victims was editor Henry Brent, whose pro-secessionist newspaper, *The Palmetto Flag*, had recently begun publication. The mob gathered at the printing office and threatened to demolish the establishment unless Brent agreed to display the American flag as a gesture of loyalty. Brent complied and Mayor Henry arrived to quell the disturbance, beseeching the crowd "to stand by your flag and protect it at all hazards; but in doing so remember the rights due your fellow citizens and their private property."⁵ *The Palmetto Flag* suspended publication forthwith. In the next few days, mobs also visited the homes of leading peace advocates and demanded appropriate displays of fidelity to the Union. Among those targeted was

⁴ Wister, "Wister's Diary," 275. The term "Loco Foco" is an opprobrious nickname for Democrat.

⁵ George Henry Preble, *Our Flag: Origin and Progress of the Flag of the United States of America* (Albany, NY: Joel Munsell, 1872), 358.

William B. Reed, who was away at court when the mob arrived. In his absence, a black servant procured an American flag and waved it in front of the crowd. Major General Robert Patterson, a hero of the Mexican War and owner of sugar and cotton plantations in Louisiana, was also targeted. Patterson enthusiastically displayed the Stars and Stripes and announced his willingness to lead the mob into battle. Patriotic Philadelphians were especially incensed at the continued presence of the Southern-born Robert Tyler in their city. On April 17, a crowd gathered at Independence Square demanding Tyler's lynching. In fear for his life, Tyler asked Mayor Henry for police protection but eventually fled to Richmond where he was appointed Register of the Southern Confederacy.⁶ As a result of the mob violence in the city, "Philadelphians critical of the war were careful not to express their views in public."⁷ Through intimidation, the Peace Democratic wing of the continuum was effectively silenced.

Newspaper reports of the events in Philadelphia naturally reflected the political bias of the editor. Forney's *Philadelphia Press*, which was fast becoming the pro-Lincoln organ in the Commonwealth, lauded the actions of the mobs. Forney extolled Philadelphians' sentiments of "strong love of the Union and its associations which has been seated in the popular heart, and which threatens, now that the Union has been menaced and its flag insulted, to vent itself in deeds of mutiny and rage upon all who have winked at treason or encouraged secession."⁸ The *Press* happily reported that "[w]hat appals [sic] the Secessionists most is...the fearful unity of the people of the Free States. The[y] expected discord and dissention they had been taught to believe by the Tylers and the William B. Reeds, and the George M. Whartons....Even the Breckinridge

⁶ Shankman, *Pennsylvania Antiwar Movement*, 64-65; Auchampaugh, *Robert Tyler*, 340.

⁷ Shankman, *Pennsylvania Antiwar Movement*, 69.

⁸ *Philadelphia Press*, April 16, 1861, 2.

men are compelled, to save their reputation...to exhibit the most ardent devotion for the country.”⁹ Democratic and conciliation-minded newspapers lamented the recent events and cautioned against mob violence. The *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin* warned the rowdies that “the innocent were quite as likely to suffer as the guilty” and that “[t]he cause of the Union is damaged rather than strengthened by [such] acts of lawlessness.”¹⁰ On May 7, the *Lancaster Intelligencer* reported “an outrageous attack” directed at Democratic Senator James Bayard of Delaware as he and his family returned to their Philadelphia home after concluding a business trip in New Orleans. A mob, suspecting Bayard was colluding with Confederates, surrounded the senator’s coach and blasted him with epithets until the police dispersed the crowd. The *Intelligencer* decried that “no man is safe either in his person or property; and in all such cases of violence the strong arm of the law ought to be stretched forth in defence [sic] of the citizen, and to severely punish the guilty offender against peace and good order.”¹¹ Although the Democratic press in the Commonwealth remained protective of assailed politicians and opposed to violence against suspected Peace Democrats, few continued to advocate moderation toward the wayward South or a peaceful separation of the Union.

In the days after the attack on Fort Sumter, no Democrat more vehemently supported military action against the South than Stephen A. Douglas. Although he had worked earnestly for compromise during the secession winter, he wholeheartedly supported Lincoln’s war policy so long as it remained bounded by constitutional measures. The president arranged a meeting with Douglas on April 14, at which the men

⁹ Ibid, April 30, 1861, 2.

¹⁰ *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, April 16, 1861, 2; *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, May 7, 1861, 2. Quoted in Shankman, *Pennsylvania Antiwar Movement*, 65.

¹¹ *Lancaster Intelligencer*, May 14, 1861, 2.

determined principal strategic locations in the North and discussed Lincoln's proposed call for volunteers to suppress the rebellion.¹² Douglas released a statement to the press concerning his discussion with the president which verified Douglas' commitment to a Republican-led war policy. The Associated Press published the content of the report, which stated that Douglas "was unalterably opposed to the Administration in all its political issues, [but] he was prepared to fully sustain the President in the exercise of all his constitutional functions to preserve the Union, maintain the Government, and defend the Federal Capital....The Capital was in danger, and must be defended at all hazards, and at any expense of men and money."¹³ Because Douglas still commanded a significant majority of Pennsylvania's Democrats, it is reasonable that most of his followers "had lined up, quickly and in the face of all promises to the contrary, side by side with Lincoln and the 'Black Republicans.'"¹⁴ Douglas, in fact, made it even more difficult to remain a Democratic bystander during the crisis. Upon a return to Illinois, Douglas was invited to speak at the National Hall in Chicago on May 1 where he laid down the gauntlet to all Northern Democrats. "The conspiracy is now known," announced Douglas. "Armies have been raised, war is levied to accomplish it. There are only two sides to the question. Every man must be for the United States or against them. There can be no neutrals in this war; only *patriots or traitors*."¹⁵ In 1861, nothing but

¹² Presciently, Douglas recommended that Lincoln call for 200,000 volunteers. On April 15, Lincoln's issued a proclamation calling for only 75,000. Johannsen, *Stephen A. Douglas*, 859-60.

¹³ David W. Lusk, *Politics and Politicians: A Succinct History of the Politics of Illinois from 1856 to 1884* (Springfield, IL: H.W. Rokker, 1884), 138.

¹⁴ Dell, *War Democrats*, 60. Dell estimates that Douglas' strength in the 1860 presidential election was about sixty percent of Pennsylvania's Democratic total. Nonetheless, speculation is difficult because of the Democratic "Fusion" ticket that combined the Douglas and Breckinridge votes.

¹⁵ John D. Philbrick, *The American Union Speaker; Containing Standard and Recent Selections in Prose and Poetry* (Boston: Taggard and Thompson, 1868), 407.

wholehearted support for the fledgling war effort could save a Democrat from charges of treason.

The budding War Democratic cause suffered a setback with the premature death of Stephen A. Douglas on June 3, 1861. The Little Giant, perhaps at the apex of his influence, succumbed to typhoid fever, exacerbated by a lifetime of cigar smoking and hard drinking. Newspapers of all political stripes lamented his loss. Forney's *Press* acknowledged that Douglas was "the recognized exponent of an immense portion of his countrymen" who "ignored all mere partisan considerations, and promptly stepped forward to encourage and support the Administration in the energetic measures which were absolutely necessary to rescue the Government from destruction."¹⁶ Forney, a Douglas Democrat-turned-Republican, also noted the unlikelihood of Democratic resurgence with the loss of Douglas. "[I]t is, of course, evident," the *Press* averred, "that Stephen A. Douglas was the representative of the only relic of the old Democratic party which, in the free States, could possibly have regained political power and vitality."¹⁷ Even publications that would later emerge as leading Copperhead organs noted Douglas' loss with sorrow and recognized him as a unifying figure between the Democracy and the ruling Republicans. The *Democratic Watchman* [Bellefonte] noted that "[i]n the troubles that beset the country...Mr. Douglas was the earnest friend of the Constitution and the Union."¹⁸ The *Republican Compiler* [Gettysburg] reported that his death "caused emotions of sadness throughout the whole country" and that Douglas should be remembered as "a statesman and a patriot" akin to the likes of "Webster, Jackson, [and]

¹⁶ *Philadelphia Press*, June 4, 1861, 2.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Democratic Watchman* [Bellefonte], June 13, 1861, 2.

Clay.”¹⁹ The ultraconservative *Huntingdon Globe* acknowledged Douglas as a man who “was looked up to with more confidence as having it in his heart and in his power to assist to a greater extent than any other in bringing back to our distracted country a speedy, happy and permanent peace.”²⁰ One month after Douglas’ death, Forney delivered a eulogy to his former chief in Washington. Lauding Douglas’ “wonderful versatility, [and] the vast amount of labor he performed,” Forney urged his listeners to follow the spirit of Douglas’ recent bipartisanship by “no longer [being] deceived by wicked and ambitious men. Remember that every appeal to party against the Government is an argument intended to demoralize the energies of the present Executive and his ministers.”²¹ Forney used the occasion of the senator’s death to encourage Democrats to back the efforts of the Lincoln administration.

For its part, the Lincoln administration recognized the value in appointing Pennsylvania Democrats to positions of high rank in the fledgling armies being created to suppress the rebellion during the spring and summer of 1861. Although this practice did not guarantee the appointment of competent commanders, it did seal a bond between War Democrats and Republicans. Upon Lincoln’s first call for troops on April 15, Robert Patterson made good on his pledge to lead troops against the South. He was appointed major general of Pennsylvania Volunteers and assigned to command the Department of Pennsylvania. At that time, Patterson was seventy-one years old and lacked the verve he had exhibited during the Mexican War. In his sole Civil War campaign, Patterson failed

¹⁹ *Republican Compiler* [Gettysburg], June 10, 1861, 2.

²⁰ *Huntingdon Globe*, June 4, 1861, 2.

²¹ John W. Forney, *Eulogy upon the Hon. Stephen A. Douglas, Delivered at the Smithsonian Institute, Washington, July 3, 1861* (Philadelphia: Ringwalt and Brown, 1861), 6, 17. Forney’s support for the Lincoln administration did not come solely through magnanimity. Forney was rewarded for his loyalty when Lincoln secured for the *Press* editor the post of secretary of the Senate soon after delivering the Douglas eulogy.

to act promptly in capturing the arsenal town of Harper's Ferry, Virginia, freeing Confederates under General Joseph Johnston to reinforce beleaguered rebels at Manassas, resulting in a Union defeat at the First Battle of Bull Run on July 21, 1861. Patterson was severely censured for his ineptitude, honorably discharged, and mustered out of service later that month.²² William Buel Franklin, a young engineer who graduated first in his class at West Point, was in charge of constructing the Capitol dome at the time hostilities broke out. He was commissioned colonel of the 12th U.S. Infantry Regulars on May 14, and appointed brigadier general of volunteers three days later.²³ Despite expressing anti-Republican comments as the war continued, Franklin would serve through the duration of the war capably, but not spectacularly. Perhaps the finest Pennsylvania Democrat-soldier was Winfield Scott Hancock, of Norristown. Serving in California when the war broke out, Hancock returned east and was appointed brigadier general of volunteers in September 1861. Through the war, Hancock displayed brilliant leadership in many of the Army of the Potomac's most desperate battles. During his military service, Hancock wisely refrained from expressing his political opinions, though he emerged in the postwar years as the Democratic candidate in the 1880 presidential campaign.

Certainly the most influential Pennsylvania Democrat early in the war was George B. McClellan. Born in Philadelphia in 1826, McClellan enjoyed a brilliant antebellum career as a military engineer. Resigning from the army in 1857, he became chief engineer to the Illinois Central Railroad at which time he became an ardent disciple of Stephen Douglas. During the 1858 Illinois senatorial race that pitted Douglas against Lincoln, McClellan gave Douglas his private railway car in which to campaign and

²² McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 335, 339.

²³ Ezra J. Warner, *Generals in Blue: Lives of the Union Commanders* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1964), 159-60.

criticized the Republican's oratorical style as "rather a mass of anecdotes than of arguments."²⁴ When war broke out, McClellan accepted an offer from Ohio's Republican governor, William Dennison, Jr., to take command of the state's volunteers on April 23. McClellan commanded enough trust that just "three weeks later, such was [McClellan's] élan, efficiency in organization, capability, and personal magnetism, that President Lincoln, who had never seen him, was impelled to appoint him major general in the Regular Army, where he was outranked only by the aged and infirm General-in-Chief Winfield Scott."²⁵ During the spring and summer of 1861, McClellan's first campaign was in western Virginia where he used his forces to occupy this mostly loyal region. Although the operation was largely a success, McClellan exhibited his conservative bent in a proclamation he issued to the people of western Virginia on May 26. In it, he revealed his accommodation with slavery:

Notwithstanding all that has been said by the traitors to induce you to believe that our advent among you will be signalized by interference with your slaves, understand one thing clearly – not only will we abstain from all such interference, but we will, on the contrary, with an iron hand, crush any attempt at insurrection on their part. Now that we are in your midst, I call upon you to fly to arms and support the General Government.²⁶

Although this proclamation's stand on slavery essentially followed the Lincoln administration's policy at this stage of the war, it emphasized two important sentiments that most War Democrats shared. First, War Democrats had no interest in slavery's abolition and preferred to sustain it in areas where it existed in order to compel the rebellious states back into the Union. Second, War Democrats favored a war limited in

²⁴ Stephen W. Sears, "Lincoln and McClellan," in *Lincoln's Generals*, ed. Gabor S. Boritt (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 6.

²⁵ Warner, *Generals in Blue*, 291.

²⁶ United States War Department, *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 70 vols. in 128 parts (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1880 – 1901), series 1, vol. 2, 48-49. (Hereinafter cited as OR. All subsequent citations are from series 1.)

scope; that is, a war that did little to interfere with Southern noncombatants. Although participation by War Democrats in the military proved vital to a Republican-War Democrat accord, their conservatism and anti-abolitionism would later prove contrary to the Lincoln administration's war policies.

Republicans in Pennsylvania assuredly sensed the potential to absorb War Democrats into their ranks during the summer of 1861. To do so, however, would require the party to moderate its more radical views on slavery and war policy to appeal to a wider conservative base. Moreover, the Republicans would have to continue to shed their name in favor of the "Union party" appellation that drew greater numbers of War Democrats. Historian Christopher Dell argues that "[t]he Union party movement in Pennsylvania was inaugurated by Forney," with his July 3 eulogy for Douglas.²⁷ As a result of his pro-Union, anti-Peace Democrat remarks, Forney was able to merge his followers with those of the recently installed administration of Republican governor Andrew Curtin. Former Philadelphia mayor and Douglas devotee Richard Vaux prepared a lecture delivered on July 4, setting forth the basic sentiments of the War Democratic philosophy. "To-day secession is claimed to be the inherent right of the States," explained Vaux. "The people are preparing to settle this question forever. They are about to interpret the Constitution. This time it will be done with the ceremonial of battle, blood, victory, and retributive justice on treason....The Constitution will be preserved, and this will be accomplished by the people, interpreting what is a constitutional government of constitutional governments."²⁸ War Democrats largely matched the attitudes of most Republicans in the early stages of war before questions of

²⁷ Dell, *War Democrats*, 111.

²⁸ Richard Vaux, *The Integrity of American Politics, An Oration Delivered by Hon. Richard Vaux at the Girard College, on Fourth of July, 1861* (Philadelphia: McLaughlin Brothers, 1861), 15-16.

emancipation and suspension of civil liberties came to the fore. Union conventions composed of conservative Republicans and War Democrats met periodically to advance acceptable candidates for the upcoming 1861 elections. Nonetheless, no charismatic leader emerged among Pennsylvania's Unionist conservatives. This fact, along with military setbacks and alleged abuse of civil liberties, would ultimately hinder the movement and allow a Peace Democratic resurgence to build toward the end of the year.

* * * *

The First Battle of Bull Run on July 21, 1861 created much commotion among all Pennsylvanians struggling to grasp the particulars of the clash. News of the battle, as would be the case for all battles throughout the war, was jumbled as it reached the Commonwealth. Nonetheless, citizens soon learned the result was an ill omen for the Union cause. Sarah Butler Wister recorded in her diary a day after the battle that “[t]he whole town [Philadelphia] was in consternation: the riddle of the retreats in Virginia has been solved at last. We have had an overwhelming defeat at Manassas Junction.”²⁹ On July 23, Sidney George Fisher noted the realization that “everyone is impressed with the conviction that the war is a very stern and serious reality.”³⁰ Although the Union defeat was shocking to most, war weariness had not yet surfaced and patriotic sentiment still resonated strong, even among Democratic organs. The *Huntingdon Globe* reported that “[t]ens of thousands of our brave soldiers will fall before Washington can be taken. Hundreds of thousands yet at home will take up arms to save the Capitol from falling into the hands of the rebels.”³¹ Agitation, however, was directed at Philadelphia Democrat Robert Patterson, whose lackadaisical generalship was largely viewed as a deciding

²⁹ Wister, “Wister’s Diary,” 316.

³⁰ White, *Diary of Fisher*, 105.

³¹ *Huntingdon Globe*, July 23, 1861, 1.

factor in the Federals' defeat. Wister wrote on July 27 that "[t]he feeling with regard to Patterson is so strong in town that his house had to be guarded on Monday night [July 22], & there will be a very strong force posted there tonight also, as the mob declare they will burn him out despite mayor & police."³² Philadelphians likely associated Patterson's battlefield incompetence with his suspect loyalties that had been questioned by the mobs the previous April. Despite the astonishing victory by the Confederates, Bull Run ultimately had done little to encourage Peace Democratic sentiment in Pennsylvania. As historian Jennifer L. Weber explains, "the battle had little effect on the national morale," which compelled budding Copperheadism to remain, for the time being, under wraps.³³ Although battlefield setbacks did not yet inspire wholesale Democratic opposition to the war, Republican attacks on civil liberties nurtured a nascent Copperhead response during the closing months of 1861.

* * * *

On August 19, 1861, Sarah B. Wister recorded a frantic entry in her diary. "Just at 10 o'clock," she wrote, "the door bell rang & to my unutterable amazement my cousin Alfred came in, came to tell me that at 4 in the afternoon Father had been arrested by the U.S. Marshall on a special order from [Secretary of War Simon] Cameron, & taken to New York by the 6 o'clock line to be placed in Ft. Hamilton[, New York]."³⁴ Wister's father was the notorious Southern sympathizer, Pierce Butler. Butler, a native of South Carolina, had just returned to Philadelphia after visiting family in the South. As a Breckinridge Conservative and a virulent pro-secessionist, Butler's sentiments appalled most Philadelphians. His enemies had spread the rumor that Butler had already accepted

³² Wister, "Wister's Diary," 318.

³³ Weber, *Copperheads*, 34.

³⁴ Wister, "Wister's Diary," 321.

a commission in the Confederate army and had returned to Philadelphia to purchase arms for the South. These rumors, along with Butler's known opposition to the war, resulted in his arrest. He was held at Ft. Hamilton for over a month, although nothing incriminating was found in his personal papers. For the rest of the war, Butler remained a Southern sympathizer, but kept his personal feelings on the war largely to himself. This event was rooted in the Lincoln administration's disregard of the Supreme Court's ruling on the *Ex parte Merryman* case, delivered three months before. Chief Justice Roger Taney decreed that the president had no power to suspend the writ of *habeas corpus* nor to arrest and detain a noncombatant without due cause. Lincoln ignored the ruling, and continued to deny the writ periodically for the rest of the war. In his July 4 war message to Congress, Lincoln famously asked, "are all the laws but one to go unexecuted and the Government itself go to pieces lest that one be violated?"³⁵ Many Democrats, who had traditionally been the jealous guardians of constitutional rights, bristled at the thought of civil liberty usurpations like the Butler arrest.

Democrats also recoiled at the recent attacks made on Pennsylvania's anti-administration newspapers. Suppression of Democratic organs occurred across the state by angry mobs still in the throes of war fever. Besides the April attack on Philadelphia's *Palmetto Flag*, rowdies targeted the Beaver *Western Star* in May and the Easton *Sentinel* and *Argus* in August. The attacks tended to rouse Democrats who supported the conservative editors' right to free speech. "[T]he mob assaults on Democratic newspaper offices," explains Christopher Dell, "had the appearance of a Republican plot to wreck the Democratic party by violent means. On that basis a great many Democrats became ardently opposed to the wartime suppression of *any* Democratic paper by *any means*,

³⁵ *OR*, vol. 17, pt. 1, 315.

legal or illegal, peaceful or violent....Instead of demoralizing the Peace press the Unionist hooligans had raised it to the level of martyrdom.”³⁶ The situation became more heated when government officials assumed responsibility for the newspaper suppressions. In West Chester, an alleged gang of spiteful Republicans stormed the print shop of the particularly defiant *Jeffersonian* on August 19. What made the incident particularly noteworthy however, was the appearance four days later of a United States marshal and his deputies who closed the office and seized the printing press “upon authority of the President of the United States.”³⁷ The paper’s editor, John Hodgson, demanded that the property be returned, at which point authorities demanded he sign a loyalty pledge. Hodgson presumably replied, “I would rather die than give any pledge...to get the property back.”³⁸ The affair was taken up in court in October, at which Hodgson selected Peace Democrat William B. Reed to serve as his attorney. The court determined that the *Jeffersonian* did not abet the Confederacy in any way and opted to restore Hodgson’s property. Ultimately, the government’s involvement in Pierce Butler’s arbitrary arrest and the temporary suppression of John Hodgson’s newspaper engendered at least two reactions by the Pennsylvania Democracy. First, Peace Democrats, though largely restrained in 1861, were vocal enough to encourage Unionists to control their influence through curtailment of civil liberties. Second, the government’s involvement in these events helped nurture a burgeoning peace movement that would emerge in full force the following year. Newspapermen like Hodgson and public figures like Reed would only

³⁶ Dell, *War Democrats*, 87.

³⁷ *The Jeffersonian*, February 7, 1863. Quoted in Ray H. Abrams, “*The Jeffersonian*, Copperhead Newspaper,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 57:3 (July 1933): 271.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

have to bide their time a little longer to attract a larger following no longer willing to brook the costly war effort and the suspension of civil liberties.

The year 1861 was the least crucial of Pennsylvania's four wartime election years. Still, all of the state's legislators and one-third of its senators were up for election. Despite the continued war fever from which Republicans benefited nationally, the Republican-War Democrat alliance in Pennsylvania proved an awkward arrangement. Union party conventions were held throughout the state in the months prior to the October election. These conservative-led Union conventions oftentimes did not agree to endorse all proposed candidates, particularly those deemed too radical for the War Democrat delegates. Furthermore, Pennsylvania Republicans were particularly impeded by their party's controversial decision to repeal a tonnage tax that had long been imposed on the Pennsylvania Railroad. Democrats seized the tax repeal as a campaign issue and argued that the lost revenue would burden common workers with new taxes.³⁹ As it turned out, the tax repeal and the inability of Republicans and War Democrats to unify over their slate of candidates allowed straight-Democratic candidates to carry the October elections. Although the election results did not result in a landslide Democratic victory, the party's relative success was unusual given the continued popularity of the Lincoln administration's war effort. Diarist Sidney George Fisher presented a perceptive analysis of the Democrats' triumph. The poor Republican performance did not, in his view, "show that the people are opposed to the war. On the contrary, all parties profess equal zeal on that point. The war is popular, the passions of the masses are enlisted in it, and the [Democratic] party leaders, finding that they could not resist the current, immediately

³⁹ Dell, *War Democrats*, 112.

determined to swim with it, if possible into power.”⁴⁰ The Democratic victories, therefore, should be attributed to the Republicans’ unpopular stance on a key economic issue, their inability to fully gel with War Democrats, and a continuation of Pennsylvania’s strong, conservative tendencies. Straight-Democratic candidates pledged a commitment to the war, bringing with them Moderates and any Peace Democrats who could stomach voting for a nominally pro-war candidate. Peace Democrats thus had not yet infiltrated the ranks of Pennsylvania’s party machinery as they would in successive election years.⁴¹

* * * *

During the 1860-1861 secession winter, Pennsylvania’s Breckinridge Moderates had led the party because of their restrained attitudes toward the South and their prominent place within the Buchanan political machine. After the attack on Fort Sumter and the subsequent war fervor that arose, however, the Moderates relinquished their power to the War Democrats. This occurred for two major reasons. First, Pennsylvania’s Moderate Democratic leaders lost their positions of influence after Republicans assumed control of the prominent offices in the nation during the early months of 1861. Most importantly, James Buchanan left office on March 4, 1861 and looked forward to retiring from the political spotlight. Famously, Buchanan was reported to have told his successor Lincoln that “if you are as happy in entering the White House as I shall feel on returning

⁴⁰ White, *Diary of Fisher*, 117.

