

“The True and Ever Living Principle of States Rights and Popular Sovereignty”

Douglas Democrats and Indiana Republicans Allied, 1857-1859

GREGORY PEEK

On February 4, 1857, Democrats in the Indiana General Assembly elected Jesse Bright and Graham Fitch to the United States Senate. The controversial results came after days of Republican Party gridlock designed to secure guarantees of support for their candidates. Unlike their colleagues in neighboring free states, Indiana Republicans had yet to elect one of their members to the U.S. Senate. This failure stemmed from the traditional strength of the state's Democrats and Republicans' inability to draw conservative ex-Whigs affiliated with the American Party into their coalition. A sitting Republican U. S. Senator would challenge opponents' portrayals of the party as radical. State Democrats, however, bypassed constitutional requirements stipulating that U. S. Senate elections be held in joint session and elected party leaders Bright and Fitch. Republicans declared the election unconstitutional and quickly filed formal protests in the General Assembly, even though their minority status rendered these actions symbolic.

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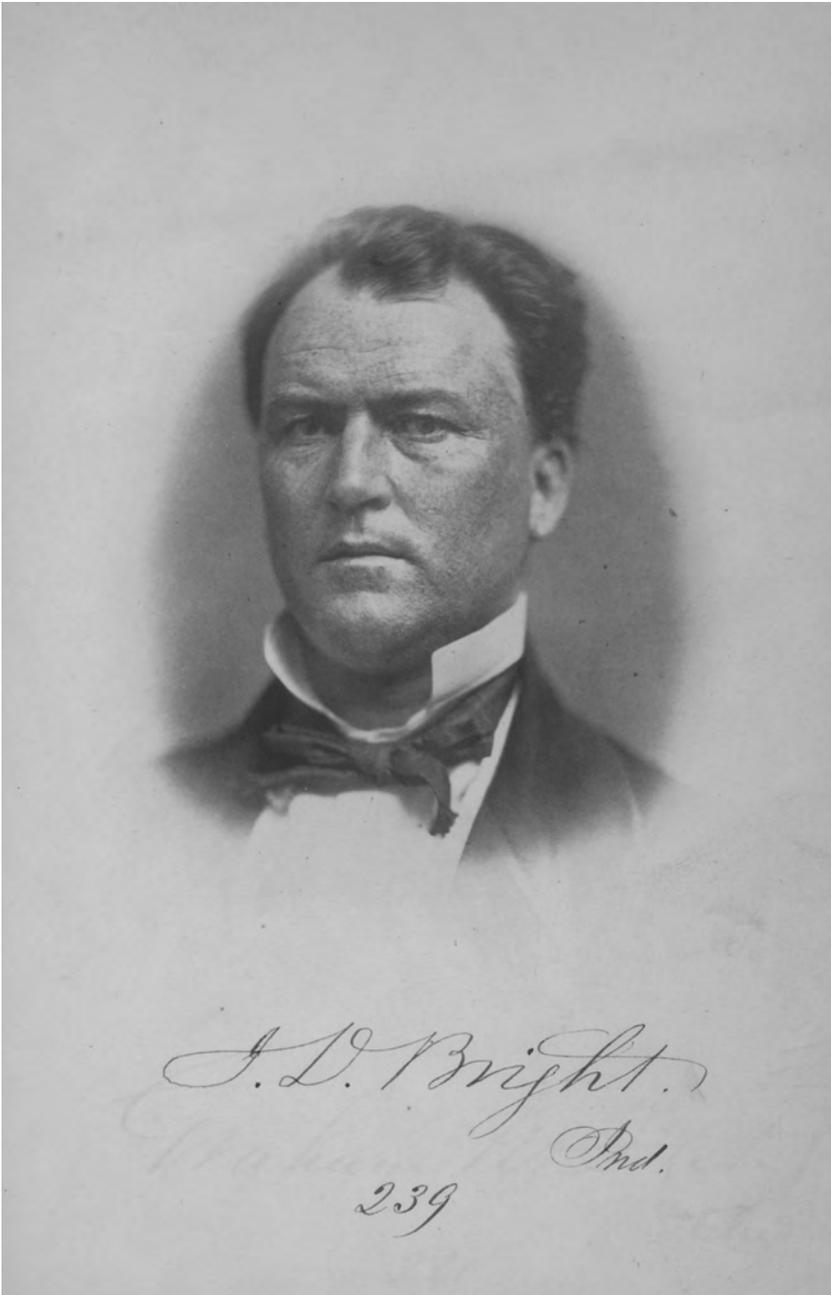
For Indiana Democrats, the selection of Bright and Fitch would be their last unified act of the pre-Civil War era. The party fractured later that year when leaders including President James Buchanan and Senator Bright made support of the Lecompton Constitution a test of party loyalty. Illinois senator Stephen A. Douglas opposed the constitution, which ensured that Kansas would enter the Union as a slave state. Douglas charged that the document stood in violation of popular sovereignty, a principle that emphasized the sanctity of local governance and majority rule. Popular sovereignty stood at the center of a Democratic worldview that Jean Baker has labeled “conservative naturalism,” which allowed local communities to govern their internal rules and regulations free from outside intervention.¹ Racial protocols were central since many whites viewed blacks as inferior and wanted to exclude both slaves and freemen from their communities. Douglas’s position was bolstered when a majority of Kansans rejected the pro-slavery constitution. Controversy over the constitution combined with anger over party leaders’ endorsement of it, providing Douglas and his followers the justification for separation.

In Indiana, where support for both Douglas and popular sovereignty ran high, the separation resulted in bitter and long-lasting division. The split, however, proved to be about more than the Lecompton. At its heart lay the domineering figure of Jesse Bright, Indiana’s three-term, slave-holding senator.² Lacking in charisma, Bright instilled loyalty and discipline through the distribution of patronage and threats of physical violence. Over the course of his career, Bright constructed a tightly knit political machine with loyalists placed in crucial offices throughout the state. By the 1850s, his increasing efforts to consolidate personal control over the party bred resentment among the rank and file. Pro-Douglas Democrats in Indiana knew that support of Lecompton would be unpopular among their constituents, but they also knew that Bright would be unrelenting in his support of the president. When he challenged pro-Douglas Hoosiers over support of the document, they declared their independence.

To exploit their opponents’ disunity, Indiana Republicans employed two strategies. First, they nurtured political coalitions with Douglas men for the 1858 election. Retreating from the principles of their 1856 national platform, which had called for congressional action to prohibit the spread

¹Jean H. Baker, *Affairs of Party: The Political Culture of Democrats in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1983), 143-48, 186-89.

²Bright held his slaves in Kentucky.



Senator Jesse Bright, 1859. Bright's attempts to maintain personal control over Indiana Democrats at the state and national level led to a party split by supporters of Stephen Douglas.

Courtesy, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division

of slavery, Republicans instead endorsed popular sovereignty. They coordinated their nominating and campaign efforts with Douglas Democrats to ensure the defeat of pro-Lecompton candidates aligned with Bright and Buchanan. Even as they promoted Democratic disharmony, Republicans endeavored to strengthen their party in the southern half of the state by attracting conservative ex-Whigs who had supported the American Party in 1856. They promoted candidates who mirrored the electorate's cultural and political backgrounds and who held the relatively conservative anti-slavery position that while the spread of slavery was contrary to the founding generation's intentions, the South should remain a full and equal partner within the Union. Republicans also rejected sectional rhetoric that denigrated the South even as they firmly maintained that secession equaled treason. Staunch white supremacists, Republicans challenged accusations that they favored abolition or social equality between races. They insisted instead that solving the sectional crisis lay in electing conservatives who would uphold the rights of all sections and would denounce any hint of radicalism, whether Northern or Southern in origin.

In 1858, a coalition of Republicans, Americans, and Douglas Democrats defeated pro-administration Democrats in nine of eleven congressional seats and captured majorities in both chambers of the Indiana General Assembly. The coalition rescinded the elections of Bright and Fitch and elected two new senators—one Republican and one Douglas Democrat—as their replacements. The Democrat-controlled U. S. Senate, however, refused the new candidates, casting national attention upon the affair and hastening the ascent of rising Republican star Henry S. Lane. A Kentucky born ex-Whig with conservative anti-slavery credentials, Lane had been recruited by party leaders to canvass the state's southern counties for American Party votes during the 1858 election. Republican state legislators rewarded Lane by selecting him to replace Bright. When he was denied by the Senate, Indiana Republicans convinced him to run for governor. They believed him their strongest candidate in the state, one who could not only win state office but also induce Hoosiers to vote Republican in the coming presidential contest. Following their 1860 victories, Indiana Republicans could view the events of 1858 as foundational to their success. Through timely and flexible political strategy, they had loosened Democratic control of the state government and broadened their appeal, bringing a Republican majority in the state for the first time.

