The National Party Chairmen and Committees

Factionalism at the Top

Ralph M. Goldman

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Contents

Part IV. Destruction by Faction

Part V. Formalizing the National Chairmanship

Part VI. Bureaucratizing the National Committee

Part VII. The Long View: Processes and Problems

Preface

This book traces the history of the national committee chairmanships of the two major parties of the United States. The story of the Democratic party begins in the mid-nineteenth century. The Democrats were the first to establish a national committee in 1848. In 1854, the Republican party made a national committee an integral part of its initial organization. Taken together, the institutional history of the two national committees and their chairmanships reveals much that distinguishes the party system of the United States. In addition, by following the trends in certain aspects of their institutional evolution, we are able to test, albeit in a limited manner, an analytic theory of conflict processes and organizational development.

The government-party-faction hierarchy

The relevant organizations that are in part observed in this book are the government of the United States (particularly the presidency and the Congress as the elective branches), the major political parties (Democratic and Republican), and the factions within each party.

A government is a complex organization that is established by leaders of a society according to custom or according to specifications in a written constitution. The extent to which ordinary citizens participate in the selection and accountability of governmental officers and in the decisions that make public policies is a major measure of how democratic the political system is.

This organizational framework is part of a hierarchy of organizations that facilitates political conflict, competition, and the search for consensus. Party factions compete for control of party offices and policies. Parties compete for control of governmental offices and policies. Governments often compete with other institutions, for example, the media, organized interest groups, churches, corporations, military establishments ("the military-industrial com-

plex," for example), and others for control of the society.

In constitutional democracies, practices and rules evolve that constrain leaders to be tolerant, to negotiate, and to compromise in the process of resolving their conflicts. From this perspective, a democracy is essentially a system of conflict management that provides institutional alternatives to internal violence, for example, the judicial processes that replaced trial by combat between adversary individuals. Similarly, party leaders in constitutional systems have become the principal advocates and negotiators of the nation's political and social values, enabling them to provide opportunities for and constraints upon elite conflict.

When the above hierarchy of organizations is inverted, a faction may gain control of a party, a party may exclusively control the government, and the government may exercise extensive as well as intensive control over all facets of the society's and the citizen's life. Such a system is totalitarian and essentially a system of conflict prevention rather than conflict management.

Parties are organizations that seek to place their leaders or recognized representatives into the offices of government. Party organization is usually formal, that is, with officers, headquarters, and rules of operation. Parties will also formally present their nominees to an electorate, campaign for their election, and appeal for support through statements, platforms, manifestos, and propaganda dealing with public policy issues.

In their early stages of organizational development, parties tend to be relatively accidental and transitional bodies, operating extraconstitutionally within the context of the governmental organization. When parties endure for long periods and interact with each other in a more or less regularized manner, they become a party system.

A faction is a temporary system of cooperation among a number of recognized leaders of a political party for the purpose of influencing the decisions and conduct of the party organization as a whole.[1] A faction is usually informally organized. Its decisions usually pertain to the selection of the party's officers, nominees, or policy postures or to the distribution of party resources such as campaign funds and job patronage. Factional leaders usually have a constituency among party rank-and-file workers and regular party voters. Factions are sometimes referred to as cliques, wings, by an ideological name ("the Eastern liberals"), or the name of their principal leader ("the McKinley men"). A faction may exist as briefly as a ballot during a national nominating convention or as long as a decade or two in support of a policy such as "free silver."

An entire faction may bolt a party and set itself up as a new, independent party organization; this happened frequently during the first century of the American system. More commonly, faction leaders within a party will negotiate their differences and arrive at various trade-offs, for example, one faction's support for a nomination in exchange for another's endorsement of a platform plank.

The chairmen of party national committees hold key offices at the point where faction and party make one of their most important institutional connections. The interactions between faction and party can tell us much about how the chairmanship develops as an office, how its incumbents are selected or removed, and how chairmen behave while in office as well as about the historical development of the party as an organization.

How factional leaders conduct themselves may predict how they will behave as party and governmental leaders. The "deals" that factional leaders are willing to make may predict how well they will serve as political brokers or negotiators among the many competing interests of a heterogeneous society. As key players, factional leaders also become the rule makers for the institutionalized "political game" within which they carry on their conflicts.

In this book, the national party chairman will be viewed from several perspectives: as the manager of the national committee's affairs; as a political careerist; as a representative of a faction in his or her party. Relationships between chairmen and other major party leaders, particularly the titular leaders, will be given special attention. The functional development and political significance of the office of national chairman will be examined. The historical account will follow the flow of events chronologically. All this will describe significant conflicts that have institutionalized parties as vital agencies in the management of political conflict in the United States.

Conflict processes and organizational development

In his presidential address to the American Political Science Association, E.E. Schattschneider viewed conflict as the essential element of politics and conflict management as the central practice of politics:

> If politics is the management of conflict, it is necessary first to get rid of some simplistic concepts of conflict. Political conflict is not primarily or usually a matter of head-on collisions or tests of strength, for a good reason: intelligent people prefer to avoid tests of strength, about matters more serious than sports, unless they are sure to win.
>
> Nor is political conflict like an intercollegiate debate in which the opponents agree in advance on the definition of the issues. The definition of alternatives is the supreme instrument of power; the antagonists can rarely agree on what the issues are because power is involved in the definition. He who determines what politics is about runs the country because the definition of the alternatives is the choice of conflicts, and the choice of conflicts allocates power.
>
> Political strategy deals therefore with the exploitation, use, and suppression of conflict. Conflict is so powerful an instrument of government that all regimes are of necessity concerned with its management. . . . The grand strategy of politics deals with public policy concerning conflict. This is the policy of policies, the sovereign policy—what to do about conflict.[2]

Theoretically, some of the developmental patterns of an organization may be inferred from a history of the conflicts surrounding its principal executive office. The outcomes of these conflicts may, in fact, predict whether or not the organization is viable. At minimum, this kind of data and analysis may provide valuable information to those leaders who must manage the present affairs and further development of the organization.

Conflicts may determine how incumbents in the principal executive office are likely to behave, what functions and tasks they are expected to perform, and what kinds of persons are likely to hold the office or be removed from it. As will be explained in the concluding chapters of this inquiry, issues in conflict may arise from and have consequences on basic structural features of the office and the organization that it heads.[3]

To illustrate, assume that a national committee chairman issues a policy statement of his own formulation on some public issue such as welfare. Assume too that his policy is contrary to the party's platform or the position taken by the dominant faction in the national committee. A factional conflict ensues. The conflict may be resolved in one or more of at least three ways. The chairman may retract his statement, apologize for having made it, and promise never again to presume to make policy statements of his own formulation. His changed behavior is the structural change; he has "learned a lesson" and the conflict has "socialized" him somewhat. When this type of change occurs, we may call it a socialization process.

A second kind of conflict resolution may involve the creation of new rules about what chairmen in general may or may not do with respect to party policy statements. This new specification of a chairman's duties and prerogatives changes the organizational structure by further formalizing the office; it is a formalization outcome.

A third outcome of the conflict may be to remove the incumbent chairman from office by firing or forced resignation. This may be described as an investiture (in this case, divestiture) process.

Combinations of two or more of these conflict causes or outcomes are possible, for example, firing the incumbent (investiture process) and writing new rules for the job (formalization process).

The three processes are referred to here as socialization, formalization, and investiture. This analytical typology of conflict processes helps narrow the focus of an otherwise unmanageably large institutional history. The three perspectives suggest questions to be asked and events to be chosen in tracing the factional conflicts associated with the development of the national chairmanship and the national committee. Some of the conflicts are about personal behavior (socialization process), some are about task expectations pertinent to the office (formalization process), and some about how an incumbency is achieved (investiture process). In all cases, there are structural consequences for the office and the

organization. These structural consequences *in seriatim* comprise the developmental history of the office and, less directly, of the organization.

In the developmental histories of the national committees and the national chairmanships, an economical way of tracking the relevant factional data is to follow the major party and factional events as they manifest themselves at party national conventions and during presidential campaigns, as is often done in this book. National factions reveal themselves most often in these circumstances.

The semiautonomous national agencies

Organizationally, neither major party in the United States is an integrated whole at its national level. Rather, each national-level party organization is a relatively loose network of semi-autonomous organizations. These include: the party-in-the-Senate, the party-in-the-House, the national convention, the presidential campaign organization, the party-in-the-electorate, the national committee, and the national chairman as chief executive of the national party headquarters. The national-level agencies of the two major parties reflect the separation of powers principle. Nothing distinguishes the U.S. parties from parliamentary or authoritarian parties more than this plurality of semiautonomous national-level units. The U.S. national parties are structurally ill suited to march in solid phalanx or hierarchical order as is almost always the case in political parties elsewhere in the world.

Each of these semiautonomous agencies has a membership and executives of its own. One national party agency may exert temporary influence over the others, usually through the overlapping membership of particular persons. Each of these national-level organizations recruits its own officers with substantial independence from the others. Each member of each semiautonomous agency relates to the different party units at the national level in a different way.

Party-in-the-Senate

Once in the Senate, a senator's party affiliation takes on particular significance primarily when that body is being organized, that is, the majority party is entitled to control the senior offices of the Senate and all its committee chairmanships. A senator automatically becomes a member of his party's conference in the Senate. The conference chooses the president *pro tempore* of the Senate (when it is the majority party), its own chairman and secretary, the party's floor leader and whips, the membership of its committee on committees or steering committee, its committee on Senate patronage, and its senatorial campaign committee. The conference also chooses the party's policy committee.

Party-in-the-House

Congressional district constituents tend to vote the party ticket, largely because most candidates for representative are less well known than senators. This party-ticket constituency tends to obligate the representative to deal carefully with party matters in the House. Arrival to the House of Representatives carries automatic membership in the party's House caucus. The majority party wins the powerful speakership. The caucus selects its own officers, the party's floor leader, the whip, the members of (in the Democratic case) a steering and policy committee, standing committee chairpersons, the members of the congressional campaign committee, and the party's House patronage committee.

In general, coordination in so large a body as the House of Representatives has promoted party organization in many forms. House Democrats have developed an elaborate system of party management. In practice, for example, the whip is not a single person, but really an organization of nearly thirty assistant whips and others. The powerful steering and policy committee, chaired by the Speaker, consists of about twenty-nine members representing specific interests in the party. Even the unwieldy party caucus has arrogated to itself larger powers and greater participation in House operations. In recent years, the House has also seen the growth in a number of special caucuses: the Black caucus, the Hispanic caucus, the women's caucus, and liberal and conservative caucuses. These special caucuses endeavor to transcend party lines, but more often than not they have more members from one party than the other.

National convention

Every four years the party recreates its most comprehensive representative body, the national convention. Every state and territorial party organization in the Union sends a delegation to the great national quadrennial meeting to write a platform of public policies upon which the party will stand, prepare rules for the governance of the party as a national organization, nominate its slate for president and vice-president, and designate the membership of the national committee as the party's governing body between conventions.

The presidential nomination rather than national party self-governance has dominated the concerns of national conventions since their founding in 1832. Candidate and ideological factionalism, as the evidence of this volume demonstrates, rather than principles of rational organization, have been the principal engine of convention action. Platforms are more often encyclopedias of public issues than specific programs for legislative and executive action. Delegate selection through primary elections has placed voter popularity above peer assessment as the party's principal standard for selecting nominees and other

leaders. By the end of one week, the national convention disbands, leaving the future of national party affairs in the hands of the nominee's campaign organization, the national committee, and the party national chairman.

Campaign organization

The nominee's campaign organization is a special short-term organization that takes shape and leads the party during the period from the end of the national convention until election day. The sources of personnel for this operation have been numerous and varied. The campaign organization's chief executive may be a personal and trusted friend, the manager of his preconvention campaign, a representative of an adversary faction, the national committee chairman, or even an executive from a public relations firm. Subordinate campaign staff may also come from as many sources.

The presidential campaign organization is a distinct corporate body. As such, it may receive federal election funds, incur debts, hire and fire personnel, and cooperate with or ignore party agencies. Some nominees may try to operate it as though it were an assembly representative of the entire spectrum of interests in the party; others will prefer a tight ship consisting of only loyal co-workers. How the campaign organization is composed and directed may furnish clues to the manner in which the nominee is likely to manage his administration if elected. The way the campaign organization handles the party platform and the debates over public policy also helps forecast the programmatic approach of the nominee's prospective administration.

Party-in-the-electorate

The electorate is rarely viewed as an organization. Yet on election day the mobilized electorate systematically registers, with constitutional finality, its decisions regarding the personnel to fill the principal offices of government. How each voter casts his or her ballot has consequences for the composition of the electoral college, the party-in-the-Senate, the party-in-the-House, the partisan character of state and local governments and party organizations, the makeup of the national committee, and even the delegations to the next national convention.

In recent years, roughly 40 percent of the voters have referred to themselves as Democrats, 25 to 30 percent as Republicans, and about 33 percent as Independents. Intensity of identification varies within each group. The party-in-the-electorate is therefore a subdivision of the total electorate: party "regulars," who vote with the party through thick and thin, plus all the others—from leaners to switchers—whose votes make a difference in the party's fortunes.

National committee

From all appearances, the national committee is an organization subordinate to the national convention. Representatives to the national committee are designated by each state's delegation to the national convention. The national committee serves as the convention's interim organization. In both parties, each state and territory is entitled to at least three people—one man, one woman, and the state party chairperson—as its core representatives. The Democrats apportion more than this minimum according to the size of the delegation to the national convention. The Democrats also provide several seats to representatives of Democratic governors, mayors, congressional leaders, young Democrats, women, and others.

The national committee tends to be more of a political environment than an operating agency. With some distortion, it perpetuates the intraparty power relationships manifest at the national convention. The committee is a place to test factional and candidate influence. It is often a sounding board for the national chairman or, if in office, the president. It is a place to discuss and possibly ameliorate grievances and competing interests. Above all, it is the specific party agency to which the national party chairman is beholden.

National chairmanship

"Floating" among all these semiautonomous national-level agencies is the national chairman and his headquarters staff. By now, it should be evident that the national chairman is not the chief executive of a neatly structured hierarchy. He and his headquarters are only one of several semiautonomous agencies. How he performs may depend on political skill, luck, political circumstances, personal ambition, factional connection, and so on. The national chairman may try to serve as a party broker among the several semiautonomous agencies or factions, particularly when different agencies are controlled by different factions. He may be a political recluse, filling the office either to prevent someone else from controlling it or to hold it until a preferred successor is available to fill it. In brief, the national chairman is only one of several leaders of a multiheaded organization called "the national party."