⁴¹ After the October 8, 1861 election, the state senate stood at twenty-three Republican-Unionists and ten Democrats, three of whom were elected on Union tickets. The state house numbered forty-five Republican-Unionists and fifty-five Democrats, thirteen of whom were elected on Union tickets. In 1860, the combined Democratic tally between the upper and lower assemblies totaled just thirty-five compared with the Republicans’ ninety-eight. By 1861, the Democrats and Democratic-Unionists in joint assembly numbered sixty-five compared with the Republican-Unionists’ sixty-eight. For election results, see Davis, “Pennsylvania Politics,” 207.

to Wheatland [Buchanan's estate], you are a happy man indeed."⁴² The man best suited to guide Pennsylvania's Moderate Democrats had no interest in taking up the role, preferring instead to manage his estate and defend the conduct of his administration. As Buchanan's Secretary of State, Moderate Jeremiah S. Black similarly left office in March and never again took a significant public post for the rest of his life. Once a candidate for chief justice of the Supreme Court, Black was compelled to settle on the comparatively trivial post of Supreme Court Reporter of Decisions from 1861 to 1862. Another Breckinridge Moderate and Buchanan confidant, Senator William Bigler, was forced out of his seat by Republican Edgar Cowan. Although Bigler would campaign for Democratic candidates through the duration of the war, he too never sought public office nor took on a leading role in Pennsylvania's Democracy. The Moderate leadership that had run the Buchanan administration during the secession crisis and comprised his state political machine would never have much influence after Old Buck left the White House.

The second reason for the Moderates' loss of influence during this period was simply the untenable nature of advocating a middle course during the height of war fervor. During the secession winter, Breckinridge Moderates could proudly point to their efforts to maintain the Union through compromise and concession. With the Confederate attack on Fort Sumter, however, the vast majority of Northerners demanded military action to subdue the rebellion. To preach conciliation to a people who had assailed federal property was deemed treasonous and could result in verbal or physical abuse by unruly mobs. Therefore Moderate Democrats, during the first year or so of the war, were compelled to either exhibit a bipartisan show of patriotism with the War Democrats or remain silent and inconspicuous with the Peace Democrats. Buchanan, for his part, shed

⁴² Smith, *James Buchanan*, 190.

all conciliatory feelings he had once displayed as president and fell firmly into line behind the Lincoln administration. In a September 1861 letter addressed to Union meeting committee members of Chester and Lancaster Counties, Buchanan gave his “solemn & earnest appeal to my countrymen...to volunteer for the war & join the many thousands of brave & patriotic volunteers who are already in the field. This is the moment for action, - prompt, energetic, & united action, & not for the discussion of Peace Propositions.”⁴³ Furthermore, Buchanan expressed his commitment to the Republican administration, encouraging his followers “to support the President with all the men & means at the command of the Country in a vigorous and successful prosecution of the war.”⁴⁴ The following February, Buchanan distanced himself further from the Peace Democrats in another letter in which he stated that “the idea of a recognition of [the Southern states’] independence, & a consequent dissolution of the Confederacy which has rendered us prosperous & happy in peace & triumphant & glorious in war cannot be entertained for a moment. This would...destroy the prestige & character of our Country throughout the world.”⁴⁵ Black, who continued to lean toward the War Democrats, nonetheless warned Buchanan not to sanction Lincoln’s efforts so stridently. “Your endorsement of Lincoln’s policy,” Black cautioned, “will be a very serious drawback upon the defense of your own.”⁴⁶ Black’s support for the war remained conditional, particularly when states’ rights appeared threatened. As Black biographer William Brigance explains, “[d]eclaring war upon States, [Black] felt, was in complete

⁴³ Moore, *Works of Buchanan*, 11: 223. Quote from Buchanan’s letter to the Committee of the Citizens of Chester and Lancaster Counties written September 28, 1861.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 11:255. Quote from Buchanan’s letter to Mrs. Linn Boyd written February 17, 1862.

⁴⁶ William Norwood Brigance, *Jeremiah Sullivan Black: A Defender of the Constitution and the Ten Commandments* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1934), 124.

violation of the Constitution. Individuals in the Southern States were responsible for the insurrection – and force should be applied upon individuals as such.”⁴⁷ Thus, Pennsylvania’s Moderate Democratic leadership largely sided with War Democrats in advocating military action to suppress the rebellion. Nonetheless, the degree of their support for the Republican war policy varied according to one’s commitment to traditional Democratic principles. This support would wane as the war continued and additional conservative values came under attack.

* * * *

The Democratic continuum that developed during the secession winter of 1860-1861 underwent profound changes after hostilities began in April 1861. The Moderate Democrats were forced from their temporizing role and compelled to choose between the extreme wings of the party’s spectrum, the War faction or the Peace faction. The Peace Democrats, who had been a small but vocal minority prior to Fort Sumter, retained their sympathies for the South but curtailed their raucous agitation. Angry mobs of Republicans and Democrats alike employed their rabid patriotism to silence treasonous sentiments and demanded shows of loyalty from those with suspect sentiments. Some, like Robert Patterson, could only prove their fidelity to the Union by joining the war effort. Others, like William Reed and Henry Brent, offered token displays of allegiance until public sentiment shifted enough for them to continue their Copperhead agitation. Still others, including Robert Tyler, were hounded enough to leave the state altogether for the young Confederacy that they so strongly sympathized with in the first place. Mob rule gave way to outright government interference later that year, as the Lincoln administration deemed the silencing of strident opponents to be worth the cost of

⁴⁷ Ibid, 127.

restricting civil liberties. Pierce Butler and John Hodgson, for example, were the victims of arbitrary arrest and free speech suppression, respectively. Although most Democrats in the early months of the war tolerated the silencing of extremist Peace agitators, the further curtailment of civil liberty would foster a Peace Democratic resurgence when the Union war effort faltered in 1862 and early 1863. Peace Democrats, therefore, remained devoted to their opposition to the war, but bided their time in expressing their sentiments for the first year or so after the attack on Fort Sumter.

On the opposite wing of the Democracy's continuum, Pennsylvania's War Democrats wrested control of the party machinery. Most Pennsylvanians, including the majority of the state's Democratic electorate, were incensed at the Southerners' attack on federal property. These individuals followed the lead of Stephen A. Douglas in condemning the rebellion and putting aside partisan differences in the face of national crisis. The War Democrats were "celebrated...for their ability to equate the Lincoln administration with the needs of the hour" and agreed that military action was required to suppress the insurrection and restore the Union.⁴⁸ The Lincoln administration recognized the value in installing Democrats in positions of power, granting Pennsylvania conservatives such as Robert Patterson, William Franklin, Winfield Hancock, and George McClellan important military commissions. Nonetheless, Pennsylvania's War Democrats had difficulty using their political clout to control the party. The death of Douglas and the absence of a strong leader to take up the cause of the War Democrats left this wing of the continuum searching for direction. The tenuous War Democrat-Republican alliance that developed under the banner of the Union party never fully adhered around a set of core principles that all could share. As traditional conservative principles eroded with the

⁴⁸ Silbey, *A Respectable Minority*, 59.

suppression of civil liberties and war aims broadened to include emancipation, many initial War Democrats soured toward cooperation with the Republicans and would drift toward the center of the party spectrum in 1862.

The Moderate Democratic philosophy which commanded ideological control of the party before the attack on Fort Sumter largely evaporated when hostilities commenced. The Douglas ultimatum which demanded that all Northerners choose between the role of “patriots or traitors” was used as a rallying cry to flush out Southern sympathizers. Mob violence and the threat of government arrest were enough for most Moderates to flock to the War Democrats and leave behind, albeit temporarily, notions of peace, conciliation, and reunion. The retirement of James Buchanan and the ouster from office of a number of important prewar Pennsylvania Moderates also aided in the dispersal of Moderate sentiment for the first several months of the war. Buchanan himself came out strongly for the Lincoln administration’s war plans, probably out of both genuine concern for the Union’s preservation and a desire to rehabilitate his image after his contentious term in office. Other Moderates supported the war with conditions. Because Southerners had slighted efforts at compromise, Moderates were at first willing to see a more hard-line approach to bring the rebels back into the Union. As casualties and expenses continued to mount and traditional conservative principles were violated in 1862 and beyond, these conditional War Democrats reinstated the middle segment of the continuum and rehabilitated their efforts to conciliate and restore the Union under lenient terms. As the war bogged down after Spring 1862 and the Lincoln administration employed more radical measures to defeat the Confederacy, more and more Pennsylvania Democrats began to assert their own ideas on how best to bring the conflict to a close.

Chapter 3: The Peace Democracy Revealed, Spring 1862 – Summer 1863

On July 22, 1862, President Abraham Lincoln convened his entire cabinet to discuss a momentous shift in war policy. To his secretaries, Lincoln recited a draft of his proposed emancipation proclamation which authorized that “as Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy of the United States,” he would on January 1, 1863 declare “all persons held as slaves within any state or states, wherein the constitutional authority of the United States shall not then be practically recognized, submitted to, and maintained,... forever... free.”¹ Nearly the entire cabinet gave their support to the policy, though some with certain conditions. Secretary of State William Seward, for example, urged Lincoln to withhold promulgation of the proposal until after a Union military victory, a recommendation to which the president consented. Postmaster General Montgomery Blair, however, denounced the proclamation in no uncertain terms. Blair, who began his political career as a Democrat, was among the most conservative of Lincoln’s secretaries and recognized the incongruence of the proclamation with Northern conservatives’ war aims. He anticipated the Democratic backlash that would result with a Republican policy shift to emancipate the Confederacy’s slaves. Furthermore, Blair realized that the proclamation would have serious repercussions for the upcoming midterm elections. Therefore, the postmaster general “deprecated the policy, on the ground that it would cost the Administration the fall elections.”² Blair’s reservations proved well-founded as evidenced by the reaction of Pennsylvania’s Democracy to the administration’s swing toward the radicals. Whereas the 1861 Democrats largely

¹ Roy P. Basler, ed., *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, vol. 5 (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1955), 337.

² Francis Bicknell Carpenter, *The Inner Life of Abraham Lincoln: Six Months at the White House* (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1872), 21.

supported a war effort to preserve the Union, by Spring 1862 the combination of military setbacks, continued suppression of civil liberties, and a new Republican motivation to abolish slavery prompted a more vocal Democratic opposition. War Democrats lost control of the Commonwealth's party machinery to Conditional Moderates, who in turn were increasingly influenced by the Peace Democrats' condemnations of the Lincoln administration's policies. From the Spring 1862 military campaigns to the Battle of Gettysburg in July 1863, the Peace Democrats reached the pinnacle of their power in the state, distinguishing Pennsylvania as one of the most conservative and obstructionist states in the North.

Charles Ingersoll led the Peace Democrats' reemergence in the early months of 1862. With Pennsylvania conservatives growing increasingly restless over the unsuccessful military campaigning and agitated with the Lincoln administration's oppressive suspension of personal liberties, Ingersoll broke the Copperheads' silence with his controversial tract, *A Letter to a Friend in a Slave State*, published in March. Central to Ingersoll's arguments was his belief in the inability of the Federal armies to truly subjugate the Southern people and instill Union spirit there through use of force. He noted the vastness of the Southern territory over which to conquer and wryly stated that "neither Julius Caesar nor Napoleon ever performed such a feat, and, if they could be brought to Washington to advise with Mr. Lincoln, would assure him it was not possible."³ Exhibiting a degree of Copperhead defeatism, Ingersoll asked, "[d]o we entertain of our own blood so poor an opinion, as for a moment to suppose we could ever

³ Charles Ingersoll, *A Letter to a Friend in a Slave State by a Citizen of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: J. Campbell, 1862), 15.

beat into the Union the people of the South?”⁴ The pamphlet also included a scathing critique on emancipation. Although not officially a war aim of the Lincoln administration at that time, Ingersoll likely prophesied the federal government’s growing affinity for more radical Republican measures. With emancipation, Ingersoll argued, “four millions of negroes, now slaves, should be freed and added to five hundred thousand already free negroes that are among us....[T]hese unhappy beings, as the inferior and degraded race...will miserably decay, by slow degrees, in the course of ages of oppression, or be more suddenly, but not more inhumanly, butchered in a war of races.”⁵ In his tract, Ingersoll also denigrated the war record of the Republicans and boosted Democratic electoral successes. “To be in favor of the Union is one thing,” he elucidated, “to be in favor of the Union and the Constitution is another. What these men [Republicans, particularly abolitionists] want is to keep the Union and break up the Constitution.”⁶ On the other hand, Democrats, Ingersoll argued, traditionally administered “[i]n instinctively opposed to over-governing, they, upon the whole, ruled judiciously, the let-alone policy prevailing.”⁷ Therefore, the tract continued, “the Democratic party, which carried the State at the last election, and will sweep it at the next, will insist on an earnest and persistent effort...to restore the Union by measures of conciliation, you may be sure.”⁸ After nearly a year in hibernation, leaders of the Peace Democracy gradually reemerged, espousing their obstructionist views on emancipation, bipartisanship, and the military subjugation of the Confederacy. Their resurgent antiwar

⁴ Ibid, 19.

⁵ Ibid, 27-28.

⁶ Ibid, 30.

⁷ Ibid, 34.

⁸ Ibid, 56-57.

dialogue coincided with a Democratic revival, both in Pennsylvania state politics and among the Commonwealth's Democrats in Washington.

In the United States House of Representatives, two Pennsylvania congressmen emerged as leaders in a conservative resurgence bent on reasserting the preservation of the Union as the sole war aim. Representative Hendrick B. Wright of Wilkes-Barre was a solid War Democrat who lauded President Lincoln for his "patriotic heart" and vowed to remain a supporter of the administration so long as the war was waged "upon the sole issue upon which it was inaugurated" – the preservation of the Union.⁹ When radicals in Congress began to advance abolition as a proposed war measure, however, Wright responded on January 20, 1862 in typical conservative fashion. "I am not an...advocate of slavery," Wright averred, "but I am one of those who are willing to take the Constitution as our fathers gave it to us."¹⁰ Wright continued:

[T]his war is not waged upon our part in any spirit of oppression or purpose to overthrow or interfere with the rights or established institutions of the southern States, but to defend and maintain the supremacy of the Constitution, and to preserve the Union with all the dignity, equality, and rights of the several States unimpaired; and that, as soon as these objects are accomplished, the war ought to cease....It was not to be a war of conquest. It was not to be a war of subjugation. No; it was to be a war to put down this rebellion and to suppress this insurrection.¹¹

As emancipation began to surface as a Republican war aim in 1862, the War Democrat-Republican accord began to break apart. Willing to tolerate military setbacks and some limits on civil liberty suspension for the sake of the Union's preservation, many of Pennsylvania's War Democrats were adamantly opposed to the radical Republicans' twin goals of Union *and* emancipation.

⁹ Speech of Hendrick B. Wright in the U.S. House, *Congressional Globe*, 37th Congress, 2nd session (January 20, 1862), 405.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 404.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 405.

Charles J. Biddle, another of Pennsylvania's House leaders, began the war as commander of the state's famed "Bucktail Regiment" until he campaigned for and was elected to a vacant, Philadelphia-based congressional seat during Summer 1861. Although described by diarist Sidney George Fisher as "a man of high character & ability," Fisher went on to record that Biddle was "very southern in his sympathies, opposed to this war &, tho [sic] now serving in the army, very far from sympathizing with the purposes of the government."¹² Indeed, despite his brief military stint, Biddle was a Moderate Democrat whose qualified support for the war excluded not just emancipation, but also suspension of civil liberties. "A party that can silence opposition and muzzle the press," Biddle cautioned, "is the worst kind of tyrant."¹³ In a speech delivered in the House on March 6, 1862, Congressman Biddle asserted his belief in the Democracy's capacity to restore the antebellum *status quo* and reverse the Republicans' attempt to engender radical change such as emancipation. "[T]he rise of the Democratic party in this country," he explained, "was the people's protest against the concentration of power in the Federal Government. Now, let some party rise; call it the Democratic party – call it, if you will, 'the white man's party' – which shall protest against these schemes for black armies and States held as subject provinces."¹⁴ Biddle continued in a quintessentially conservative vein, "I would leave to my children the Union that our fathers left to us. Born and bred on the soil of the State, whose proudest title is to be 'the Keystone of the Federal arch,' I do not wish to see a new St. Domingo on her southern

¹² White, *Diary of Fisher*, 100. Entry dated June 24, 1861.

¹³ Quoted in Shankman, *Pennsylvania Antiwar Movement*, 83.

¹⁴ Speech of Charles J. Biddle in the U.S. House, *Congressional Globe*, 37th Congress, 2nd session (March 7, 1862), 1112. Among other proposals proffered by radical Republican congressmen were plans to enlist African-Americans into the armies and revert the Southern states to territorial status upon their subjugation – two proposals deemed anathema to nearly all Democrats.

border. These are my sentiments as a Pennsylvanian and a white man.”¹⁵ In succeeding months, Biddle would go on to oppose various congressional antislavery measures including the repeal of the Fugitive Slave Act (March 1862), the abolishment of slavery in the District of Columbia (April), and the Second Confiscation Act (July 1862). Thus, Biddle represented “the new, militant anti-Lincoln congressmen” who stood somewhere between the War and Peace factions of the Democracy, only offering their conditional support for the war effort in 1862.¹⁶

Besides a resurgent conservative offensive in Congress, Pennsylvania’s Democrats could cheerfully point to a factious Republican division that would hurt the latter party’s fortunes in elections held later that year. United States Senator Edgar Cowan, a Republican in office since March 1861, exhibited reservations about war policy once the emancipation issue was introduced in Congress. In a speech delivered on April 30, 1862, Cowan voiced sentiments similar to Democratic Congressmen Wright and Biddle. He argued that Southerners “have rebelled upon the belief that we intended to correct it [slavery]; and we are here to show them they are wrong, to try to get them back, to restore the Union, to restore the Constitution and the laws, and to punish those who have incited them to rebellion.”¹⁷ Cowan continued with a degree of defeatism akin to the most conservative of Democrats:

[I]f...emancipation is to be made the prime end and purpose of this war, the war itself will fail inevitably, just because as soon as the people of the South understand and know certainly that that is the end and purpose of the war, they are a unit against us; and I say that no people united, in a country of the size they

¹⁵ Ibid, 1112.

¹⁶ Shankman, *Pennsylvania Antiwar Movement*, 83.

¹⁷ Speech of Edgar Cowan in the U.S. Senate, *Congressional Globe*, 37th Congress, 2nd session (April 30, 1862), 1879.

occupy, with the numbers they have, and the spirit with which we have reason to believe they will carry on the war, can ever be conquered. It is impossible.¹⁸

Senator Cowan's conservative bent undoubtedly irritated mainstream Republican congressmen and the Republican press in Pennsylvania. Even before he delivered this speech in the Senate, the *Pittsburgh Gazette* grumbled that "[t]he powerful Republican majority of this section of the State supposed they had in Mr. Cowan a true and able exponent of Republican principles, one who would retrieve the tarnished honor of the State, and redeem it from the disgrace inflicted by such men as Bigler and Buchanan."¹⁹ A definitive conservative reaction among Pennsylvania's officials in Washington thus materialized once emancipation was discussed as a potential war aim. In the Commonwealth, the Democratic continuum shifted even more fiercely away from bipartisan, pro-war sentiments that had characterized 1861 state politics and gave waxing power to Conditional Moderates and even Peace advocates.

For the Pennsylvania Democracy, there was much at stake in the upcoming elections of October 1862. Not only were there the usual state offices to fill, but also all twenty-four seats in the U.S. House of Representatives. More importantly, Democrats saw the opportunity to combat the increasingly radical bent that Republicans were pursuing in Congress and the White House. The limited war aims pursued by the Lincoln administration in 1861 were expanding frighteningly for Democrats, most of whom could no longer maintain the tenuous accord with their political opposition in a bipartisan spirit of unity. A series of measures instituted by Congress and sustained by Lincoln during the first half of 1862 proved distasteful to conservatives because of their presumed threat to

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ *Pittsburgh Gazette*, March 7, 1862. Quoted in Stanton Ling Davis, "Pennsylvania Politics, 1860 – 1863" (Ph.D. diss., [Case] Western Reserve University, 1935), 236.

white supremacy and interference with established patterns of race relations and social structure. In his gradual turn towards emancipation as a war aim, Lincoln proposed as early as March the idea of compensated emancipation for those states willing to relinquish their slaves. With the president's endorsement, Congress passed a resolution the following month, "[t]hat the United States ought to cooperate with any State which may adopt gradual abolishment of slavery, giving to such State pecuniary aid, to be used by such State in its discretion, to compensate for the inconveniences, public and private, produced by such change of system."²⁰ On April 16, Lincoln signed into law an act abolishing slavery in the District of Columbia, providing immediate emancipation and compensation to loyal slaveholders. In June, Lincoln approved bills designed to abolish slavery in the federal territories and to recognize the black-majority republics of Haiti and Liberia. On July 17, the Second Confiscation Act and the Militia Act took effect, freeing slaves of persons engaged in rebellion against the Union and providing for freed blacks' employment in military service. Five days later, Lincoln assembled his cabinet to discuss his draft of an emancipation proclamation which, it was decided, would be issued after a Union military victory. With a new tone of intolerance against the institution of slavery, Lincoln wrote privately, "[t]his government cannot much longer play a game in which it stakes all, and its enemies stake nothing. Those enemies must understand that they cannot experiment for ten years trying to destroy the government, and if they fail still come back into the Union unhurt."²¹ It was in this atmosphere of increasing radicalism

²⁰ *The American Annual Cyclopaedia and Register of Important Events of the Year 1862*, vol. 2 (New York: D. Appleton, 1869), 788.

²¹ Don E. Fehrenbacher, ed., *Abraham Lincoln: Speeches, Letters, and Miscellaneous Writings, Presidential Messages and Proclamations*, vol. 2, *Speeches and Writings, 1859 – 1865* (New York: Library of America, 1989), 347. Quote from Lincoln letter to August Belmont written July 31, 1862.

toward abolition that Pennsylvania's Democrats planned their election campaign to halt the Republicans' expansion of war aims.