The story of Indiana's Republican-Democrat coalition of 1858 reveals some of the significant developments associated with the rise of the American third party system in the state and the nation on the eve of the Civil



Henry S. Lane, 1855. In 1860, Republican Lane became governor of Indiana and then was sent to the U.S. Senate by a Republican-controlled General Assembly.

Courtesy, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division

War.³ Despite widespread study of the American third party system—its growth and its contributions to both secession and war—Indiana’s role in this history has received short attention. This neglect largely results from a scholarly inclination to portray congressional non-extension—the paradigm of anti-slavery politicians who denigrated southern society and framed slavery’s eradication as a moral imperative—as the primary engine of the party system. As a result, many works on the coming of the war echo a tone of inevitability encapsulated by William H. Seward’s claim that the relations between the North and South were characterized as an “irrepressible conflict.”⁴ Slavery’s dramatic end and the subsequent emancipation of more than four million persons amplify this historical tendency, warping our ability to understand the anti-slavery politics of the era and obscuring the efforts of those who opposed the spread of slavery, but wished to pursue that goal in a reserved, consensual, and, above all, constitutional manner.⁵

Political anti-slavery was a prominent issue in Indiana, responsible for much social and political turmoil. The state, however, was remarkable among free states for its dearth of nationally prominent anti-slavery politicians, its conservative brand of free-soil politics, and its loyalty to the venerated compromise tradition. Early migration by Upland Southerners had created a political culture that prompted one longtime Hoosier abolitionist to characterize his native state as one of the “outlying provinces of the empire of slavery.”⁶ This culture contributed to the early demise of the Indiana Whig Party and ensured that initial support for the Republican Party remained tepid. In 1856, opponents of the new party painted it as

³The term “third party system” describes a historical period from 1854 to 1900 and the competitive arrangement between the Republican Party and Democratic Party. See Walter Dean Burnham, *Critical Elections and the Mainsprings of American Politics* (New York, 1971); and Paul Kleppner, *The Third Electoral System, 1853-1892: Parties, Voters, and Cultures* (Chapel Hill, N. C., 1979).

⁴See Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men* (New York, 1970); Fredrick Blue, *Free Soilers: Third Party Politics, 1848-1854* (Urbana, Ill., 1974); Richard Sewell, *Ballots for Freedom: Anti-slavery Politics in the United States, 1837-1860* (New York, 1980); Tyler Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery* (New York, 1992); and James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York, 2003).

⁵For an emphasis on the compromise tradition in Indiana politics, see Henry Clyde Hubbard, *The Older Middle West, 1840-1860* (New York, 1936); Peter B. Knupfer, *The Union As It Is: Constitutional Unionism and Sectional Compromise, 1787-1861* (Chapel Hill, N. C., 1991).

⁶On Upland Southerners’ migration to Indiana, see Nicole Etcheson, *The Emerging Midwest: Upland Southerners and the Political Culture of the Old Northwest, 1787-1861* (Bloomington, Ind., 1996); Richard F. Nation, *At Home in the Hoosier Hills: Agriculture, Politics, and Religion in Southern Indiana, 1810-1870* (Bloomington, Ind., 2005); George W. Julian, *Political Recollections, 1840-1872* (Chicago, 1884), 115.

bent on disrupting national stability and imposing eastern cultural norms. Racial prejudice constituted a major component of this message, as did anxieties over potential competition with black laborers. As a result, a majority of Hoosiers supported American or Democratic Party candidates. If Republicans hoped to achieve victory they would need to combat these fears. Given that Indiana was central to Republican hopes for a presidential victory in 1860, it is puzzling that scholars have not dedicated more time to looking at the particulars of the state and its complex political scene.⁷

While national studies have tended to overlook Indiana in total, a handful of scholars have applied their expertise to examining internal state conditions during this era. Kenneth Stampf's foundational *Indiana Politics During the Civil War* stressed the conservatism of the state's anti-slavery politics, highlighting Republicans' minority position and continued efforts to broaden their base through fusion.⁸ Emma Lou Thornbrough's *Indiana in the Civil War Era* underscored the contributions of ex-Democrats to the Republican ranks, positing ex-Democrat Oliver P. Morton as critical to the fledgling party's eventual success.⁹ More recently, Thomas H. Rodgers's essay "Liberty, Will, and Violence" highlighted the political values shared between Hoosier Democrats and southerners, emphasizing their commitment to resist, by violence if necessary, centralizing efforts by government to restrict personal liberty.¹⁰ Richard F. Nation's *At Home in the Hoosier Hills* emphasized the disposition of southern Indiana Hoosiers to employ popular sovereignty as a means of addressing slavery expansion. According to Nation, the region's prevailing ethic of localism bolstered the doctrine's popularity, as it stressed the political agency of white men as well as a reluctance to view the world in terms of moral absolutes.¹¹ Finally, Nicole Etcheson's *A Generation at War* highlighted the fluidity of

⁷The free states that did not vote Republican in 1856 included Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Indiana, Illinois, and California. In 1860, securing Pennsylvania, Illinois, and Indiana was seen as essential for Republican victory in the Electoral College. See William C. Harris, *Lincoln's Rise to the Presidency* (Lawrence, Kan., 2007), 227-35; Marc Egnal, *Clash of Extremes: The Economic Origins of the Civil War* (New York, 2009), 235-57.

⁸Kenneth Stampf, *Indiana Politics During the Civil War* (Indianapolis, Ind., 1949), 24.

⁹Emma Lou Thornbrough, *Indiana in the Civil War Era, 1850-1880* (Indianapolis, Ind., 1965), 82-96.

¹⁰Democrats believed in the maintenance of liberty in the face of all forms of tyranny, through use of force if necessary. In their minds such martial vigilance differentiated them from enslaved blacks. See Thomas E. Rodgers, "Liberty, Will, and Violence: The Political Ideology of the Democrats of West-Central Indiana during the Civil War," *Indiana Magazine of History* 92 (June 1996), 154-56.

¹¹Nation, *At Home in the Hoosier Hills*, 193-95.

political alliances during the time in question. As her study of Putnam County, Indiana, demonstrated, the politics of compromise were increasingly undermined in the late 1850s by extremism. Many viewed the doctrine of popular sovereignty, with its emphasis on self-determination, as a workable compromise, national in scope with universally shared ideals. Only when the Democratic Party abandoned popular sovereignty, as the Buchanan administration did in its support of the Lecompton Constitution, did Hoosier Democrats reject their leadership. Democratic vacillation allowed Republicans to seize the mantle of nationalism.¹²

The challenge for Indiana Republicans lay in presenting themselves as a party both of the North and for the nation. Given the party's 1856 national platform, which espoused politics too radical for many Hoosier voters, many believed that Republicans would never secure a majority in Indiana without Democratic division. In exploiting this opportunity, Indiana Republicans demonstrated pragmatism that they might not have considered had they not resided in so pro-southern a state. They did not allow inflexible ideology to prevent them from taking advantage of their opponent's vulnerability. They also, however, did not disavow their opposition to slavery's expansion, instead transforming popular sovereignty into an explicitly anti-slavery tool. Henry Lane's ability to carry that message into southern Indiana during 1858 capitalized on this shift. With unmatched credibility and success, Lane attracted American Party voters suspicious of Republicans, earning him his party's gubernatorial candidacy in 1860 and providing him with influence to promote Abraham Lincoln's presidential nomination. Ultimately, Lane's ascendancy proved just as crucial to Hoosier Republican success in 1860 as did the Democratic fracture in 1858.