What may be said with confidence is that the national chairmanship has been at the center of national factional developments throughout the history of each major party. Factional conflict has had much to do with the manner in which individuals have been chosen for or removed from the office, the kinds of persons who have been its incumbents, and the kinds of job descriptions and expectations held for the office. These developments may be observed by investigating the national committee's investiture, socialization, and formalization processes.

A word about methodology

There are several ways of investigating and reporting history. A chronicle recites events in chronological order, describing which actors did what and in what sequence. A colligation endeavors to apply selected major concepts, for example, socialization, investiture, and formalization processes, to the information of a chronicle in order to interpret the facts and thereby convert the chronicle into a significant narrative. Finally, there is the genetic explanation, which is the historian's closest approach to testing hypotheses and producing predictive knowledge. Genetic explanation seeks to find the reasons for, and the causes of, behavior and events. This volume is a colligation about the institutional history of a particular political office—the party national chairmanship—and of the agency—the national committee—of which it is a part.

Historiography is necessarily a less than scientific enterprise. It must deal with all of the pitfalls of *ex post facto* inquiry, wherein independent variables have already occurred and the researcher must start with observation of the dependent variables. This is the reverse of the more rigorously scientific experimental procedure wherein the researcher can manipulate and measure the independent variable and at the same time observe if there is concomitant variation in the dependent variable. Pitfalls notwithstanding, historiography can be systematic, guided by—albeit not a test of—a hypothesis, particular concepts, or specific questions. By applying the questions raised by conflict process theory, this book aims to meet the standards of systematic historiography. This report also seeks to encourage the recent revival of historical methods in the study of political institutions.

National Party Chairmen

Democratic National Chairmen

	Date of election
Benjamin F. Hallett	May 22, 1848
Robert M. McLane	June 5, 1852
David A. Smalley	June 6, 1856
August Belmont	June 23, 1860
Augustus Schell	July 10, 1872
Abram S. Hewitt	June 29, 1876
William H. Barnum	March 3, 1877
Calvin S. Brice	June 12, 1889
William F. Harrity	July 21, 1892
James K. Jones	July 11, 1896
Thomas D. Taggart	July 26, 1904
Norman E. Mack	July 25, 1908
William F. McCombs	July 15, 1912
Vance C. McCormick	June 15, 1916
Homer S. Cummings	February 26, 1919
George White	July 20, 1920
Cordell Hull	November 1, 1921
Clement L. Shaver	August 11, 1924
John J. Raskob	July 11, 1928
James A. Farley	July 2, 1932
Edward J. Flynn	August 17, 1940
Frank C. Walker	January 18, 1943
Robert E. Hannegan	January 22, 1944
J. Howard McGrath	October 29, 1947
William M. Boyle, Jr.	August 24, 1949

Frank E. McKinney	November 1, 1951
Stephen A. Mitchell	August 29, 1952
Paul M. Butler	December 5, 1954
Henry M. Jackson	July 17, 1960

The following chairmen are not covered in this book:

John M. Bailey	January 22, 1961
Lawrence O'Brien	August 31, 1968
Fred R. Harris	January 14, 1969
Jean Westwood	July 14, 1972
Robert Strauss	December 9, 1972
Kenneth Curtis	January 7, 1977
John C. White	December 29, 1977
Charles A. Manatt	February 28, 1981
Paul G. Kirk, Jr.	February 2, 1985
Ronald H. Brown	February 10, 1989

Republican National Chairmen

	Date of election
Edwin D. Morgan	February 23, 1856
Henry J. Raymond	June 8, 1864
Marcus L. Ward	September 3, 1866
William Claflin	June 3, 1868
Edwin D. Morgan	June 6, 1872
Zachariah Chandler	July 8, 1876
James D. Cameron	December 17, 1879
Marshall Jewell	July 2, 1880
Dwight M. Sabin	December 12, 1883
Benjamin F. Jones	June 26, 1884
Matthew S. Quay	July 11, 1888
James S. Clarkson	July 29, 1891
Thomas H. Carter	May 10, 1893
Marcus A. Hanna	June 19, 1896
Henry C. Payne	June 20, 1904
George B. Cortelyou	June 23, 1904
Harry S. New	December 6, 1907
Frank H. Hitchcock	July 8, 1908
John F. Hill	December 12, 1911
Victor Rosewater	June 6, 1912
Charles D. Hilles	July 9, 1912

William R. Willcox	June 28, 1916
William H. Hays	February 13, 1918
John T. Adams	June 6, 1921
William M. Butler	June 13, 1924
Hubert Work	June 21, 1928
Claudius H. Huston	September 9, 1929
Simeon D. Fess	August 7, 1930
Everett Sanders	June 16, 1932
Henry P. Fletcher	June 6, 1934
John D.M. Hamilton	June 12, 1936
Joseph W. Martin, Jr.	July 9, 1940
Harrison E. Spangler	December 7, 1942
Herbert Brownell, Jr.	June 29, 1944
B. Carroll Reece	April 1, 1946
Hugh D. Scott, Jr.	June 26, 1948
Guy G. Gabrielson	August 9, 1949
Arthur E. Summerfield	July 11, 1952
C. Wesley Roberts	January 17, 1953
Leonard Hall	April 11, 1953
H. Meade Alcorn, Jr.	January 22, 1957
Thruston B. Morton	April 12, 1959

The following chairmen are not covered in this book:

William E. Miller	June 3, 1961
Dean Burch	July 18, 1964
Ray C. Bliss	January 23, 1965
Rogers C.B. Morton	April 15, 1969
Robert J. Dole	January 15, 1971
George Bush	December 11, 1972
Mary Louise Smith	September 17, 1974
Bill Brock	January 15, 1977
Richard Richards	January 18, 1981
Paul Laxalt (general chairman)	January 29, 1983
Frank J. Fahrenkopf	January 29, 1983
Lee Atwater	January 18, 1989

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Ralph M. Goldman
Reston, Virginia

Part I
In the Beginning

DEMOCRATS

1 Early National Parties as Personal Networks

By the mid-eighteenth century, the Tory and Whig parties were the established political parties of Great Britain and were principally active in Parliament. In several British colonies there were partisan counterparts of the British parties, namely, the Crown and Country parties, respectively. As in the mother country, the colonial parties engaged each other regularly in the colonial legislatures. American politicians differed from their counterparts in the mother country because, from the outset, they were primarily concerned with their constituencies, that is, the electorate. Thus, colonial parties were more electoral than parliamentary.

Local caucusing, campaigning (or electioneering, as it was known), and grass-roots organizing received serious attention. Grass-roots politics and decentralization remain characteristic of U.S. party development. A half-century passed after the founding of the Republic before a major party established its first formal *national* chief executive office, that is, the Democratic national chairmanship. Even today, organization continues to be a prime concern of American party leaders. Decentralization and loose structure are still major characteristics, although there is a firm trend toward centralization.

1

Most of the Founders were uncomfortable with the concept of popular sovereignty and particularly with political parties as organizers of the popular will. They drew this attitude from the contentious history of the British party system and from the writings of such critical British observers as Lord Bolingbroke. The Founders were also quite familiar with the partisan squabbling in the colonial legislatures, which was either joined or derided by the colonial press. Popular sovereignty was suspect, even though the tiny American electorate consisted mainly of property-owning Caucasian males, that is, less than 5 percent of the

total population, including children. In his Farewell Address, President George Washington reinforced the emerging antiparty tradition by warning against parties. Even Thomas Jefferson, builder of the first loyal opposition party, was ambivalent from time to time on the subject of parties.

The exceptions to this antiparty tradition were James Madison and Alexander Hamilton. Madison wrote of the importance of "factions," the commonly used synonym for political parties, in his much-quoted *Federalist Paper* #10. He also created and led the Democratic-Republican caucus in the first sessions of the House of Representatives. Hamilton, as secretary of the treasury, was the behind-the-scenes leader of the "Hamiltonian," or Federalist, bloc in Congress.

Party lines were well drawn by the Third Congress, with Madisonians (now also known as Democratic-Republicans) dominating the House of Representatives. In the country and the electorate, party organizations appeared in state legislatures as caucuses and in the cities and counties, as patriotic clubs and democratic societies. What national party organization existed depended entirely upon the pens of Jefferson and Hamilton, whose prolific correspondence was all that bound state and local political leaders of like mind together in the coordination of their election strategies and efforts. Jefferson and Hamilton were, for all practical purposes, the national chairmen of their respective parties.

When Hamilton urged his fellow Federalists to better organize themselves as a party at the local level, his counsel was ignored; the Federalist leaders refused to acknowledge that they were a political party. Not long after, the Federalists disappeared from the state and local ballots, whereupon almost every politician referred to himself as a Democratic-Republican or Jeffersonian Republican. This was the "Era of Good Feelings," a euphemism for a one-party system that lasted for the decade from 1814 to 1824.

The young nation sprawled and spread during the 1820s and 1830s. As its borders and population changed, so did its politics. In the national arena, new constituencies mixed with the old, for example, labor in the cities joined with farmers at the frontiers. Suffrage was extended to unpropertied white males. New political interests came to life. Presidential politicians worked diligently to mobilize the political fragments. Henry Clay produced an oppositionist patchwork—the War Hawks—in the West to confront the Virginia Dynasty (Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe) in the East. The remnants of Federalism in New England fell in line behind the Adamses and Daniel Webster. Of them all, only Andrew Jackson's colleagues organized a party that endured.

Even as presidential parties organized themselves around their heroes, different factions within each party made themselves visible. Factionalism soon acquired regional dimensions, for example, North versus South, Northeast versus West. These factions became powerful enough to destroy the National Republican party, the Whig party, and others prior to 1856 and to come within a breath of destroying the Democrats—and the nation—in 1860. One major arena of

factional struggle was the contest between leaders of the parties in Congress and leaders of the presidential wings. It took little time for the principle of separation of powers that was applied to the national government to find its way into the factionalism of the political parties.

2

The politicians around Andrew Jackson intended to collect the Jacksonian following into a potent and durable political organization. In time, a number of otherwise independent state party organizations united to form a "holding company" to capitalize the fame of Old Hickory.[1] Once accomplished, they converted the holding company into a more formal national party organization.

After his inauguration, Jackson gave careful attention to the political composition of his administration. He wanted his cabinet to be his administrative arm; the six states represented in it constituted one-third of the votes in the electoral college and were also the principal sources of Jackson's popular support. For advice in matters of party and political management, Jackson turned to a more intimate group: the Kitchen Cabinet.*

For counsel regarding broad strategies of political organization, Jackson relied mostly on Martin Van Buren, leader of New York's Albany Regency. Van Buren was, in effect, the leader of the Kitchen Cabinet. He later became Jackson's secretary of state, vice-president, and heir apparent. Secretary of War John Henry Eaton was another favored adviser, long an intimate friend and Jackson's personal biographer. Senator Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri, John Forsyth of Georgia, and Robert Hayne of South Carolina were Jacksonian activists in matters of congressional relations.

The membership of the Kitchen Cabinet changed over the years. Jackson's long-time aide Major William B. Lewis, brother-in-law to Eaton and principal promoter of the Jackson-for-president movement in the early 1820s, participated while serving as a federal auditor; Lewis later broke with Jackson on the national bank issue. Duff Green edited the *Telegraph*, the administration's chief newspaper, but soon fell out with the Jacksonian cause. Isaac Hill was known as "the Marat of the Kitchen Cabinet" because heads fell under the system of patronage he devised. Editor of the leading Democratic newspaper in New Hampshire, Hill headed the Jacksonian party in that state, keeping it Democratic over the decades from 1832 to 1852. Hill's organization issued the official calls for the first Democratic national conventions. Another consultant to the Kitchen Cabinet was Roger B. Taney, Maryland lawyer and attorney general in the reorganized cabinet after 1831.

The publicists were the key activists in the Kitchen Cabinet. They maintained

*An unofficial and informal group of personal advisers who presumably worked out political strategies in the White House kitchen.

the lines of communication between President Jackson and the new mass electorate. Isaac Hill's newspaper, for example, was a formidable voice for Jackson. Other key journalists included Amos Kendall and Francis P. Blair. Educated at Dartmouth and later a teacher at Groton, Kendall moved to Kentucky in 1814, where he became a tutor for the Henry Clay family. A journalist, he eventually became editor of the leading newspaper in the state, the *Angus*. Kendall's support of Jackson was an influential factor in the West. Blair was also a Kentuckian, long associated with Kendall and the latter's successor as editor of the *Angus*. When Duff Green's handling of the *Telegraph* became unsatisfactory, Kendall arranged for Blair to launch a new Jackson newspaper, the *Globe*, which began publication on December 7, 1830. Both Kendall and Blair worked well with Van Buren and became masters of the press battles that helped transform the Jacksonian following into the Democratic party.

The Kitchen Cabinet was never more than advisory. Jackson made up his own mind. "I should loath myself," he wrote, "did any act of mine afford the slightest color for the insinuation that I followed blindly the judgment of any friend in the discharge of my proper duties as a public or private individual."[2] Furthermore, the members of the group were too transient ever to have the opportunity to control Jackson. Nonetheless, the Kitchen Cabinet was an informal national party staff with substantial influence upon the political strategies Jackson chose and the tactics he used to win his battles.

Gradually, Jackson's vice-president, John C. Calhoun of South Carolina, became a political opponent and a problem for his administration. Calhoun, along with Henry Clay, was a nationalist prior to his vice-presidential campaign in 1824. Calhoun had endorsed most of Clay's American System platform, which promised protective tariffs to New England and internal improvements to the West, but gave very little to the South. However, Calhoun was in favor of reducing tariffs, a policy that had strong support in the South. In the 1824 presidential race, Calhoun ran for the vice-presidency on both John Quincy Adams' and Andrew Jackson's tickets in different states. He was elected as Adams' vice-president. After 1824, however, Calhoun began an ideological shift that eventually placed him at the head of the states' rights cause. The price for Calhoun's support of Jackson's candidacy in 1828 was tariff reform—and the vice-presidency.