The 1862 Democratic State Convention convened at Harrisburg on Independence Day. In the face of the recent Republican measures favoring emancipation, delegates to the convention met with a unity of purpose that healed the breach that had once divided Douglas and Breckinridge supporters. The Bellefonte *Democratic Watchman* noted that the convention "was entirely harmonious throughout the whole session."²² Delegates elected Francis W. Hughes as chairman of the body. Hughes, a renowned lawyer, former state senator, and Democratic political boss of Schuylkill County, was a Breckinridge Conservative during the secession winter who later adopted Moderate tendencies after the war began. During the course of the convention, Democrats issued a series of resolutions that set forth their qualified support for the war and indicated a shift away from accord with Republican war aims. Although the delegates resolved to "pledge our hearty and unqualified support to the Federal Government in the energetic prosecution of the existing war," they also determined "[t]hat the only object of the Democratic party is the restoration of this Union as it was, and the preservation of the Constitution as it is."²³ No longer would Pennsylvania's Democracy acquiesce to the Lincoln administration's handling of the war, nor accept the leadership of the War wing of the party. The state's Democrats now voiced their disapproval of the war's progress and the sweeping social changes it wrought. Furthermore, they propagated the notion that the Democracy could better bring the war to a close by stopping Republican policy. The delegates swiped at the suspension of free speech, free press, and the writ of *habeas corpus*, warning that

²² *Democratic Watchman* [Bellefonte], July 10, 1862, 2.

²³ *Ibid.*

these actions were “most dangerous to civil liberty, and should be resisted at the ballot box by every freeman in the land.”²⁴ The most strident resolution pertained to the federal government’s meddling with established race relations and involvement in the cause of emancipation:

Resolved, That this is a government of white men, and was established exclusively for the white race, and that the negro race are not entitled to, and ought not to be, admitted to political or social equality with the white race, but that it is our duty to treat them with kindness and consideration as an inferior and dependent race; that the right of the several States to determine the position and duties of the race is a sovereign right; and the pledges of the Constitution require us as loyal citizens not to interfere wherewith.²⁵

The Democratic resolutions deliberately said nothing, at this point, favoring conciliatory gestures toward the South. At this early stage of the war, Union military setbacks were not so insufferable to warrant calls for negotiated peace as would be the case in later months. Also, the delegates likely hoped to attract sufficient War Democrats and pro-slavery Unionists who favored the military subjugation of the South, but withheld support for emancipation. An examination of the 1862 state party resolutions indicates that the convention was firmly in the hands of Moderates who supported the war with conditions; was not influenced or controlled by Peace Democrats as the party would be at other times during the war; and was interested in reclaiming War Democrats from the Republican-Unionist fold.

For their part, Pennsylvania’s Republicans also vied for the continued support of War Democrats and other pro-Union conservatives. Meeting under the banner of the “People’s” or “National Union” party, delegates to the convention assembled at Harrisburg on July 17. As chairman of the People’s State Committee, Alexander K.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

McClure called the convention together in an effort “to unite in sustaining the National Administration...to preserve the Union of our fathers.”²⁶ Pointedly, McClure conveyed a conservative message that Democrats might accept by appealing to a Union based on the antebellum *status quo*.²⁷ In their resolutions, the People’s party delegates expressed their “confidence in the honesty, capacity, and patriotism of President Lincoln” and “cordially approve[d] of the administration of Andrew G. Curtin” and their efforts to suppress the rebellion.²⁸ Furthermore, the delegates offered their thanks to the soldiers in arms against the Confederacy and denigrated those presumed domestic traitors who aimed to engender the permanent division of the Union. Notably, none of the resolutions weighed in on the recent congressional legislation on emancipation nor was any attempt made to define the war aims of the Republican party. Apparently content that the state’s radical Republicans would adhere to the People’s party no matter how conservative the convention’s message, delegates offered a series of subdued resolutions in the hope of maintaining the loyalty of War Democrats and pro-slavery Unionists. However, as Stanton Ling Davis explains, “[t]o many conservatives...the [Republican] resolutions seemed indefinite and evasive, and the Democratic arguments more logical.”²⁹ Ultimately, the Democrats were the recognized representatives of conservatism and those voters who shared a desire for limited war aims increasingly sided with them during the 1862 campaign.

Republicans were also hampered by military setbacks during the spring and summer which eroded public support for the party’s handling of the war. After months of irresolution as general-in-chief of the Union armies, General George B. McClellan,

²⁶ *Philadelphia Press*, July 18, 1862, 2.

²⁷ McClure’s appeal “to preserve the Union of our fathers” was not much different in degree to the Democrats’ call for a “restoration of this Union as it was, and the preservation of the Constitution as it is.”

²⁸ *Philadelphia Press*, July 18, 1862, 2.

²⁹ Davis, “Pennsylvania Politics,” 244.

darling of the Democratic party, was removed from that command in March 1862 but retained control of the Army of the Potomac, the primary Union army in the East. The following month, McClellan's army commenced the Peninsula Campaign, a military operation designed to capture the Confederate capital of Richmond from the east. Although the campaign began favorably for the North, McClellan's indecisive command halted the Union advance just short of its objective. Early in July, the Army of the Potomac was in retreat from its tenuous position, demoralizing Northern soldiers and civilians alike. What doubts Lincoln already harbored about McClellan's aptitude for command were exacerbated by the general's defiance. In a letter to Lincoln dated July 7, McClellan penned his misgivings about the administration's increasingly radical handling of the war:

This Rebellion has assumed the character of a war; as such it should be regarded, and it should be conducted upon the highest principles known to Christian civilization. It should not be a war looking to the subjugation of the people of any State, in any event. It should not be at all a war upon population, but against armed forces and political organizations. Neither confiscation of property, political executions of persons, territorial organization of States, or forcible abolition of slavery, should be contemplated for a moment.³⁰

McClellan's Democratic conservatism and desire for limited war aims clashed with the Lincoln administration's gradual movement to incorporate emancipation as a stipulation for Union victory. Further military embarrassment accompanied the Union defeat of General John Pope's Army of Virginia at the Second Battle of Bull Run on August 29-30. Incidentally, the war enthusiasm that had marked the early months of the war waned considerably by 1862. The controversial Militia Act which had marked the first step toward black enlistment in the military, also stipulated for the drafting of

³⁰ George B. McClellan, *Report of Major-General George B. McClellan upon the Organization of the Army of the Potomac, and Its Campaigns in Virginia and Maryland, from July 26, 1861, to November 7, 1862* (Boston: J.R. Farwell and Company, 1864), 92.

300,000 additional troops for the war effort. Predictably, Union military reverses and unpopular federal legislation was a boon for Pennsylvania's Democratic midterm election candidates.

As a result of the difficulties faced by the Lincoln administration and congressional Republicans, Pennsylvania's Democracy sensed the opportunity to secure sweeping gains in the upcoming election. In a show of defiance to the Lincoln administration's radical course toward emancipation, Chairman Francis W. Hughes of the Democratic State Central Committee wrote a public letter to Secretary of State William Seward on August 11. Hughes claimed he expressed "the sentiments of no less than three hundred thousand of the men of Pennsylvania" concerning the qualms all conservatives held.³¹ Although Hughes believed that there were no other "men in the whole country...more devoted [to] patriotism and loyalty," the prospect of abolition would shake the commitment of all Northerners to the suppression of the rebellion.³² Furthermore, Hughes hoped to "stimulate" Seward "or serve [him] in any degree to promote a policy on the part of the Administration of President Lincoln to put down the demon of Abolitionism."³³ Secretary Seward responded cordially and affirmed his "full confidence in the sincerity of the devotion to the Union" Hughes and the Democracy exhibited.³⁴ However, Seward responded with a tacit approval for the course of the administration and cautioned Hughes "that this nation is now engaged, not in a political canvass between opposing parties, about questions of civil administration, but in a civil

³¹ *Huntingdon Globe*, August 27, 1862, 2.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

war, carried on by opposing armies on an issue of national life or death.”³⁵ Whatever concessions Hughes hoped to achieve from the federal government, he realized that only Democratic victory at the polls would engender a return to conservatism.

The Democracy’s campaigners aimed to do just that and organized a large rally in Philadelphia’s Independence Square on August 23. Hughes opened the meeting by criticizing Republican war policy and the continued suspension of civil liberties by the Lincoln administration. “[A] war of conquest or subjugation [of the South],” Hughes cautioned, “means eternal disunion. It means anarchy and despotism.”³⁶ Democratic officers at the rally adopted a series of resolutions similar to those espoused at the party’s state convention. The officials denounced the continuation of sectional politics which “lay at the foundation of our troubles. The existence of the Nation depends upon their extermination. These sectional parties are known as Abolitionists and Secessionists, and, together, they constitute the enemies of the Republic.”³⁷ Although the majority of the rally’s sentiments expressed loyalty and at least qualified support for the war, the invitation granted to Charles Ingersoll to speak gave the event a tinge of opprobrium. Ingersoll’s remarks were customarily vitriolic and solidified his status as the state’s leading Copperhead. “I want to know,” mused Ingersoll, “whether any Government that ever exercised so much power has...with 700,000 men in the field, ever accomplished results so insignificant?”³⁸ Ingersoll continued:

[W]hat has been the whole object of the war hitherto? To free the nigger! Now, has there been any other object? – and if they could accomplish that object, where should we be? If those four millions of negroes were turned loose into the

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Arnold Shankman, “Francis W. Hughes and the 1862 Pennsylvania Election,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 95:3 (July 1971): 386.

³⁷ *Philadelphia Press*, August 25, 1862, 4.

³⁸ Ibid, August 26, 1862, 4.

Northern and Southern States together, where, gentlemen, would you and I be? Are we to adopt them? Marry them? In what manner are those negroes to be disposed of?...Those poor negroes whom the Abolitionists love much less than you and I do – those poor negroes would have their throats cut in a war of races, and that would be the end of this scheme of the Abolitionists.³⁹

Perhaps the most subversive of Ingersoll's scathing remarks were charges of malfeasance against the Lincoln administration. "I say further, fellow-citizens," he harangued, "that a more corrupt Government than that which now governs us never was in the United States, and has been seldom seen in any European part of the world. It is necessary to go to the older regions of Asia to find as much corruption as exists in this Government of Mr. Lincoln."⁴⁰ Certainly, Ingersoll's comments went beyond the tenor of the rally which proved to be much more moderate and haltingly pro-war. As diarist Sidney George Fisher remarked, the rally was "not extravagant in [its] tone and neither were the speeches, except that of Chas. Ingersoll. He was extremely violent, far beyond the general feeling of the assembly."⁴¹ However, the mere presence of Ingersoll among the orators that day implied that the Peace Democrats had a presence within the party mainstream and that the party's officials still reached out to and desired the electoral support of those Democrats who shared Ingersoll's Copperhead views.

Fully aware of the support Democrats were enjoying in the months leading up to the midterm election, Republicans countered with their own strategies. Most controversial was the arrest of Charles Ingersoll two days after delivering his speech at Independence Square. The arrest was made under an order issued by the War Department on August 8 that permitted the detainment of "any person who, by act, speech, or writing, tended to discourage enlistments, 'give aid and comfort to the enemy,'

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ White, *Diary of Fisher*, 159.

or commit any other kind of disloyal acts.”⁴² Unfortunately for the Republicans, Ingersoll deftly appealed to a Democratic judge, John Cadwalader, who hastily ordered a writ of *habeas corpus*. Evidently, authorities in Washington were interested in washing their hands of the public relations fiasco and dropped the charges against Ingersoll just a week after his arrest. Thus, the plan to silence Ingersoll backfired and only strengthened the Democracy.

Republican attacks on Democratic Chairman Hughes were only marginally more successful. Because of his identity as an 1860 Breckinridge Conservative, Hughes’s loyalty already met with skepticism from his detractors. Although his recent orations fit the tone of a Conditional Moderate, Republicans sought out incriminating evidence of his once pro-Southern leanings. What they found was a damning resolution penned by Hughes prior to the February 1861 Democratic State Convention, which had never been revealed to the delegates:

Should...causes hitherto resisted by the Democracy of the country, rend asunder the bonds that bind together these states; and should the fifteen slaveholding states, claiming to be driven by the necessity of mutual protection against the effect of such causes, successfully establish another confederacy; - then Pennsylvania must regard her relation to the facts which circumstances beyond our control have produced. She cannot then refuse to perceive that she must either take her place in some Northern fragment of a once glorious Union, and rest content to be shorn of the greater part of her manufacturing industry...to hold a secondary and helpless relation to the North-Eastern States....Or she may, if a member of the New Confederacy, become the great manufacturing workshop for a people now consuming annually \$300,000,000 worth of products....That it will be the right and duty of her citizens to consult their own best interests in a position so momentous, and decide between the lawful alternatives.⁴³

The resolution’s sentiments resembled proposals offered by Ingersoll, Reed, and other notorious Breckinridge Conservatives prior to the attack on Fort Sumter.

⁴² Greenberg, “Charles Ingersoll,” 199.

⁴³ *Pittsburgh Gazette*, October 2, 1862, 2.

Nonetheless, Hughes promptly took responsibility for the resolution and admitted that after consulting with fellow politicians prior to the February 1861 convention, he had opted to refrain from presenting the measure to the Democratic delegates. The Republican press seized the incident as an election issue and hounded the Democrats for their decision to select Hughes as a party leader. Furthermore, Republicans discovered that two of Hughes's nephews had enlisted in the Confederate army while residing in North Carolina, further denigrating the Democratic chairman's image. "The treasonable views of this man are and have long been well known, yet he is retained as the leader of the party in this State," noted the *Pittsburgh Gazette*. "[I]f the mass of his party were loyal men, they would not keep him in the position he occupies."⁴⁴

Pennsylvania's midterm elections were held on October 14, 1862. Voters went to the polls less than one month after Confederate General Robert E. Lee's first invasion of the North, the Battle of Antietam, and the issuance of Lincoln's preliminary Emancipation Proclamation – three events that further reinforced the great cost of the war and the radical changes it was rendering. As anticipated, the Democracy scored significant triumphs. The two state offices up for election both went to Democrats.⁴⁵ In the state's lower assembly, fifty-four Democrats were elected compared with the Republican-Unionists' forty-six. In the state senate, where only twelve of the thirty-three senate seats were up for election, Unionists won eight seats to the Democrats four and retained an overall majority of twenty-one to twelve. However, in joint session of the state house and senate, the Democrats held a slim one vote majority which would prove

⁴⁴ Ibid, September 30, 1862, 2.

⁴⁵ Isaac Slenker was elected auditor general and James P. Barr, editor of the *Pittsburgh Post*, was selected to the office of surveyor general. Nonetheless, the margins of victory for both were slim, numbering around 3,800 out of 430,000 total votes cast (0.9%).

crucial in the upcoming election for U.S. senator the following January. In the congressional battle, Republicans and Democrats divided evenly, each party sending twelve of its own to Washington. The Democracy that had been struggling since the Lecompton fiasco to present a united front finally seemed to have healed old wounds and looked toward a return to its traditional dominance. “[W]e return thanks to a superior Power,” gushed the *Lancaster Intelligencer*, “that the Democracy throughout the State have given the monster of Abolitionism a death-wound, and we may now hope that President Lincoln will re-consider his course, take counsel from the warning the people of...Pennsylvania...have given him through the ballot-box, and retrace his steps as quickly as possible until he finds his feet again planted firmly on the platform of the Constitution.”⁴⁶ The Gettysburg *Republican Compiler* beamed that “the freemen of Pennsylvania, by an overwhelming vote, have recorded their verdict against the Abolition traitors. – The boot is on the other leg now, and the term traitor is applied where it properly belongs.”⁴⁷ Indeed, the Democracy had cause, at long last, to celebrate a resumption of conservative tradition in the state.

Since early 1862, Pennsylvania’s Democratic party had moved toward reconciliation within its ranks. War Democrats were no longer certain supporters of the Lincoln administration when the expansion of war aims came to embrace emancipation. Republicans aimed to reaffirm the War Democrats’ allegiance with conservative platform planks that ignored the question of abolition. But mainstream Democrats more often than not succeeded in convincing the War Democrats of the radical designs of the opposition. Peace Democrats meanwhile emerged from hiding once dissent for the war was again

⁴⁶ *Lancaster Intelligencer*, October 21, 1862, 2.

⁴⁷ *Republican Compiler* [Gettysburg], October 20, 1862, 2.

tolerated. Although they did not seize the party machinery, they were welcome to work within it and rally their followers to back candidates selected for office during the midterm election. The Moderate Democrats had firm control of the party in 1862 and articulated their continued support for the suppression of the rebellion, but now emphasized certain conditions. The Lincoln administration's mishandling of military campaigning, continued suppression of civil liberties, and newfound espousal for abolition prompted the Moderates to declare their loyalty to the federal government but opposition to its Republican management. As Joel Silbey explains, "the strong force of traditional institutions and perspectives forced the factions of the [Democratic] party, rent by old wounds, back together and ultimately led them into a position of political partisanship which all but a small minority of Democrats accepted – because this was their accustomed stance and they were comfortable in it and understood it."⁴⁸ Fortified by the party's resurgence, the Peace Democrats worked to gain control of the state party structure through the winter of 1862-63.

The success of the Democrats in the October elections manifested a renewed determination on the part of the state's Peace Democrats to disseminate their views. As dissatisfaction with the war's prosecution mounted, Copperhead sentiments became more tolerated, if not embraced. After a long hiatus from the public limelight, William B. Reed reemerged to proffer his views of the war with the November 1862 publication of his *A Statement and Vindication of Certain Political Opinions*. "[E]very day dissipates some theory of conquest or submission," Reed lamented, "widens the awful chasm that separates us from our brethren of the South, and renders more probable the stupendous shame of European intervention, - not merely recognition, but active military

⁴⁸ Silbey, *A Respectable Minority*, 61.

interposition, which at once settles the contest to our ignominy, and adds bitterness to the cup of degradation.”⁴⁹ Although many Democrats shared this particular worry concerning the complete conquest of the Confederacy, Reed’s preference was radically defeatist. “[I]f the choice be between the continuance of the war, with its attendant suffering and demoralization, certain miseries and uncertain results, and a recognition of the Southern Confederacy, I am in favor of Recognition, - of course making the abolition party responsible for this dread necessity. The blood of the Union is on them.”⁵⁰ To objectify this outcome, Reed proposed a solution that soon amounted to a political maxim of the Peace Democracy in the coming months, and became an attractive idea for increasing numbers of Moderate Democrats. He recommended a “National Convention” to “deliberate on matters of common concern” in the hope of achieving “new Federal relations.”⁵¹ Of course, such a solution would recognize the failure of the war effort, and to some, the failure of the American experiment in democracy. But to Reed and other Peace Democrats, this scenario was preferable to the continued sacrifices and radical social changes wrought by the war.

In the meantime, Charles Ingersoll’s short term in custody did little to diminish his antiwar sentiments after the midterm elections. After the disastrous Union defeat at Fredericksburg on December 13, Sidney George Fisher recorded in his diary that he “[m]et Charles Ingersoll in the street. He expressed such exultation and delight at the defeat of the Union army and his language was so violent & extravagant, that I was disgusted. He is imbued with narrowest partizan [sic] passions & is wholly insensible to

⁴⁹ William B. Reed, *A Paper Containing a Statement and Vindication of Certain Political Opinions* (Philadelphia: John Campbell, 1862), 19.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 21.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, 23.

argument, and incapable of any but the most petty views of the situation of the country.”⁵² Ingersoll’s behavior was representative of a small, but growing number of Democrats who believed that further Confederate victories would hasten the Democracy’s restoration to political power which would in turn bring the war to a prompt close.⁵³ To circulate this message, Ingersoll, Reed, and a group of conservative Philadelphia elites organized a social club “for mutual aid in the promotion, dissemination, and defence [sic] of the pure principles of Democracy.”⁵⁴ Designated the Central Democratic Club, it was established on January 8, 1863 – just one week after the Emancipation Proclamation took effect and on the anniversary of Andrew Jackson’s victory at New Orleans. Although the club would have little bearing on state politics, its mere existence hints at the growing affinity for the Peace Democrats’ agenda and a change in public perception of antiwar sentiments.

The grievances of the Central Democratic Club did not differ so much from previous resolutions adopted by Moderates of the Democratic State Convention. For example, the Club objected to the federal government’s centralization, the effort to broaden war aims to include emancipation, and the Lincoln administration’s suppression of free speech, free press, and the writ of *habeas corpus*. However, the tone of the club members’ agitation was far more vitriolic and outright subversive in nature. Among the propositions of the club was the assertion “[t]hat in the State of Pennsylvania all power is inherent in the WHITE PEOPLE, and that our Government is founded on THEIR authority, and that THEY have at all times the unalienable and indefeasible right to alter,

⁵² White, *Diary of Fisher*, 177.

⁵³ Greenberg, “Charles Ingersoll,” 203-204.

⁵⁴ *Constitution and By-Laws of the Central Democratic Club, Organized January, 1863* (Philadelphia: H.G. Leisenring, 1863), 5.

reform and abolish their Government in such manner as they may think proper.”⁵⁵ More extreme was the club’s contention that under certain circumstances, citizens could defy legislation of the federal government – particularly that of the radical Republicans and the Lincoln administration. The resolution stated:

That the people of the State of Pennsylvania, under its organic law, cannot be rightfully required to support or approve any political party, or the conduct of any officers of Government – executive, legislative, or judicial – who wilfully [sic] violate or disregard the requirements of the Constitution of the United States, and the cardinal doctrines of self-government and State Sovereignty, as the same are recognized and limited in the letter and spirit of the Federal and State Constitutions.⁵⁶

Within the walls of its headquarters in Philadelphia, the Central Democratic Club provided a forum for some of the most dissident rhetoric uttered at any time during the war, as Pennsylvania Copperheads displayed as much fervor as their counterparts in the more traditional “butternut” regions of the Midwest. As president of the Club, Charles Ingersoll opened the inaugural meeting with a speech. “The North is pro-slavery,” he asserted. “Through the voice of its people in their recent Democratic elections, it has pronounced for the protection of slavery, and of the protection of the gentlemen of the South in their human property....I look on negro property as being sacred as any other property, and I sympathize with the South in their desire to preserve it.”⁵⁷ In a brazenly obstructionist tone, Ingersoll further recommended that the Democratic-led state house “should...refuse supplies [for the war effort]. If I were a member of the House of Representatives at Harrisburg, I would say, until you give us a bill to call a [conciliatory] convention of the people of Pennsylvania we will give no money; we will withhold

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid, 6.

⁵⁷ *Philadelphia Press*, January 9, 1863, 3.

supplies.”⁵⁸ Sidney George Fisher, who was not a supporter of the Club but monitored the substance of its meetings, recorded on March 19 that Ingersoll “proposes, should any more ‘arbitrary arrests’ be made, that the government of Pennsylvania should seize officers of the federal government & hold *them as hostages* till the prisoners are released. Such are the extravagant, revolutionary plans of the Democrats, who profess to respect the Constitution.”⁵⁹ Other members of the club were equally dissident as Ingersoll. At a February 3 meeting, Reverend Chauncey C. Burr audaciously announced that “Abraham Lincoln is a greater traitor than Jefferson Davis. What has Jeff Davis done? He has merely infringed upon our territorial jurisdiction. He has not struck at the Constitution.”⁶⁰ With less agitation, but certainly as much defeatism, William B. Reed addressed the club on March 28: “I deplore and condemn the war and believe coercion to have been a mistake from the beginning, and pray, and hope and urge the necessity of Peace, and, if possible, ‘Reconciliation’: but Peace, even if the bond of sympathy be, as I fear it is, irreparably broken.”⁶¹ Although few Democrats were so vocal as the members of the Central Democratic Club, their ability to profess such subversive rhetoric over the course of several months indicates Pennsylvania’s disillusionment with the war and a growing tolerance for Copperhead agitation. Although the Copperheads did not seize the state party machinery outright in early 1863, Harrisburg’s Democrats were certainly shifting their sympathies toward peace.