THE POLITICAL LANDSCAPE AFTER THE 1856 ELECTIONS

Surveying their 1856 defeat, Hoosier Republicans identified deficiencies with both their candidates and their message. Nominating former Democrat John C. Frémont for president had done little to attract conservative ex-Whigs. Portrayals of Frémont as a sectional candidate drove

¹²Etcheson argued that in the late 1850s "Putnam residents longed for a Northern party that would accord the South its rights, respect the rights of the North, and deny the rights of African Americans." Nicole Etcheson, *A Generation at War: The Civil War in a Northern Community* (Lawrence, Kan., 2011), 22.

conservatives to support the American Party candidate, former president and ex-Whig Millard Fillmore. In the governor's race, ex-Whigs supported the Republican Morton over the regular Democratic nominee Ashbell Willard, although Morton's history as a partisan Democrat generated neither incentive nor enthusiasm among old Whigs to join the Republican standard. Without their vigorous support, particularly in the southern half of the state, the party could not hope to achieve the necessary majority. The Republicans' national platform further encumbered their efforts. Broad in its expression of federal power and anti-southern in its tone, the platform only superficially resembled the one adopted at the state convention, allowing opponents to paint the party as sectional, dangerous to the stability of the Union, and unrepresentative of Hoosier conservative values. Party leaders did little to combat these accusations, particularly in southern Indiana, prompting Republican newspaper editor Michael C. Garber to write: "The gentlemen who engineered the Republican Party in Indiana are clever estimable men... but as political leaders they are imbeciles. Southern Indiana was indubitably the Republican missionary field [yet it] was given up to the combined enemy without a struggle."¹³ Garber became executive chair of the Republican State Central Committee weeks later and prioritized Republican organization in the southern half of the state going forward.

Within the Democratic Party, fractures resurfaced as spoilsmen scrambled to secure appointed offices within the new administration. Jesse Bright's single-minded quest to secure a position for himself and to eliminate competition within the party quickly escalated the tension. Bright enjoyed a favored position with the president-elect, having supported Buchanan at the nominating convention.¹⁴ In doing so, Bright had further distanced himself from the state's Democratic governor, Joseph Wright, and the rank-and-file majority who favored Stephen A. Douglas. The episode represented yet another step in a long series of clashes between Bright and Governor Wright, stretching back over a decade. As both men had ascended party ranks in the 1840s, they quickly fell into competing camps—Bright into the pro-southern, pro-slavery wing and Wright into the pro-western, anti-slavery wing. When Bright went to the U. S. Senate

¹³*Madison Evening Courier*, November 6, 1856, quoted in Mildred Stoler, "The Democratic Element in the New Republican Party in Indiana," *Indiana Magazine of History* 36 (September 1940), 192.

¹⁴William Lynch, ed., "Indiana in the Douglas-Buchanan Contest of 1856," *Indiana Magazine of History* 30 (June 1934), 119-32.

in 1845, Wright worked to ensure that none of the new senator's loyalists joined him. Conversely, during Wright's two terms as governor, Bright ensured that new federal appointees to Indiana opposed the executive's efforts. The rise of Douglas as the leading voice of western Democrats deepened the rivalry into bitter personal resentment. Wright and his allies embraced the Illinois senator while Bright viewed Douglas as an impediment to his own success. In June 1852, Bright led the Indiana delegation at the Democratic National Convention in Baltimore and stonewalled support for Douglas.¹⁵

Bright duplicated this feat in 1856, shifting control of the state Democratic Party into his hands. Bright had assurances from Buchanan that his loyalty would not be forgotten. With Wright's second term concluded, Bright intended to maintain his seat in the Senate, while excluding Wright from any meaningful appointments. The legislature's failure to fill a vacancy in 1855 meant two Senate seats, one for four years and another for six, would be available when the General Assembly convened in 1857. Bright traveled to Indianapolis to ensure personally that the party's nominating caucus did not consider Wright for one of the seats. Bright preferred Graham Fitch, a political ally from Logansport. On January 30, 1857, the caucus convened with Wright showing more strength than Bright had anticipated. Judge James Hughes of Bloomington, viewed as an impartial observer, finally brokered a deal between the factions. Hughes proposed that Wright allow Bright and Fitch to try for the Senate. In return, Bright would influence Buchanan to make Wright the first Hoosier to serve in a president's cabinet.¹⁶ With the two factions of the party seemingly united, Bright turned his attention to the election process in the General Assembly.

The 1857 Senate election in the General Assembly proved to be among the most remarkable in the state's history. In 1855 Democrats, who had a majority in the upper chamber but were an overall minority in the legislature, refused to go into joint session with the opposition. Consequently the expiring seat of Democrat John Pettit remained empty and Bright alone represented Indiana in the U.S. Senate. In 1857, roles were reversed, with Democrats now the majority in the lower chamber and the legislature overall, while the opposition, a combination of Republicans and Americans, held

¹⁵John B. Stoll, *A History of the Indiana Democracy: 1816-1916* (Indianapolis, Ind., 1917), 182-83.

¹⁶H. C. Duncan, "James Hughes," *Indiana Magazine of History* 5 (September 1909), 90-91; Joseph A. Wright to Joseph Lane, February 9, 1857, Joseph Lane Papers, Lilly Library, Bloomington, Indiana. Wright recognized that he and Bright had reached a tacit agreement and hoped that Joe Lane would see "certain gentlemen keep their promises and agreements."

the majority in the upper chamber. Mindful of the Democrats' earlier tactics, Republicans now vowed not to go into joint session unless they were guaranteed one of the seats.¹⁷ During the standoff, Democrats searched for any precedent or justification to hold the election, eventually leaning on Supreme Court Justice Samuel Perkins's report that a simple majority of the legislature's total membership would suffice to act. Working under this assumption, on February 4, 1857, Democrats from the upper chamber joined their lower-chamber colleagues, electing Bright to a third consecutive six-year term, while Dr. Graham Fitch received the four-year position. Republicans filed angry protests that same day, calling the election "an indignation against the people of Indiana" and an "illegal and revolutionary precedent." Republicans in the upper chamber abdicated their legislative responsibilities for the remainder of the session in protest, and the session ended without passing revenue or appropriations bills.¹⁸ Bright and Fitch made their way to the capitol, where the U. S. Senate immediately seated Bright for an upcoming special session and submitted the credentials of both men to the Senate Judiciary Committee for authentication.

Within weeks, Indiana's Democratic coalition began to unravel. On March 6, 1857, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Dred Scott v. Sandford* that neither territorial governments nor the U. S. Congress could prohibit slave owners from transporting their property into federal lands. President Buchanan, joined by Bright and other supporters, endorsed the ruling, despite the implication that it rendered popular sovereignty obsolete if not illegal. Opponents rejected the idea that local governments could not jurisdictionally bar slavery, and charged that the ruling had been designed to weaken Stephen A. Douglas's presidential prospects. Anger flared when news arrived in Indianapolis that former Governor Wright would not serve in the president's cabinet. An aging Lewis Cass of Michigan took the appointment of secretary of state, while Buchanan assigned Wright as minister to Prussia, an unimportant post which Wright accepted primarily out of financial considerations. Bright allies, including Federal Marshall John L. Robinson and Governor-elect Ashbel P. Willard, traveled to Washington later that fall to promote their claims on federal patronage. Wright's politi-

¹⁷"Synopsis of Speech given by Henry S. Lane to the Republican Convention at Indianapolis about January 7, 1857," January 7, 1857 [typescript], Henry S. Lane Papers. Lane suggested that Republicans postpone the elections, "not only for two years, only, but for two hundred years, if necessary."

¹⁸Indiana General Assembly, *Indiana Senate Journal: 39th Session Commencing January 8, 1857* (Indianapolis, Ind., 1858), 276.

cal confidant John G. Davis was furious at the blatant favoritism shown by the executive branch. Republican congressman James Wilson described the apparent discontent of the Indiana Douglas supporters: "The Wright men are anxious to make a fight against Bright. John Davis is as bitter against Bright as it is possible for anyone to be."¹⁹ Bright's control over Indiana Democrats now rested solely on his rivals' willingness to submit to his leadership.