William H. Crawford of the Richmond Junto and Martin Van Buren of the Albany Regency shared the objective of blocking Calhoun's presidential ambitions. The bitterness between Calhoun and Van Buren supporters became extreme even before Jackson's inauguration in March 1829.[3] This rivalry lent unusual heat to what should have been a minor social crisis: the social ostracizing of Peggy Eaton.

Jackson's old friend, Secretary of War John Henry Eaton, had married Peggy O'Neale, a Washington tavern-keeper's daughter, two months before Jackson's

inauguration. At the inaugural and thereafter, Peggy Eaton was subjected to an ostentatious snub from the other cabinet wives led by Floride Calhoun. Sympathetic to the Eatons and recalling the distresses that politics had heaped upon his own deceased wife, Jackson asked the men of the cabinet to intercede with their wives. Widower Van Buren took a position alongside Jackson and Eaton in this affair. Calhoun, on the other hand, supported the cabinet majority in its refusal to intercede. Thereafter, few cabinet meetings were called. After 1830, Calhoun began to feel the full force of Jackson's hostility.

Jackson had pledged himself to a single term in the presidency. As Clay proceeded to mobilize the National Republican opposition and as Calhoun became an overt contender for the leadership of the Jackson party, Van Buren and the Kitchen Cabinet reached the conclusion that only the renomination of the president himself could lay low both the Clay threat from without and the Calhoun faction within. Early in 1830, two New York newspapers, the *Courier* and the *Enquirer*, opened the campaign for Jackson's renomination.

Meanwhile, in Congress during January 1830, the historic Webster-Hayne debate on the nature of the Union took place. The Jacksonian leaders viewed the crusade in favor of the states' rights doctrine as a major threat to the sectional combination upon which their support rested. Jackson's second annual message of the following December declared that it was within the power of Congress to protect industry by using tariffs and that it was not within the power of any state to nullify an act of the national legislature. Robert Hayne, as a South Carolinian, fervently set forth the nullification doctrine formulated by Calhoun in 1828. Daniel Webster replied with a classic appeal for union and patriotism. The issue between Jackson and Calhoun was thus sharply drawn. On January 22, 1831, the *Globe* reported that the president would not decline a second term; Calhoun's presidential aspirations were now in jeopardy.

In March and April, Jackson followed Van Buren's strategy and began to remove the Calhoun supporters from his cabinet. In order to give the president a free hand to reorganize his cabinet, Van Buren and Eaton volunteered to resign. Ingham, Branch, and Berrien followed suit, but not without public references to the pressure that had been put on them. One member of the new cabinet came from Louisiana and another from Maryland, but on the whole the pro-Calhoun South was no longer represented. The Jacksonians were ready to proceed into the campaign of 1832, but not before revamping the Kitchen Cabinet.

The Anti-Masonic party issued its call for a national nominating convention, the first such convention. In February 1831, the New York City National Republicans adopted the same procedure, a national convention to nominate Clay. Since Van Buren had proposed the concept of national nominating conventions four years earlier, the Kitchen Cabinet was also predisposed to this new nominating method.

A month after the cabinet reshuffle, Amos Kendall visited Isaac Hill in New

Hampshire to discuss means for uniting the Jacksonian party. While there, he received the following message from Major Lewis, still a member of the Kitchen Cabinet:

> Many of our friends (and the most judicious of them) think it would be best for the Republican members of the respective Legislatures to propose to the people to elect delegates to a national convention . . . about the middle of next May. That period is preferred to prevent an improper interference by members of Congress who, about that time, will leave this city for their respective homes. If the friends of the administration, when brought together from every part of the Union, in convention, cannot harmonize I know of no other plan by which it can be done.[4]

Lewis closed his letter with the suggestion that the New Hampshire legislature lead off with the proposal. Hill arranged to have this done on June 25, 1831, issuing the convention call, a function later performed by the party's national committee. Duff Green's pro-Calhoun *Telegraph* promptly denounced the convention as a scheme to nominate Van Buren.

The president had other plans for his former secretary of state. Jackson appointed Van Buren to be ambassador to Great Britain in the belief that, after two or three years out of the country, Van Buren could return to the cabinet in time to regain his position as Jackson's successor in 1836.[5] This intention was evident from Major Lewis' failure to mention Van Buren as a vice-presidential candidate, instead suggesting Philip P. Barbour of Virginia, former Speaker of the House of Representatives, and two others. Van Buren departed for Great Britain during the summer as an interim appointee to be confirmed when Congress reconvened.

The vote on confirmation came January 25, 1832. The National Republicans and four Calhoun men voted against confirmation, creating a 23 to 23 tie. As presiding officer, Calhoun broke the tie by voting against confirmation. The Jacksonians rose to the challenge. Senator Benton, looking directly at Calhoun, shouted, "You have broken a minister and elected a vice-president." Jackson wrote Van Buren, "The insult to the executive would be avenged by putting you into the very chair which is now occupied by him who cast the deciding vote against you."[6]

The Democratic-Republican national convention had a larger attendance from more states than either the Anti-Masonic or the National Republican conventions. The Jacksonians followed the Anti-Mason example by adopting a unit rule for delegation voting and a special majority, the two-thirds rule, to nominate. The purpose was to avoid letting divided votes in the convention give the public the impression of party disunity. After approving a motion to concur in the many state legislative nominations of Jackson, the convention proceeded directly to a vice-presidential vote. The Calhoun supporters concen-

trated their votes on Barbour, but to no avail. Van Buren received 208 of the 283 votes cast.

This first Democratic-Republican national convention next turned to matters of permanent organization. Simon Cameron of Pennsylvania, who three decades later would be a member of President Abraham Lincoln's cabinet, offered a resolution that a national nominating convention be held every four years. However, the motion was tabled.

A presidential campaign organization was authorized and was composed of state corresponding committees appointed by the respective state delegations to the convention. A national central committee, with an unspecified number of members, was to be designated by the chairman of the convention. An "address to the nation," that is, a platform, was not to be prepared by national party officials, but left to state organizations to be handled as best suited to local conditions.[7]

These simple organizing arrangements were prodigious for the times and were made with an eye to permanency. The Anti-Mason and National Republican meetings, however, never convened again after their first gatherings; the Democratic-Republican meeting did, and continued to do so. A major step in the incorporation of Jacksonian democracy had been successfully consummated.

3

President Jackson began his second term with a new vice-president, Martin Van Buren. The outgoing vice-president, John C. Calhoun, became the spearhead of the states' rights movement. In 1832 and 1836, Calhoun's South Carolina threw away its electoral vote in the factional stalemate between Calhoun's Nullifiers and the pro-Jackson Unionists, a stalemate that began to be felt throughout the South. In the Southern frontier states, prior to 1836, including Jackson's own Tennessee, there was mounting resistance to the probability that Van Buren would be Jackson's successor. In the Northeast and the West, on the other hand, the exertions of Van Buren and his allies began to produce impressive state party organizations.

Federal patronage was used with skill to ensure party discipline. The *Globe*, as the official party newspaper, was able to coordinate policy positions on major issues and to give a semblance of unity to party affairs generally. Van Buren was indefatigable in his personal contacts and correspondence.[8] For Van Buren, the business of creating a national political party was essential and honorable work in a democracy:

> But knowing, as all men of sense know, that political parties are inseparable from free governments, and that in many and material respects they are highly useful to the country, I never could bring myself for my part to deprecate their existence. . . . The disposition to abuse power, so deeply planted in the human

> heart, can by no other means be more effectively checked; and it has always struck me as more honorable and manly and more in harmony with the character of our People and of our Institutions to deal with the subject of Political Parties in a sincere and wiser spirit.[9]

In 1835, the Jacksonians again turned to the national convention as a means for tightening party lines behind a single national ticket. To capture the initiative in a divided field, the national nominating convention was held early, on May 20, 1835, in Baltimore, Maryland. The purpose of the convention was stated clearly enough by its chairman, Andrew Stevenson of Virginia, former Speaker of the House of Representatives from 1827 to 1834:

> Efforts will no doubt be made to . . . put in jeopardy, and possible defeat the election of a president by the people, in their primary colleges. . . . The democracy of the union have [*sic*] been forced to look to a national convention, as the best means of concentrating the popular will, and giving it effect in the approaching election. It is, in fact, the only defense against a minority president.[10]

The roll call showed 612 delegates present, representing twenty-two states. Most of this large number, however, were from Maryland, giving the convention more the appearance of a mass rally than a representative assembly. Vice-President Van Buren received the 1836 presidential nomination without opposition.

The Jackson-Van Buren managers then proposed Richard M. Johnson of Kentucky, hero of the Indian wars of the West, as vice-president. The South, particularly Virginia, expressed strong objections. To overcome the two-thirds nominating requirement, the Jackson-Van Buren managers attempted to change the rule from two-thirds to a simple majority. This was the first of a century-long series of attempts to repeal the two-thirds rule. The motion was defeated. Johnson was nevertheless nominated by a bare two-thirds vote, 178 to 87, but at the cost of Virginia's support in the campaign and election. Virginia not only refused to pledge its energies to the campaign, but, after the convention, nominated its own vice-presidential candidate, John Tyler.

The convention failed to name a national or central campaign committee or committee of correspondence. It did, however, select a committee to prepare an address to the nation at some time after the convention. Represented on the committee were the Jackson leaders from New York, Virginia, New Hampshire, Maryland, North Carolina, and Mississippi. The work of this postconvention platform committee was published in the *Globe* on July 31, 1835, and filled ten columns.[11]

The convention vote on the vice-presidency revealed the first serious fissure in the Jacksonian party and was further reflected in the failure of any nominee to win the requisite majority of electoral college votes for vice-president. This was

the first and only election in which the choice of vice-president was made in the Senate.*

The Whig opposition had adopted the strategy of running several strong regional candidates for president. The strategy may not have won the election, but it did result in significant inroads into Democratic strength in many states. The decline in the Democratic vote in the South—Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, and Virginia—averaged 34 percentage points. An average decline of 33 percent was registered for the Democrats in the West and Southwest: Illinois, Indiana, Missouri, and Tennessee. On the other hand, the average Democratic vote rose 11 percent in the New England states, reflecting in part the rise of New England's abolitionist movement. Van Buren's losses in the South indicated the sharpening of the North-South split in the Democratic party-in-the-electorate, that is, the rank-and-file party workers and the loyal party voters in the electorate. The election marked a decline in the extent to which one-party states dominated the national elections and began a period in which politics became competitive throughout the nation, with Democrats and Whigs evenly matched in most states. In close elections, the cost of factionalism was bound to come high.

The presidential campaign of 1836 also marked the advent of slavery as an explicit and emotional national issue. The abolitionists petitioned Congress to forbid slavery in the District of Columbia. The petition roused the ire of Southerners whose economic interests depended on the institution of slavery. Southern leaders repeatedly asked President Van Buren his views on slavery. Van Buren took the position that the states had jurisdiction over slavery strictly within their own boundaries and that the Constitution did not give Congress the power to interfere either in the states or in the District of Columbia.[12]

The years 1837–1841 were particularly consequential for the development of the Democratic party. The premises for Van Buren's policies regarding the independent treasury, public lands, and the slave issues turned the Democratic party toward new principles of political philosophy. For example, Van Buren could see no reason why private state or national banks should be employed as depositories for government money. In May 1837, he ordered the suspension of specie payments by the banks. The economic Panic of 1837 ensued, for which he was blamed. This set the tone of factional and partisan controversy.

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*Richard Johnson of Kentucky, the Jacksonian convention's nominee for vice-president, was the bachelor father of illegitimate daughters whom he had by a mulatto slave. He lived openly with the slave, educated the daughters, and left them his fortune in his will. This earned him the hostility of the slave state leaders, who withheld their votes from him in the electoral college. Thus, he failed to get the requisite absolute majority in the electoral college, and the selection went to the Senate in accordance with the Twelfth Amendment to Article II, Section 1, of the Constitution. He was unopposed, and the Senate Democrats elected him.

In September 1837, Van Buren called Congress into special session to consider the "Divorce Bill" that would create an independent sub-treasury for the deposit of public funds. The proposal completely obliterated party lines. The Senate vote on the sub-treasury bill in particular revealed the split between the conservative forces in the Democratic party in Congress and the Van Buren administration. After much debate, the administration, led by Wright and Benton, rallied enough votes to pass the bill, 26 to 20. In the House, however, the conservatives were successful in tabling the bill, 119 to 107. An opposition group among the Democrats had cooperated with the Whigs to reject the bill. In the event, the two state organizations—New York and Virginia—that had been the pillars of the Democratic national coalition also had split apart.

On December 12, 1837, former president and now Representative John Quincy Adams presented a petition in the House asking for the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia. According to Thomas Hart Benton,[13] this petition was followed on December 20 by "the most disturbing movement the subject of slavery ever made in our Congress," namely, the departure of the Southern members from the hall to deliberate among themselves what lines of conduct they should follow.[14]

In the Senate, Calhoun introduced a series of resolutions defining the character of our government and the rights of the slave states under it. The debates on these resolutions were bitter and protracted. According to Benton:

> These resolutions, and the debate to which they gave rise, and the modification which they underwent, and the final vote upon them, constitute the most important proceeding on the subject of slavery which has ever taken place in Congress. They were framed to declare the whole power of Congress upon the subject, and were presented for a "test" vote, and as the future "platform" and "permanent settlement" of the law on the slavery question. The first four related to the states, and the rights of slavery in them under the guarantee of the constitution. The fifth related to the District of Columbia, and to the Territory of Florida [that being the only slave territory then in the Union], placed the abolition of slavery therein in the hands of Congress, but forbid [it] by high expedient reasons.[15]

The vote on the slavery question did not repeat the division revealed by the sub-treasury bill. Almost all Democrats supported Calhoun's efforts to prevent the question of slavery from becoming an issue. The final vote on the adoption of the first five of Calhoun's resolutions was typical. Democrats, including Southern leaders, maintained a unified front, with thirty-five in favor of passage and nine opposed. These nine were mainly senators from the Northeast.