As Philadelphia’s Copperheads were rousing antiwar sentiment in their social circle, Pennsylvania’s Democratic politicians were flexing their restored might against

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ White, *Diary of Fisher*, 186.

⁶⁰ *Philadelphia Press*, February 4, 1863, 2.

⁶¹ Quoted in Russell Weigley, “The Border City in Civil War,” in *Philadelphia: A 300-Year History*, eds. Russell Weigley and Nicholas B. Wainwright (New York: W.W. Norton, 1982), 406-407.

Republican-Unionists. The 1862 election had given the Democrats a slim one-vote majority in joint session of the state house and senate. This gave the party a virtual lock on electing a U.S. senator to succeed Republican David Wilmot in January 1863, barring any unexpected defections. Selection of an appropriate Democratic candidate would be essential to ensure a unified party vote. Francis W. Hughes was considered a leading contender since his selection as state party chairman; however, the recent revelations of his ultraconservative past had made his nomination inauspicious. Democrats subsequently turned to Charles Rollins Buckalew, a War Democrat during the early months of the conflict and more recently a Conditional Moderate who stood firmly for the suppression of the rebellion while criticizing the Emancipation Proclamation. Buckalew, a lawyer from Columbia County, distinguished himself with his “thoroughly honest, able and wise leadership” in the state senate during the 1850s and had most recently served as Buchanan’s minister to Ecuador.⁶² Republicans meanwhile sought to win converts from the slim Democratic majority and ultimately settled on Simon Cameron, Lincoln’s recently deposed secretary of war. Cameron was known to employ corrupt dealings to secure political advantage, and evidence suggests that bribes were offered to Democratic legislators to switch their votes to him.⁶³ Devoted conservatives caught wind of the scheme and some “were inflamed to revolutionary action, and meetings were held in Philadelphia where it was openly declared that no Democratic member of the Legislature should be permitted to escape from the hall of the house alive

⁶² Alexander K. McClure, *Old Time Notes of Pennsylvania*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: John C. Winston, 1905), 33.

⁶³ One Democratic representative averred before the legislature that he was offered \$100,000 to vote for Cameron. McClure, *Old Time Notes*, 2:38.

if he cast his vote for Cameron.”⁶⁴ Whether through devotion to party or threat of physical violence, the Democrats maintained their partisan sympathies and elected Buckalew with the one-vote majority on January 13, 1863, the closest election for senator in the history of the Pennsylvania legislature.⁶⁵ The state Democracy was jubilant over another example of conservative forces recovering the federal government. The *Luzerne Union* celebrated “the loyal, Constitution-loving masses of the old Keystone [that] have at last triumphed in the election of a [D]emocrat who will contribute all in his power to bring back the old ship of State safely to her moorings.”⁶⁶ Soon after his election, Buckalew professed his views on the war, which had a decidedly pro-peace tone. He “propose[d] to secure [the Confederacy’s] cooperation in restoring the Union by a policy of conciliation, and by the example of a return by our own government to the true Constitutional rule, uninfluenced by fanatical passion and regardful of all State and individual rights as established by our fathers.”⁶⁷ The proponents of peace could now cheerfully point to a fellow conservative in state office.

In response to continuing military frustrations, the Emancipation Proclamation, and an unpopular conscription law enacted on March 3, 1863, the Democratic majority in the state house passed a series of resolutions that censured Republican policy and represented a steady shift toward open advocacy of peace. These resolutions were passed on April 13 as a result of the nation’s onslaught “by an armed rebellion on one side, which is being met by the sword, and on the other by unconstitutional acts of Congress,

⁶⁴ Ibid, 2:34.

⁶⁵ Hummel, “Charles R. Buckalew,” 204-205.

⁶⁶ Quoted in Ibid, 142.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 206.

and startling usurpation of power by the Executive.”⁶⁸ Most revolting to the legislators was the Emancipation Proclamation, which upset traditional conservative notions of property and race. “[T]his General Assembly,” pronounced the resolution, “enters its solemn protest against the Proclamation of the President...by which he assumes to emancipate slaves in certain States, holding the same to be unwise, unconstitutional, and void.”⁶⁹ More startling was the house members’ approval of a proposition espoused by some of the most ardent Peace Democrats:

[T]his General Assembly deem it proper further to declare that it, together with all the truly loyal people of the State, would hail with pleasure and delight any manifestation of a desire on the part of the seceded States to return to their allegiance to the Government of the Union, and would in such an event, cordially and earnestly co-operate with them in the restoration of peace, and the procurement of such proper guarantees as would give security to all their interests and rights.⁷⁰

Of course, these sentiments only took the form of resolutions and were not drawn up as legislation; nor did the Republican-majority state senate pass the resolutions. Nonetheless, Democratic dissatisfaction and disillusionment with the war had by early 1863 combined many Moderate politicians with the state’s Copperhead elements in a denunciation of the war’s course. An immediate turn of military fortunes was critical to sustain the Republican war effort, particularly with the 1863 gubernatorial and the 1864 presidential elections looming. The conservative resurgence seemed even more unyielding with Lee’s heretofore invincible army threatening to invade the Keystone State.

⁶⁸ Davis, “Pennsylvania Politics,” 283.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid, 284.

* * * *

From early 1862 to the eve of the Battle of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania's Democratic continuum endured the most drastic shift of the entire war. The War Democrats, who had once allied with Republican-Unionists in a combined effort to suppress the rebellion, balked at the thought of a war to emancipate Southern slaves. Erstwhile War Democrats like Representatives Hendrick Wright and Charles Biddle could brook temporary suspension of civil liberties and some military setbacks, but a war designed to upset the traditional social structure and conservative notions of slave property proved too radical to tolerate. Many of these War Democrats became Conditional Moderates, still supporting the military subjugation of the South, but fighting incessantly to restore the limited war aims that had defined the Lincoln administration's plans in 1861. Peace Democrats, on the other hand, reveled in the agitation created by the federal government's turn toward emancipation. As conservatives across the state reacted unfavorably to the expanded war aims, the Copperheads' dire warnings now took on relevance as military defeats and perceived government usurpation sapped enthusiasm for war. Although Ingersoll, Reed, and their peers never took public office during the war, their views met with support from a larger number of Democrats and even came to be adopted to a degree by party members in Harrisburg.

Moderate Democrats, who more often than not leaned toward the pro-war end of the spectrum during the early months of the war, shifted overwhelmingly toward peace by the eve of the Battle of Gettysburg. Although they had always viewed the suppression of free speech, free press, and the writ of *habeas corpus* as unconstitutional, they had often given the Lincoln administration tacit approval when it came to preserving the

Union through subjugation of the Confederacy. Once they witnessed what they viewed as a radical Republican usurpation of the North's war aims however, they withheld all support for a Republican administration and fought tenaciously, and for a time successfully, to regain control of the state and federal governments. They viewed their success in the 1862 midterm elections as a mandate from Pennsylvania voters to stop social change through emancipation and painted themselves as the best hope for a speedy restoration of peace. As military failures multiplied and the Lincoln administration persisted in its radical course, the Moderates adopted some of the views of the Copperheads. Most strikingly, Moderates began advocating renewed efforts at conciliation with the South through state and national conventions, a proposal advocated by Peace Democrats since before the war. By June 1863, the war had reached a crossroads. Another major Union defeat would likely engender an overwhelming call for peace among Northern conservatives and discredit Republicans in all political offices. On the other hand, a definitive military victory could halt the surging Democratic tide and their plan to bring the war to a swift, and potentially ignominious, close. This outcome was staked on the result of the crucial battle destined to be fought on the soils of Pennsylvania.

Chapter 4: The Peace Democracy Rebuffed, Summer 1863 – Spring 1864

The Summer 1863 invasion of Pennsylvania by General Robert E. Lee and his Army of Northern Virginia marked a watershed moment in the political clout of the Commonwealth's Peace Democracy. Although their ultraconservative views had prohibited the outright seizure of their party's machinery, the Copperheads' antiwar vitriol gained influence statewide and persuaded Conditional Moderates in Harrisburg to consider closely their calls for peace. As the Confederates crossed the Mason-Dixon line in June, Peace Democrats exhibited restrained jubilation at the thought of another Union defeat that would further question the Lincoln administration's prosecution of the war. As Philadelphia diarist George W. Fahnestock recorded, "[u]nhappily, so strong has grown the feeling of opposition to the present Administration, that many men are pleased with the prospect of invasion, carnage, blood, and smoking ruins! They walk our streets today, radiant with joy, led on by W[illiam] B. Reed, Charlie Ingersoll, and [George] Wharton, and a horde of old worn out Peace Democrats. Nothing would rejoice them more than to see our whole government laid in ashes!"¹ The invasion came amid the most important election campaign of the war to that point – one that would determine the next governor of the Commonwealth and the level of Pennsylvania's commitment to the Lincoln administration's war policies. With their burgeoning political power, Copperheads looked to wrest control of the party machinery, unite with war-weary Moderates, and oust War Democrats from the party ranks. If successful at the polls, the Peace Democracy would install an antiwar governor who could use his influence to bring the Lincoln administration to heel and encourage the immediate cessation of hostilities. All signs pointed to a continued Peace Democratic resurgence and the election of a

¹ Quoted in Weigley, "A Peaceful City," 166.

Copperhead as governor. But a concerted Republican effort to unite against the forces of antiwar conservatism, combined with an auspicious change in Union military fortunes in the latter half of 1863 resulted in the slow decline of Pennsylvania's Peace Democracy, capped by a narrow, but devastating defeat during the fall election.

The high-water mark of the Peace Democracy in Pennsylvania coincided with the arrest of the notorious Copperhead leader and Democratic congressman Clement L. Vallandigham of Ohio, where antiwar sentiment may have been the most strident of any Northern state. In the southern part of the state especially, large numbers of Southern-born Democrats vehemently opposed the Lincoln administration's war policies, particularly emancipation. Nicknamed the "Butternut" region of Ohio, its political champion was Vallandigham, who was a strong advocate of states' rights and fervently believed that the South had the constitutional right to secede from the Union. Citing a "reign of terror" committed by the Lincoln administration, Vallandigham decried the "determined purpose [by Republicans] evinced to break down the ancient, customary, and constitutional means of opposition to the political party in power."² His statements were often radical and construed as disloyal by Republicans, prompting his arrest in May 1863. In an effort to wash their hands of the controversial Copperhead, government officials exiled Vallandigham to the Confederacy from whence he boarded a steamboat to Canada and declared himself a Democratic candidate in the upcoming gubernatorial election in his native state. For their part, Pennsylvania's Peace Democrats were outraged by the arrest and exile of the Ohioan and organized a protest at Independence Hall in Philadelphia on June 1, 1863. There they passed resolutions that criticized the

² Clement L. Vallandigham, *Speeches, Arguments, and Letters of Clement L. Vallandigham* (New York: J. Walter & Company, 1864), 415.

Lincoln administration's restriction of civil liberty. Moreover, the protest meeting set the stage for the Pennsylvania Democracy's upcoming state party convention.

The Democratic State Convention met in Harrisburg on June 17, 1863, amid the disorder caused by Lee's apparent designs to capture the state capital. In a frenzy, citizens began constructing earthworks around Harrisburg, and Governor Andrew Gregg Curtin called out the state militia to defend the city. On the day of the convention, the *Philadelphia Press* observed that "Harrisburg is now in a condition which borders on commotion...and [which] run[s] over with rumor and gossip."³ With a wry sense of humor, the same publication reported several days later that if Confederate cavalry in the region had been more intrepid, they "might have ridden to the top of Capitol Hill and taken part in the deliberations of the Democratic Convention."⁴ Nonetheless, Democratic leaders paid little heed to the rebel invasion during their assembly, and drew up a slate of candidates and resolutions they deemed appropriate to restore conservative, antiwar principles in the Keystone State. Nonetheless the delegates present doubtlessly recognized the importance of Lee's invasion to the 1863 gubernatorial campaign. Another Confederate victory, this time on Northern soil, would likely unnerve the majority of Pennsylvanians toward the war and better the Democrats' chances at securing the governor's seat from the Unionists. Furthermore, the outcome of the looming battle would decide which wing of the Democratic continuum would control the party machinery. Peace Democrats knew that another Union defeat would make their calls for an immediate armistice irresistible.

³ *Philadelphia Press*, June 17, 1863, 1.

⁴ *Ibid*, June 23, 1863, 2.

The resolutions adopted at the convention concerned many of the usual grievances that had rankled most Democrats since the early months of the war. Arbitrary arrest, suppression of the press, suspension of the writ of *habeas corpus*, and the usurpation of the Lincoln Administration by “a small faction of ultra Abolitionists” were all denounced as at previous conventions.⁵ The adoption of other resolutions, however, substantiated the fact that the War Democrats had little clout among the delegates at this point in the war. For instance, the Pennsylvania Democracy demonstrated its sympathy for the plight of Congressman Vallandigham, an expression that War Democrats would certainly not have supported: “*Resolved*, That we heartily thank the lion-hearted Democracy of Ohio for the manly vindication they have given to the Constitution against the great crime committed upon it in the arrest and deportation of Clement L. Vallandigham, and we assure them of our cordial sympathy in the great struggle they are making for their undoubted rights.”⁶ Another resolution targeted the Curtin administration’s acquiescence to what they deemed to be the unconstitutional measures implemented by the federal government. “[T]he plain duty of the Chief Magistrate of the Commonwealth,” determined the delegates, “requires him to use whatever power the law has placed in his hands to protect the State and the people from lawless outrages, come from whatever quarter they may, and no man is fit to be Governor...who will consent to hold his own liberties and let the people hold theirs at the mere will of the Federal Executive.”⁷ Peace Democrats also exerted their influence with a resolution that acknowledged on one hand their “profound anxiety for [the Union’s] fate,” but on the other, their intent to “exercise the right to consider, discuss, ascertain and urge in

⁵ *Erie Observer*, June 27, 1863, 2.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

becoming terms upon the people and the constituted authorities, whatever measures will, in our judgment, be most likely to place and keep the whole nation together under one Federal Government.”⁸ The platform adopted by the Democratic convention delegates exhibited a pronounced peace bent that demonstrated that Conditional Moderates and Peace Democrats in Harrisburg were much more likely to work together collaboratively during Summer 1863 than with the War wing of the Democratic continuum.

A host of state party leaders were advanced as potential candidates for the October gubernatorial election during the state convention. No fewer than nine Democrats received serious consideration for the party’s nod. Notable among these were Henry D. Foster, the defeated 1860 gubernatorial candidate; George Cass, a Pittsburgh rail magnate; William H. Witte, a former Congressman and War Democrat; Hiester Clymer, a state senator and Peace Democrat; and George W. Woodward, associate justice of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court. Also of note was General William Buel Franklin, a career soldier with typical War Democratic principles. During Summer 1863, Franklin found himself without a command, likely because of both his unimpressive battle record and his close friendship with General George B. McClellan. Pennsylvania’s War Democrats, however, supported him for his conservative ideology and pro-war sympathies. In a letter to his sister, Franklin wrote, “[i]f I be nominated for Gov. of Penn. & be elected, I believe I will still have some opportunity of doing good in this war” but would only do so “with a platform of principles which I could fully endorse & that the prosecution of the war is the only thing that I care much about.”⁹ Alexander K. McClure,

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Quoted in Mark A. Snell, *From First to Last: The Life of Major General William B. Franklin* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), 271-272. Interestingly, Franklin was also considered for the gubernatorial candidacy of the Republican-Union party. During Spring 1863, Governor Andrew G. Curtin

advisor to Governor Curtin, believed that Franklin's selection would have been "a great opportunity for the Democrats...as it would have emphasized the attitude of the party and relieved it of the crushing millstone of actual or apparent disloyalty that always more or less hindered Democratic success."¹⁰ Still, Franklin's political inexperience and pro-war attitudes proved unpopular among most Democratic leaders at the nominating convention.

Initial balloting to determine the party's gubernatorial candidate pitted War Democrat William H. Witte against Peace Democrat Hiester Clymer. Through eight ballots, neither candidate could secure sufficient votes to win. Witte's name was subsequently removed from contention and replaced with that of George W. Woodward. On the ninth ballot, Woodward defeated Clymer by a vote of seventy-five to fifty-three. Delegate Christopher Ward recorded in his diary that although Woodward was not the first choice of many state politicians, there was still "much enthusiasm at the nomination of Geo. W. Woodward for Governor."¹¹ Also selected by acclamation among convention delegates was Walter H. Lowrie, who served as chief justice of the state supreme court and was up for reelection.

Woodward was generally viewed as a man of high character and ability and a strong candidate to wrest the governorship from the Republicans. Born in Bethany, Wayne County, Pennsylvania on March 26, 1809, Woodward came from a family of Pennsylvania jurists. Local schools were unable to slake his intellectual appetite, so

was seriously ill and was warned by physicians that reelection to a second term in office would likely result in the governor's death. Curtin advanced Franklin's name as a potential successor who could garner the votes of Republicans and Democratic Unionists alike. Curtin eventually relented and sought and secured the nomination of the Union party in August 1863.

¹⁰ McClure, *Old Time Notes*, 2:53.

¹¹ Quoted in Arnold Shankman, "For the Union As It Was and the Constitution As It Is: A Copperhead Views the Civil War," in *Rank and File: Civil War Essays in Honor of Bell Irvin Wiley*, eds. James I. Robertson, Jr. and Richard M. McMurry (San Rafael, CA: Presidio Press, 1976), 102.

young George was sent to an academy at Geneva, New York, later to become Hobart College. He left the academy when he was nineteen and began studying law. Just two years later, in 1830, he was admitted to Luzerne County's bar and quickly established a successful practice in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. For his capable services, the community rewarded Woodward in 1836 with a seat at the state constitutional convention that assembled the following year. There he adopted a democratizing reform by spearheading a movement to reduce life tenures for state judges to fifteen-year appointments.¹² Less universally acceptable was Woodward's proposed amendment to bar immigrants from voting or holding public office in the state. He urged delegates to "prevent any foreigner who may arrive in the State after the 4th of July, 1841, from acquiring the right to *vote* or to hold office in the commonwealth."¹³ Delegates, especially fellow Democrats, censured Woodward's recommendation and he quickly rescinded it.¹⁴ More popular was Woodward's support for barring the state's free black population from the franchise. By a wide margin, delegates passed an amendment that ensured that only "white freemen...shall enjoy the rights of an elector."¹⁵ Woodward's established leadership during the deliberations opened up new political opportunities for him during the antebellum years.

¹² Ironically, Woodward would be subjected to these term limits when he became a state justice himself, less than fifteen years later. To his credit, when Woodward secured his appointment as a state judge, he never seemed to regret the limitations he had a hand in imposing on himself.

¹³ Daniel J. Curran, "Polk, Politics, and Patronage: The Rejection of George W. Woodward's Nomination to the Supreme Court," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 121:3 (July 1997): 167.

¹⁴ Democrats of this era tended to support immigrants and their voting rights. Most immigrants of the antebellum era were Irish or German and qualified under the Jacksonian ideal of white male egalitarianism. For the rest of Woodward's political career, opponents branded him as a nativist, forcing him to temper or outright deny his role in the anti-immigrant proposal at the 1838 convention.

¹⁵ *Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*, 1838, Article III, Section I.

By 1841, Woodward's rising stature helped him secure an appointment as president judge of Pennsylvania's fourth judicial district, encompassing five Democratic-inclined counties in the center of the state.¹⁶ Four years later, several Democrats urged Woodward to be considered for a vacancy in the U.S. Senate. Although he acquired the support of the Democratic nominating caucus, another rising Democrat, Simon Cameron, sought the post as well.¹⁷ Cameron effectively attacked Woodward's nativist sympathies which helped to discredit him among Democratic voters. Because of the damage to his reputation, enough Democrats abandoned Woodward for his rival. The judge would suffer another disappointment just months later. In December 1845, President James K. Polk nominated Woodward to fill an opening in the U.S. Supreme Court. Polk accurately viewed Woodward as a fellow "old time Jeffersonian" who "maintain[ed] in their full vigor the reserved rights of the States."¹⁸ However, Polk's affinity for Woodward did not translate to senatorial approbation. Whig senators, especially, viewed Woodward as too polarizing a figure and deemed him a "partisan judge who tended to allow his political opinions to influence his legal decisions."¹⁹ After his hopes for a nationally recognized position were dashed twice, Woodward devoted himself to his law practice for the next seven years. A new opportunity arose in 1852 when Governor William Bigler appointed Woodward to a fifteen-year term in the state's supreme court, where he was recognized among friends as one of the ablest jurists in the state. It was in this capacity that Woodward served when he received the Democratic party's gubernatorial candidacy.

¹⁶ These counties included Centre, Clearfield, Clinton, Huntington, and Mifflin.

¹⁷ Simon Cameron (1799 – 1889) would later bolt the Democratic Party and join the fledgling Republican Party in the 1850s. As earlier noted, he would become Lincoln's first Secretary of War.

¹⁸ Curran, "Polk, Politics, and Patronage," 181.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 192.

Some historians have labeled Woodward a compromise candidate between the warring factions of the War and Peace wings of the party.²⁰ Although Woodward received support from both wings in the convention balloting, it is not altogether apt to consider the judge either a Conditional Moderate or a true compromise candidate. An examination of his wartime record indicates that his ideology more closely matched that of the Peace wing of the party. During the secession winter, Woodward was a Breckinridge Conservative, vehemently opposed to the sectionalizing tendencies of the Republican party. At the Independence Square rally in December 1860, Woodward famously struck out in favor of the South's right to secede when he lectured that "[t]he law of self-defense includes rights of *property* as well as of *person* and it appears to me that there must be a time...when slaveholders may lawfully fall back on their natural rights, and employ in defence [sic] of their property whatever means of protection they possess or can command."²¹ Furthermore, Woodward considered Southern slavery to be "an incalculable blessing" to the North's prosperity as he urged his listeners to "remember that COTTON, *the product of slave labor*, has been one of the indispensable elements of all this prosperity. More – it must be an indispensable element of all our future prosperity."²² So radical were Woodward's views during the 1860-61 winter, they were actually in line with the sentiments of the likes of Charles Ingersoll and William B. Reed. In a letter to his close friend Jeremiah S. Black, Woodward urged the then-attorney general that "if [the Southern states] do go out [of the Union] dont [sic] let a

²⁰ See Dell, *War Democrats*, 244-246.

²¹ Woodward, "Speech of Woodward," 6.