Factionalism of a different sort plagued Indiana Republicans, as internal party divides revealed different visions of the party's future. Following the 1856 election, Republicans Henry S. Lane and George W. Julian offered differing interpretations of their party's past and its potential future. Lane, in his popular speech "Ashland and The Hermitage," argued that the party combined the pro-union stance of Andrew Jackson with the pro-compromise tradition of Henry Clay, who in spite of their partisan differences were "true and tried patriots, and unshaken friends to the Union and the Constitution." Republicans wanted to maintain the bonds of union by ensuring fairness and protection for each section's rights; Democrats, by contrast, pursued party success to the detriment of national harmony, as demonstrated by their support of the Kansas-Nebraska Act. Lane drew a sharp distinction between Jackson, who had, he claimed, never resorted to the "low tricks of the Demagogue," and President Buchanan, who practiced the "vulgar arts of the place hunting politician." Lane encouraged listeners to "forget our past dissensions remembering only that we are brethren, that we are joint heirs of the historic Glory of the past, that we have a common interest in the present, and a common hope for the future."²⁰

In contrast, long-time Indiana abolitionist George W. Julian demanded that Hoosier Republicans drop attempts to broaden their appeal in their short-sighted quest to win office. Such thinking, he argued, had plagued party efforts since 1854, when an opportunity to create a purely anti-slavery party was abandoned in favor of appeals to temperance and Know Nothingism. Republicans won an electoral majority that year, but "when victory was won, no great principle could be regarded as having been settled by the majority of the people." The flawed victory in 1854 necessarily contributed to the defeat of 1856: attempts to replicate the coalition resulted in the "People's Party," which denounced voting ir-

¹⁹James Wilson to Henry S. Lane, November 29, 1857 [typescript], Lane-Elston Family Papers, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana. Hereafter cited as Lane-Elston Papers.

²⁰"Ashland and the Hermitage," July 4, 1856 [typescript], Henry S. Lane Papers.

regularities in Kansas and fended off all accusations of abolitionism. So feeble were their efforts, accused Julian, that the State Central Committee suppressed their own electoral ticket in a vain effort to promote fusion with the pro-Fillmore men. Discerning voters viewed the party not as an answer to pro-slavery depredations but as a coalition “conceived in mere policy and lust for office and managed by unbelieving politicians.” For such cowardice, Julian asserted, defeat was both eminent and proper, but the loss served as a blessing in disguise, allowing a more ideologically pure party to be wrought from the aftermath.²¹

The Republican State Central Committee feared Julian’s abrasive speeches, and opposition presses successfully portrayed him as a fanatic. Party leaders could not totally disavow his supporters, who harbored important energy and drive, but the state’s conservative political climate necessitated embracing Lane’s inclusivity over Julian’s ideological purity. Julian bitterly recognized this fact:

The sad truth is that Indiana is the most pro-slavery of all our Northern States. Her Black Code, branded upon her recreant forehead by a majority of nearly one-hundred thousand of her voters, tells her humiliating pedigree far more forcibly than any words I could employ. Our people hate the negro with a perfect, if not a supreme hatred, and their anti-slavery, making an average estimate, is a superficial and sickly sentiment, rather than a deep-rooted and robust conviction.

For Julian, however, such conditions simply necessitated a longer-term trajectory toward ideological sanctity. “The organization of an anti-slavery party that shall rule the State is not the work of a day,” he proclaimed, “it must be the fruit of time, toil, and patience.”²² State party leaders lacked any patience borne out of conviction. Instead, they waited for weaknesses to reappear among Indiana Democrats, ready to seize the moment with as broad a constituency as possible.

²¹George W. Julian, *Speeches on Political Questions* (New York, 1872), 126-53. Julian reflected, “Had the slippery tactics of our leaders received the premium of a victory it would have been far more disastrous in its influences hereafter than a merited defeat, which may even bless us as a timely reproof of our faithlessness” (p. 135).

²²*Ibid.*, 127-28.

THE LECOMPTON CONSTITUTION ALTERS POLITICAL ALLIANCES

President Buchanan's unexpected decision to push the Lecompton Constitution through Congress provided that opportunity for Indiana Republicans. In September 1857, a pro-slavery body of Kansans, intent on pushing for statehood, gathered in the town of Lecompton. The convention crafted a pro-slavery document, which they refused to submit wholly to popular referendum. Rather, they submitted it partially to Congress and partially to the public, with voters having only the choice to accept the document with or without the future importation of slaves. Buchanan initially favored a popular vote on the full constitution, fulfilling his party's commitment to popular sovereignty, but the convention's recommendations, coupled with pressure from southern cabinet members, altered his position. Buchanan regarded the convention as the legitimate result of the state's constitutional process and, wanting to end the Kansas controversy once and for all, he called for unequivocal party support, placing Democrats in the position of either supporting the president or facing the possibility of party expulsion.²³

Popular sovereignty champion Douglas refused to acquiesce. He understood that if Kansas entered the union as a slave state and popular sovereignty proved unworkable, the Democratic Party in the North would cease to be viable. He quickly rallied his supporters in Congress to slow the constitution's passage, garnering unlikely admiration from the Republican editor of the *New York Tribune*, Horace Greeley.²⁴ Greeley envisioned a coalition of Douglas Democrats and Republicans and asked Indiana Republican Schuyler Colfax to approach Douglas about such an agreement.²⁵ Douglas agreed to meet, aware that Buchanan would exercise

²³Nichole Etcheson, *Bleeding Kansas: Contested Liberty in the Civil War Era* (Lawrence, Kan., 2004), 139-61.

²⁴Douglas Democrats viewed the endorsement of the Lecompton Constitution as a piece of "particularist" legislation that only benefitted a privileged few. Baker, *Affairs of the Party*, 317-27. On the actions of Douglas Democrats and Republicans in Congress, see Johannsen, *Stephen A. Douglas*, 582-97.

²⁵Horace Greeley to Schuyler Colfax, December 11, and 20, 1857, Greeley-Colfax Papers, New York Public Library, New York City, New York. Hereafter cited as Greeley-Colfax Papers; Allan Nevins, *The Emergence of Lincoln: Douglas, Buchanan, and Party Chaos, 1857-1859* (New York, 1950), 290-92.

power to see him defeated.²⁶ Between March and October of 1858, Buchanan replaced twelve pro-Douglas postmasters, gave lucrative printing contracts to editors unfriendly to Douglas, and worked to disrupt the Illinois state nominating convention. Many Douglas supporters pleaded with him to compromise with the president and prevent his seat from falling into Republican hands.²⁷

The attack on Douglas galvanized his Indiana supporters, led by Seventh District Representative John G. Davis.²⁸ Davis fielded numerous encouraging letters from constituents such as R. S. Stevens, a native Hoosier living in Kansas, who implored Davis to reject the “Lecompton Swindle (I can call it by no fairer name)” and support Douglas. David Gooding, editor of the *Hancock Democrat*, wrote that four-fifths of the county’s Democrats supported Douglas and warned that district voters would not elect someone “who would vote to admit Kansas as a state without the submission of the constitution to a fair vote of the people who are legal voters in the territory.”²⁹ Another Democrat characterized popular sovereignty as “the main principle of our political system” and welcomed potential Republican support, while insisting that Democrats should never retreat on the issue.³⁰ Such letters convinced Davis of the continued loyalty of rank-and-file party members and encouraged him to continue challenging Bright and the administration. Clearly many Democratic voters did not believe that blind party loyalty superseded the principles of popular sovereignty.