Another test came in 1839. It required two months to organize the new House of Representatives. The party balance was 119 Democrats and 118 opposition members, with 5 members from New Jersey unable to be seated because of seating contests. Selection of the Speaker resulted in another setback for Van

Buren's administration. The chief candidates were John Bell of Tennessee, a Whig, and George W. Jones of Virginia for the Van Buren side. Neither Bell nor Jones could win the whole vote of their respective parties. A Calhoun man—Dixon H. Lewis of Alabama—also failed. Finally, the Whigs and conservative Democrats united on Robert M.T. Hunter and elected him. The vote breakdown was 119 for Hunter, 55 for Jones, 24 for George M. Keim of Pennsylvania, and 34 spread among 10 other candidates. Van Buren's influence was in decline as the time for the third Democratic-Republican national convention on May 5, 1840, approached.

Van Buren had been preparing for 1840 for some time. On February 8, 1840, Silas Wright received from the president a draft of "hints" that contained 103 handwritten pages. This document included principles upon which the party should run, organization strategies for the various states, and so forth. Van Buren evidently felt that his greatest opponent was fraud. He strongly urged organizations within the Democratic-Republican party to guard against frauds by opposition.[16]

Administration managers worked diligently to keep the factional ferment to a minimum. Preferring not to risk divisions on the floor of the convention, the Van Buren supporters moved that a committee of one representative from each state consider the subject of nominations. This committee issued a report stating that no opposition had been found to Van Buren's renomination and that no vice-presidential candidate had been chosen. The committee's report was adopted by simple majority and constituted the entire nominating procedure. Three vice-presidential candidates subsequently entered the field: Vice-President Richard Johnson, Littleton W. Tazewell of Virginia, and James K. Polk of Tennessee.

The Whigs, meanwhile, were nominating states' rights Democrat John Tyler to second place on their "Tippecanoe and Tyler, too" ticket.

The 1840 Democratic-Republican national convention was also the one in which the party name was simplified. Henceforth, it was called the Democratic party.

2 Establishing the National Committee and Its Chairmanship

Jackson and his party managers left the modern Democratic party with a predilection for strong presidential leadership and for nurturing party strength in the presidential electorate, at times more so than in the legislative arena. In contrast to the party versus Congress factionalism exhibited in the Weed-Clay rivalry among the Whigs, the Democrats enjoyed an abundance of presidential leadership on the electoral side. Jackson and Van Buren lent energy and direction to the party-in-the-electorate, even after they left presidential office.

With keen organizational sense, Van Buren moved swiftly into the role of out-party leader after his defeat in 1840. Jackson continued to be a source of elder-statesmanly advice and influence to any Democratic leader who solicited his views. John Tyler's succession to the presidency upon William Henry Harrison's death created some confusion by giving the Democrats a third titular leader whose party identity was somewhat ambiguous. All three men turned to the national conventions as the chosen arenas of battle. James K. Polk, another Democrat skilled in electioneering and party management, was the convention's choice as Tyler's successor.

The attitude of these men toward the party reinforced the Democratic predilection for strong national party agencies capable of mobilizing the presidential electorate. National factional battles were therefore carried forward mainly in the national conventions, during the conduct of presidential campaigns, and in connection with the national party chairmanship. In contrast, sectional differences between Northern and Southern Democrats in Congress on the issues of slavery, annexation of new territories, and the admission of new states to the Union kept the development of Democratic party leadership off balance for more than two decades. Congressional Democrats found it necessary to learn the ways of the national conventions and other national party agencies.

1

Loss of the election to Harrison left Van Buren titular leader of an out-party, the first president nominated by a national convention to hold this unofficial status. The prestige of having twice received the presidential nomination of his party and having previously served in the vice-presidency and presidency assured Van Buren a leadership role even in defeat. Van Buren did not take his unspecified responsibilities lightly. He wrote in his *Autobiography* that party organization is the greatest need of a party in defeat, suggesting his conception of the problems of an opposition party.

> Always under similar circumstances, the rank and file of a political party, taught by adversity the folly of their divisions, looked to a discontinuance of them to soothe its mortification, and long delays in accomplishing a cordial reconciliation are invariably attributed to the policy inhibition of leaders.[1]

Anticipating the 1840 defeat, Francis P. Blair, editor of the *Globe*, had written to Jackson at the Hermitage arguing that the party ought to plan to restore itself "by the re-election of Mr. Van Buren." He suggested that Jackson correspond with party leaders to determine "the best means of recovery."[2]

Vice-President Tyler's succession to the presidency in April 1841 raised a serious threat to Van Buren's future. As a Virginia states' rights Democrat on the Whig ticket in 1840, Tyler had contributed substantially to Van Buren's defeat. As president, Tyler again dedicated himself to the defeat of nationalism and centralization as represented by Clay on the Whig side and by Van Buren among Democrats. Tyler's key associate in this objective was Senator Robert J. Walker, the "Wizard of Mississippi." "As an adroit political fixer, Walker knew no equal, unless it was Van Buren—the Van Buren of earlier days."[3]

Walker has been one of the forgotten political giants of mid-nineteenth-century American history.[4] He was just forty years of age when Tyler became president, in his fourth year as senator from Mississippi, and he was the spokesman for the Southeast. As the 1844 Democratic national convention approached, Walker assumed leadership of one of the three annexationist groups opposed to Van Buren's renomination.

Democratic victories in the local and congressional elections of 1841 and 1842 brought a flood of congratulations to Van Buren's home in Lindenwald, New York. "Lindenwald was becoming another Monticello."[5] Van Buren had supported and gained the support of leading figures in Democratic state organizations and media. Among the latter were Thomas Ritchie, editor of the Richmond *Enquirer;* Samuel Medary, editor of the *Ohio Statesman;* Amos Kendall, postmaster general under Van Buren; Gideon Welles, editor of the *Hartford Times;* and others.

Robert J. Walker was born to politics, educated for politics, and married into a political family. His father was a justice of the Pennsylvania supreme court, and Walker was trained to be a lawyer. His wife belonged to the Bache-Dallas political dynasty of Pennsylvania. An ardent Jacksonian even before he moved from Pennsylvania to Mississippi in 1826, by 1832 he was leader of the Jackson party in Mississippi. At the 1840 Democratic convention, Walker served on the committee that made the report on nominations. Re-elected to a second term in the Senate in 1842, he became a confidant of President Tyler.

In the summer of 1843, Medary visited Van Buren at Lindenwald and found him seemingly unaware of movements in the party to replace him as the nominee in 1844.[6] During his travels, Medary found the opposition to be more formidable than he had supposed. Kendall, for his part, carried on a large private correspondence in an often vain search of allies who could be counted on to help in the 1844 Van Buren campaign. Late in 1841, Van Buren received word from Joel Poinsett of South Carolina that John C. Calhoun would also campaign for the nomination. Among those working for Calhoun were such former Jackson and Van Buren loyalists as Senator Levi Woodbury of New Hampshire, David Henshaw of Boston, and Isaac Hill of New Hampshire.

Another threat to Van Buren was the manner in which President Tyler was dispensing patronage, strongly suggesting that Tyler was interested in succeeding himself as the regular Democratic candidate rather than as a Whig. Furthermore, the president was apparently moving into an anti-Van Buren alliance with Calhoun. As Blair's *Globe* carried on its anti-Tyler and anti-Calhoun tirades, the Calhoun newspaper, *The Spectator*, argued against Van Buren's "re-eligibility" on grounds that he had been soundly defeated in 1840 and his renomination would be an "imposition" upon the party faithful.

Duff Green, Tyler's emissary to Great Britain, wrote Calhoun that the Van Burenites would control the 1844 convention. Green hoped that Tyler might receive the nomination, but now, in November 1842, looked to the president's friends to hold only the balance of power.[7]

The Van Buren forces, in control of many state organizations, assumed that the nomination could be theirs if the national convention were held as early as possible and if they left delegation voting procedure (unit rule, per capita voting, etc.) to the judgment of each state delegation. The Calhoun people and others thought that they could further their causes by putting off the convention to the latest possible date and by voting under a per capita rule. The latter issue was fought over in several state conventions. Eventually, Van Buren agreed that a

later convention would be necessary in order to conciliate the Calhoun people. The apparently innocuous issues of the convention's date and the delegation voting method had become the subjects of critical factional tests and transactions.

A further test of Van Buren's influence came in the fight for the speakership and the printer's contract of the Twenty-eighth Congress in 1843. The printing contract went to Francis Preston Blair, Van Buren's man, by an 80 to 30 vote margin. The speakership went to the Van Buren candidate, 128 to 59. The pro-Van Buren surge was felt in Democratic state organizations throughout the country. In the Senate during January 1844, the Van Buren forces joined the Whigs in rejecting four of Tyler's nominations to federal offices.

In January 1844, Calhoun announced that he would not allow his name to go before the convention. Duff Green proposed a movement to call a separate convention that would leave only the Van Buren delegates at the official Baltimore convention. Lewis Cass of Michigan, whose support was necessary for Green's scheme, sought to dissuade Green, indicating that he did not "believe much" in third parties and that "experience" proved that such organizations "could not exist in our country."[8] By 1844, Lewis Cass, James Buchanan, and Robert Johnson had removed themselves from the field of candidates.

Meanwhile, President Tyler was eagerly pursuing negotiations to annex Texas. Although the admission of Texas as another slave state would be a threat to the North, most of the Democratic party press, Andrew Jackson, and Robert Walker were unqualifiedly in favor of immediate annexation. The leading political issue during the spring of 1844 was annexation, which focused around the annexation treaty signed by Calhoun as secretary of state on April 12, 1844.

Van Buren could not escape having to take a stand. Early in April, a letter from W.H. Hammet, Democratic congressman from Mississippi, invited Van Buren to speak out on the constitutionality and expediency of immediate annexation of Texas. On April 27, Senator Henry Clay declared himself opposed to immediate annexation and was roundly criticized by leaders in both parties. On the very same day, Van Buren's reply to Hammet was published in the *Globe*. Van Buren thought that the annexation of Texas was clearly constitutional, but denied its expediency. He saw war with Mexico as the probable outcome. He further considered annexation a source of sectional bitterness. The Hammet letter immediately raised serious doubts about Van Buren's availability, particularly as a unifier of the party. The Hammet letter also united the opposition to Van Buren's renomination.

Van Buren's letter was generally interpreted as putting him in the antiannexation camp. Among the annexationists were Calhoun's followers, rabidly opposed to Van Buren; Calhoun himself had entered Tyler's cabinet just prior to the Democratic national convention. A second group of annexationists was the Southern leadership led by Robert Walker. A third group consisted of middle-

states delegations led by Cave Johnson, manager of the unusual Polk-for-vice-president movement. Fourteen state party conventions, four congressional district conventions, and one party caucus in a state legislature nevertheless instructed their delegations to support Van Buren for a third presidential nomination. The votes committed in this fashion numbered 159, that is, 18 votes short of two-thirds, assuming that two-thirds would be needed to nominate.

At the convention, Senator Walker immediately moved readoption of the two-thirds rule for nomination. Debate raged for two days. There was talk of running three candidates, similar to the Whig strategy in 1836. Wrote James K. Polk from his residence in Tennessee, "Surely, there is patriotism enough among leaders yet to save the party. This can only be done by uniting on *one* candidate. . . . The idea which has been suggested of running three candidates . . . ought not to be entertained for a moment."[9]

The two-thirds rule was readopted by a 148 to 118 vote. The critical votes were Virginia's 17. George C. Dromgoole, head of the Virginia delegation, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and a Van Buren supporter of long standing, was a principal decision maker in the important vote. Virginia withdrew from the floor of the convention and cast its decisive ballot at the end of the roll call. The possibility of a renomination for the Democratic party's first titular leader ended there. Twenty-nine of the 159 voters who had been pledged to Van Buren failed to vote for him; 16 uninstructed delegates supported him, for a net loss of 13. Van Buren received 146 votes on the first ballot, 31 votes short of the necessary two-thirds.

The Walker-Dromgoole maneuver created a stalemate for seven nominating ballots. The supporters of Johnson, Cass, and Buchanan were unable to unite among themselves; nor was any one of them able to draw votes from the Van Buren side. Polk's name was added to the presidential candidate roster on the eighth ballot. Most of his forty-four votes came from the Van Buren wing of the Massachusetts delegation, a concession of defeat. The bandwagon moved quickly on the ninth ballot, and Polk was nominated amid an uproarious ovation, the first dark-horse nominee in the brief history of national conventions. The convention system thus demonstrated itself to be an institution capable of producing an unexpected solution to factional stalemates.

2

Having retired Van Buren, Senator Walker promptly moved to conciliate the supporters of the deposed leader, personally proposing Silas Wright, Van Buren's close associate in New York politics, for vice-president. Wright declined and second place went instead to Walker's brother-in-law, George M. Dallas of Pennsylvania.

Looking to the future, Cave Johnson reminded the national convention that

practical means for winning the election would have to be created. Benjamin Butler of New York, as chairman of the Committee on Resolutions, recommended appointment of a Committee on Political Tracts for the ensuing campaign. A five-member committee, little used in the campaign, was appointed.

Congressman Dromgoole moved and the convention approved formation of a central committee of fifteen members to undertake immediate organization of the party throughout the Union.[10] However, over one-third of the states were not represented on the fifteen-member committee. The appointment of members to the central committee, to reside in Washington, seems to have been left to a caucus of the Democratic members of Congress. As it later turned out, none of the factional leaders dared convene the caucus for fear of alienating all the others. When it was eventually organized, the 1844 central committee was the immediate predecesssor of the all-states membership of the first national committee in 1848.[11]

After returning to Washington, Senator Walker again assumed leadership as the unofficial national chairman of the party. Throughout June, July, and August, he labored prodigiously. He initiated the organization of the central committee, wrote the address to the people, served as the go-between in the negotiations to have President Tyler withdraw from the presidential race, and induced the Tyler and Calhoun newspapers to support the Polk-Dallas ticket. Walker was chosen chairman of the central committee, probably during June, expecting to serve in that capacity only temporarily:

> I was chosen chairman, and consented to remain here [in Washington] and discharge the duties of that office, until relieved by a substitute who was expected to take my place during the present month [August], and enable me before the close of August to return to Mississippi. In this expectation I have been disappointed.[12]

Walker successfully used the central committee to draw together the disparate elements of the Democratic campaign. He asked Polk for a letter "to use discreetly" to win the support of the conservative Democrats whose votes would influence election results in Maine, Connecticut, New York, and New Jersey.[13] President Tyler expressed the hope that his "friends"—some 150,000 of them—would be treated as equals (referring, of course, to the extensive federal patronage) in the event that Polk should be elected. In response, Walker, performing the patronage duties of future national chairmen, asked Jackson and Polk for letters "of a character to put Tyler's friends at perfect ease."[14]

Favorable actions fell into place in good order. Polk made appropriate pledges regarding Tyler's friends. Blair's *Globe* ended its verbal assaults on President Tyler. Tyler terminated his candidacy. The Calhoun press mounted the Polk-Dallas bandwagon. Walker's work bore rich fruit.