²² *Ibid*, 9.

blow be struck against them....Dissuade them if you can, but if you cant [sic] let them go in peace. I wish Pennsylvania could go with them. They are our brethren.”²³

Although Woodward remained out of the public eye during the early months of the war, he managed to use his seat on the bench to thwart Republican war policy. In October 1861, Democrats met with a series of election defeats that some charged came as a result of fraudulent votes cast by soldiers in the field. It was alleged that some non-Pennsylvania soldiers had cast ballots in the state election.²⁴ In May 1862, the state supreme court ruled on the case of *Chase v. Miller*, which called into question the constitutionality of soldiers voting from the field. Referring to a stipulation in the state’s 1838 constitution which directed that a voter must reside for a period of at least ten days before the election “in the election district where he offers to vote,” Woodward and a majority of his associates decided that this barred the soldier vote outside the state.²⁵ Woodward, who wrote the opinion of the court, determined that “the constitution meant...that the voter, *in propria persona*, should offer his vote in an appropriate election district, in order that his neighbours [sic] might be at hand to establish his right to vote if it were challenged, or to challenge it if it were doubtful.”²⁶ Republicans came to regret the court’s decision because soldiers tended to vote increasingly and overwhelmingly for Republican candidates as the war continued. With his controversial ruling, Woodward had given the Democrats a decided edge in future elections by removing a crucial sector of the Republican vote. Peace Democrats at the state convention of 1863 undoubtedly

²³ George W. Woodward to Jeremiah S. Black, November 18, 1860, Jeremiah Black Papers, Microfilm Collection, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

²⁴ It should be noted that soldiers in the field represented one of the Republican party’s most loyal groups of supporters.

²⁵ Jonathan W. White, “Citizens and Soldiers: Party Competition and the Debate in Pennsylvania over Permitting Soldiers to Vote, 1861 – 64,” *American Nineteenth Century History* 5:2 (Summer 2004): 54.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

remembered this and acknowledged Woodward's worthiness for the gubernatorial candidacy.

Nevertheless, War Democrats could have found cause to support Woodward during the balloting. If his loyalty was in question, the judge could point to two of his five sons who enthusiastically joined the Union army in the opening days of the war. Woodward's oldest son, Stanley, abandoned for a time the legal profession and took up arms with the Third Pennsylvania and later the Forty-First Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry, attaining the rank of captain in the latter regiment. Among other engagements, Stanley participated in the Antietam and Gettysburg Campaigns but emerged unscathed.²⁷ Another son, George Abisha Woodward, joined the Second Pennsylvania Infantry. In June 1862, he was severely wounded in combat, was captured, and sent to Libby Prison in Richmond, Virginia. After his release, the younger Woodward returned to Philadelphia and was cared for by his father. George Abisha recalled that during his convalescence, his father supported the preservation of the Union but at times openly criticized the war effort and even advocated a six-month truce, in which time the North might seek a peace with the Confederacy.²⁸ War Democrats were also likely attracted to Woodward's personal funding for the equipping of a volunteer infantry company at the beginning of the war. Nonetheless, Woodward's pro-secessionist and pro-slavery comments, anti-Lincoln sentiments, and obstructionist judicial rulings more closely identify him with the Peace wing of the party and refute the dubious contention that he served as a moderate, compromise candidate. As historian Arnold Shankman definitively

²⁷ George B. Kulp, *The Luzerne Legal Register*, vol. 12 (Wilkes-Barre, PA: E.B. Yordy, 1883), 34. During the postwar years, Stanley Woodward would follow in his father's footsteps and serve as an associate judge in the Pennsylvania Supreme Court.

²⁸ Shankman, "Union As It Was," 100.

notes, “Woodward was a Copperhead. He shared the peace Democrats’ antipathy toward greenback currency, arbitrary arrests, the denial of the writ of *habeas corpus*, the suppression of antiadministration newspapers and a federal conscription act. He hoped that enough war critics would be elected to state and national offices to force the Lincoln administration to reevaluate its military position.”²⁹ Furthermore, Woodward’s selection by the convention delegates affirms the argument that the Peace Democracy, with the support of war-weary Moderates, had firm control of state politics prior to the Battle of Gettysburg. These Democrats speculated that enough of Pennsylvania’s voters were similarly disillusioned by the war to obviate the need for a conservative Unionist candidate like William B. Franklin. As Erwin Stanley Bradley explains, Woodward’s “nomination was a deliberate move by the Democratic Party to avoid selection of a man likely to be accepted by Unionists as a coalition candidate, and was proof of the party’s confidence in its ability to capture the gubernatorial prize without the aid of the War Democrats.”³⁰ Success likely would have been forthcoming for the Peace Democrats had the fortunes of the Union armies not improved.

* * * *

For pro-war Unionists, the June-July 1863 Confederate invasion was the most discouraging incident in a long series of unfortunate events for the Northern cause. The eastern-based Army of the Potomac had been thwarted again by Lee’s Army of Northern Virginia at Chancellorsville in May, while General Ulysses S. Grant had become bogged down outside the city of Vicksburg, the Confederacy’s Mississippi River citadel. On June 29, just two days before the Battle of Gettysburg commenced, Sidney George Fisher

²⁹ Ibid, 101.

³⁰ Bradley, *Militant Republicanism*, 162.

logged in his diary that Philadelphia's "streets presented a strange aspect....There was no excitement. The same street presented a very different scene in April 1861 when the war broke out....War was a novelty then; it is an old story now, and the demagogues have spread abroad the opinion that the administration is corrupt & imbecile, that it is impossible to conquer the South & that we ought to have peace now on any terms."³¹

Directly in the path of the invasion, Cassandra Morris Small of York wrote a letter to a friend on July 8 concerning the prevalence of Copperheads in her community who mingled freely with the marauding rebel soldiers:

I would be ashamed to tell you...[that] there are some who call themselves ladies, who went out to see [the Confederates] there, and entertained them, but they are sorry already, I guess – no one will visit them any more, they must form a party among themselves – a distinct line is drawn [between Unionists and Copperheads]. The Rebels, themselves spoke of them to some of our townsmen and said...that 'friends in an enemy's country are worse than traitors.' They said they held them in supreme contempt.³²

Unionists' aversion to the Peace Democrats during the Gettysburg Campaign was centered on the notion that Copperhead subversion would only encourage the Confederates to pursue independence with greater resolve. As Fisher explained, Copperheads "are evidence of a divided North. Division is weakness and our weakness is strength for the enemy."³³ This logic proved well-founded, as Lee himself recognized the benefits of the Peace Democrats' obstructionism to the Southern cause. In a letter to Confederate President Jefferson Davis, Lee wrote on June 25 that "the peace party at the North" would "tend to repress the war feeling in the Federal States [and] will inure to our benefit. I do not know that we can do anything to promote the pacific feeling, but our

³¹ White, *Diary of Fisher*, 196.

³² Cassandra Morris Small Blair, *Letters of "63": Written in York, Pennsylvania, During the Occupation of that Town by the Confederate Troops in the Summer of 1863* (Detroit: Stair-Jordan-Baker, 1928), 25.

³³ White, *Diary of Fisher*, 190.

course ought to be so shaped as not to discourage it.”³⁴ By Summer 1863, Peace Democrats were prevalent enough to serve as a dangerous counterpoise to Pennsylvania’s Unionist sentiments both in politics and on the home front.

The threat of Lee’s invasion on Pennsylvania soil did engender a degree of renewed war enthusiasm among citizens of all political stripes, particularly along the southern tier counties targeted by rebel raids. Fresh off his failed bid to secure the Democratic gubernatorial candidacy, War Democrat William B. Franklin returned to his hometown of York to urge enlistments to thwart the Confederate invasion. Franklin penned an article featured in the June 23 *York Gazette* entitled “The Crisis – An Appeal: A few practical reasons why the People of the Border Counties of Pennsylvania should respond to the last call of the President for Volunteers.” He warned his fellow Pennsylvanians that the Confederates “will destroy your property, will take away all feeling of self-respect from you, will degrade your country, and if allowed to proceed will make you objects of contempt & scorn to your own country and to the rest of the world.”³⁵ But Franklin also offered criticism of the Curtin and Lincoln administrations by encouraging able-bodied men to “[r]epair to Harrisburg and offer yourselves in compliance with the call of the President & your Governor, and should it afterwards appear this attempt at invasion has been caused by those in authority to whom you have committed the direction of affairs, you have the power of constitutionally hurling them from the places which they have degraded, to the ignominy they will deserve.”³⁶

³⁴ A.L. Long and Marcus J. Wright, *Memoirs of Robert E. Lee: His Military and Personal History* (New York: J.M. Stoddart, 1886), 622.

³⁵ Snell, *From First to Last*, 274.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

The Battle of Gettysburg, fought July 1 – 3, 1863, ended with the Army of the Potomac’s most stirring victory of the war. General George G. Meade, a Pennsylvania-raised War Democrat, turned aside Lee’s last major Northern invasion of the war with devastating losses for the Confederacy. On Independence Day, Ulysses S. Grant finally forced the surrender of Confederate troops at Vicksburg, opening the entirety of the Mississippi River to Union forces. Just as the Confederacy reached its “high-water mark” at Gettysburg just before Pickett’s Charge, that point should also be considered the high-water mark of Pennsylvania’s Peace Democracy. Gettysburg and Vicksburg demonstrated to many Northerners that the Lincoln administration’s prosecution of the war was finally bearing fruit and that the South could be militarily suppressed. Contemporaries agreed that these events decided the 1863 gubernatorial campaign.

Republican Alexander K. McClure speculated that:

Had Lee’s campaign in Pennsylvania been crowned with any important measure of success it would have been accepted very generally in the North that the war was likely to be indefinitely continued, with none able to foretell the final result with any degree of certainty; but when, on the Fourth of July, 1863, General Meade announced the retreat of Lee’s army, and General Grant announced the surrender of Vicksburg, the confidence of the loyal people of the country was greatly strengthened, and the feeling was very general that the military power of the Rebellion was broken, assuring the overthrow of the Confederacy.³⁷

Woodward and his supporters fought on, however, and campaigned strenuously in their bid to reestablish Democratic dominance in the state and begin a concerted effort to bring immediate peace to the nation.

* * * *

When the Democratic State Convention selected George W. Woodward as their gubernatorial candidate, Woodward was not present. Apparently confident that he would

³⁷ McClure, *Old Time Notes*, 2:52.

not be chosen, the judge had left his Philadelphia home on a fishing trip. Nonetheless, Woodward was aware of the interest some Democrats harbored for his nomination. Just weeks before the convention, he wrote his friend and fellow Democrat, Lewis S. Coryell, that he did not actively seek the nomination. “I have done nothing,” Woodward insisted, “to attract public attention to myself – have rather discouraged friends from naming me. My tastes are more judicial than executive.”³⁸ Nonetheless, if called upon he felt duty-bound to serve. “Whilst I do not seek the nomination I will not decline it,” he determined.³⁹ After two years of bloodshed and the further decline of Democratic conservatism at the hands of Republican war policy, Woodward’s convictions of limited government and strict constitutional interpretation only hardened. He urged that a candidate be chosen that would “stand by the few state rights that are left” and “administer the constitution & laws as they are written.”⁴⁰ If chosen as the Democratic gubernatorial candidate, he hoped he could govern “constitution loving citizens whose hearts were large enough to embrace the whole country, and whose heads were clear enough to see that a centralized despotism would be the death of popular liberty.”⁴¹

After securing the Democratic candidacy, Woodward refused to resign from the state supreme court which made it easier for him to remain detached from the frenzy of political campaigning.⁴² Throughout the summer and fall campaign season, Woodward would occasionally attend rallies, but rarely spoke to the crowds and never addressed the

³⁸ George W. Woodward to Lewis S. Coryell, June 1, 1863, the Lewis S. Coryell Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Although it is true that candidates for national offices rarely campaigned actively in the form of rallies and stump speeches during this time, candidates for state office more often employed these tactics. Governor Curtin, for instance, engaged in political rallies across the Commonwealth during the campaign despite his ill health.

major issues of the day. There were several reasons he adopted this strategy. First, Woodward firmly believed that active political campaigning and discussing issues of partisan politics was beneath the dignity of his office. To a crowd of supporters, Woodward explained that “I am one of those who think that the judicial office should be held aloft above all partisan passions and appeals....If I should be elected your Governor, it will then become my duty to discuss these questions, and I promise you it shall be done at the proper time with great plainness of speech.”⁴³ Unsurprisingly, Republican partisans assailed his attempts to mix his judicial principles with executive ambition. “We have great respect for our Supreme Court,” asserted the *Philadelphia Press*, “and we are sorry to see one of its members aiding to drag its sacred ermine in the turbid waters of politics. Let him retain his self-respect and retire from the bench, or decline the nomination for Governor.”⁴⁴ Second, Woodward was recognized as an able speech-writer but a colorless orator whose dispassionate manner inspired few. Instead, he relied on friends like Jeremiah Black and other Democratic leaders like William Bigler and William B. Reed to provide electrifying speeches to galvanize the antiwar base. Lastly, and perhaps most revealing, was that Woodward recognized that silence would best disguise his peace sentiments. To win the election, the party needed the support of the War Democratic wing. If Woodward spoke plainly about his true convictions, he would likely alienate this segment of the party. “Woodward was...a man of integrity, and it would be difficult for him to talk about the war and disguise his peace sympathies.”⁴⁵ Woodward shrewdly realized that silence would garner him the greatest number of supporters without corrupting his Copperhead views.

⁴³ *Erie Observer*, Sept. 26, 1863, 2.

⁴⁴ *Philadelphia Press*, June 23, 1863, 2.

⁴⁵ Shankman, “Union As It Was,” 102.

Because of his self-imposed silence, Woodward was dependent upon friends and state political leaders to campaign for him. Another example of the campaign's peace-inclined bent are the identities of Woodward's strongest supporters and the substance of their speeches. Among those who spoke on behalf of Woodward were two prominent Peace Democrats, Hiester Clymer and William B. Reed. At a rally in Somerset on August 24, 1863, Clymer announced that "if Woodward and Vallandigham were elected Governors of Pennsylvania and Ohio, they, with [Governor Horatio] Seymour of New York, and [Governor Joel] Parker of New Jersey, would unite in calling from the army the troops from their respective States, for the purpose of compelling the [Lincoln] Administration to invite a convention of the States to adjust our difficulties."⁴⁶ Although the likelihood of any such recall may have been slim, Clymer's pronouncement was radically obstructionist. Reed resumed his defeatist tone in a speech delivered at Meadville on September 17. Although he claimed he had "no wish of [Pennsylvania] being other than she was before this terrible convulsion came upon us – the keystone of the great arch," Reed also averred "that if, in the dread dispensation of Providence... Pennsylvania, still a sovereign Commonwealth, still an organized community, shall have power to stand by itself or to seek new companionship."⁴⁷ Because of Woodward's campaign reticence and dearth of personal papers, it is impossible to determine if Woodward's own ideology and plans for a potential governorship matched the desires of Peace Democrats like Clymer and Reed. However, his past statements and judicial actions likely indicate some affinity for their proposals.

⁴⁶ Unsigned campaign literature, *Record of Hiester Clymer; and Historical Parallel Between Him and Major-General John W. Geary* (Philadelphia: T.K. Collins, 1866), 6.

⁴⁷ *Philadelphia Age*, September 21, 1863, 2.

Pennsylvania's Conditional Moderates also supported Woodward's bid for the governorship and spoke on behalf of the judge at rallies held across the Commonwealth. Chief among these were William Bigler and Jeremiah Black. The content of these politicians' speeches indicate the shifting nature of what it meant to be a Moderate in 1863. Although Moderates were erstwhile supporters of Lincoln's war policy in 1861, continued war casualties, civil liberty suppression, and preliminary calls for Negro participation in the military and at the polls effected a change among these Democrats. Increasingly, their ideological commitments sounded like those of the Peace wing of the party. At a Democratic meeting in Erie on October 6, Bigler proposed that the sectional strife should be "referred to impartial parties to be adjusted." Bigler further recommended that:

An umpire should be selected. . . . The reference I propose is to displace the radicals of both sections [that is, abolitionists in the North and secessionists in the South], and put the country in the hands of conservative men, who will seek only the re-establishment of the Union, and not the gratification of passion, prejudice and hate. Our part in this work will be to displace the Administration of Mr. Lincoln, and put in its stead one composed of men representing the conservative people of the North, and against whom less prejudice is cherished in the South; which result would undoubtedly be followed by the prompt overthrow of [Confederate President Jefferson] Davis and his adherents.⁴⁸

Woodward personally sought out the aid of Jeremiah Black and asked his friend and fellow jurist, "[n]ow can't you convince the people of Penna. that no traitor blood lurks in my veins? I rather think that they are the last people I shall prove unfaithful to. Indeed I do not know to whom I would sell them if I was bent on a bargain."⁴⁹ Black responded with a ringing endorsement which resonated with a crowd of Democratic

⁴⁸ Ibid, October 8, 1863, 2. A common misconception among Moderates in 1863 was the belief that the Confederacy was interested in a reunion with slavery intact. In actuality, Confederate leaders consistently expressed their intent to secure full independence from the United States.

⁴⁹ Woodward to Black, September 10, 1863, Black Papers.

supporters at a rally in Lancaster. The ex-Attorney General advocated the election of Woodward “the Union Saver” who would do everything he could to “bring back the Union to the condition in which it was three years ago.”⁵⁰ Appealing to the racism of the era, Black thought there was “something radically and fatally wrong in a war which has for its object a negro proclamation inconsistent with the white man’s constitution.”⁵¹ If Woodward were elevated to the governorship, Black assured that “the reign of order and law” would return to country.⁵² Woodward, pleased with the confirmation of his loyalty, thanked his friend for the “noble speech” and applauded its “forceful and beautiful” expression.⁵³ Thus, during the campaign season, Peace Democrats and Conditional Moderates worked together to effect the restoration of an antiwar conservative to the governor’s seat.

For their part, Republican-Unionists concurrently touted the solid record of their incumbent candidate, Andrew Gregg Curtin, and smeared the reputation of George Woodward. At the Union State Convention, held in August 1863, Curtin was nominated overwhelmingly on the first ballot. Likely aiming at Woodward, the Republican delegates adopted resolutions “denouncing the traitors abroad and the sympathizers at home [and] commending the course of President Lincoln.”⁵⁴ Republican reaction to the re-nomination was overwhelmingly positive. “The people of this State love ANDREW G. CURTIN,” proclaimed the Philadelphia *Press*, “and their representatives, in convention assembled, gave expression to their love and confidence by giving him the

⁵⁰ Jeremiah S. Black, “Speech of Hon. Jeremiah S. Black, at the Democratic Mass Convention in Lancaster City, September 17, 1863” in Samuel J. May Anti-Slavery Collection, Cornell University Digital Archive, 3-4.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, 5.

⁵² *Ibid*, 7.

⁵³ Woodward to Black, September 24, 1863, Black Papers.

⁵⁴ Davis, “Pennsylvania Politics,” 297.

gubernatorial nomination.”⁵⁵ The *Harrisburg Evening Telegraph* advocated Curtin as “the choice of the loyal men of Pennsylvania” and the candidate who would prevent Pennsylvania to fall “under the control of traitors to their country and God.”⁵⁶ In his first term, Curtin had endeared himself to pro-war Pennsylvanians for supporting measures to equip soldiers in the field and had been active in preparing a defense against Confederate invasions of the state. Besides running a strong candidate for governor, Unionists believed they had in Woodward an opponent susceptible to charges of disloyalty.

The Unionists were quick to dig up dirt on Justice Woodward and resurrected his Independence Square speech to further their charges of Democratic subversion. A Republican pamphleteer excoriated the Copperhead for his radically states’ rights view and grew incensed that Woodward “dared to go further. [He] affirmed that this alleged ‘right’ [to secede] might be vindicated or supported, not merely according to the laws of war...but by ‘whatever means they (the South) possess or can command.’”⁵⁷ In this instance, Woodward’s strategy to remain silent backfired. Because Woodward “ha[d] not deigned to speak” throughout the campaign, Forney’s *Press* presumed that the Copperhead views advanced in the Independence Square speech still formed his principles since he had “allowed these great years to pass without exhibiting regret or emotion for his country.”⁵⁸ Republican Congressman Thaddeus Stevens of Adams County assailed that “Woodward pronounces the course of the rebels just; and says they are right in defending their property, and the ‘Heaven Ordained’ institution of human

⁵⁵ *Philadelphia Press*, August 6, 1863, 2.

⁵⁶ *Evening Telegraph* [Harrisburg], August 8, 1863, 2.

⁵⁷ William A. Cook, *Hon. Geo. W. Woodward and the Gubernatorial Contest in Pennsylvania. Review of His Speech in Independence Square, Philadelphia, December 13, 1860. A True Exposition of His Principles and Purposes* (Philadelphia: Chronicle Print, 1863), 8.

⁵⁸ *Philadelphia Press*, August 11, 1863, 2.

bondage. Can mortal infamy be blacker?”⁵⁹ Stevens further urged his constituents to “let them [Copperhead office-seekers] never again be permitted to disgrace the commission of their country.”⁶⁰ Republican campaigners admonished those who approved of Woodward’s calls for peace simply because they were “tired and wearied with the sacrifices and privations of the war....But unfortunately the Devil is never so dangerous as when he is robed as ‘an angel of light.’”⁶¹

Representative of the fears the Lincoln administration held for a Woodward victory are a number of missives and diary entries of the President and his cabinet members. Because Pennsylvania contributed so many troops and so much matériel to the war effort, it was in the best interest of the administration to keep the state in Republican hands. When asked by a Pennsylvania politician in August 1863 who was the best candidate to support in the gubernatorial election, Treasury Secretary Salmon P. Chase replied “that there seemed to me but one course to be taken, and that was to give a hearty support to the re-election of Gov. Curtin.”⁶² Chase foresaw the importance of the Pennsylvania election to the outcome of Lincoln’s success during the presidential election to be held the following year. In September, he warned Republican financier Jay Cooke that “Gov. Curtin’s reelection or defeat is now the success or defeat of the administration of President Lincoln.”⁶³ As Election Day approached, Navy Secretary Gideon Welles commented that among the cabinet members “the elections in Ohio and Pennsylvania absorb attention.” Although Welles asserted that, “no doubts have troubled

⁵⁹ Beverly Wilson Palmer and Holly Byers Ochoa, eds., *The Selected Papers of Thaddeus Stevens*, vol. 1, January 1814 – March 1865 (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1997), 408.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 108.

⁶¹ Unsigned campaign literature, *Woodward in 1860 & 1863* (Philadelphia: Crissy & Markley, 1863), 3.

⁶² David Donald, ed., *Inside Lincoln’s Cabinet: The Civil War Diaries of Salmon P. Chase*, (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1954), 179.

⁶³ Samuel P. Chase to Jay Cooke, September 4, 1863, Chase MSS, quoted in Donald Herbert Donald, *Lincoln* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995), 455.

me [as to the results],” he admitted that “the President says he feels nervous.”⁶⁴ Indeed, Lincoln must have worried about the outcome of the election and the dangers of a Woodward victory. Just days before the election, Lincoln permitted Secretary of War Stanton to furlough thousands of Pennsylvania soldiers from the field so they could return home to vote. Surely, the president must have noted the irony that it was Woodward’s 1862 ruling against soldier voting in the field that forced their release from the Federal armies. Temporarily weakening the army, however, was a risk Lincoln was willing to take.⁶⁵ The president recognized that Federal soldiers made up the most trustworthy segment of Republican support.