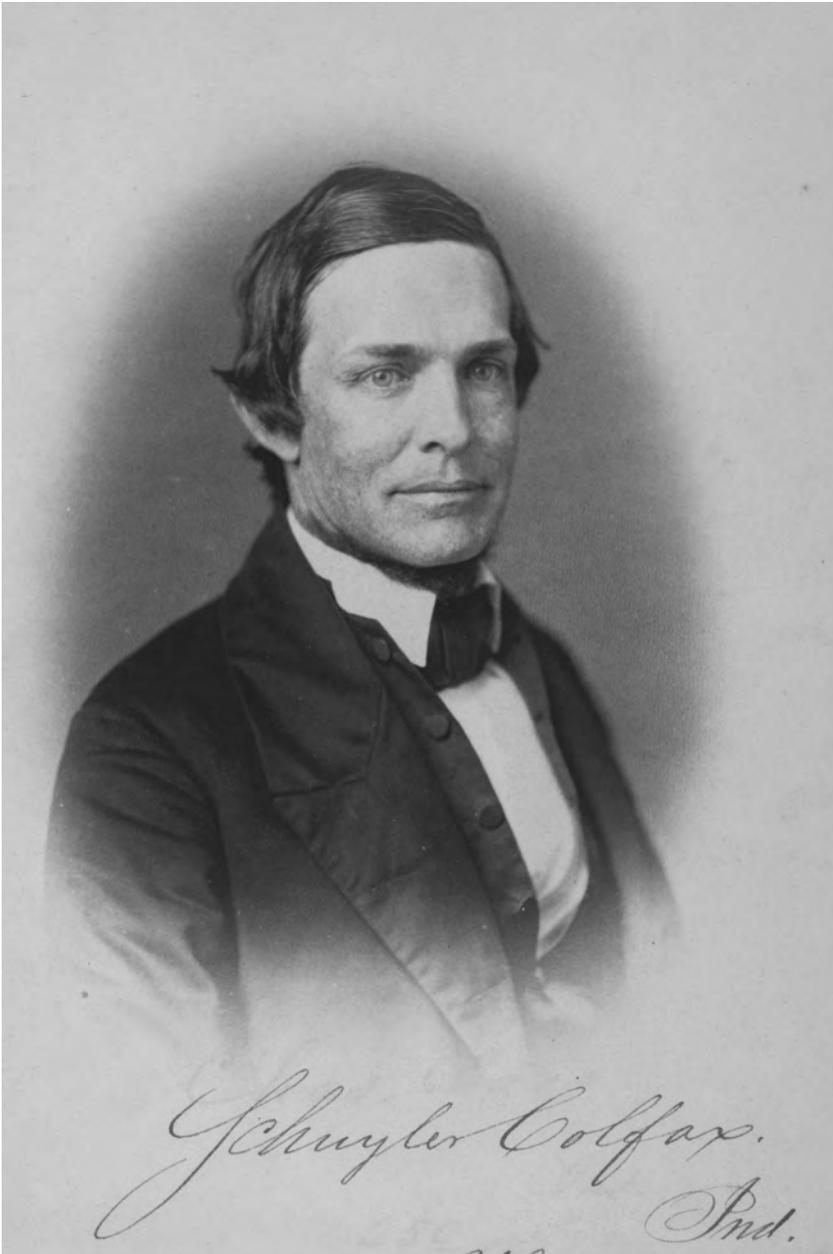
²⁶Memorandum of interview, Burlingame and Colfax with Douglas, December 14, 1857, Schuyler Colfax Papers, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis, Indiana. The memorandum indicated that Douglas believed the move to endorse Lecompton was promulgated by southern dis-unionists who would use any opposition to the admittance of Kansas as pretext to call for secession. Colfax believed that “Douglas had the opportunity to place himself in the most commanding position of any statesman in the nation; that he could be the ‘Silas Wright’ of his party, and could conquer the prejudices of his enemies. But he believed that Douglas would be forced out of his party if he persisted in his present course.”

²⁷Holt, *The Fate of their Country*, 122-23; Allen C. Guelzo, *Lincoln and Douglas: The Debates that Defined America* (New York, 2008), 64-67.

²⁸Leadership of the anti-Bright faction fell to Davis due to his longstanding relationship with Governor Wright. Davis moved to Rockville, Indiana, with his family in 1819, where he eventually served as Parke County sheriff and clerk of the Common Courts. Joseph Wright moved to Rockville in 1830 where he ran a successful law practice and represented the county both in the state legislature and U.S. Congress. See Philip Crain, “Governor Jo Wright: Hoosier Conservative,” (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1963).

²⁹R. S. Stevens to John G. Davis, December 14, 1857, and David S. Gooding to John G. Davis, December 19, 1857, both in John G. Davis Papers, Indiana Historical Society. Hereafter cited as John G. Davis Papers.

³⁰James M. Lucas to John G. Davis, “Letters to John G. Davis,” *Indiana Magazine of History* 24 (September 1928), 201-202.



Congressman Schuyler Colfax, 1855. Republican Colfax worked with Douglas Democrats to defeat the pro-slavery Lecompton Constitution proposed for Kansas.

Courtesy, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division

The 1858 Democratic state convention in Indianapolis publicly exposed the fullness of the divide. Davis received indications from colleagues that numerous delegates would arrive at the convention with instructions favorable to Douglas and hostile to Lecompton. Delegates Austin Brown and Gordon Tanner predicted that convention support of any pro-Lecompton candidate or position would ensure a Republican victory. Tanner wrote to Davis that “nothing can avert” such an outcome “unless the efforts to crush Mr. Douglas shall cease and be followed by conciliatory overtures.”³¹ A letter writer from Bright’s home district indicated that a majority of Democrats favored Douglas and only support for the local deputy mail agent sustained any loyalty to the administration. The author labeled the Bright faction a “dynasty” and earnestly prayed that “our oligarchy may fall with that developed in the Lecompton Constitution.”³²

When the convention gathered on January 8, Bright arrived in person to oversee the proceedings, intending to affirm the party’s commitment to Lecompton and to disavow any support of Douglas. His supporters succeeded in controlling the convention, cobbling together a platform that endorsed popular sovereignty, the *Dred Scott* decision, and the actions of President Buchanan. When delegate Lew Wallace offered resolutions amending the platform to include public support for Douglas, mayhem ensued.³³ Bright loyalists tabled these motions and rammed the platform through un-amended. Upon adjournment, livid and uncowed Douglas supporters moved to hold a separate convention on February 22, 1858. The precarious Democratic unity achieved only one year earlier shattered.

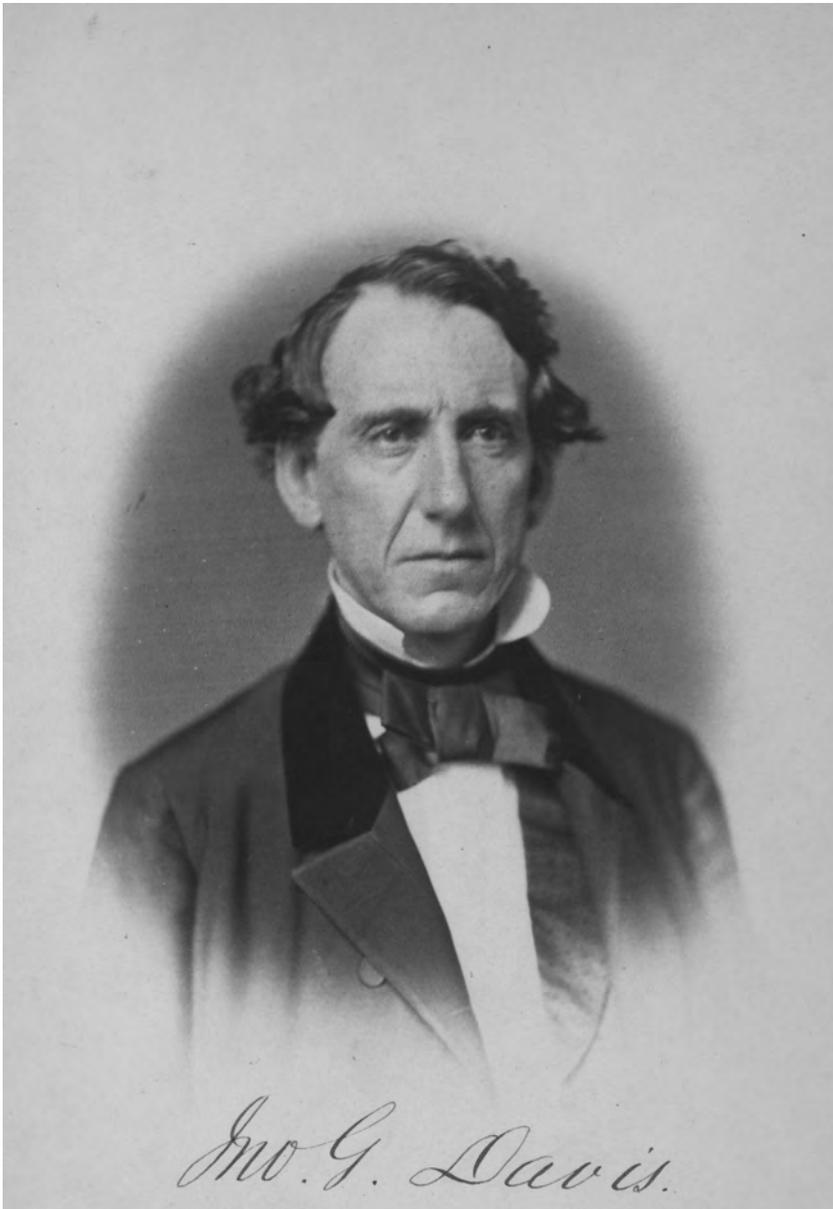
The emboldened anti-Bright faction proceeded to strike their own course. Lew Wallace published a tract reasserting the faction’s support of popular sovereignty and the 1856 Cincinnati Platform, and rejection of Lecompton. If Democrats abandoned popular sovereignty principles, he warned, Indiana Republicans would likely adopt them.³⁴ Unsurprisingly, the February convention unanimously endorsed popular sovereignty and Douglas, comparing Lecompton with the undemocratic tendencies of feudal Europe. A final resolution declared the *Indianapolis State Sentinel*—the primary Democratic newspaper and perceived mouthpiece of

³¹Austin Brown to John G. Davis, December 20, 1857, and Gordon Tanner to John G. Davis, December 22, 1857, both in John G. Davis Papers.