The address to the people was the final delicate task. A misstep on the

annexation issue could be fatal. To please both the North and the South, Walker prepared two versions of the same address. One version, entitled "The South in Danger," *seemed* to put the Democratic party on record favoring the extension of slavery into Texas. This version was widely distributed in the South. The second version, substantially the same as the first, but with a few key phrases altered, was distributed in the Northern constituencies. This was done early in October. Communication was too slow for comparisons to reach the attention of most voters until after the November elections. The pamphlets' effect was positive in both sections of the country. The postelection uproar over the pamphlet tactic was drowned out by the celebration over Polk's victory.[15]

3

The presidential prize was becoming well worth the effort. The federal job patronage during the 1840s and early 1850s had an estimated monetary value of $50 million.[16] Polk's postmaster general Cave Johnson oversaw the removals and resignations of 11,000 of the 14,000 postmasters; 11 out of every 14 postmasters as compared with the 1 out of every 8 in the simpler patronage days of Andrew Jackson.[17] The economic resources of the federal government were expanding in size and influence, particularly with respect to letting contracts for supplies for frontier policing and, later, for the Mexican War. The lands acquired as the result of that war and the discovery of gold in California heightened the eagerness of party leaders to win control of the presidency.

The Polk cabinet was largely composed of men experienced in party affairs: James Buchanan to head the State Department, Robert Walker in Treasury, William L. Marcy in War, George Bancroft in Navy, John J. Mason as attorney general; and Cave Johnson as postmaster general. Walker and Johnson were, of course, the national convention managers who produced this dark horse president. Mason's Virginia sent the delegation that had put an end to the Van Buren candidacy. Bancroft's wing of the Massachusetts delegation was responsible for starting the convention bandwagon to Polk. Marcy of New York and Buchanan of Pennsylvania represented the two most powerful states in the electoral college.

With such political talent in his cabinet, Polk naively declared his intention to serve a one-term presidency and, further, expected to be able to avoid destabilizing maneuvers pertaining to the succession. Regarding all this, Andrew Jackson suggested:

> No aspirant to the succession will be in [Polk's] Cabinet unless, over his own signature, he disavows all such intentions and this is made known to the people. He [Polk] will not permit himself, as Mr. Monroe did, to be surrounded with strife by having candidates for the Presidency in the Cabinet.[18]

In addition to the several members of the cabinet, particularly Secretary of State Buchanan, the field of presidential aspirants included Senator John C. Calhoun of South Carolina, Senator William Allen of Ohio, Senator Lewis Cass of Michigan, Senator Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri, and Governor Silas Wright of New York.[19] Polk categorically rejected suggestions that he himself stand for re-election in order to unite the party.[20]

The president eventually comprehended the lack of logic of the political vacuum created by his one-term pledge, but seemed unable or unwilling to do anything about this:

> I have a nominal majority of Democrats in both Houses of Congress, but am in truth a minority in each House. The disappointments about office among the members [referring to the distribution of patronage], and the premature contest which they are waging in favor of their favorites for the Presidency in 1848, are the leading causes of this lamentable state of things.[21]

Polk deplored the fact that "the Federalists (*sic*) are always united and vote with the minority of the Democratic party upon every administration measure."[22] Polk looked with particular disapproval upon Secretary of State Buchanan's excessive concern with the matter of the presidential nomination.

On December 23, 1847, Buchanan had an interview with the president on this subject. It was generally understood among the members of Congress, Buchanan reported, that the president favored Cass for the nomination. Polk denied this emphatically, declaring that the Democratic party would have to make its own choice without his interference. When the secretary of state departed, Polk made the following entry in his diary, "Mr. B. seems to have been so much absorbed with the idea of being President that I cannot rely, as formerly, upon his advice given in Cabinet upon public subjects."[23]

More than one member of the cabinet, however, was interested in the Buchanan candidacy. Postmaster General Cave Johnson was a Buchanan man almost from the moment the Polk administration came into office. After 1848, Johnson worked diligently to line up former Cass supporters for Buchanan in 1852.[24] If Polk hoped to keep politics out of a cabinet made up of master politicians, he was foredoomed to disappointment. If Polk had a distinct preference for his successor, he never stated it explicitly, even in his diary, although there are numerous indications that he probably preferred Cass.[25]

4

As the Democratic national convention of 1848 approached, editor Gideon Welles of Connecticut set down an estimate of the candidate situation in a memorandum to himself. Welles thought Cass of Michigan was in the lead, Levi

Benjamin F. Hallett's career reflected the party ferment and changes occurring in New England during the decades from 1820 to 1848. Upon graduation from Brown University in 1816, he embarked upon journalistic pursuits in Providence, Rhode Island. Returning to his native state of Massachusetts in 1827, he became an editor of the Boston *Advertiser.* However, his writings on behalf of the growing prohibition, abolition, and antimasonic movements were so extreme, he was compelled to resign four years later. At this juncture, he gave full time to the Anti-Mason party, editing several of its publications in Massachusetts and becoming acquainted with Thurlow Weed, then leader of the New York Anti-Masons. (By 1848, however, Weed was principal manager of the Whig presidential campaign.)

In 1831, the Massachusetts Anti-Masons were second only to the National Republicans in popular support. But when antimasonry waned following Jackson's re-election in 1832, Hallett was instrumental in leading his party into the Democratic-Republican organization, particularly after the Jacksonians stepped up their fight against the National Bank. Thereafter, Hallett became a radical Democrat, vociferous in his defense of the abolition cause. This radicalism mellowed, however, and by 1844 Hallett was one of the principal leaders of the Tyler-Calhoun faction in the Massachusetts Democratic party, bent upon conciliating the North-South split in the national party. In 1847, this faction defeated the Van Burenites and nominated Caleb Cushing for governor. This put Hallett into the chairmanship of the party's state central committee. In 1848, New England Democratic leaders, chief among them Hallett, supported the cause of Judge Levi Woodbury of New Hampshire as a regional "favorite son."

Woodbury of New Hampshire next, and Buchanan trailing. Welles did not mention Silas Wright; New York was divided to the point of sending two delegations—the antislavery Barnburners and the pro-South Hunkers—"[t]he decision in the New York case and that of the two-thirds rule will be likely to affect the result."[26] Then, alluding to the organization-conscious Polk leadership, Welles continued:

> Unfortunately, we have no great and master minds which draw to them general confidence, and give to things a right direction. Nor have we any absorbing questions generating a wholesome distinction or correct party principles. The administration has endeavored to acquire for itself a strong party character, but has failed to create a party attachment. It has trusted too much to organization, and not sufficiently mindful of principles.[27]

The national convention had special guidance from congressional sources. On January 24, 1848, rather than the national committee, a conference of Democratic senators and representatives, with Senator Sam Houston of Texas as chairman, issued the call setting the time and place of the national convention.[28] At the convention, Senator Jesse D. Bright of Indiana, the leading parliamentarian in the Senate and a trusted ally of President Polk, exercised floor leadership, particularly on matters of agenda, parliamentary procedure, and organization.[29] Assisting Bright was Benjamin F. Hallett, a former leader of the Anti-Masonic party, but now chairman of the Massachusetts Democratic state committee and spokesman for most of the New England delegations.

The convention again adopted the two-thirds rule, whose application seemed likely to stop the candidacy of Lewis Cass. The first nominating ballot gave Cass 125 votes, Woodbury 58, Buchanan 55, and Dallas 3. Hallett led the New England swing from Woodbury to Cass. Buchanan supporters, willing to wait for another opportunity, joined the Cass parade. The nomination went to Cass on the fourth ballot. The platform, in large part the work of Hallett, was conciliatory to the South.

Later in the proceedings, Senator Bright moved "that a committee be appointed for the purpose of calling the next Democratic National Convention; that said committee be composed of one member from each State, to be appointed by the delegations from each State; and that said committee be authorized to fix the time and place of holding said Convention."[30] This motion was tabled along with another motion specifically designating Pittsburgh and the second Monday of June 1852 as place and time of the next convention.

Benjamin Hallett then proposed "that a committee of fifteen, to be named by the President of this convention, be appointed to promote the Democratic cause, and to be designated as the Democratic Central Committee of the United States."[31] Hallett had in mind the reestablishment of the same kind of central committee that was headed by Robert J. Walker in 1844. After some consultation, and undoubtedly taking into account that in 1846 Congress had passed legislation requiring that all presidential electors be chosen on the same first Tuesday in November, Senator Bright offered the following amendment, "Ordered, that a committee of one from each State, to be named by the respective delegations, be appointed to promote the Democratic cause, with power to fill vacancies, and to be designated 'The Democratic National Committee.' "[32]

What Bright had originally proposed as a committee to issue the next convention call and Hallett had intended as a committee to direct the national campaign were now incorporated into a proposal for a permanent interim committee representative of all state parties with power to fill vacancies in its membership. The Bright amendment was approved and the first national committee established.

The state delegations named their respective representatives on the national committee, and the convention adjourned. Benjamin F. Hallett was chosen the

first Democratic national committee chairman. It is not clear how or when Hallett was chosen. The wording of his resolution for a central committee of fifteen to be appointed by the president of the national convention suggests that he may have been designated by Andrew Stevenson, permanent chairman of the convention, probably in consultation with Senator Bright and the Cass managers.

There are several apparent reasons for Hallett's selection. He led the decisive New England shift from Woodbury to Cass, thereby starting the Cass bandwagon. He was chairman of the platform committee whose Northern majority wrote a plank on the slavery-abolition issue that was conciliatory to the South. The party's national chairman, as had Robert Walker before him, was expected to produce campaign propaganda. Hallett's achievements with the platform made him the logical man for the propaganda job. Hallett also contributed to the regional balance in the party's national leadership; the nominees came from the Northwest and the Southwest, Hallett from New England, the national committee secretaries from the Middle Atlantic area and the South. Perhaps most influential were Hallett's long years of experience in party and campaign management.

Despite the national convention's success in creating the party's first permanent national body outside of Congress and, with it, the party's highest formal permanent office—the national chairmanship—victory eluded the party in the ensuing election. Chairman Hallett conducted most of his campaign activities from Boston. He made frequent public appearances at rallies. At his state's Democratic convention in the fall, he prepared the platform, which was later entitled "One Hundred Reasons for Voting for Cass," a major campaign document.[33]

The keynote of the Democratic campaign was "organization," and, in the opinion of Gideon Welles, the election was "more a conflict of organizations than of any exciting controverted question."[34] Organization, however, was not enough to surmount the crippling effects of a bolt by a faction that refused to recognize the legitimacy of a nomination made by the party's national convention. The New York Barnburners bolted to form the Free Soil party, with former President Van Buren heading the ticket. Van Buren's 300,000 votes were more than enough to deny the electoral votes of New York, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania to Cass. A similar fate awaited the Whigs in 1852, that is, electoral defeat was concurrent with formalization of the party's national committee structure. The Van Buren bolt and the Democratic defeat launched a new phase in the development of the national party system in which factional bolts assumed tactical importance.

3 Federalist, National Republican, and Whig Antecedents

The modern national Republican party was not established until 1856, at which time its organizers created the party's national committee and national chairmanship. However, there were partisan forebears dating from the founding of the Republic. Alexander Hamilton was the one-man national committee for the Federalists just as Thomas Jefferson was for the Democratic-Republicans. The Federalists were replaced for the most part by the National Republicans. Since neither the Federalists nor the National Republicans were interested in organizing the electorate on any enduring basis, their followers were readily brought into the Whig party of the 1830s to 1850s.

For a time, the Whigs verged on becoming a well-organized party, only to fall victim in the mid-1850s to the divisive slavery issue. Local factions in the Whig and Free Soil parties joined to form the present Republican party: in Ripon, Wisconsin, on February 28, 1854, or, as others claim, in Jackson, Michigan, on July 6, 1854. Born of defecting factions from other parties, the Republicans have since had their own lively factional history.

1

Organizing a national-level party structure was a major problem for these predecessors of the Republican party. Staunch promoters of a strong national government under the new constitution, often referred to as "the party of the Constitution," the Federalists nevertheless were conceptually antiparty and refused to engage seriously in the grass-roots work of party organization. Recalling with disdain the partisan strife of British politics, they viewed "factions," that is, parties, as machines of conflict, and conflict meant disunity at a time when national unity was needed. In commenting on the activities of the controversial patriotic societies during the years under the Articles of Confederation, General George Washington conceded that these groups might serve a useful purpose at

the local level, but were objectionable in national matters.[1] This became a typical Federalist view.

Nearly the entire membership of the First Congress was Federalist: all twenty-six members of the Senate and fifty-three of the sixty-five members of the House of Representatives. Although "above party" and often perturbed by the partisan tensions between Hamilton and Jefferson in his cabinet, President Washington nevertheless tended to favor Federalist policies. By the time the Third Congress met, most members were either Hamiltonians or, because of James Madison's leadership of the overt opposition, Madisonians, that is, Federalists or Democratic-Republicans. In his message to this Congress in November 1794, Washington made a point of condemning the activities of "certain self-created societies." The reference was to some twenty-four local Democratic-Republican societies. His message was followed by a Federalist attempt to pass an even more condemnatory congressional resolution, a move that made Washington appear to be more of a partisan than he wanted.

Hamilton was a Federalist who understood party politics. Events gave him a rare opportunity to demonstrate that partisanship could be compatible with patriotism. Jefferson was elected president in 1800 only because his arch-rival, Hamilton, trusted him with the future of the young republic. When a stalemate in the electoral college and the House of Representatives occurred between the two Democratic-Republican candidates, Jefferson and Aaron Burr, Hamilton, uneasy about Burr's reputation and ambitions, asked his Federalist colleagues in the House to break the stalemate in Jefferson's favor.