Democratic campaigners, meanwhile, were surprisingly successful in deflecting much of the criticism hurled Woodward’s way by the Curtin camp. Republicans resurrected Woodward’s unpopular stand against immigrant voting rights. In reference to his role in the constitutional convention of 1838, Congressman Stevens remarked that Woodward “once attempted to deprive foreigners forever of the right to vote and hold office; and now he asks their votes; and they are mean enough to give them. Could either find deeper degradation?”⁶⁶ This tactic backfired, however, as Governor Curtin himself had been a member of the Know-Nothing Party in the 1850s.⁶⁷ “Surely Gov. Curtin’s friends cannot hope that citizens of foreign birth have forgotten these recent facts,” insisted the pro-Woodward *Patriot and Union*, “or believe that they can be so utterly lost

⁶⁴ Gideon Welles, *Diary of Gideon Welles: Secretary of the Navy under Lincoln and Johnson*, vol. 1 (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1911), 469.

⁶⁵ Democrats were quick to attack Lincoln’s furlough scheme as a dangerous ploy that would threaten the safety of the soldiers remaining in the undermanned armies. As November was not a typically auspicious month for battle, however, the risk was minimal.

⁶⁶ Palmer and Ochoa, *Papers of Stevens*, 408. During the war, most European immigrants still adhered to the Democratic Party.

⁶⁷ The Know-Nothing Party was a nativist political movement of the 1850s that aimed to curb immigration and reduce immigrant voting rights.

to self-respect as to vote for a candidate who assisted in marshaling the bigoted host that a few short years ago sought their disfranchisement and abasement.”⁶⁸ Democrats also charged that Curtin had once jested that “the reason a Dutchman’s head was so hard was because he had two skulls.”⁶⁹ Republicans thus pursued another course and revived Woodward’s 1860 Independence Square speech. From the speech they ridiculed Woodward’s belief in a biblical sanction for slavery. This tactic also failed because of the persistent racism and continued unpopularity of Lincoln’s policy of emancipation among many Pennsylvania voters.

Woodward supporters continued to lament the arbitrary suppression of civil liberties by the Lincoln administration. Fearful of the centralization of the federal government, *The Old Guard* periodical promised its readers that impediments to “life, liberty, and property of the citizen of a State” would be “heresies to which Judge Woodward will never assent.”⁷⁰ The Democratic State Committee agreed that the election of Woodward was a necessary act toward reestablishing the nation as it was before the war. “The overthrow of the Abolitionists at the polls,” asserted the Democrats, “and the re-establishment of constitutional principles of the North is the first, the indispensable step towards the restoration of the Union and the vindication of civil liberty.”⁷¹ As election day approached, Woodward received an endorsement from an unlikely source. General George B. McClellan, the deposed, but popular commander of the Army of the Potomac, indicated his support for the Pennsylvania judge. After having

⁶⁸ *Patriot and Union* [Harrisburg], August 15, 1863, 2.

⁶⁹ Shankman, “Union As It Was,” 103.

⁷⁰ C. Chauncey Burr and Company, “Judge Woodward and the Contest in Pennsylvania,” *The Old Guard: A Monthly Journal, Devoted to the Principles of 1776 and 1787* 1 (September 1863): 229.

⁷¹ Charles J. Biddle, *Address of the Democratic State Central Committee* (Philadelphia: Age Office, 1863), 8.

had a “full conversation” with Woodward, McClellan discovered that “our views agreed. I regard his election as Governor of Pennsylvania as called for by the interest of the nation....I would, were it in my power, give to Judge Woodward my voice and vote.”⁷²

State election day fell on Tuesday, October 13, 1863. Whatever gains Democrats appeared to make during the course of their campaign, Republicans remained confident. On that day, I. Wayne MacVeagh, now chairman of the Pennsylvania Union Committee, reported to a nervous Lincoln, that “Woodward cannot harm us much now” and that “everything [was] most cheering.”⁷³ In the end, Republicans had much to be cheerful about. By a slim margin, Governor Andrew G. Curtin was reelected for a second term. Woodward lost the election by just 15,335 votes, 51.5% to 48.5%. The importance of the Republican victory was acknowledged most at the White House. After hearing the good news, Navy Secretary Welles “stopped in to see and congratulate the President, who is in good spirits and greatly relieved from the depression of yesterday. He told me he had more anxiety in regard to the election results...than he had in 1860 when he was chosen.”⁷⁴ The magnitude of the election was also evident by the sheer number of Pennsylvanians who cast ballots. The total vote for the gubernatorial contest totaled 523,679, the largest number of votes cast in the history of the state to that time.⁷⁵ The

⁷² William E. Chandler, *The Soldier's Right to Vote: Who Opposes It? Who Favors It? Or, The Record of the M'Clellan Copperheads Against Allowing the Soldier Who Fights, the Right to Vote While Fighting* (Washington, DC: Lemuel Towers, 1864), 9. McClellan was born to a patrician Philadelphia family, but now resided in New Jersey and could not outright vote for Woodward. At this time, Democratic leaders were approaching McClellan to challenge Lincoln in the upcoming presidential election.

⁷³ Basler, *Collected Works Lincoln*, 6:512. Quote from MacVeagh's telegram to Lincoln sent October 13, 1863.

⁷⁴ Welles, *Diary of Welles*, 470.

⁷⁵ This number is especially remarkable because around 75,000 Pennsylvania soldiers remained in the field and were unable to participate in the election.

1863 election turnout was nine percent higher than the 1860 presidential election.⁷⁶ Voters of both ideologies recognized the significance of their candidates' potential governorship and the fate of the war effort. The election was a close, but explicit referendum approving the Republican party's policies.⁷⁷ Noted Civil War lawyer and diarist George Templeton Strong recorded what many in the nation realized after Woodward's defeat: "The tail of the national Copperhead is out of joint."⁷⁸

Although the Peace Democratic resurgence definitively declined after Woodward's unsuccessful bid for governor, the judge had made a major impact on Pennsylvania Civil War politics. Two important conclusions can be determined from the 1863 gubernatorial campaign. First, Woodward proved to be a more effective and acceptable Copperhead than his Ohio counterpart, Clement L. Vallandigham. The same day that Pennsylvania voters narrowly rejected Woodward for Curtin, Vallandigham lost his gubernatorial campaign in a landslide to incumbent Governor David Brough. In that election, Vallandigham lost by a margin of about 100,000 votes.⁷⁹ A comparison of the election results shows that Woodward was far more successful in advancing the principles of Copperheadism than the Ohioan. Although both men represented the same ideology, Woodward managed to appeal to a broader constituency. Therefore, Woodward was the more dangerous Copperhead to the Lincoln administration and the continuation of Republican war policy.

⁷⁶ The election statistics were derived from Davis, "Pennsylvania Politics," 313. The vote tally for Curtin was 269,506. Woodward garnered 254,171 votes. The majority for Curtin in 1863 (15,335) was about halved from that of 1860 (32,116).

⁷⁷ Elections in the state legislature also boded ill for the Democrats. After the 1862 election, Democrats held a slim 67-66 majority in joint session of both assemblies. After the 1863 election, however, Unionists held a 68-65 majority.

⁷⁸ Allan Nevins and Milton Halsey Thomas, eds., *The Diary of George Templeton Strong: The Civil War, 1860 – 1865* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1952), 364.

⁷⁹ Klement, *Limits of Dissent*, 252.

Second, the gubernatorial campaign indicated that a strong peace sentiment pervaded the Pennsylvania Democracy in 1863. Peace Democrats continued to advocate radical measures to obstruct the Lincoln administration's war policy, some still going so far as to encourage the peaceful separation of the Union. Moderates meanwhile grew even cooler toward the war because of its high cost and the prospect of sweeping social change. These Moderates who had once supported limited war aims to suppress the rebellion now joined with Peace Democrats in a bid to end the war through armistice and a national convention of the states. Although they remained devoted to the preservation of the Union, their perseverance to support a war that wrought radical change substantially waned. War Democrats, meanwhile, had little place in the 1863 Democracy. Few were fooled into thinking that George W. Woodward represented their views and most sought refuge amid the pro-war Unionists who helped give Andrew G. Curtin the margin of victory in the gubernatorial election. The defeat of Woodward in October 1863 tolled the death knell of the Peace Democrats' influence over the state party machinery. Although they would continue to agitate for immediate peace through the duration of the war, their views no longer attracted most conservatives who increasingly saw the war as winnable and the threat of social change less disturbing than the destruction of the Union.

* * * *

After their loss in the 1863 gubernatorial election, Pennsylvania Democrats complained that Curtin had won the election through "grossly unfair means."⁸⁰ Although there were reports of Unionists intimidating voters and casting multiple ballots,

⁸⁰ *Republican Compiler* [Gettysburg], October 26, 1863, 2.

Democrats committed similar incidents of fraud.⁸¹ Voting schemes by both parties seemed to counteract each other and ultimately Curtin's win was legitimate. Incidentally, the fall election had proved inauspicious for the other major Democratic candidate on the ballot, Chief Justice Walter Lowrie. Defeated for reelection by Republican Daniel Agnew, Lowrie's seat ironically was filled by Woodward by virtue of his seniority on the bench. In a desperate gambit to obstruct Republican war policy before the expiration of Lowrie's term, Woodward, Lowrie, and a third conservative associate on the bench, Justice James Thompson, aimed to rule on the contentious issue of conscription in the case *Kneedler v. Lane*.⁸²

Because voluntary enlistments in the army had declined precipitously in 1862 and 1863, Congress responded with the Conscription Act of March 3, 1863. The act provided for the compilation of names of men eligible for the draft by a provost marshal and his enrollment officers who would supervise conscription in each congressional district. A draftee would be given ten days' notice in which time he could attempt to pay a \$300 commutation fee or hire a substitute to serve in his stead. Otherwise, the draftee would be subject to imprisonment and fine.⁸³ Drafts would be held at the president's behest, the first of which occurred in July 1863.⁸⁴ Pennsylvania Democrats quickly censured the act

⁸¹ Shankman, *Pennsylvania Antiwar Movement*, 138.

⁸² The number of Pennsylvania Supreme Court justices at this time was five. Woodward, Lowrie, and Thompson were all Democrats, along with a fourth justice, William Strong. Strong, however, bucked conservative ideology in this case and adjudicated in favor of conscription. The fifth justice, John M. Read, was the sole Republican on the bench prior to Lowrie's defeat by Agnew.

⁸³ Arnold Shankman, "Draft Resistance in Civil War Pennsylvania," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 101:2 (April 1977): 191. Enlistments could be procured through bounties or other rewards. If voluntary enlistment failed to reach the quota, the reviled draft lottery would be implemented. Although enlistment deficiencies were reported in Philadelphia and the coal-mining regions of the state, these shortages were generally overlooked to quell potential violence.

⁸⁴ The July 1863 draft was notorious for sparking the New York City draft riots, which resulted in the deaths of over a hundred rioters, soldiers, and policemen. The incident was especially devastating to the city's African-American population, as rioters committed lynchings to vent their frustration at fighting a war on the blacks' behalf.

as unconstitutional and viewed it as evidence of the despotic nature of Republican war policy. The court case that arose from the conscription act pitted Provost Marshal David M. Lane against conscript Henry S. Kneedler.⁸⁵ Justice Woodward fixed September 23, 1863 as the date for the case to be heard by the full court. Counsel for the aggrieved conscripts included leading Philadelphia Peace Democrats, including George M. Wharton and Charles Ingersoll. However, when the case was called there was no counsel for the defendants. This was likely a Republican ploy to depoliticize the issue in the weeks before the crucial October elections as well as a show of “aggressive hostility to such interference by the State judicial authority to obstruct the execution of a National law.”⁸⁶ Consequently, the case was pushed back until November 9, at which point it was known that the state court’s political composition would favor the Republicans after the expiration of Lowrie’s term.

Despite Lowrie’s defeat during the October election, he and his conservative associates aimed to assert their peace sentiments in a last-ditch effort before the chief justice’s ouster from the bench. In a 3-2 decision, Lowrie, Woodward, and Thompson ruled against the constitutionality of the conscription act. Woodward’s opinion argued that “[t]he great vice of the conscript law is that it is designed on the assumption that Congress may take away, not the State rights of the citizen, but the security and foundation of his State rights, and how long is civil liberty expected to last after the securities of civil liberty are destroyed?”⁸⁷ The decision proved short-lived. After Daniel Agnew replaced Chief Justice Lowrie on the bench, the court took up the case again in an

⁸⁵ There were other parties to the court action, including associates of Lane on various congressional enrolling boards as well as additional conscripts besides Kneedler.

⁸⁶ McClure, *Old Time Notes*, 2:66.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 2:69-70.

effort to remove the court injunctions placed on state conscription. On January 16, 1864, the court ruled in a 3-2 decision to uphold the constitutionality of the conscription act. In his dissenting opinion, Woodward asserted that the November hearing had resulted in “as regular, fair and solemn a judgment as this court ever rendered” and insisted that the previous verdict could not be altered despite the change in the court’s composition.⁸⁸ Nonetheless, conscription continued in the state despite desperate Peace Democratic attempts to subvert a crucial aspect of Republican war policy. The Republican victory over antiwar forces during the October election clearly had far-reaching implications, including on Pennsylvania’s most conservative branch of government.

* * * *

The Pennsylvania Peace Democracy’s best chance to assert its principles came amid the 1863 gubernatorial campaign. Although few Copperhead subversives like Ingersoll and Reed occupied state office during the war, their views were adopted by Moderates in Harrisburg who increasingly favored the implementation of an armistice and a convention of the states to bring about a reunion based solely on the supremacy of the Constitution, not acknowledgement of emancipation. Peace Democrats managed to have nominated George W. Woodward, one whose antiwar sympathies were evident. Although the Peace Democrats’ views were shared by a significant number of the electorate prior to July 1863, major Union victories at Gettysburg and Vicksburg compelled Pennsylvanians to acknowledge that the war’s end was at long last in sight and promoted a renewed spirit of patriotism among disillusioned Unionists. The sudden change in military fortunes came at the height of the Copperheads’ power and severely tested the validity of their antiwar sentiments. For the rest of the gubernatorial campaign,

⁸⁸ Ibid, 2:72.

Democrats were left defending their candidate against charges of disloyalty and advocating an increasingly less accurate assertion that the war was unwinnable. On state election day, Republicans and War Democrats gave incumbent Governor Andrew G. Curtin a slim majority, effectively quashing Copperheadism for the rest of the war. Nonetheless, Moderate Democrats continued to function capably and would persist in their efforts to unseat Republican office holders, particularly in the crucial presidential election to be held the following year. Although the Peace Democracy had met been mortally wounded in the aftermath of the 1863 gubernatorial election, conservatives would again rally around Moderate leaders in months to come.

On January 19, 1864, Andrew Curtin delivered his second inaugural address. “I need hardly renew my pledge,” the governor announced, “that during the term of office on which I am about to enter, I will give my whole moral and official power to the prosecution of the war, and in aiding the National Government in every effort to secure early and complete success over our malignant foes.”⁸⁹ Curtin viewed his October election victory as a referendum on the war and intended to devote the men and resources of his state to the federal government’s prosecution of the war, whatever the cost in casualties or social change. Pennsylvania’s Unionists had succeeded in keeping the state firmly within the Republican fold in 1863. However, none of this would matter should Lincoln be ousted from the White House. Democrats subsequently looked to the crucially important presidential election of November 1864 for redemption and the last means by which to end the war, reinstate conservative traditions, and restore the Union to the *antebellum status quo*.

⁸⁹ Andrew G. Curtin, “Inaugural Address of Andrew G. Curtin, Governor of Pennsylvania, Delivered January 19, 1864,” Samuel J. May Anti-Slavery Collection, Cornell University Digital Archive, 5.

Chapter 5: The War Democracy's Final Campaign, Spring 1864 – Spring 1865

The vituperative Copperhead editor of the *Selinsgrove Times* printed a denunciation of President Abraham Lincoln in the weeks after the devastating Democratic losses in the October 1863 gubernatorial election. “He is hell’s Pandora box brought to earth,” derided Franklin Weirick. “He is a liar, a thief, a robber, a brigand, a pirate, a perjurer, a traitor, a coward, a hypocrite, a cheat, a trickster, a murderer, a tyrant, an unmitigated scoundrel, and an infernal fool.”¹ Philadelphia’s Democratic organ, the *Age*, circulated a similar opinion: “If the rebels, for firing at the flag, deserve to be devastated by war, what punishment should be visited upon the President for firing into the Constitution?”² In a stunning show of subversive harangues, the *Greensburg Argus* declared that Lincoln’s “defeat or his death is an indispensable condition to an honorable peace,” and called on Pennsylvanians to “suspend Old Abe – by the neck if necessary to stop the accursed slaughter of our citizens.”³ Although the gubernatorial election of 1863 had been a demoralizing defeat for the Democracy, party members worked assiduously in 1864 to cohere around what would be the last and most important campaign of the Civil War. The 1864 presidential election determined if Lincoln would retain the White House or if General George B. McClellan would overthrow Republican war policy with the Democracy’s calls for peace and a return to the *antebellum status quo*. During the final year of the conflict, the War Democracy reemerged to lead the party. Although this segment of the Democracy received at least the tacit support of Moderates and Peace Democrats, renewed Union victories and the disparate nature of party member ideologies

¹ William A. Russ, Jr., “Franklin Weirick: ‘Copperhead’ of Central Pennsylvania,” *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies* 5:4 (October 1938): 252. Editorial printed December 25, 1863.

² *Philadelphia Age*, February 6, 1864, 2.

³ Quoted in Shankman, *Pennsylvania Antiwar Movement*, 177, 192. Editorials printed August 10 and 17, 1864.

obviated victory at the polls. The result would be the simultaneous dissolution of the Southern rebellion and that of the Democratic wartime continuum.

Although Pennsylvania Democrats failed to take control of state politics through the first three years of the war, they recognized that the installation of a Democrat in the White House would compensate for past electoral losses and bring conservative leadership to the most important office in the land. A Democratic victory in the presidential election of 1864 thus could bring the desired end to the war despite the preponderance of Republican state officials. Unfortunately for conservatives, the divisiveness among party members was then at its most extreme. Leaders of the Commonwealth's Democracy recognized the difficulty in reconciling their vast ideological differences ahead of the presidential campaign. Peace sentiment, which had influenced the tenor of the gubernatorial campaign, had been repudiated by the Pennsylvania electorate in 1863 thanks to a reversal in Union military misfortunes and a subsequent patriotic resurgence. Although Peace Democrats consequently found themselves hamstrung within the party in 1864, they remained a veritable force even while War Democrats gradually regained control of the Democracy. Alienation of either wing of the party would spell disaster in the polls, as all Democrats were needed to competitively challenge the Republicans, particularly to unseat the Lincoln administration in the November election. Former president James Buchanan, who remained withdrawn from active political debate throughout the war, nonetheless weighed in on his party's status early in the year. A proslavery War Democrat, Buchanan acknowledged the challenges the party faced in unifying the broad party continuum ahead of the presidential campaign:

So far as I can learn and observe, there will be very great difficulty in erecting a platform on which the party can unite. It now embraces all shades of opinion, from the prosecution of the war with as much vigor as the Republicans, notwithstanding the violations of the Constitution, down to peace [with the Confederate government], which means neither more nor less than recognition. I say that this means recognition, because I entertain not the least idea that the South would return to the Union, if we were to offer to restore them with all the rights which belonged to them, as expounded by the Supreme Court, at the time of their secession. Besides, I regret to say, many good Democrats in Pennsylvania begin to be inoculated with abolition principles.⁴

Buchanan's reflections indicate the intense ideological divergence in 1864 between the War and Peace Democratic elements of the party and the difficulty of merging their conflicting war policy views around a presidential candidate acceptable to all. Rather glumly, Buchanan predicted that "[f]rom present appearances, Mr. Lincoln will be re-elected, unless some Republican Military Chieftain should supply his place, or our [nation's] finances should break down."⁵ In fact, Democrats were nearly awarded an unexpected gift from their opponents, as Lincoln's re-nomination hardly proved assured.

* * * *

Within his own party, Abraham Lincoln was harassed with criticisms of ineffective leadership that threatened his reelection bid. In December 1863, Lincoln issued his Proclamation of Amnesty and Reconstruction which declared that a "full pardon...with restoration of all rights of property, except as to slaves" would be granted to those rebels who took a loyalty oath.⁶ Furthermore, the proclamation announced that any rebellious state where one-tenth of voters took the loyalty oath could "re-establish a

⁴ Moore, *Works of Buchanan*, 11:358. Quote from Buchanan letter to Nahum Capen written March 14, 1864.

⁵ Moore, *Works of Buchanan*, 11:355. Quote from Buchanan letter to Nahum Capen written January 27, 1864. By "Republican Military Chieftain," Buchanan implies an army general such as Ulysses S. Grant. Despite his lack of interest to run for president at this time, Grant was a popular favorite among Republicans to challenge Lincoln for the party's candidacy.

⁶ Fehrenbacher, *Lincoln: Speeches, Letters, and Writings*, 2:555. Quote from Lincoln's Proclamation of Amnesty and Reconstruction delivered December 8, 1863.

State government” and “such shall be recognized as the true government of the State.”⁷ Radicals disapproved of Lincoln’s lenient reconstruction plan and in coming months advanced candidates amenable to a more rigorous prosecution of the war. In February 1864, a campaign to promote the candidacy of Treasury Secretary Salmon P. Chase climaxed with the issuance of the so-called “Pomeroy Circular.” As an opponent of Lincoln’s cautious policies toward the South and slavery, Chase was promoted by radicals as a Republican who possessed “more of the qualities needed in a President during the next four years, than are combined in any other available candidate.”⁸ But when the circular was leaked to the press, an anti-Chase backlash ensued that galvanized support for Lincoln. On May 31, another group of disaffected radicals organized a convention in Cleveland under the banner of the “Radical Democracy” with intent to nominate the 1856 Republican presidential candidate, John C. Frémont. Delegates there protested the “imbecile and vacillating policy of the present Administration in the conduct of the war.”⁹ Although the convention ignominiously fizzled, it indicated some lack of enthusiasm by Republicans for Lincoln.¹⁰

Lincoln’s re-nomination and presidential campaigns were also hampered by limited Union military progress during the spring and summer. General Ulysses S. Grant, who had performed admirably in the Western Theater, was recalled to the East in March

⁷ Ibid, 556-557.

⁸ David Herbert Donald, *Lincoln* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995), 482. The Pomeroy Circular was named after Chase-backer, Senator Samuel Pomeroy of Kansas who joined with other radicals such as Senator John Sherman and Representatives James Garfield and James Ashley, all of Chase’s native state of Ohio.

⁹ Ibid, 502.