³²A. Lovering to John G. Davis, December 27, 1857, John G. Davis Papers.

³³Logan Esarey, *A History of Indiana: From 1850 to the Present* (1918; Indianapolis, Ind., 1970), 653.

³⁴*Indianapolis State Sentinel*, January 18, 1858; *New Albany Daily Ledger*, January 20, 1858.



Congressman John G. Davis, 1859. Davis, a dedicated supporter of Stephen Douglas, led the party revolt among Indiana Democrats against Jesse Bright.
Courtesy, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division

Jesse Bright—out of the party.³⁵ One letter to Davis rejoiced at the revolt: “It has made some of the Bright Lecomptonites tremble, we will bring them to their senses, that they may feel their ‘awful situation.’ I hope before it be too late—The people here are determined to act and think for themselves and not follow dictators any longer.”³⁶

Seizing the moment, Indiana Republicans issued a call for all opponents of Lecompton, regardless of party affiliation, to attend a state convention on March 4, 1858. Oliver P. Morton, president-elect of the proceedings, opened with a speech stressing harmony, compromise, and an urgent need to halt slavery’s spread to Kansas.³⁷ Clear expressions of Republican support for popular sovereignty emerged from the convention. Solomon Meredith, a longtime anti-slavery activist and Morton ally, avowed himself a popular sovereignty man. Henry S. Lane declared that the “Republican Party had always contended for popular sovereignty; always contended for the right of the people to govern themselves.” He expressed his admiration for Douglas and the anti-Lecompton Democrats and predicted a civil insurrection in Kansas if the constitution was forced on an unwilling population. In contrast, George W. Julian spoke in opposition of altering the Philadelphia Platform ratified by the 1856 Republican National Convention. That document, Julian argued, repudiated the “squatter sovereignty” position of Douglas and his supporters and offered better protections against slavery for Kansas. He refused to yield those “sacred principles” and hoped that the convention would do the same. Theodore Hielscher, editor of the German-language *Indiana Free Press*, followed Julian with similar remarks. Hielscher argued that Republican victory hinged on strong turnout among the state’s Germans, who would support the Republican Party as “the party of free white labor”—a principle best expressed by the Philadelphia Platform.³⁸

The Committee on Platform and Resolutions presented to the convention a document substantially more conservative than the 1856

³⁵*Proceedings from the 1858 Democratic Convention*, February 23, 1858, Pamphlet Collection, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis.

³⁶H. K. Wilson to John G. Davis, “Letters to John G. Davis,” 203-204. Wilson described a mass meeting in Sullivan County where speakers “handled Bright without Gloves and showed him up as a tool of the South and Buchanan.” “The few Bright men here,” he concluded, “are down in the mouth.”

³⁷Morton left the Democratic party after the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854. William Dudley Foulke, *Life of Oliver P. Morton Including His Most Important Speeches* (Indianapolis, Ind., 1899), I: 62-63.

³⁸*New Albany Daily Ledger*, March 8, 1858, supplement insert on convention proceedings.

Philadelphia Platform. An opening statement espousing sectional harmony was followed by planks that endorsed popular sovereignty and criticized Lecompton. The popular sovereignty plank asserted the right of the people of a territory to adopt an acceptable constitution, freely voted upon by a majority of legal voters. The following plank condemned the Lecompton Constitution as “notoriously obnoxious to the great majority of [Kansas] citizens, and with no other object than to force upon them institutions against which they have repeatedly and most earnestly protested, [it] is a gross outrage upon the rights of the people of that Territory.”³⁹ The sixth plank of the platform openly invited Douglas Democrats to coordinate their efforts with Republicans in order to block passage of the bill in Congress and defeat candidates affiliated with President Buchanan.⁴⁰ The document included a number of explicit anti-slavery planks—one denying southern radicals’ claim that the constitution carried slavery into the territories; one opposing the spread of slavery beyond where it already existed, and a final one questioning the validity of the *Dred Scott* verdict. The last plank was qualified, however, by a statement disclaiming “any right to interfere with slavery in the States where it exists under the shield of State Sovereignty.”⁴¹

In 1856, the Republican state convention had directly opposed Democrats’ popular sovereignty principles. They adopted strong planks in favor of restricting immigration and prohibiting the sale and consumption of alcohol—both absent in 1858.⁴² The 1858 platform ignored most of the principled expression of its predecessor, including any assertion of human rights as vital to the preservation of republican institutions and any claim that Congress possessed a moral obligation to prevent the spread of slavery.⁴³

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Ibid. The full text of the plank reads, “That we do not struggle for a mere party triumph but for the right and the good of our whole country, and that we honor those political opponents who have had the manliness to place themselves in opposition to the administration in its assaults upon the fundamental principles of American Liberty.” The following plank took direct aim at Jesse Bright declaring that he and Graham Fitch, “are not of right the representatives of this State in the Senate of the United States, and ought to be immediately ousted therefrom.”

⁴¹Ibid. The final plank states, “That we re-affirm the doctrine, that Congress has the constitutional power to exclude slavery from the national territories, notwithstanding the extra-judicial opinion of the Supreme Court of the United States to the contrary.”

⁴²*New Albany Daily Ledger*, May 3, 1856. The first plank of the 1856 platform reads, “Resolved, That we are uncompromisingly opposed to the extension of slavery, and that we utterly repudiate the platform of principles adopted by the self-styled Democratic Convention of this State, endorsing and approving the Kansas-Nebraska inequity.”

⁴³For the text of the 1856 national platform, see *New Albany Daily Ledger*, June 19, 1856.

Upon the report of the committee, supporters of the 1856 platform moved immediately to amend the document. William Moreau, an anti-slavery newspaper editor from Shelbyville, asked to have the plank supporting popular sovereignty replaced by one endorsing the Philadelphia Platform. Moreau received support from Julian, but both men were “choked down” by those in favor of compromise. William McKee Dunn of Jefferson County maintained that “Men of extreme opinions had framed the Philadelphia platform. He had no part in making the Philadelphia platform. He was not there. If he had been, he should have voted against it from first to last.” Julian took the floor again to defend Moreau and the Philadelphia Platform. According to one Democratic reporter, after Julian “skinned alive the ‘managers’ of the convention,” accusing them of despotism and dishonesty, the convention became “absolutely wild and uncontrollable. Disorder reigned supreme...The scene was one of the most disgraceful ever witnessed in any public assembly.”⁴⁴

When Morton had finally restored order, he declared that a reiteration of the Philadelphia Platform would be inexpedient. He dismissed Julian’s accusations, noting that the platform committee was filled with “antislavery veterans” no less committed than Julian himself. Morton compared Julian’s rigidity to a “clergyman who had to have a prayer exactly fitted to the case or he could not pray at all.” The spirit of the 1856 platform remained, he argued, even if the exact language did not.⁴⁵ Ultimately, Republican hunger for victory overwhelmed Julian’s calls for ideological purity and, upon popular sovereignty principles, the platform carried the day.

With the state conventions ended, attention shifted to the U. S. House of Representatives, where Lecompton’s opponents worked to prevent its passage. Indiana Republicans, following the cue from their state meeting, opposed the constitution upon popular sovereignty criteria. Schuyler Colfax argued that the document would unalterably infringe on Kansans’ right to self-determination, limiting the ability of future legislatures to amend slavery-related statutes and demonstrating arrogant disregard for the will of future assemblies. Republican Charles Case likened Kansas’ free-soil supporters to the American colonists who rebelled against Britain. Douglas Democrat John G. Davis rebuked members of his party for abandoning the Cincinnati Platform of 1856 and castigated the president for using the privileges of his office to silence dissent. If southerners en-

⁴⁴Ibid., March 8, 1858. See also Patrick W. Riddleberger, *George Washington Julian, Radical Republican: A Study in Nineteenth Century Politics and Reform* (Indianapolis, Ind., 1966), 120-22.