Hamilton also recognized that the Jeffersonian electoral success rested upon energetic grass-roots organization, that is, mobilization of voters by those very local societies that Washington had condemned. In 1802, Hamilton suggested a plan for a national Federalist association to be called "The Christian Constitutional Society." This society would be organized under a president and a twelve-member national council. There would be "sub-directing Councils" of thirteen members for each state and as many local branches as possible. Financed by a five dollar annual fee, this association would diffuse information about, and promote the election of, "fit" men through its use of newspapers, pamphlets, "a lively correspondence," and public meetings. The association would also pursue "charitable and useful" activities, particularly in the growing cities, through relief societies for immigrants and vocational schools for workers.[2] Hamilton's Federalist colleagues would have none of it.

2

The first congressional caucus to nominate a candidate for president in 1796 was a Democratic-Republican affair, imitated by congressional Federalists in later years. As the number of Federalists elected to Congress and other public offices grew fewer

and fewer, the Federalist congressional caucus became increasingly unrepresentative and unpopular, its nominations carrying little weight with the electorate. A better way had to be found to bring Federalists in and out of public office together for consultation. In 1808, a committee of correspondence appointed by the Federalist-controlled Massachusetts legislature proposed that a secret convention be held in New York with delegates from as many states as possible.[3]

Delegates from eight of the seventeen states met in New York during the third week of August 1808 and put together a Pinckney-King ticket. A second secret convention in 1812 was attended by delegates from eleven states, passed a resolution supporting George Clinton for president, and created a committee of correspondence apparently to send literature forth from Philadelphia. This was the last secret Federalist convention and the last of the party's activities in any national sense. This left only the Democratic-Republicans, who now called themselves simply Republicans. A one-party Republican era ensued until the arrival of "the age of Jackson." Technically still Democratic-Republicans, by 1840 the Jacksonians were calling themselves Democrats.

3

In the election of 1824, General Andrew Jackson, then serving as senator from Tennessee, received 352,062 votes from the eighteen states that chose their presidential electors by popular vote (elsewhere state legislatures chose presidential electors). This was a popular plurality that produced something less than the absolute majority required in the electoral college. The presidential election went into the House of Representatives where Speaker Henry Clay, also a candidate, eventually withdrew in favor of John Quincy Adams. Thereafter, "Jackson men" claimed to be the true successors of the Jeffersonian Republicans while the "Adams men" (in large part Federalists) called themselves National Republicans to reflect their centralizing policies.

The Jackson managers, soon joined by Senator Martin Van Buren of New York, arranged to have the Tennessee legislature nominate the general again in 1825. This time they organized voters until a victory was achieved in 1828. The Adams men, for their part, were handicapped by a leader, who, in the Federalist tradition of his father's day, derided all things connected with political parties. The National Republicans were never as well organized as the Jacksonians, except in some cities and states in New England. By 1828, a generation prior to the creation of the first permanent national party committee, each major party had a central corresponding committee in Washington.[4] In press and pamphlet, the central committees hurled charges and countercharges at each other's candidates. "Federalist" and "Jacksonian" were used as terms of denigration. The central committees also served as communications centers for consultations among party leaders in Congress.

Between 1827 and 1830, significant precedents for party organization at the national level were established by the new Anti-Mason party of New York. The leading promoter of these developments was the young editor of the *Anti-Masonic Enquirer*, Thurlow Weed. The Anti-Masons adopted the delegate convention as their principal mode of organization. The New York state Anti-Mason convention of February 1829 issued a call for a national convention to be held on September 11, 1830, in Philadelphia. Each state's delegation was entitled to a number of seats and votes equal in size to its combined representation in the two houses of Congress. This voting structure mirrored the apportionment of votes in the electoral college. Each state party could elect delegates in any manner it wished.

Dominated by Weed's New York delegation, the Philadelphia convention devoted itself to matters of permanent organization. The convention decided to meet again in Baltimore, on September 26, 1831, to nominate candidates for president and vice-president of the United States. Before disbanding, the convention also appointed a three-member national committee of correspondence to take care of interim details.

At the Baltimore convention, there were 116 Anti-Masons representing thirteen states. This was the nation's first national nominating convention. Leading their respective delegations and the convention as a whole were Weed, destined to be a future founder of the Whig and Republican parties, and Benjamin F. Hallett of Massachusetts, who in 1848 became the first national committee chairman of the Democratic party. The previously appointed three-member National Anti-Masonic Committee continued in office.[5]

4

When the House of Representatives pondered its presidential choice in 1824, Speaker Clay expressed his exasperation in private correspondence, "I am compelled to be an actor in the public concern here. And an actor in such a scene! An alternative made up of Andrew Jackson and John Quincy Adams. . . . My duty was that of passive submission [to these alternatives]."[6]

From 1825 to 1828, the pressure of the Jackson juggernaut was countered by an uneasy collaboration among the nation's four leading nationalists. John Quincy Adams and Henry Clay, although personally incompatible, nevertheless cooperated for several years in the promotion of the American System concept, that is, protective tariffs and internal transportation improvements that would help the development of U.S. industry. Daniel Webster, as the chief devotee of the centralizing theories of Alexander Hamilton, was helpful in Congress, carrying with him about twenty-five representatives and four senators who clung to the old Federalist label and policies. The vice-president, John C. Calhoun, although a Southern nationalist in many respects, during his

1824–1828 term, became increasingly outspoken in defense of states' rights.

The ambitions and ages of these four made unity among them difficult. Each was presidential material. Each was in the prime of his political life: Adams 57, Clay 47, Webster and Calhoun 42. President Adams' attitude toward political parties and toward those who opposed him was unquestionably the most serious obstacle to successful collaboration. Adams entertained the old Federalist distrust of party organization per se but, unlike his father, John Adams, would not concede the inevitability of parties in democratic communities. He abhorred the manner in which democracy deified competition.[7] In his inaugural address he warned against being "palsied by the will of our constituents." Adams' shortcomings as a party leader were succinctly summarized by Thurlow Weed:

> Mr. Adams, during his administration, failed to cherish, strengthen, or even recognize the party to which he owed his election; nor as far as I am informed, with the great power he possessed did he make a single influential friend.[8]

Adams' refusal to use patronage as the cement of party organization was a constant irritation to Clay and Webster, who favored appointments for partisan supporters.[9] Adams opposed every form of activity that involved party. He opposed nominating activities, the *sine qua non* of party. He railed against the sins of party in no uncertain terms: the impropriety of private interviews between members of Congress and the president with regard to nominations to appointive public office; the tendency to misinterpret all statements "infected with the venom of party"; the extreme difficulty, even for men in the highest offices, to act properly in delicate situations; and the malignant aspect that a want of candor and explicitness gives to incidents trivial or insignificant in themselves. He opposed the use of money in election campaigning on grounds that once the principle was established, there could logically be no limit on the amount of expenditure.[10]

Adams minced no words about his attitude toward those who opposed him. They were endowed, he believed, with every trait of evil. He spoke of John Randolph of Virginia, a Jeffersonian, Samuel D. Ingham, a staunch Calhoun supporter, and others in Congress as "skunks of party slander."[11] It was therefore particularly ironic that the most vehement Jacksonian charge against Adams was that he had entered a partisan and corrupt bargain with Clay in order to win the presidency. Corrupt bargain or not, the fact was that Clay did become Adams' secretary of state. Adams, in the tradition of the day, must have understood that this cabinet post was widely considered a stepping stone to the presidency.

Clay and, particularly, Webster were aware of the need for party organization, friendly newspapers, campaign funds, and patronage. Clay kept his eye on local party developments in the Southwest and the West. Webster looked to party matters in New England and the mid-Atlantic states. Clay suggested free distribution of certain

newspapers during election campaigns. Webster acted as an unofficial party treasurer for the Adams men, since most of the funds for the National Republican cause came from New England. When the successes of the Jackson men in the New York elections of 1827 foreshadowed Adams' defeat for re-election in 1828, the best Clay and Webster could do was to look forward to building a new party from whatever would remain of the National Republican organization.

After Jackson's victory in 1828, Adams returned to Washington as a congressman from Massachusetts, never again to cope with party matters, much to his satisfaction. Webster, having been elected to the Senate in 1827, prepared to assume a greater role as a member of the anti-Jackson forces. The chief mantle of opposition leadership, however, fell to Clay, who returned to Congress as a senator in 1831. Webster was pleased to follow Clay's lead, believing that only Clay could carry the party of protection and internal improvements to victory.[12] By 1829, the designation "National Republican" was firmly fixed in the press when referring to the Adams-Clay-Webster school of nationalists.[13]

Clay had favored Adams over Jackson in 1824 because he considered Jackson's popularity a threat to his own aspirations. Despite a resolution from the Kentucky legislature urging him to support Jackson, Clay thought his own chances for the presidency would be enhanced if he took the traditional route through the office of secretary of state. In supporting Adams, however, Clay forfeited much of his popular support in the frontier states. Four years later, Jackson swept to victory in Kentucky, Ohio, and Missouri, all formerly Clay states. Upon his departure from the cabinet in 1829, Clay was generally recognized as the leader of the anti-Jackson forces, yet he won his bid for re-election to the Senate in 1831 by only the slimmest majority in the Kentucky legislature.

Clay's performance as an electoral strategist never equalled his remarkable talents as a legislative strategist—"Henry Clay understood politicians perfectly, simple voters not so well."[14] Clay never learned the secret of successfully mobilizing popular votes. His nicknames reflect this distinction: the "Great Commoner" for his defense of the common people during the Alien and Sedition debates of 1798–1799, the "Chief" for his leadership of the War Hawks in Congress, the "Great Pacificator" for engineering the Compromise of 1820.[15] Clay was most at home among his legislative colleagues and at his best defending the constitutional prerogatives and institutional integrity of Congress. He never gathered around himself a group of advisers capable of managing his electoral affairs. This in part may also explain why the National Republicans never built an enduring national organization.[16]

5

After taking his seat in the Senate in 1831, Clay attempted to build common ground for the multifaction anti-Jacksonians. His best prospects were within the

Senate, where the Democratic majority of only four votes in 1831 was reduced to a 20–20 tie in 1833. The House, on the other hand, maintained overwhelming Democratic majorities until 1837. The state electorates were bound to be the most difficult of all to mobilize. States with about 40 percent of the electoral college votes were firmly under Jacksonian control; states with only 13 percent of the votes were held by steadfast National Republican organizations. Another 27 percent of the electoral votes were reasonably within National Republican reach: Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Ohio, and New York. If carried, these states could bring the two major parties abreast of each other. South Carolina, despite growing hostility to Jackson, remained committed to Calhoun.

The rupture that had been developing between President Jackson and Vice-President Calhoun burst apart in 1831, when the cabinet was reshuffled to eliminate the pro-Calhoun members. Calhoun had become increasingly dedicated not only to blocking Secretary of State Van Buren's rise to the presidency, but also to promoting the cause of states' rights. In seeking an entente with Calhoun, Clay modified his own high tariff position almost to the point of alienating Webster and the New England manufacturers. At the same time, Clay endeavored to strengthen his hand in the West by proposing that revenue from the sale of public lands be used for internal improvements. When Jackson vetoed the Maysville Road Bill, Clay used the veto as a symbol of "Executive Usurpation," a political evil against which all good anti-Jacksonians could march. The battle cry was reinforced by the fact that Jackson had vetoed more bills than all his predecessors combined.

Another campaign issue was the recharter of the National Bank. Most anti-Jacksonians—Clay, Webster, even Calhoun—were supporters of the bank. Jackson's original position was one of mild opposition. He expected that the bank's rechartering would be handled by Congress quietly and in due course. Rechartering would ordinarily have come up after the 1832 election. Instead, Clay urged Nicholas Biddle, the bank's president, to apply for recharter early enough to throw the issue into the presidential campaign. Webster endorsed this tactic. Significantly, the bank, with its large network of officers and debtors, was in contact with a considerable portion of the population in every state.[17] In the absence of extensive National Republican organization, the bank could indirectly serve as the party's grass-roots army. After careful consideration, Biddle decided to hurl down the gauntlet by asking Congress for an early renewal.

Another organizational question concerned finding the most effective way to place Clay's name in nomination. The *National Intelligencer* at Washington, whose large circulation made it an important link among the anti-Jacksonian elements, in 1830 proposed Clay for the presidency. The National Republicans also revived the congressional caucus, which met weekly during the winter of 1830 and 1831 to discuss, among other things, overall opposition strategy. One member was appointed from each state to confer with political associates back

home. These state representatives reconvened in January 1832 to set the "opposition's course of policy." Policy differences among its members were numerous, the stigma of "King Caucus" was still fresh in the public mind, and, in the end, the caucus fell apart as a mechanism of consultation.[18]

A solution to the question of nominating method was eventually suggested by the procedures of the Anti-Masonic party. The Anti-Masons not only opposed Jackson, a Mason, but also supported the Adams-Clay American System. The leading Anti-Masonic editor and organizer, Thurlow Weed, had virtually been President Adams' political manager for western New York in the 1828 presidential campaign. But there were hurdles to overcome.

In the months between the Anti-Masonic organizing convention in Philadelphia in 1830 and its 1831 nominating convention in Baltimore, the Anti-Masonic leadership sought a nationally acceptable presidential candidate. They came up with three names: Henry Clay; Supreme Court Justice John McLean of Ohio, former postmaster general under Monroe and Adams; and former Attorney General William Wirt of Virginia. Clay was more interested in the Anti-Masonic endorsement than in nomination; the Anti-Masons were committed to make a nomination, not an endorsement. McLean would accept the nomination only if assured that all anti-Jacksonians would unite behind him; such assurances could hardly be forthcoming. Wirt, who demanded no conditions, became the Anti-Masonic nominee.