¹⁰ Other minor Republican movements to thwart a Lincoln reelection bid existed in the first half of 1864. General Benjamin Butler, a War Democrat from Massachusetts, and General Ulysses S. Grant were also advanced as potential candidates by discontented party members. Pennsylvania’s Simon Cameron, however, worked assiduously for Lincoln’s re-nomination, writing Lincoln in February that “the Devil and all his imps cannot take Pennsylvania from you.” Quoted in Bradley, *Militant Republicanism*, 199.

where he was designated general-in-chief of all Union armies. Grant initiated a complex strategy in which five Union armies would press the Confederates simultaneously in various parts of the South to effect the destruction of the rebel armies. For the first several months after Grant's strategy commenced, none of the Union armies met with success. In Louisiana, General Nathaniel Banks's Army of the Gulf was turned aside in the so-called Red River Campaign of March – May 1864. In Virginia, armies commanded by Generals Franz Sigel and Benjamin Butler met with humiliating defeats in May in the Shenandoah Valley and the Virginia Peninsula, respectively. General William T. Sherman's army in Georgia made significant headway in its pursuit to capture Atlanta until the costly June 27 battle at Kennesaw Mountain which led to a siege of the city and an effective stalemate that lasted several weeks. Grant, who oversaw the operations of General George G. Meade's Army of the Potomac, suffered shocking casualties at the Wilderness (May 5 – 7), Spotsylvania Court House (May 8 – 21), and Cold Harbor (May 31 – June 12). Added to the war disillusionment among conservative Northern civilians was the growing use of African-American soldiers. Although soldiers of the United States Colored Troops (USCT) performed commendably throughout the war, anti-emancipation advocates magnified instances when deployment of black troops created military setbacks. For instance, at the Battle of the Crater (July 30) outside Petersburg, Virginia, a USCT division was selected and trained to initiate an assault on Confederate lines. At the last minute, Generals Grant and Meade agreed to replace the division with white soldiers out of fear that a defeat of black troops would lead to political backlash. The unprepared white troops were ultimately decimated in the battle, leading to a flurry of anti-USCT agitation anyway. The *Philadelphia Age* complained:

The truth is, the Negro mania has been as mischievous in the conduct of the war, as it has been in and is in politics...The effect of such a Negro policy upon this issue of the struggle cannot fail to be pernicious. If a corps commander is suffered to thwart an important movement, cause the butchery of 10,000 men [an exaggerated estimate of the Battle of the Crater casualties], and bring disgrace upon the army, because Negro troops are not selected in preference to white, and if promotion rests, not upon deeds of gallantry, but in devotion to the Negro-equality dogma of a political party, then no man can tell where the demoralization of our army will end, or what calamity the future has in store for it.¹¹

Because the use of African-American troops advanced the notion of race equality, conservatives of all political stripes attacked their utilization in the Union armies to stir up racist sentiment against the Lincoln administration during the presidential campaign.

Lincoln secured re-nomination convincingly once the threat of sectarian Republican movements was removed. Delegates to the National Union Convention in Baltimore convened on June 7 – 8 to set the party's platform and ticket. Although the convention passed itself off as a National Union affair to appeal to War Democrats, the platform planks proved decidedly radical. Among the resolutions proffered was a commitment "not to compromise with rebels...and to prosecute the war with the utmost possible vigor" and to pass an "amendment to the Constitution to...terminate and forever prohibit the existence of slavery within the limits or the jurisdiction of the United States."¹² Furthermore, delegates announced their loyalty to Lincoln and his war policies, "especially the Proclamation of Emancipation and the employment as Union soldiers of men heretofore held in slavery."¹³ At the Baltimore Convention, Republicans clearly sought to detach themselves from notions of leniency toward the South and to draw a distinct separation from Democratic war aims in the eyes of the nation's voters.

¹¹ W.H. Hutter and Ray H. Abrams, "Copperhead Newspapers and the Negro," *Journal of Negro History* 20:2 (April 1935): 141.

¹² *Philadelphia Press*, June 9, 1864, 2.

¹³ *Ibid.*

When delegates turned to the selection of a presidential candidate, state after state voted unanimously for Lincoln's re-nomination. Even twenty-two renegade Missouri votes for Grant were ultimately rescinded in favor of Lincoln. In another attempt to appeal to War Democrats, delegates selected Democrat Andrew Johnson of Tennessee as Lincoln's running mate.¹⁴ With an unambiguous set of principles and virtual unanimity behind Lincoln's re-nomination, Republican delegates looked toward the president's reelection. The two major threats to this aim were developments on the battlefield and the tactics of an increasingly desperate Democratic party.

* * * *

In the aftermath of the devastating 1863 gubernatorial election Pennsylvania's Democrats reassessed party principles and campaign tactics to reassert their vitality in state politics. The Democratic State Convention of 1864, which assembled in Philadelphia on March 24, proved to be an inadequate affair to broadcast this message. The convention did, however, circulate the notion that the Peace Democracy, which had failed to bring electoral success in 1863, was gradually being supplanted by War Democrats. Representative of this phenomenon was the election of William H. Witte as convention president. Witte was a solid War Democrat who had been snubbed in favor of Copperhead George W. Woodward for the gubernatorial nomination a year earlier. Other evidence of the War Democracy's ascendancy were the substance of the state party's platform and the convention's preference for the presidential candidacy. Pointedly, none of the party resolutions explicitly favored a national peace assembly or negotiations with the Confederacy as they had in past state conventions. Instead, the

¹⁴ Among other reasons, the president favored the selection of Johnson because he hoped it would broaden the National Union coalition and substantiate Lincoln's belief that the Southern states still existed within the Union and could function politically at some point in the near future.

delegates resolved a vague determination “to restore the welfare and prosperity of the American Republic” by “get[ting] rid of the present corrupt Federal Administration...[through] a thorough organization of the time-honored Democratic party.”¹⁵ Furthermore, the delegation pledged their support to the War Democrats’ leading presidential contender, General George B. McClellan, who was widely viewed throughout the North as the only man who could restore the Union without engendering radical social change. “[A]t every mention of the name of Geo. B. McClellan,” reported the *Pittsburgh Gazette*, “there was great enthusiasm.”¹⁶ The convention further resolved that delegates vote for McClellan “as a unit” at the Chicago Convention to be held in August.¹⁷ Although the War Democrats used the convention as a means by which to reassert their party supremacy, the convention, perhaps to maintain unity, was hesitant to commit to specific policies. “[A]s we have...no issues involved in the coming election other than those which affect the welfare and liberties of our sister States equally with ours,” read one resolution, “we leave it to our representatives in the Chicago Convention...in embodying the sentiment of the people in a declaration of principles acceptable to all the States.”¹⁸

Pennsylvania Democratic congressmen, meanwhile, boldly expressed their continued opposition to Republican war policy just weeks after the president secured re-nomination. In a July 1864 manifesto, forty-three senators and representatives from ten states affixed their signatures to a document entitled *Congressional Address*, which cataloged the injustices and unconstitutional measures of the Lincoln administration. The

¹⁵ *Lancaster Intelligencer*, March 29, 1864, 2.

¹⁶ *Pittsburgh Gazette*, March 28, 1864, 4.

¹⁷ *Lancaster Intelligencer*, March 29, 1864, 2.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

discontents, including Senator Charles R. Buckalew and eight Pennsylvania representatives, warned: “Let no one be deceived by the assertion, that the arbitrary and evil acts of the Administration indicate but a temporary policy, and are founded upon necessities which cannot long exist....Success itself in the odious policy now urged by the Administration...could be so only at the price of the liberty of the whole country.”¹⁹ Among the grievances listed by the congressmen were typical Democratic criticisms against federal government centralization, conscription, suspension of civil liberties, and the uplifting of the black race. Particularly abhorrent to these men was the burgeoning utilization of African-Americans in the Union armies. “The practical results of this policy,” the address maintained, “are to obtain an inferior quality of troops at the highest rate of expense [and] to impose upon the Treasury the support of an enormous number of undisciplined and ignorant negroes.”²⁰ The enlistment of black troops was doubtless viewed by Democrats as a step toward equality between the races. The address sponsors continued: “[T]he employment of blacks in the war is to be made the pretext for extending to them the right of suffrage and also social position, and to be followed, probably, by the organization of a considerable body of them into a standing army.”²¹ Democrats sought to invoke race prejudice, their strongest political card, in advance of the presidential election.

Despite the organized opposition that continued to assail Republican war policy during Summer 1864, the Democracy endured two major complications in August that questioned the party’s loyalty. First was the issue of soldier voting. Since the 1862 state

¹⁹ Charles Buckalew, et al., *Congressional Address* (Washington, DC, 1864), 17-18. The eight Democratic Pennsylvania representatives included Samuel J. Randall, John D. Stiles, Sydenham E. Ancona, Myer Strouse, Philip Johnson, Charles Denison, William H. Miller, and Alexander H. Coffroth.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 13.

²¹ *Ibid.*

supreme court ruling, Pennsylvania's soldiers were unable to cast ballots outside state lines. This decision withheld the franchise from a sizeable bloc of Republican-majority voters. Republicans had subsequently lost the 1862 midterm elections and nearly relinquished the governor's seat as a result. Unionists in Harrisburg thus took up the issue and aimed to adopt an amendment to the state constitution that would authorize the soldier vote outside Pennsylvania's borders. Not only would the proposed amendment improve Republican electoral chances, but it also could embarrass Democrats who stood in the way of granting the ballot to those fighting to suppress the Confederacy. Those Democrats who blocked the amendment argued that the legislation would yield fraudulent votes in future elections and that Democratic tickets would be withheld from the soldiers by Republican officers and government officials. The amendment was passed by the state assembly with little difficulty and was scheduled for a referendum by special election on August 2. The Pennsylvania electorate overwhelmingly favored the amendment by a vote of 200,000 to 105,000.²² The election returns indicate that a substantial number of Democrats approved of the soldier vote, despite the ill-tidings it would bring to the party.²³

A second complication for the party that arose in August 1864 dealt with the vexing issue of conscription. Wildly unpopular since its inception, conscription had perpetually brought the threat of disorder through draft resistance. Because many of these draft dodgers were antiwar Democrats, the party endured the negative stereotype as the organization of cowardice and disloyalty. This image only hardened as a result of the farcical "Fishingcreek Conspiracy" of Columbia County. The rural county was known as

²² Shankman, *Pennsylvania Antiwar Movement*, 173.

²³ This is a reasonable assertion given that other Civil War era elections in Pennsylvania were rarely decided by more than a five percent differential between Republican-Unionist and Democratic votes.

a Democratic stronghold and center for draft resistance. The area became notorious, however, after the August 1 murder of J. Stewart Robinson, an assistant provost marshal assigned to root out draft dodgers. Rumors circulated that a large contingent of anti-conscription Democrats and deserters, numbering up to five hundred, had banded together in the Fishingcreek Valley and constructed a fort as a means to resist conscription and aid a Confederate invasion of the state. Starting on August 13, Union soldiers were sent to search the area for the mythical fort. A number of arrests were made and twenty-three men were charged and tried for organizing to resist the draft. Through the course of the October 1864 trial of the suspected draft resisters, fifteen men were found innocent, two confessed to the charges against them, and the rest were fined or jailed.²⁴ The alleged conspiracy was an embarrassment for both Unionists and Democrats. Federal officials appeared gullible in their fears of a fort manned by draft dodgers and heavy-handed in the arrest of anti-conscription, but otherwise benign civilians. Democrats, on the other hand, only reinforced the notion that they were the party of draft dodgers and Southern sympathizers. This was not a welcome image for Democrats to exemplify on the cusp of a potentially transformative election.

Despite the challenges faced by Democrats leading up to their national convention, Abraham Lincoln was noted by friends to be deeply depressed. War weariness continued to mount, particularly with the June – August 1864 raid of Confederate General Jubal A. Early that brought rebels to the gates of Washington and resulted in the burning of Chambersburg, Pennsylvania on July 30. The president was also discredited by the radicals in his own party, particularly those who supported the so-

²⁴ For a complete account of the Fishingcreek Conspiracy, see William H. Hummel, “The Military Occupation of Columbia County,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 80:3 (July 1956): 320-338.

called Wade-Davis Bill. The bill, which passed Congress on July 2, proposed that a majority of Southerners in a seceded state take a loyalty oath before re-admittance to the Union would be considered. Lincoln pocket-vetoed the legislation on the grounds that it was too harsh a reconstruction proposal that interfered with his more moderate “Ten-percent plan.”²⁵ In an angry declaration, dubbed the Wade-Davis Manifesto, the bill’s architects warned that Lincoln “must understand that our support is of a cause and not of a man; that the authority of Congress is paramount and must be respected...and if he wishes our support, he must confine himself to his executive duties - to obey and execute, not make the laws - to suppress by arms armed Rebellion, and leave political reorganization to Congress.”²⁶ Faced with renewed military setbacks and revived schisms within his party, Lincoln wrote a disheartened memorandum on August 23 lamenting that “[t]his morning, as for some days past, it seems exceedingly probable that this Administration will not be re-elected. Then it will be my duty to so co-operate with the President elect, as to save the Union between the election and the inauguration; as he will have secured his election on such ground that he can not possibly save it afterwards.”²⁷ Should his administration indeed be voted out of office, Lincoln thought it likely that the Democratic president-elect he would hope to cooperate with would be the Pennsylvania-born general who had irked him since the early days of the war – George B. McClellan.

²⁵ Also, Lincoln disapproved of the bill’s assertion that the Southern states had seceded in the first place. Lincoln believed that secession was unconstitutional and the rebellious Southern states still remained in the Union.

²⁶ *Appleton’s Annual Cyclopaedia and Register of Important Events of the Year 1864* (New York: D. Appleton, 1866), 310.

²⁷ Fehrenbacher, *Lincoln: Speeches, Letters, and Writings*, 2:624. Quote from Lincoln’s Memorandum on Probable Failure of Re-election written August 23, 1864.

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After George McClellan was removed from command of the Army of the Potomac in November 1862, rumors continued to circulate for the next two years that he would be reassigned to some important military post. Opposition within the Lincoln administration remained too strong, however, particularly after McClellan announced his entrance onto the political stage as a Democrat in October 1863. Both wings of the party petitioned the general to run for president with War or Peace principles, respectively. Although McClellan had been a constant critic of Lincoln's policies of emancipation and civil liberty suspension, the general's war service and empathy for the Union soldier made most believe that he would advance a typical War Democratic ideology. These were valuable traits for a presidential candidate as the Democracy aimed to distance itself from the Peace Democratic bent it experimented with in 1863 and the subsequent backlash it endured as the party of treason. As historian Joel H. Silbey explains, McClellan "was a good Democrat who could attack the Lincoln administration for its execution of policy without casting doubt on his own support for the ends of that policy."²⁸ Nonetheless, a significant portion of the party remained determined to seek an immediate cessation of hostilities, especially after high casualty reports continued to filter North through Summer 1864. These Peace men were numerous enough for the Democracy to consider their grievances and attempt to incorporate them within the party whole. Consequently, McClellan would be compelled through the duration of the presidential contest to walk a fine line between the divergent party wings. Peace Democrats were thrilled and War Democrats stunned when on August 24, just days before the Chicago Convention, McClellan informed St. Louis businessman James

²⁸ Silbey, *Respectable Minority*, 120.

Harrison, “[i]f I am elected, I will recommend an immediate armistice and a call for a convention of all the states and insist upon exhausting all and every means to secure peace without further bloodshed.”²⁹ Although McClellan never again uttered another such pro-peace sentiment throughout the rest of the campaign, it showed the difficulties he would face in representing the conflicting principles of the War and Peace Democrats.

The Democratic National Convention met in Chicago on August 29 with a majority of War Democrats and Conditional Moderates present. Among Pennsylvania’s leading delegates were Moderates Francis W. Hughes and William Bigler. Bigler was selected to deliver an opening address to the convention. Although the address urged conciliation with the South, it did so with the typically Moderate pledge to do so through restoration of the entire Union and with no commitment to continue the war with abolitionist aims in mind:

[M]ore than two millions of men have been called into the field, on our side alone, after the land has been literally drenched in fraternal blood....The men now in authority, because of the feud which they have so long maintained with violent and unwise men of the South, and because of a blind fanaticism about an institution [slavery] of some of the States, in relation to which they have no duties to perform and no responsibilities to bear, are rendered incapable of adopting the proper means to rescue our country, - our whole country – from its present lamentable condition....[I]t is apparent that the first indispensable step to the accomplishment of this great work is the overthrow, by the ballot, of the present administration, and the inauguration of another, in its stead, which shall directly and zealously, but temperately and justly, wield all the influence and power of the government to bring about a speedy settlement of the national troubles on the principles of the constitution and on terms honorable and just to all sections....[A settlement] which shall have no conditions precedent to the restoration of the Union, but which shall diligently seek that result as the consummation of permanent peace amongst the States and renewed fraternity amongst the people.³⁰

²⁹ Quoted in McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 771.

³⁰ *Official Proceedings of the Democratic National Convention, Held in 1864 at Chicago* (Chicago: Times Steam Book and Job Printing House, 1864), 4.

Most Democrats present at the convention desired to restore limited war aims, preserve antebellum social relations, and consider all reconciliatory plans with the Confederacy that could preserve the Union.

On the convention's second day, Democratic delegates hammered out a party platform. Although War Democrats and Conditional Moderates favoring a continuation of the war outnumbered the Peace Democrats, the latter group's cooperation was necessary for the party's success. What resulted was an ineffective compromise between the party wings that doomed the Democrats' subsequent campaign. Ultimately, tacit concessions were granted by both sides that permitted Peace Democrats to lead the structuring of the party platform and allowed War Democrats to advance McClellan as the party's nominee with little opposition. The platform planks were fashioned primarily by the North's most infamous Copperhead, Clement L. Vallandigham of Ohio. Although one plank declared that the Democracy would "adhere with unswerving fidelity to the Union under the Constitution," Vallandigham and the Peace Democrats went too far in the second resolution of the platform:

[T]his convention does explicitly declare, as the sense of the American people, that after four years of *failure* [emphasis mine] to restore the Union by the experiment of war, during which, under the pretence of a military necessity, or war power higher than the Constitution, the Constitution itself has been disregarded in every part, and public liberty and private right alike trodden down and the material prosperity of the country essentially [sic] impaired, - justice, humanity, liberty and the public welfare demand that immediate efforts be made for a cessation of hostilities, with a view to an ultimate convention of the States, or other peaceable means, to the end that at the earliest practicable moment peace may be restored on the basis of the Federal Union of the States.³¹

To brand the war a failure was a bold denunciation of the Lincoln administration that also inadvertently questioned the resolve of the Northern civilian and the gallantry of the

³¹ Ibid, 27.

Union soldier. Peace Democrats had overstepped decorum and had made it impossible for McClellan, as a War Democrat, to embrace the platform unconditionally.

True to their word, Peace Democrats on the third day of the convention permitted George McClellan to capture the nomination with only token resistance. McClellan garnered enough votes over Peace Democrats like Governor Thomas H. Seymour of Connecticut and Governor Horatio Seymour of New York to win the nomination on the first ballot. Peace Democrats additionally received another important concession from the War faction. For their continued loyalty, Peace Democrats were awarded the number two spot on the ticket. Ohio Representative George H. Pendleton, a Copperhead associate of Vallandigham, was selected by convention delegates as McClellan's running mate. The selection only complicated the Democracy's presidential aspirations as the party now staked its hopes on a War Democrat campaigning on a Peace Democratic platform with a Copperhead running mate. Nonetheless, delegates of all ideological stripes were apparently content. The party expressed its enthusiasm for McClellan: "Be assured that those for whom we speak, were animated with the most earnest, devoted and prayerful desire, for the salvator [sic] of the American Union, and the preservation of the Constitution of the United States; and that the accomplishment of these objects was the guiding and impelling motive in every mind."³² McClellan was now faced with the daunting challenge of campaigning amid the disparate desires of party members and a sudden turn in Union military fortunes.

George B. McClellan was an unabashed War Democrat whose affinity for his comrades in arms only reinforced his belief that their sacrifices should not be in vain. The Chicago Convention, however, had complicated McClellan's ability to come out

³² Ibid, 59.

forthrightly in favor of the war. Between the August 31 adjournment of the convention and McClellan's acceptance of the nomination on September 8, the general painstakingly crafted an acceptance letter he hoped would set forth his War Democratic principles without alienating the crucial Peace advocates. Interposed between these two events was the sudden news from General Sherman in Georgia that Atlanta had been captured. Whereas once the Democrats' platform was acceptable to many conservatives, the change in military fortunes galvanized renewed resolve to continue the war effort. As Republican Alexander K. McClure explained, the Democratic platform "at the time of its deliverance honestly reflected the views of nearly the entire Democratic people of the country, and very many Republicans were profoundly apprehensive that the declaration was only too true, but just when the convention had concluded its labors, the trained lightning flashed the news to Washington from Sherman saying: 'Atlanta is ours, and fairly won.'"³³ The news only hastened the need for the Democrats to refute the notion that the war was a failure and for McClellan to come out strongly in favor of the war's continuation, albeit toward conservative war aims.

In his acceptance letter, McClellan unequivocally asserted the War Democratic principle that he could not recognize Confederate independence. "The re-establishment of the Union in all its integrity," affirmed McClellan, "is and must continue to be the indispensable condition to any settlement."³⁴ Although reunion was requisite to any thought of peace, McClellan blatantly discarded Republican insistence upon emancipation. McClellan continued:

³³ McClure, *Old Time Notes*, 2:152.

³⁴ Edward McPherson, *The Political History of the United States of America, During the Great Rebellion* (Washington, DC: Philp and Solomons, 1865), 421.

So soon as it is clear, or even probable, that our present adversaries are ready for peace, upon the basis of Union, we should exhaust all the resources of statesmanship practiced by civilized nations and taught by the traditions of the American people, consistent with the honor and interests of the country, to secure such peace, re-establish the Union, and guarantee for the future the constitutional rights of every State. The Union is the one condition of peace – we ask no more.³⁵

McClellan also appealed to his dedication to his brothers in arms to advance his unambiguously pro-war stance. “I could not look in the face of my gallant comrades of the army and navy,” he avowed, “who have survived so many bloody battles, and tell them that their labors and the sacrifice of so many of our slain and wounded brethren had been in vain; that we had abandoned that Union for which we have so often periled our lives.”³⁶ Without outright repudiation of the Peace Democratic platform which he was pledged to advance, McClellan went as far as he could in his acceptance letter to present himself as a pro-war conservative who would continue the fight for the Union with the limited aims pursued during the earliest months of the war. As historian Jennifer Weber explains, “McClellan had to walk a fine line in accepting the nomination. If he blatantly rejected the plank, he risked alienating the Peace Democrats...Embracing the document, however, would drive away Unionist moderates of both parties who had been drawn to his candidacy. McClellan’s task would have been difficult in the best of times, but he had to act now in the excited days after Atlanta.”³⁷

Once the presidential campaign began in earnest, Pennsylvania’s Democracy worked assiduously to ensure a McClellan victory in November. The selection of McClellan and his announcement to campaign as a pro-war candidate further emboldened the War Democrats within the state party system. In July, Philadelphia’s antiwar Central

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Weber, *Copperheads*, 179.

Democratic Club, which had served as a Copperhead social organization and headquarters for propagating Peace sentiment since January 1863, fizzled. As Irwin F. Greenberg explains, “[b]y 1864 it was painfully clear to the professionals [politicians] that the Democratic Party’s identification with the dissenting aristocrats of the Central Democratic Club was hurting the party’s chances for election victories.”³⁸ In its stead, War Democrats and Conditional Moderates organized the so-called Keystone Club to advance the principles of pro-war conservatives. At its first meeting in August, club members selected Colonel William McCandless president. McCandless, who had fought in some of the Army of the Potomac’s most fearsome battles, had recently relinquished command of his Pennsylvania Reserve troops after the loss of his arm at Spotsylvania in May.³⁹ His selection as president was a deliberate move by pro-war Democrats to distance themselves from the Copperhead elites who had led the Central Democratic Club. The choice was shrewd because Republicans could hardly attack a Democratic organization led by a war hero. Even Forney’s *Press* admitted that McCandless “served his country during three years with great courage and skill....He has made a sacrifice for the Democratic party...and now that he has taken his course we trust that the party will appreciate this sacrifice and reward him accordingly.”⁴⁰ Although during the 1864 campaign season the Keystone Club would invite speakers of all political hues such as War Democrat Richard Vaux, Conditional Moderate Jeremiah Black, and Peace

³⁸ Greenberg, “Charles Ingersoll,” 209.