⁴⁵Foulke, *Life of Oliver P. Morton*, I: 63-67.

couraged this blatant repudiation of their platform, he argued, they were no less sectional than Republicans.⁴⁶

Even Buchanan supporters expressed reservations about the bill and its impact on the Democratic Party in the North. William H. English, a Bright protégé from southern Indiana, stated that the process of selecting delegates for the Kansas convention had been faulty, casting doubt on the whole process. He also claimed that the constitution, while following the form of popular sovereignty, did not adhere to the substance, denying the people real choices regarding its various components. He expressed supreme confidence that if popular sovereignty were carried out in faithful adherence to the law, there would be no dissent about the constitution.⁴⁷ Bright expressed disappointment as well as understanding of the pressure English faced from his constituents, writing to his protégé: “I am sorry I could not have met you as promised in order to compare notes about Kansas, but I know you have not sought by anything you have said or done, to embarrass or strike at me. It is to be regretted that Will and I could not have harmonized on this question. I hope, sincerely hope, we yet will be able to do so.”⁴⁸

On March 23, American Party Senator John J. Crittenden of Kentucky proposed a compromise—an amendment to resubmit the whole constitution to popular vote. Senate Democrats tabled the proposal, but William Montgomery, a Douglas Democrat from Pennsylvania, reproduced Crittenden’s motion in the House. English eagerly seconded the motion, and the House leadership created a committee, with English as chair, to alter the bill. The committee returned a bill that subjected the constitution to popular vote but pinned passage not on the issue of slavery but on a federal land grant, trimming by 20 million acres a large land request made by the Lecompton Convention. Kansans would vote on the revised constitution as a whole document, including its original pro-slavery statutes, with the newly drawn boundaries being the only difference. A final stipulation declared that if the constitution failed, Kansas would wait until its population warranted representation in Congress before reapplying

⁴⁶*Speech of the Honorable Schuyler Colfax, Of Indiana, On the Admission of Kansas under the Lecompton Constitution*, March 20, 1858; *Speech of the Honorable Charles Case, Of Indiana, On the Admission of Kansas under the Lecompton Constitution*, March 11, 1858; *Speech of the Honorable John G. Davis, Of Indiana, Against the Admission of Kansas into the Union Under the Lecompton Constitution*, March 25, 1858, all in Pamphlet Collection, Indiana Historical Society.

⁴⁷*Rockport Democrat*, May 8, 1858.

⁴⁸Jesse Bright to William H. English, March 9, 1858, English Family Papers, Indiana Historical Society.



Congressman William English, 1859. English, along with Kentucky senator John Crittenden, wrote compromise legislation which allowed the Lecompton Constitution to be submitted to Kansas voters.

Courtesy, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division

for admission. The shrewd move satisfied both Douglas Democrats, who called for Lecompton to be resubmitted to a popular vote, and Southern Democrats, who believed that Congress had no legal power to legislate against slavery in the territories.⁴⁹ Most importantly, the bill provided an avenue by which the Lecompton question would be settled before the fall elections. The so-called “English Compromise Bill” carried the House with a division among Douglas Democrats. The Senate quickly followed suit and President Buchanan signed the bill on May 4, 1858.⁵⁰

With a popular vote on Lecompton now set for August, Indiana Republicans faced the real possibility of Democratic reconciliation. Certainly the severity with which the Republican press attacked English and his compromise laid bare their concerns at such a reunion. Editors attacked the provision that allowed Kansas to enter the nation under Lecompton with 30,000 inhabitants, but refused admission—if the people voted the constitution down—until the state acquired a population of over 90,000. They described the bill as a bribe, designed to obscure the choice of freedom or slavery for the territory’s voters, and they accused English of selling his principles to salvage his congressional campaign.⁵¹ Horace Greeley felt such fears misplaced. “Don’t be frightened at the looks of English’s bill,” he wrote to Schuyler Colfax, “it is a vicious blunderbuss, and will kick over those who stand at the breach.”⁵²

Jesse Bright certainly did not perceive the English Bill as the path towards party reconciliation. In Senate debate, Bright rejected entirely the idea that Lecompton should be resubmitted to the people for direct vote: “So strong is my conviction of the viciousness of submitting to a direct vote of the people the propriety of the enactment of rejection of laws, that for one I am prepared to extend the same objection to the submission of the entire constitution to the same tribunal.” Bright questioned the intelligence of Kansas voters and their ability to understand the various amendments, offering his belief that Congress, at least in this case, had

⁴⁹Philip Shriver Klein, *President James Buchanan: A Biography* (University Park, Pa., 1962), 310-12.

⁵⁰David Potter, *The Impending Crisis, 1848-1861* (New York, 1977), 322-25. The House voted 109-108 to place the original bill in conference committee. Speaker of the House James L. Orr of South Carolina cast the deciding vote in favor. The Senate passed the English Bill 31-22 with both Senators Bright and Fitch voting in favor. The House favored the measure 112-103. John G. Davis was the only Indiana Democrat to vote against the English Bill.

⁵¹*Indianapolis State Journal*, May 12, 1858.

⁵²Horace Greeley to Schuyler Colfax, April 21, 1858, Greeley-Colfax Papers.

the duty to govern directly over the territory.⁵³ Two-thirds of the state's Democratic press condemned Bright's statements, comparing them with the most pro-Southern position of the Buchanan administration. Despite English's honest efforts to build bridges between the administration and Douglas supporters, the bitterness many felt towards Bright made reconciliation impossible. In Indianapolis, for example, Douglas Democrats began to publish the *National Democrat*, an anti-administration sheet. Clearly Hoosier Democrats who had chafed under Bright, first as followers of Governor Joseph Wright and then as champions of Senator Douglas, had little desire to return to a position of subordination. For his part, Bright reciprocated the bitter feelings, writing to Fort Wayne Whig Allen Hamilton: "I have not, nor shall I ever regard a set of men in this country who called themselves 'anti-Lecompton Democrats,' in any other light than Abolitionists, and most of them rotten in every sense of the word. I court and defy opposition of every one of them, from there lying hypocritical demagogical master Douglas, down to the scurviest puppy in the kennel."⁵⁴

The anti-Bright coalition exhibited a high level of cooperation in congressional races. In the Ninth District, home of incumbent Republican Schuyler Colfax, Douglas men refused to nominate one of their own, and eventually the Democratic nomination fell to John C. Walker, a conservative ex-Whig who had joined the party in 1856.⁵⁵ A similar process transpired in the Tenth District, where Democrats eventually nominated John W. Dawson, a former Republican who unexpectedly challenged incumbent Charles Case.⁵⁶ In the First District, a Democratic stronghold, Republicans withheld a nomination instead rallying around the "independent" candidacy of Democrat Alvin P. Hovey.⁵⁷ Second District Republicans supported "independent" Democrat John M. Wilson in a forlorn attempt to oust incumbent William H. English.⁵⁸ Democratic

⁵³See the reprint of Bright's speech in the *New Albany Daily Ledger*, April 8, 9, 1860.

⁵⁴Jesse Bright to Allen Hamilton, December 1858, Hamilton Family Papers, Indiana State Library.

⁵⁵Hollister, *The Life of Schuyler Colfax*, 129-30.

⁵⁶*Marshall County Democrat*, August 8, 1858. Republicans read Dawson out of the party later that summer only to receive him again into the fold in 1860.

⁵⁷*The Jasper Weekly*, September 29, 1858. A long time Democrat, Hovey had served on the Indiana Supreme Court and in 1855 received an appointment as U. S. attorney for Indiana from Democratic president Franklin Pierce. Hovey, however, was a confidant of Governor Wright, and during the Buchanan administration Bright succeeded in having Hovey replaced. When Hovey opposed Lecompton, Bright had him read of out the party.