During the winter and spring of 1830 and 1831, state and local National Republicans also were turning to the delegate convention as their nominating procedure. While working out plans for a state organization, a National Republican committee of seventy in New York City recommended on February 9, 1831, that a state convention be held at Albany in June for the purpose of endorsing Clay, to be followed by a "National Convention" to be held at Philadelphia.[19]

The National Republicans instead met in Baltimore on December 12, 1831. Over 150 delegates attended, representing seventeen states. There was no doubt who would be the nominee. Unlike later national conventions, voting was by individual delegate rather than state delegation. As the vote for Clay neared a majority, it was moved and voted to complete the nominating procedure by acclamation. Then, George William Fairfax of Virginia made the only reference to national party organization, moving "that a central state corresponding committee be provisionally appointed in each where none are now appointed, and that it be recommended to the several states, to organize subordinate corresponding committees in each county and town."[20]

The National Republican campaign began promptly. Clay and Biddle mobilized the full resources of the National Bank throughout the country, spending the unprecedented sum of $80,000 for propaganda of all kinds. The bill to recharter the bank was sent to Jackson early in July. If Clay expected simply another veto against which he could cry "Executive Usurpation," he seriously

misjudged Jackson. The president's shattering veto message placed the supporters of the bank squarely on the side of "the rich and powerful" against the interests of "the humble members of society." The bitter debate continued long beyond the 1832 election.

Clay had again erred in his estimate of the electorate. Compared to 1828, the Jacksonians increased the margin of their pluralities in nearly every state, including Clay strongholds in New England. In Pennsylvania, the Anti-Masons displaced the National Republicans as the principal minority party. In Vermont, the Anti-Masons temporarily took the state entirely out of National Republican hands. Only in Clay's own Kentucky did the voters buck the national tide by turning in a National Republican majority.

Thus Henry Clay earned the dubious distinction (shared with the Anti-Masons' William Wirt) of becoming the first presidential nominee of a national party convention to suffer defeat in the general election. Clay would have been the first out-party titular leader if his party had survived to the next election.

6

Jackson's second term was a period of rapidly shifting leadership alliances and highly inflammatory policy debates. When the South Carolina legislature called a special state convention to issue an Ordinance of Nullification, the very concept of a federal union was put to test. The ordinance declared the federal tariffs of 1828 and 1832 null and void insofar as enforcement within South Carolina was concerned. On the same day, President Jackson issued a proclamation declaring the national government sovereign and indivisible. No state could refuse to obey the law, and no state could leave the Union. To support the presidential proclamation, the administration submitted a Force Bill to Congress authorizing military measures if necessary to preserve federal interests in South Carolina, in this case, the collection of tariffs. Over the next three decades this issue destroyed the Whigs, gave rise to the Republican party, divided the Democratic party, and sent the nation into civil war.

The Jacksonians favored tariffs for revenue only, but were not willing to abandon the principle that tariffs could also protect domestic products. Calhoun, now senator from South Carolina, wanted to abandon the protection principle completely. Webster sided with Jackson in seeking to preserve the superiority of the central government. Clay, so recently defeated for the presidency, assumed the role of mediator in an effort to regain his diminished prestige. The compromise he negotiated provided for gradual reduction of all duties to the revenue level, abandonment of the protection principle, repeal of South Carolina's Ordinance of Nullification, and passage of Jackson's Force Bill.

Hardly had the dust settled when President Andrew Jackson set off another storm by removing public funds from the National Bank during September

Thurlow Weed was born on November 15, 1797, the son of a "migratory person" in a Catskill Mountain community just west of the Hudson River in New York. At nine he was shifting for himself as a cabin boy on a river sloop. His adolescent years were spent alternately on his father's backwoods farm, as an army private during the War of 1812, and as an employee in printing shops. In his early twenties, Weed moved west to Chenango County to establish a weekly journal, subsequently founding the Onondaga County *Republican* and the Rochester *Telegraph*. In 1828, he founded the *Anti-Masonic Enquirer*, which supported the Adams administration nationally and the Anti-Masonic cause locally.

Elected to the state assembly in 1829, Weed left the *Enquirer* to set up the *Albany Evening Journal*, backed by leading Anti-Masons. This paper was to become one of the most powerful political organs in the country. The Anti-Mason defeats in the New York elections of 1832 turned Weed toward new party affiliations. As a first step, Weed and his associates nominated a list of presidential electors in 1832 evenly divided between National Republicans and Anti-Masons, intending to swing to either Clay or Wirt depending on which seemed best able to beat Jackson. In the following years, Weed lost hope for the Anti-Masons and the National Republicans and devoted himself to organizing the Whig party.

1833. When the public funds were withdrawn, Nicholas Biddle, president of the bank, redoubled his efforts to forge a solid political alliance among Clay, Calhoun, and Webster. He succeeded in forestalling a Webster-Jackson rapprochement that seemed in the making during the nullification crisis. Biddle did succeed in reuniting the old-line Federalists, the National Republicans, and the Calhoun states' righters in their opposition to "King Andrew." But the insurmountable obstacle to complete unity continued to be the presidential aspirations of Clay, Calhoun, and Webster.

Meanwhile, Jackson's Kitchen Cabinet was determined to build a cohesive party in Congress and a well-organized party-in-the-electorate. These Jacksonian managers took vigorous steps in friendly state party organizations and at the national conventions to bring the party-in-the-electorate into harmony with the party's congressional organization. In contrast, the anti-Jackson forces, which would eventually be united under the Whig label, were not as happily focused and united in pursuing their organizational requirements.

For the two decades from the mid-1830s to the mid-1850s, the direction of the Whig forces swung back and forth between Henry Clay operating from Congress

and Thurlow Weed working among the electorate. Clay was convinced that presidents rose and fell as a consequence of events in Congress. Weed was equally convinced that winning the presidency first required an understanding of the new presidential electorate. Weed was a master builder of electoral organizations designed to facilitate control of the officeholders elected by the party.[21]

While the anti-Jacksonians in Congress maneuvered and intrigued, new developments were taking place in the electoral opposition to the president. During the midterm congressional and local elections of 1834, many anti-Jackson candidates referred to themselves as Whigs, thereby emphasizing an analogy between their own battle against "King Andrew" and that of the British Whigs against King George III and King William IV.

7

As Jackson withdrew federal deposits from the National Bank, Nicholas Biddle countered by withholding or calling loans that had been made by the bank, hoping thereby to precipitate an economic crisis. In New York, Democratic Governor William L. Marcy established a system of state credit for those put under duress by Biddle's move. At a Fourth Ward political meeting in Albany, attended by Anti-Masons and National Republicans, Thurlow Weed denounced "Marcy's Mortgage" and Jackson's fiscal policies. This issue and this meeting were among many called to inaugurate the Whig party of New York. While Weed favored the name "Republican" for the new party, his preference would have to wait the next two decades for fulfillment.[22]

Weed exercised his influence as a Whig leader through the New York state central committee and the *Albany Evening Journal*. His power rested on several pillars: the collection and distribution of party funds through his connections with New York business people; the planning of party strategies; the activities of the state legislature and through the promotion of the destinies of leading Whig politicians, among them, William H. Seward and Horace Greeley.

Nationally, Weed opposed Clay's concept of party and Clay's type of presidential candidacy based in the Congress. Weed favored instead the military hero—William Henry Harrison, Zachary Taylor, John C. Fremont, and Ulysses S. Grant—as electorally more attractive in the Jackson tradition. Weed also took the long view regarding his party-building work, for example, his words in 1834 regarding Whig prospects in its first campaign were, "Our party as at present organized, is doomed to fight merely to be beaten."[23] He later made the same appraisal when he backed General Fremont as the first presidential nominee of the new Republican party in 1856. Fremont, Weed thought, would lose, but would leave a relatively well-established party for a Seward candidacy, Weed's preference for 1860.

The New York City election of April 1834 was the first major local test for the new party. It ended in a drawn battle. The Democrats elected the mayor; the

Whigs carried both branches of the city council and control of most of the city patronage.[24]

However energetic the Whigs may have been in their local and state organizations, they admittedly had "no common understanding in relation to the affairs of the general [national] government."[25] The absence of a nationwide organization moved William Henry Harrison to complain of the lack of a "committee of vigilance" that might bring unity out of a house divided against itself.[26]

Unable to bring the anti-Jacksonians together behind a single national ticket, Biddle and the *Intelligencer* advocated the strategy of running several regional leaders—Daniel Webster in New England, Hugh L. White in the South, William Henry Harrison in the West—popular enough to prevent a Democratic majority in the electoral college, placing the final choice again in the House of Representatives. Clay pondered the question of his own candidacy for some time before concluding that the popular tide was not with him. He then fell in with the Biddle strategy.[27] With his career steeped in the doctrine of legislative opposition and influenced by the caucus maneuvers of 1824, Clay probably also felt that a stalemated House of Representatives might yet turn to him, its former Speaker, as its dark-horse choice.

A Whig national nominating convention was not held in 1836. None of the Whig leaders were confident that a national convention would produce an acceptable compromise. No national convention had yet been put to the test of doing so; the first occurred at the Democratic convention of 1844. Not all the Whig leaders, however, failed to appreciate the popularity of the national convention as a nominating instrument. Hoping to pull support from the ranks of the frontier Jacksonians, a self-styled "Democratic-Republican committee" called a "national convention" at Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, for December 1835 to provide an aura of special legitimacy to the nomination of General Harrison.[28]

The Whig strategy was to no avail. The Jacksonians swept Van Buren into office. Among the Whig candidates, General Harrison made by far the best showing. Weed, whose New York organization gave Harrison strong support, sponsored a rally in New York City two months after the 1836 election to put Harrison's name in the running for 1840. Nicholas Biddle also appreciated the availability of the hero of Tippecanoe and advised that the general remain silent on all matters of political creed and public policy lest his chances be jeopardized. Henry Clay, encouraged by the economic depression that befell the Van Buren administration in 1837 and by Whig congressional victories in the midterm elections, activated his own alliances and candidacy.

8

In New York, Thurlow Weed strengthened his forces by electing one protégé, William H. Seward, to the governorship and putting another, Horace Greeley, in

charge of a political journal, *The Jeffersonian*. Weed respectfully urged Clay to withdraw from the national race in favor of a national ticket that could have greater popular appeal. Clay, of course, did not agree. Clay supporters, contrary to their legislative predilections, began to press for a Whig national convention. Weed agreed, worked out a convention strategy, and enlisted the help of the Webster managers to carry it out.[29]

A Whig congressional caucus called for the national nominating convention on December 4, 1839. There, Harrison and Webster associates led the floor fight on behalf of the keystone of the Weed strategy, namely, a unit rule whereby a majority within a delegation could commit the votes of the entire delegation. As a result, the first ballot put Clay short of a majority: Henry Clay 103, William Henry Harrison 91, and Winfield Scott 57. Weed, controlling most of the Scott delegates, shifted them to Harrison. The Clay supporters were furious and refused to name one of their own leaders for second place on the ticket. Consequently, as bait to dissident Democrats, John Tyler, a Virginia Democrat, was nominated for vice-president.

Popular unrest in 1840 produced a Whig victory. Harrison's name was unencumbered by association with former leaders and former issues. The Whig "hard cider and log cabin" campaign, with its campaign songs, mass rallies, parades, and demagoguery, was unprecedented in presidential politics. Webster, Clay, and Tyler stumped the country in a great show of party unity. The agency that probably gave the greatest direction to the national campaign was the Whig's *Log Cabin*, edited by Horace Greeley. According to Greeley, the paper's inspiration and sponsorship came from "the councils of our friends at Albany," that is, Weed.[30] "Old Tippecanoe" was elected, and Tyler, too.

Weed's triumph, that is, the nomination and election of Harrison in 1840, had its darker side. Profound factional differences were appearing in the New York Whig party, focused around two men whom Weed had started on their careers: William H. Seward and Millard Fillmore. Within a dozen years the Seward-Fillmore rivalry would destroy the Whig party nationally. More immediately, an exasperating misfortune for Weed was the death of President Harrison five months after his election. This put Tyler, a former Democrat, into the White House and lost for the Whigs their first major opportunity to use the presidency to consolidate a national party. Tyler's efforts to create a nonpartisan administration also gave Henry Clay an unexpected opportunity to reassert his leadership of the Whig party.

During his first days in office, Harrison appointed a cabinet in consultation with Clay and Webster. Clay had apparently turned down the offer of a post in order to remain leader of the party in Congress; the Whigs had just won their first majorities in both houses (the Twenty-seventh Congress). Instead, a staunch Clay supporter was appointed attorney general. The Webster faction was represented in the Harrison cabinet by Webster himself as secretary of state.[31] Clay

and Webster were influential in the composition of Harrison's inaugural address, which condemned the "excessive" use of the executive veto. This was in keeping with the Whig theory of legislative supremacy.[32]

From the moment of Harrison's death, Tyler encountered constitutional and other difficulties. As the first vice-president to succeed upon the death of a president, was Tyler an acting president or a president in his own right? Tyler took the oath of office as president, but a constitutional debate ensued that clouded the title during his entire administration. By asserting in his inaugural address the independence of the executive branch, Tyler stirred Whig doubts about his ideological purity. After inheriting Harrison's cabinet, Tyler kept it intact for six months, but turned for political advice to his own kitchen cabinet, a Jacksonian practice that further disturbed Whig leaders.

9

Clay at once became active in mobilizing his congressional forces and repairing his road to the White House. In the special session of Congress in 1841, Clay's supporters were placed in key positions on the standing committees. The party caucus was given an active role in the promotion of the Whig legislative program, particularly Clay's cherished American System of high protective tariff, internal improvements, and rechartering of a national bank. Clay outlined this legislative program in a resolution presented to the Senate on June 7, 1841.

Congress soon sent Tyler a bill reestablishing a national bank. The president vetoed it; his states' rights philosophy could permit no concession to such an instrument of nationalism. This was the first open battle between Tyler and the Clay Whigs. Clay suggested that since Congress as the immediate representatives of the people had passed the legislation, Tyler should have been guided by this legislative judgment. Otherwise, Clay declared, the president ought to have resigned his office upon finding himself unable conscientiously to receive the instructions of Congress.[33] This was an extreme statement of legislative ascendancy over the executive. Not since the elder Adams had entertained the thought during his altercation with an unfriendly faction of the Federalist party had the idea of resignation from the presidency been so seriously formulated. Whig constitutional theory and Clay's drive for undisputed party leadership were harmonizing.

Tyler vetoed a second bank bill on September 9, 1841. His cabinet solidly opposed his action. On September 11, all members of the cabinet, except Webster, resigned. Once again Clay seemed within striking distance of the presidency. Whig theory required that resignation of a cabinet should compel the resignation of the "prime minister," that is, the president, as well. If Tyler resigned, the president pro tempore of the Senate, the elderly and ill Samuel L. Southard, a loyal Whig, would succeed to the presidency, perhaps followed by

the election of Clay to that office. This parliamentary strategy was intended for a presidential system and would again be attempted during the administrations of Abraham Lincoln and Andrew Johnson. President Tyler, however, held a different concept of the separation of powers. On September 13, he submitted the names of a new cabinet, with the exception of Webster, for Senate confirmation.