³⁹ Larry Tagg, *The Generals of Gettysburg: The Leaders of America’s Greatest Battle* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 1998), 100-101. Interestingly, McCandless had declined a promotion to brigadier general and would continue to resist unless the federal government reverted to its limited war aim of restoring the Union.

⁴⁰ *Philadelphia Press*, September 12, 1864, 2.

Democrat Charles Ingersoll, its credibility as a loyal organization was much more secure than that of its Copperhead predecessor.

Although Pennsylvania had no state offices to fill in 1864, the electorate did select the usual numbers of state representatives and senators, as well as all twenty-four congressmen. On state election day, October 11, 1864, Pennsylvanians gave the Republican party a resounding victory, likely bolstered by the recent capture of Atlanta and General Philip Sheridan's successful raid through the Shenandoah Valley. In the state house, Unionists garnered sixty-four seats to the Democrats' thirty-six. Unionists picked up three additional seats in the state senate, giving them a twenty-to-thirteen majority. Most significantly, Lincoln's party won sixteen of the twenty-four Pennsylvania seats in Congress.⁴¹ Although the election was a Democratic defeat on paper, conservatives took heart at some of the electoral specifics. For instance, Democrats had lost the home vote by only a slim margin of less than four hundred votes. The soldier vote was resoundingly Unionist, but Democrats hoped that the appeal of General McClellan among his adoring troops would shift the state's electoral votes to the Democratic column in November. The conservative *Republican Compiler* [Gettysburg] optimistically observed in the aftermath of the October election that Unionists "were trembling for the future....But the most important work must yet be done. Democrats, therefore, must not slumber....Rally, freemen, once again; put shoulder to shoulder and move forward in solid column for McClellan and Pendleton, the Union, the Constitution and the laws."⁴² For their part, the Keystone Club organized a huge parade in Philadelphia on October 29, composed of up to 40,000 Democrats. In an appeal to

⁴¹ Election statistics found in *The Tribune Almanac for 1865* (New York: 1865), 54-55.

⁴² *Republican Compiler* [Gettysburg], October 24, 1864, 2.

conservatives' race prejudice, Democratic parade participants "carried a transparency representing General McClellan surrounded by diverging rays of light, and the motto, 'The Day is Breaking.' On the reverse was a picture representing a platform on which stood Mr. Lincoln. The platform was supported by four colored soldiers."⁴³

Pennsylvania's Democracy was indeed mobilized and enthusiastic on the eve of the presidential election and anxious to reinstall a representative of conservatism in the White House.

When election day finally arrived on November 8, 1864, results were so close in the Commonwealth that it took several days for a final tabulation. At last, it became apparent that the crucial soldier vote had carried Pennsylvania for Lincoln with a close but comfortable margin. With the combined home and soldier votes, the president collected 296,382 votes compared with McClellan's 276,316 – a margin of victory of 20,066 votes or 3.5%. Without the soldier vote, the margin of victory for Lincoln diminished to 5,702 or just 1.1%.⁴⁴ Out of sixty-six counties in the Commonwealth, McClellan had won thirty-five, particularly in the center, southern tier, and eastern coal regions of the state. Lincoln on the other hand had done well along the northern and western counties, as well as the urban regions in and around Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and Harrisburg. Although nationally, McClellan had only captured majorities in New Jersey, Delaware, and Kentucky, Pennsylvania had nearly thrown its large electoral vote count to the general. Had military misfortunes continued to occur up to the election, it is reasonable to expect that the advocates of peace would have triumphed in the state.

⁴³ *Philadelphia Press*, October 31, 1864, 4.

⁴⁴ Election returns may be found in Shankman, *Pennsylvania Antiwar Movement*, 200-201. Nationally, Lincoln's total vote count was 2,211,317 compared with McClellan's 1,806,227. This is a margin of victory of 405,090 or 10.1%. Lincoln's comparatively slim margin of victory in Pennsylvania indicates the strength of the state's Democracy in 1864.

Instead, Democrats were predictably dismayed by the returns, particularly the soldiers' preference to support the president over their former commander. The *Lancaster Intelligencer* ruefully noted that "[t]he past four years have been dark days in the history of the Nation; but the four years that are to ensue will be still darker and more terrible in their consequences....The die is cast; the Rubicon is crossed, and nothing but gloom and suffering looms up before us as a Nation."⁴⁵ The *Democratic Watchman* [Bellefonte], on the other hand, remained defiant. When its editor asked why the Republicans did not gloat over their victory, he reasoned that voters now saw "that they have made a mistake – that the triumph of their abolition principles is a triumph over the best interests of the country."⁴⁶ Ultimately, the Democracy was defeated in the 1864 presidential election for two major reasons. First, its candidate was faced with the impossible task of appealing to a Democratic continuum with ideologies and war aims too broad to satisfy all. Second, the Lincoln administration scored timely military victories that turned the tide of public sentiment in its favor. No candidate, nor any segment of Pennsylvania's Democratic spectrum could singlehandedly surmount these overwhelming circumstances.

* * * *

What was certain in the weeks after the presidential election was that Democrats of all stripes had been effectively marginalized for the remainder of the war. "With Lincoln elected for another term and Sherman rolling along toward the Georgia coast [on his famous March to the Sea]," Jennifer Weber explains, "Northerners had little question as to the outcome of the war, and dissent faded from the public stage."⁴⁷ In January 1865, the president supported congressional reconsideration of an amendment to abolish

⁴⁵ *Lancaster Intelligencer*, November 16, 1864, 2.

⁴⁶ *Democratic Watchman* [Bellefonte], November 18, 1864, 2.

⁴⁷ Weber, *Copperheads*, 206.

slavery, which passed on the last day of the month. Unionist newspapers were jubilant. “[T]his black curse,” rejoiced the *Village Record* [Waynesboro], “the cause of so much trouble and bloodshed, [will] be forever blotted out....Copperheads how do you feel?”⁴⁸ Although few Democratic newspapers printed more than the straightforward details of the amendment’s passage, the *Democratic Watchman* [Bellefonte] remained vitriolic:

The mountain has conceived and brought forth a mouse – a contemptible, laughable, abortion of a mouse. The abolitionized Congress, after terrible labor, has brought forth a resolution paving the way for the alteration of the Constitution, for abolishing slavery. Now all the company of fools or knaves who voted for this resolution have recorded themselves as being in favor of both of the following propositions:

1. The perpetual dissolution of this Union, by barring the last avenue left open for the return of the southern States.
2. The destruction of the government formed by our fathers, by blotting out the sovereignty of the States on which alone it was founded.

Stripped of all shams and lying disguises, it is simply a proposition to revolutionise [sic], overthrow, and destroy this government...If the secessionist is a *traitor*, those who voted for this resolution are *double traitors*.⁴⁹

Interestingly, among those who did vote for the amendment were three Moderate Democratic congressmen of Pennsylvania who hoped to separate themselves from the increasingly anachronistic fulminations of the Peace Democracy.⁵⁰ As Weber explains, “the antipathy of the Peace Democrats toward the amendment drove moderate Democrats to support it” in order to move the party forward and out from under the damning charges of treason.⁵¹

The Pennsylvania Democracy was demoralized and apathetic during the closing weeks of the war. With little fanfare, the Democratic State Central Committee met on March 6 in Harrisburg to determine the next meeting of the Democratic State

⁴⁸ *Village Record* [Waynesboro], February 3, 1865, 2.

⁴⁹ *Democratic Watchman* [Bellefonte], February 3, 1865, 2.

⁵⁰ These congressmen were Joseph Baily, Alexander Coffroth, and Archibald McAllister.

⁵¹ Weber, *Copperheads*, 210.

Convention. Because no important offices were at stake in 1865, the delegates deferred the convention's assembly until June. Most Democrats meanwhile waited expectantly along with Unionists for the conclusion of the war. However, a handful of diehard Peace Democrats remained to voice their continued opposition. Franklin Weirick, editor of the *Selinsgrove Times*, pledged in February that "the war will not and ought not to stop until the independence of the Confederate States has been secured and acknowledged."⁵² The *Philadelphia Age* kept up its hostility, printing in March that the conflict was not as others predicted "all but over. What an absurd notion; why, the war could go on for another ten years. The South was far from exhausted. Lee was going to add a million Negroes to his army. Peace was by no means just at hand. Six months hence, people would see how ridiculous the concept of victory over the South was."⁵³ Victory would come, however. On April 9, General Robert E. Lee surrendered his Army of Northern Virginia at Appomattox, Virginia, effectively ending the national tragedy. For Democrats and Unionists alike, peace was at hand. Nonetheless, the future of the nation was uncertain and all members of the Democracy could only speculate on the frightful changes the war had wrought.

* * * *

For Pennsylvania's Democrats, the year 1864 witnessed the last substantial continuum shift of the war. Peace Democrats failed to lead the party to victory during the gubernatorial election of 1863 and increasingly lost the trust of the electorate and control of the party. Nonetheless, these Democrats remained numerous enough to warrant attention. To remain competitive against Unionists, Pennsylvania's Democratic leaders

⁵² Quoted in Russ, "Franklin Weirick," 254.

⁵³ Nicholas B. Wainwright, "The Loyal Opposition in Civil War Philadelphia," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 88:3 (July 1964): 313.

could not alienate the advocates of peace. This took substantive form during the party's national convention at which Peace Democrats were ceded control of the platform and the vice-presidential spot. War Democrats were the beneficiaries of this final shift in the party's ideological commitment. When the war took a promising turn during the middle and end of 1863, voters increasingly thought the conflict to be winnable and enabled pro-war leaders to wrest control of the party machinery. Although the first several months of 1864 proved to be costly on the battlefield, War Democrats and their Moderate allies held together to push native son George B. McClellan for the presidency. The shift toward the War end of the spectrum is best evidenced by the dissolution of the Central Democratic Club and its substitution by the Keystone Club. The Democrats' defeat in the state and national elections in October and November were a result of renewed Union military victories and the inability of Democrats along the vast party continuum to unify.

The wartime Democratic continuum broke down after Lincoln's reelection when it became apparent that the war was nearly at an end and continued opposition was futile. War Democrats and Moderates became politically apathetic and looked with increasing enthusiasm to an end to the war, whatever the means used to achieve it. Some even embraced the Republican proposal to abolish slavery under the Thirteenth Amendment as a way to relieve the burden of the treason label that had so often hampered Democratic political success during the war. Intransigent Peace Democrats, however, resisted any accord with the dominant Unionists and continued to use their increasingly negligible means to obstruct Republican war policy. Their continued fury appeared foolish to most at this point, as peace under Republican terms was a certainty. The nation's greatest crisis was at an end and Pennsylvania's conservatives would be compelled to reorganize

the Democracy to deal with the contentious issues that would arise in a new era of reconstruction and reunion.

Conclusion

On April 21, 1865, the *Democratic Watchman* [Bellefonte], a vehemently anti-Republican newspaper established in the conservative regions of central Pennsylvania's Appalachians, reported on the national tragedy that was then arresting the American people. "An event so startling has never, perhaps, occurred in the history of our country," lamented the editor. "To be smitten down at such a time...when all were hopeful in the promise of the future, naturally casts a gloom over the whole country....What effect the death of Mr. Lincoln will have upon the future of our country, none can tell."¹ Just five months before however, when Lincoln had secured a second term in office, the same newspaper had bitterly branded him as a "fanatic" whose faults included "his violated oaths, his obscene jokes and tyrannical [sic] usurpations."² In the days after the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln, the North's Republicans and Democrats unified in a spirit unseen since the days after the attack on Fort Sumter four years before. The death of Lincoln was only the first in a long series of events that complicated the Pennsylvania Democracy's search for a postwar identity. Despite their wartime opposition, conservatives were now faced with the drastic social changes unleashed by the war. With the advent of peace, Pennsylvania Democrats were no longer divided along War, Peace, or Moderate divisions. New challenges faced them and the rest of the country as Americans North and South worked to find meaning in the years of bloodshed and struggled to come to terms with the transformative changes that the war had brought. Unfortunately for Pennsylvania Democrats, the Civil War had made

¹ *Democratic Watchman* [Bellefonte], April 21, 1865, 2.

² *Ibid*, November 11, 1864, 2.

impossible the opportunity to return their country to the *antebellum* ideals they so cherished.

* * * *

Although definitive characterizations of the individual sects of Pennsylvania's wartime Democratic continuum are difficult to draw, several conclusions can be made. The state's War Democrats were the followers of Stephen A. Douglas prior to the outbreak of war. With their commitment to the Union's preservation and low tolerance for Southern extremism, these party members distanced themselves from the rest of the Democratic continuum that favored conciliation and compromise. With the advent of war, patriotism and war enthusiasm abounded in Pennsylvania for the first year of the conflict, permitting the War Democratic philosophy to gain supremacy. The ideological commitments of this wing corresponded with the Lincoln administration's initially limited war aims. War Democrats were tolerant of a temporary suspension of civil liberties and remained committed to military suppression of the Confederacy despite military setbacks and heavy casualties. However, when Republican policy shifted in favor of emancipation, pro-war conservatives soured on the idea of collaboration with the political opposition. As military losses mounted and the threat of racial equality loomed large, the Peace Democracy seized control of the party machinery and led Pennsylvania conservatives when the war was at its bleakest, just prior to the Battle of Gettysburg. The failure of the Peace Democrats to attract enough conservatives to the idea of armistice, negotiation, or peaceable separation during the 1863 electoral campaign allowed a War Democratic resurgence. The growing prospect of Union success in 1864 also aided the War Democracy in backing the candidacy of George B. McClellan, whose pledge to

prosecute the war without commitment to emancipation resonated with pro-war Democrats. McClellan's defeat in the November 1864 election resigned War Democrats to support the war's denouement under Republican auspices. Ultimately, the success of the War Democracy was inextricably linked to conservatives' toleration of the federal government and its handling of the war. When Pennsylvania's dedication to the Confederacy's suppression was at its height in 1861 and 1864, pro-war Democrats exercised political clout. When war enthusiasm waned, as it did in 1862 and early 1863, the War Democracy reached its nadir. Whatever their political potency throughout the war, as Christopher Dell notes, "without [the War Democrats'] assistance the federal government would have been powerless to restore the Union by force of arms."³

The Commonwealth's Peace Democrats coalesced around their support for Southern Democrat John C. Breckinridge in the 1860 presidential election. Because of their vehement racism, these Breckinridge Conservatives were firm advocates of Southern slavery and encouraged the North's acquiescence to the Fugitive Slave Act and slavery's expansion in the territories. Many had familial or economic ties to the South and believed that Pennsylvania shared a closer affinity with that region than with the New England which they viewed as the bastion of radical abolitionism. It was this view that encouraged the most strident Peace Democrats to call for the secession of Pennsylvania from the Union. Although their views were tolerated during the secession winter, the Peace Democrats were harassed for their ultraconservative views after the war commenced. For the first year of the conflict, they were subject to mob violence from ardent Unionists and arbitrary arrest from the Lincoln administration. Only after conservative backlash over emancipation grew could Copperheads again voice their

³ Dell, *War Democrats*, 9.

sentiments freely. As military setbacks accumulated and popular agitation against expanded war aims burgeoned, Peace Democrats gradually took control of the party. By 1863, Copperheads had advanced as their gubernatorial candidate a notable peace advocate, George W. Woodward. Only a sudden turn of military fortunes during Summer 1863 repulsed the Copperhead tide and contributed to the Democracy's defeat at the polls. Because Peace Democrats had failed to bring the party electoral victory, the War Democracy's credibility was restored. Nonetheless, Copperheads remained numerous enough within the party framework that the rest of the Democratic continuum could not afford to alienate them. During the 1864 presidential campaign, Copperheads were assuaged when granted the number two spot on the ticket behind War Democrat George B. McClellan. After Lincoln's reelection, only the Peace Democrats remained adamantly opposed to continuing the war, causing them to look like "foolish prophets of doom."⁴ Although few Copperheads committed treason *as per* the Constitution, all Peace Democrats were obstructionists whose pratings offered Confederates a glimmer of hope long after they should have had none.

Pennsylvania's Moderate Democrats are the most difficult to track through the course of the war. They were the most likely to alter their ideological commitments as the war progressed and shift their position along the Democratic continuum. At times, Moderates were even absorbed by one wing of the continuum or the other. During the secession crisis, Moderates controlled Pennsylvania politics thanks to the leadership of the Buchanan faction which controlled major state offices through the influence and patronage of the president. They were compelled to support Buchanan's vice president and Southern rights advocate, John C. Breckinridge. The Breckinridge Moderates

⁴ Shankman, *Pennsylvania Antiwar Movement*, 217.

avored conciliation with the wayward South and proposed plans to protect and guarantee slavery through constitutional amendment and repeal of personal liberty laws. More than the Breckinridge Conservatives, the Moderates were inclined to refute the constitutionality of secession and maintained a greater degree of resolve to preserve the Union. When war broke out in April 1861, the Moderate Democrats virtually vanished as all party members were forced to choose a strict pro- or antiwar stance. Most of these Moderates sided with the War Democrats because of their inherent belief in the sanctity of the Union and the heretofore limited war aims of the Lincoln administration. The emergence of the emancipation issue and Union military setbacks allowed for a threefold party division to reemerge. Whereas War Democrats insisted on a return to limited war aims and Peace Democrats demanded immediate peace, Moderate Democrats proposed unrealistic plans for a national convention of the states whereby a redress of the South's grievances could be achieved and the Union restored. Moderates consistently held a naïve belief that the South would agree to reunite with the North if only proper negotiations were attempted. In 1863, Moderate Democrats sided with Peace Democrats in pushing the gubernatorial candidacy of the Copperhead George W. Woodward, but allied with War Democrats in 1864 in their support for George B. McClellan for the presidency. After the November 1864 election, Moderate Democrats recognized that the war was nearing an end. Rather than continue futile opposition to the Lincoln administration like the Peace Democrats, Moderates opted instead to submit with the War Democrats to a Republican-led conclusion to the conflict. The middle course that Moderates sought proved unsustainable amid the chaos of civil war. Moderate Democrats more often than not shifted their views to align with either wing of the party

continuum in order to advance their ideological interests as they stood at any particular moment in the war.

To demonstrate the value of utilizing a Democratic continuum in a study of the North's Civil War politics, it is worthwhile to trace the type and degree of ideological evolution experienced by prominent Pennsylvania politicians mentioned in this study. For instance, some politicians remained within a segment of the continuum through the entirety of the war. War Democrat James Buchanan consistently supported the military suppression of the Confederacy, while criticizing emancipation and other aspects of radical Republican policy. Charles Ingersoll, on the other hand, remained a virulent Peace Democrat even when Union victory was assured. Through the course of the war, Ingersoll endured mob violence, arrest, and a loss of business in his law practice, yet remained an ardent Copperhead and obstructionist. William Bigler remained a quintessential Moderate Democrat through the duration of the national crisis. Compelled to ally with War Democrats in the early months of the war, Bigler resurrected his middle-of-the-road policies and advocated utilization of national peace conventions and a temporary armistice to end the war. As these examples indicate, some Democratic leaders maintained a static position on the party continuum throughout the war because of a hardening or intransigence of principle.

Conversely, some Democrats altered their perceptions of the war's prosecution as changes in Republican policy or military fortunes occurred. Political expedience or simply a change in one's moral beliefs could also shift a Democrat along the party continuum. Charles J. Biddle is a good example of a Democrat whose principles shifted when emancipation became a Republican war aim. Biddle joined the army

enthusiastically as a War Democrat in the early weeks of the war and led a regiment of the Pennsylvania Reserves until he took a seat in the House of Representatives in late 1861. His war enthusiasm waned precipitously after Lincoln's emancipation proposal at which point Biddle's rhetoric more closely matched that of a Moderate. In contrast, Francis W. Hughes's shift along the political continuum took a different trajectory. As a Breckinridge Conservative during the secession crisis, Hughes advocated the secession of Pennsylvania in similar terms as other Copperhead leaders like Charles Ingersoll and William B. Reed. By the time Hughes became the chairman of the Democratic State Committee, however, his principles had shifted to favor a military solution to the rebellion with limited war aims. Thus, the Democratic continuum was for some leaders a fluid political spectrum whose segments could be transcended according to the state and scope of the war at any given time.

Implementation of a Democratic continuum in a study of wartime Pennsylvania politics offers the historian a number of conclusions that more fully explain the state of conservatism on the home front. First, acknowledgement of a continuum verifies the notion that the Democracy as a whole was not an obstructionist party when it came to the Union's preservation. For the majority of the war, War and Moderate Democrats supported the military suppression of the rebellion to preserve the Union. At particularly bleak periods of the war, Moderates may have favored a negotiated settlement with the South that would have restored slaveholders' rights, though they never advocated the peaceable separation of the Union. Examination of the Democracy's views on race leads to different conclusions, however. No segment of the party continuum fully reconciled themselves to emancipation until the last few months of the war. In this sense, the

Democracy may be considered a party hindering progress. Peace Democrats, it should be noted, were the sole obstructionist segment of the party. Their insistence on the *antebellum status quo* and virulent opposition to emancipation went so far as to supersede the desire for the Union's preservation.

Second, the notion of a Democratic continuum helps the historian identify the principles shared by the entire party and those shared by only one segment of the party spectrum. Some ideological commitments, such as white supremacy and anti-emancipation, were principles shared by practically the entire Democratic continuum. The preponderance of conservative opposition to the Emancipation Proclamation or the recruitment and use of black troops is better understood in the context of a Democratic continuum that shares a fundamental racism across all party segments. In contrast, other aspects of political ideology, ranging from views on civil liberties; conscription; the Lincoln administration; cooperation with Unionists; and leniency toward the South, varied widely among the party segments. Through utilization of the Democratic continuum it is far easier to conceptualize the views held by individual Democrats.

Lastly, examination of a Democratic continuum modifies the assertion of Joel H. Silbey, who claims that the Democracy was a healthy, competitive, and "respectable" opposition to the dominant Republicans. In terms of sheer numbers, Silbey is correct that conservatives were numerous enough to create strategic political problems for the Republican party. But we must look at the vastness of the Democratic continuum, and the range of ideological commitments along it, to see that widespread Democratic cooperation was impossible to achieve, at least in Pennsylvania. It may be more apt to consider Silbey's "respectable" minority a "chaotic" one instead. Because of these

divergences of principle along the Democratic continuum, a less ideologically divided Republican party carried most state and national elections during the war years and dictated the prosecution of the war.

Ultimately, Pennsylvania's Democratic continuum is a valuable tool to better comprehend the complexities of conservatism during the nation's greatest crisis. Although nearly all Democrats shared a commitment to white supremacy, strict constitutional construction, states' rights, and a decentralized federal government, other principles are not so definitively "Democratic" when the War – Peace continuum is broken down and analyzed over the course of the war. Personal sentiments concerning the war changed according to the progression of events. For instance, a Union military victory had a distinctly different effect on Democratic perception of the war than the announcement of a new draft lottery. Circulation of a Copperhead pamphlet stimulated a different reaction among conservatives than the propagation of a radical Republican's legislative bill. Nevertheless, every political, military, economic, and social event that occurred during the course of the Civil War is better understood in the context of the vast, varied Democratic continuum.

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