Clay convened a Whig congressional caucus that same day. The caucus issued a manifesto regretting that the president "by withdrawal of confidence from his real friends in Congress and from the members of his Cabinet . . . has voluntarily separated himself from those by whose exertions and suffrages he was elevated to that office." [34] In short, Clay and the caucus read President Tyler out of the Whig party.

Caleb Cushing of Massachusetts issued his own manifesto urging the Whigs of the country to ignore the "caucus dictatorship." Tyler's position was probably best stated by his new secretary of the navy and long-time friend, Abel Upshur:

> [Tyler] is now determined to take a middle course, avoiding ultraism on both sides, and aiming at the approbation of the temperate and sober minded of both parties. . . . I verily believe that he is determined on this course. He speaks of his re-election without any sort of reserve, as a thing that may or may not be, and as a thing which he may or may not seek.[35]

With Clay as leader of the organized opposition to Tyler's administration, it seemed inevitable that Tyler should move slowly back to the Democratic party. His various cabinet reshufflings between 1842 and 1844 were evidence of such a course. In 1844, Tyler went so far as to appoint Calhoun as his secretary of state. Finally, despite relinquishing all hope of his own re-election, Tyler maintained his candidacy with two objectives in mind: to prevent the nomination of Van Buren by the Democrats and to prevent Clay's victory in the election. Hence, a "Tyler convention" met in Baltimore on May 27, 1844, the same day as the regular Democratic convention, and gave its nomination to the president. The Democrats denied their nomination to Van Buren and gave it to James K. Polk, a dark horse, instead.

Meanwhile, the "Old Chief" was in the Whig saddle, Clay's chances for renomination in 1844 only modestly challenged by such perennials as Winfield Scott, John McLean, Daniel Webster, and the faction-ridden Weed-Seward forces. The Whig congressional caucus set the nominating convention date for May 3, 1844. At the Whig convention, Thurlow Weed was conspicuous for his absence. Clay received the nomination by acclamation.[36] After much discussion about the method of choosing a vice-presidential candidate, Theodore Frelinghuysen was nominated. Disappointed Fillmore managers blamed the absent Weed for preventing their man from getting second place; the New York factional struggle boiled on.

With the Democrats split over the question of annexing Texas and with Tyler running on his own ticket, Whig leaders were astonished to see a united Democratic party come out of that party's national convention. They were just as stunned three months later when, after receiving assurances from Polk's managers that Tyler's followers would be welcomed back into the Democratic party to share the patronage, Tyler withdrew from the presidential race. Clay lost by only 38,000 votes in the more than 2.6 million cast. Tyler, having failed to organize an effective party behind his own titular leadership, did achieve his other main objectives, namely, the retirements of Martin Van Buren and Henry Clay.

4 The Republicans: Old Factions Create a New Party

Between the territorial accessions of the Mexican War and the state secessions leading to the Civil War, the disruption of party politics grew in intensity and consequence. Van Buren's Free Soil bolt from the Democratic party in 1848 added to the Whig following. Between 1853 and 1856, Whig factions bolted to join the new coalition that became the modern Republican party. The only political certainty seemed to be the difference in the ways Henry Clay and Thurlow Weed approached the nation's electorate.

1

In December 1845, Congress voted to bring Texas into the Union. Most Whigs in Congress opposed annexation, but enough Southern Whigs broke party lines to carry the measure. Sectionalism was taking a firm hold as the basis of Whig factionalism. This tendency was reinforced by the declaration of war on Mexico in May 1846. Factions in both major parties were deeply divided over the political implications of acquiring new territories. The Wilmot Proviso passed by the House of Representatives—but not by the Senate—in 1847 required that slavery should be excluded from new territories. Southern Whigs joined Southern Democrats in opposing the Wilmot Proviso; Northern Whigs supported the measure.

The war with Mexico produced its military heroes and at least three Whig presidential candidates. General Zachary Taylor seized the disputed lands that prompted the U.S. declaration of war; his victories at Buena Vista put him at the forefront of potential Whig candidates for 1848. General Winfield Scott, a hero since the War of 1812 and a perennial candidate, received a boost from his military achievements at Vera Cruz. Captain John C. Fremont, "Pathfinder of the West," declared California a free republic and cemented a reputation that in 1856 won him the first presidential nomination of the Republican party.

Congressional Whigs generally considered Clay out of the running; the Old

Chief was approaching seventy years old and carried the scars of too many defeats. Age also disqualified Webster. The most prominent younger Whigs included Senators John J. Crittenden of Kentucky, Clay's ally and heir apparent, and John M. Clayton of Delaware, whose oratorial gifts gave him national prominence. Crittenden and Clayton were possible compromise candidates in the event of a North-South stalemate.

As the Mexican War progressed, Taylor's candidacy took on momentum. Crittenden became one of his key proponents. Thurlow Weed, troubled locally by rivalry between the Seward and Fillmore factions, also believed Taylor would be another vote-getting military hero. As early as 1846, Weed advised the general to refrain from committing himself on public issues. Members of Congress formed a Taylor club and called themselves the Young Indians. As a result of Taylor's southern origin, even Southern Whigs began to unite behind him.

Although Weed's *Albany Evening Journal* continued to speak of Taylor as a sure winner for the presidency, Weed himself had reservations that reflected the divided state of Whig opinion in the North. Most New York Whigs, particularly Millard Fillmore, favored Clay. Weed considered Clay a retired hero and Taylor a hero likely to be elected. Yet, Weed distrusted Taylor's express opposition to national conventions as presidential nominating institutions. Recalling President Tyler's unfortunate efforts at nonpartisanship, Weed also worried about the general's ambiguous political affiliation, observing that "Taylor cannot get a Whig nomination unless [he] promises to be a Whig President."[1] Weed often spoke of John Clayton as the best compromise candidate, although he also thought that the convention could well give the nomination to Winfield Scott. Probably the best explanation of Weed's ambivalent views was his uncertainty about the prospects for New York's William H. Seward in a deadlocked convention. Would it be possible to have Seward named as a compromise candidate or to have him win second place on the ticket? How could the 1848 national convention best be exploited in a buildup for a future Seward candidacy?

On April 10, 1848, Clay adopted an unprecedented strategem. Contrary to the customs of the day, he declared himself a candidate for the presidency. This announcement was intended to block Crittenden's efforts on Taylor's behalf. The announcement probably alienated more supporters than it won. About two weeks later, Taylor confirmed his Whig affiliation in a widely publicized letter to his brother-in-law. Contrary to their position in 1844, the Clay supporters now favored holding a national convention. Taylor made it clear to his supporters that he would not withdraw his candidacy even if he failed to secure the Whig convention's nomination.[2] Some pro-Taylor extremists threatened to boycott the convention. In the absence of a national committee, the call for the convention again came from the Whig congressional caucus.

The convention outcome was unpredictable. Clay was the choice among party regulars, but Taylor was seen as a possible winner. Clay's support was centered

in the North and West, Taylor's in the South. Despite the inroads of Taylor's Young Indians, Clay still held the loyalty of most of his party in Congress. A poll of congressional Whigs in December 1847 showed 90 members for Henry Clay, 60 for Zachary Taylor, and 19 for Winfield Scott.[3]

The Clay men controlled the organization of the convention, but the authority of the convention as a nominating institution remained in doubt. A proposal to require all candidates to pledge their support to the nominee of the convention was rejected. The Taylor men indicated that they were authorized to withdraw his name from the Whig campaign if he were not nominated.[4] Weed tried to negotiate with the Taylor managers, but was burdened by failing to be the master in his own house, that is, New York. The Fillmore men in the New York delegation were for Clay, and one of their number was temporary chairman of the convention. In view of the near-equal strength of the Clay and Taylor movements, Weed continued to entertain hopes for Seward.[5]

The first ballot gave Taylor 111 votes, Clay 97, Scott 43, Webster 22, Clayton 4, and McLean 2. On the fourth ballot, with 140 votes needed to nominate, Taylor had 171 and the nomination. New York was slow to join the Taylor bandwagon, and this proved costly to Weed in the vice-presidential contest. Fourteen names were put in nomination for second place, chief among them Abbott Lawrence of Massachusetts, Thomas Ewing of Ohio, and Millard Fillmore and William Seward of New York. In such a numerous field, Seward's name was withdrawn. On the second ballot, the nomination went to Fillmore. The decision further exacerbated the factionalism among New York Whigs.[6]

The convention provided no executive organization to run the national campaign. This function was for the most part left to the Whig congressional executive committee headed by Truman Smith of Connecticut. Smith had served on this committee in the "log cabin" campaign of 1840. He brought to the Taylor canvass much of the same approach. It was a successful campaign consisting of mass rallies, parades, and song. Former President Van Buren's bolt from the Democratic to the Free Soil party was worth 54 electoral votes for Taylor.

2

Weed and Seward acted swiftly to assure themselves a solid role in the new Taylor administration. They succeeded, although they trod heavily on Vice-President Fillmore's toes in the process. Seward and Weed were particularly successful in obtaining presidential patronage.[7] As a consequence, most Southern Whigs came to believe that Seward dominated the Taylor administration.[8]

Taylor faced a hostile majority in both houses of Congress. Yet, although the Democrats were in the majority, the contest for the speakership of the House of Representatives in December 1849 required sixty-three ballots. Factional chaos reigned within both major parties, aggravated by the rise of the Free Soilers. The

North-South struggle in each party focused particularly on the disposition of the slave issue in new territories acquired in the Mexican War: California, New Mexico, and Utah.

In his message to Congress, Taylor enunciated "the President's Plan," recommending the admission of California and New Mexico under conditions that would allow each to determine whether or not to allow slavery. Since the legislatures of the two territories were predominantly antislavery, the President's Plan would have tipped the balance of power in Congress in favor of the free states. The President's Plan had the support of Seward and most Northern Whigs. It provoked hot words from Southern Democrats and Whigs. Both sides of the issue awaited a statement from Henry Clay.

Clay did not disappoint them. He offered a grand compromise. In response to Northern demands, he proposed keeping California free of slavery and abolishing the slave trade in the District of Columbia. To the South he promised territorial governments in New Mexico and Utah without the requirements of a Wilmot Proviso, thereby leaving the slavery question to the future. He also promised tighter federal enforcement of the fugitive slave laws and a generous cash settlement in the Texas-New Mexico boundary dispute. The Whigs responded divisively. Fillmore, Webster, and the Southern Whigs, joined by Democratic Senator Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois, supported the Clay compromise. Congress began to lean toward Clay's solution. Then, on July 9, 1850, in the midst of the great debate, President Taylor died. Fillmore succeeded to the presidency. Taylor's plan would undoubtedly give way to Clay's Compromise of 1850. Additionally, for a second time, Thurlow Weed's political fortunes were crushed by a presidential death.

The consequences of Fillmore's elevation were felt quickly. The Compromise of 1850 was enacted. At the Whig state convention in New York in September 1850, Fillmore's "Silver Gray" faction bolted, leaving that body to the Seward-Weed "Woolly Heads." During the spring of 1851 Fillmore conducted a wholesale removal of Seward-Weed adherents from federal posts in New York.

His health failing, Henry Clay renounced his own ambitions for renomination and instead endorsed Millard Fillmore.[9] He fervently denounced those who would make the Whig party into an abolition party and warned that he would favor a new party—a Union party—if they persisted. In particular, Clay opposed Seward's presidential aspirations.

As Northern Democrats sought a Northern candidate with Southern principles, Northern Whigs veered toward the abolitionist Free Soilers. Southern Democrats were either threatening secession or acquiescing to the principles of the compromise. Southern Whigs, although discussing formation of a Union party, were slowly moving into the Democratic party or retiring from active politics. Party politics were indeed fluid.

Samuel F. Vinton had been an Ohio congressman for twenty-two years, from 1823 to 1837 and again from 1843 to 1851. A moderate on the slave issue, Vinton declined nomination for Speaker of the House while the Polk administration was in office, becoming instead chairman of the powerful Ways and Means Committee. During the Taylor administration, Vinton was not only a leading Taylor Whig in Congress, but also the senior Whig in the House of Representatives. In Congress, few Westerners equaled Vinton's influence. In 1851, he ran unsuccessfully for the governorship of Ohio.

A caucus of senators and representatives met on April 9, 1852, to decide upon a time and place for the next Whig national convention. When a Kentucky Whig took the occasion to introduce a resolution endorsing the finality of the Compromise of 1850, the meeting adjourned in an uproar. On April 24, after a considerable number of Southerners had absented themselves, the caucus met again and voted down the Kentuckian's motion, 56 to 18. The Southerners were indignant and parted with expressions of regret about the future of the Whig party.

At the national convention, Southern Whig platform strategy included trading planks endorsing the protective tariff and improvement of rivers and harbors in exchange for a plank asserting the finality of the Compromise of 1850. This quid pro quo became part of the final platform. Southern Whigs also united in support of a Fillmore-Webster ticket. Thurlow Weed was absent on a tour of Europe, but Seward was present, supporting General Winfield Scott. For a third time the Seward-Weed alliance was placing its bets on the electoral magnetism of a military hero.

The North-South split appeared on the very first ballot: 133 (all but 16 from the South) for Fillmore, 131 for Scott, and 29 for Webster. One hundred and forty-seven votes were need to nominate. The deadlock held for 53 ballots. Then a few votes from border states shifted to Scott: 8 from Virginia and 3 each from Tennessee and Missouri. The final vote was Scott 159, Fillmore 112, and Webster 21.

It was a costly victory for the Seward-Weed faction. The nomination rejected an incumbent president and denied itself the resources of that office for the forthcoming campaign. In addition, influential Whig elder statesmen were lost to the campaign: Webster died just before the November elections and Clay, who had endorsed Fillmore, died on June 29 before giving his approval of the Scott ticket. Weed remained absent in Europe. Not only was the Whig leadership destroyed, so also was its electoral foundations. The Whigs carried only Massachusetts, Vermont, and Kentucky.