⁵⁸*New Albany Daily Ledger*, August 24, 1858.

incumbent John G. Davis, who publicly denounced the administration in Congress, was passed over by the Seventh District nominating convention in favor of Henry Secrest.⁵⁹ Davis declared his independent candidacy, which Republicans agreed to support.⁶⁰ Democratic papers lamented these alliances, warning that they were part of a Republican plot to win the 1860 presidential election in the House of Representatives, and urging Democrats to unify and vote as if they were selecting presidential electors rather than congressmen.⁶¹

Republican embrace of popular sovereignty also broadened the party's appeal among American Party voters. When Crittenden endorsed Douglas and moved to have the Lecompton Constitution resubmitted to the people of Kansas, Republicans and Americans suddenly stood on common ground. Crittenden's move in favor of popular sovereignty elicited strong praise in Indiana, with many excited over the prospects of a Crittenden presidential campaign in 1860. One supporter saw Crittenden as perfectly suited to tap the deep nationalist sentiment that he felt still bound the sections together.⁶² Another expressed the collective regret of the "twenty thousand old Whigs" who voted with Buchanan in 1856 but now staunchly opposed the administration and would follow Crittenden without hesitation.⁶³ Local American Party leaders including Richard W. Thompson followed Crittenden's lead, stumping in favor of popular sovereignty and leveling charges of corruption against Bright and Buchanan. Resisting outright endorsement of specific candidates, Thompson encouraged Americans to support anti-Lecompton coalitions where possible.⁶⁴ Pro-administration Democrats attempted to counter these moves, highlighting shared language between the 1856 American Party national platform and the English Compromise. "There is no essential difference between the Democratic and

⁵⁹Etcheson, *A Generation at War*, 34-37. Etcheson indicates that Secrest received the nomination because, unlike Davis, he acquiesced to the English Compromise. Davis did not renounce his allegiance to the Democratic Party, according to Etcheson, and only accepted Republican support because they adopted popular sovereignty principles.

⁶⁰Rodgers, "Liberty, Will, and Violence," 136. The Seventh Congressional District was particularly competitive and the lack of an official candidate in the field represented a major concession by Republicans.

⁶¹*New Albany Daily Ledger*, July 3, 1858.

⁶²Crittenden was an ex-Whig and affiliate of Henry Clay who had served as Millard Fillmore's attorney general. Albert Kirwan, *John J. Crittenden: The Struggle for the Union* (Lexington, Ky., 1962), 333-38; J. B. Jaquess to J. J. Crittenden, March 1, 1858, John Jordan Crittenden Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁶³E. M. Huntington to J. J. Crittenden, March 21, 1858, John Jordan Crittenden Papers.

⁶⁴Isaac Rector to Henry S. Lane, August 28, 1858, Henry S. Lane Papers.

American platform,” claimed one editor, who also labeled those Americans who opposed the administration “at heart, abolitionists.”⁶⁵

The most successful Republican efforts to attract American Party voters took place in Indiana’s Third Congressional District, located along the Ohio River. The district had elected a Democrat in every election, save one, since 1842, but also had large pockets of American Party support in 1856.⁶⁶ The core of this sentiment lay with a generation of ex-Whigs, many with Kentucky antecedents, who dominated the politics of towns including Bloomington, Madison, Seymour, and Vevay. In 1856, Republicans had largely ignored this district.⁶⁷ In 1858, as part of their broader strategy to contest southern Indiana, Republicans nominated William McKee Dunn—a native of Hanover, in Jefferson County—whose family had long-standing ties to the area. Dunn’s personal narrative as the son of family farmers who migrated to Indiana from Kentucky due to their anti-slavery sentiments, mirrored those of many of the district’s electorate.⁶⁸ Upon accepting the nomination, Dunn requested Henry Lane as an additional speaker to help cover the district.⁶⁹ Over the course of the summer, Lane crisscrossed the region addressing American Party enclaves with his particular conservative brand of Republicanism. The party received an unexpected gift late in the campaign when Douglas Democrats decided to field their own candidate, George W. Carr, ensuring a divided opposition. Dunn ultimately prevailed over his closest Democratic competitor by one thousand votes, and Republican vote totals surpassed 1856 levels in every county in the district.⁷⁰

⁶⁵*New Albany Daily Ledger*, August 24, 1858.

⁶⁶The Third District had been redrawn by a Democratic General Assembly in 1851 to favor their party. Prior to the redistricting the district was very competitive with large pockets of Whig support particularly in Jackson, Lawrence, Monroe, and Switzerland counties. In the 1856 presidential election these four counties voted 2248 to 1505 in favor of the American Party over the Republican Party.

⁶⁷Jesse T. Cox to Henry S. Lane, July 3, 1856, Lane-Elston Family Papers. Cox wrote Lane, “Come to Bloomington and convince old line Whigs to support Fremont, most are inclined to vote Fillmore... we must do something to reconcile some of our old line Whigs and especially in the southern part of the state.”

⁶⁸William W. Woollen, *William McKee Dunn, Brigadier General USA: A Memoir* (New York, 1888), 39-45.

⁶⁹Dunn’s schedule for Lane included speeches at Vernon, Columbus, Seymour, Madison, and Vevay. William M. Dunn to Henry S. Lane, September 1, 1858, Henry S. Lane Papers.

⁷⁰The vote total from the Third District read 8385 for Hughes (D), 9363 for Dunn (R), and 1432 for Carr (ALD). In Jackson, Lawrence, Monroe, and Switzerland Counties, Republicans succeeded in winning over large numbers of American Party voters who had opposed them two years earlier. In 1856, the combined American and Republican vote in these four counties was 3663. In 1858, the total Republican vote in these same counties was 4069.

Lane's efforts among southern Indiana's conservative ex-Whigs did not escape the notice of Illinois Republicans. Unlike their Indiana counterparts, they affirmed the 1856 Philadelphia platform and shunned cooperation with Douglas Democrats, supporting Abraham Lincoln's campaign against Douglas and his repudiation of popular sovereignty as a means to prevent the spread of slavery.⁷¹ The strategy galvanized the Republican base but did little to attract American Party voters.⁷² However, Crittenden's support of Douglas in the Senate had deeply impressed American Party loyalists, and Lane was asked to address specifically these constituencies in central Illinois.⁷³ In Springfield, Illinois, Lane was to be joined by Thomas Corwin, the ex-Whig governor of Ohio, to further these efforts.⁷⁴ Lane could not prevent the re-election of Douglas, but he left the state with a very positive impression of Lincoln. Lincoln's fall 1859 midwestern speaking tour included a stop in Indianapolis, where he spoke with Lane in a pre-arranged meeting.⁷⁵ The exact nature of the discussion is not known, but Lane must have emerged further encouraged about Lincoln's electability in Indiana.

The October 1858 election resulted in substantial victories for the anti-Bright coalition. Republicans were the biggest winners, increasing their congressional delegation from five to seven, including the highly satisfying victory in the Third District. Two anti-Lecompton Democrats were elected, Holman in the Fourth District and Davis in the Seventh. Only two pro-administration Democrats were elected, incumbents William H. English in the Second District and William E. Niblack in the First. In the General Assembly a similar scene played out. The coalition held

⁷¹Guelzo, *Lincoln and Douglas*, 273-75, 281-84.

⁷²1856 Illinois vote tallies read 106,496 for Buchanan (D), 96,232 for Frémont (R), and 37,484 for Fillmore (A). See Donald R. Deskins, Sherman C. Puckett, and Hanes Walton, *Presidential Elections, 1789-2008: County, State and National Mapping of Election Data* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 2010), 161.

⁷³Jason Somers to Henry S. Lane, September 15, 1858 [typescript], Henry S. Lane Papers. Lane was asked to speak in an area known as the "Whig belt" of central Illinois, including stops in Urbana, Decatur, Bloomington, Paris, and Springfield.

⁷⁴G. M. Shipp to Henry S. Lane, October 12, 1858, Henry S. Lane Papers. Like Lane, Corwin claimed Kentucky antecedents and was perceived to be a conservative on issues of sectionalism and slavery expansion.

⁷⁵John Defrees to Henry S. Lane, September 15, 1859 [typescript], Henry S. Lane Papers.

an absolute majority over Bright's supporters.⁷⁶ The only solace for Jesse Bright and his machine lay in the state ticket, in which the original slate of candidates nominated in January all won by comfortable majorities. Douglas Democrats had not offered up their own set of candidates for state offices—their anger was directed at party leadership over national policy.⁷⁷

The editor of the *New Albany Daily Ledger* mistakenly trumpeted the victory of the state ticket as proof that Democrats “remained ascendant” in Indiana. Divisions had damaged the party, he admitted, but now Democrats could expect unity in the 1860 election.⁷⁸ The work of the coalition, however, was not yet over. At the end of October, Defrees, editor of the pro-Republican *Indianapolis Daily State Journal*, wrote John G. Davis about the possibility of replacing Bright and Fitch with new Senate candidates. Defrees called for a “united action of all the opposition” and a “spirit of liberality” to capitalize upon the coalition's victory. He strongly insinuated that Republicans would support a Douglas Democrat for one of the Senate seats:

The fraudulent election of Bright and Fitch must be repudiated by a strong joint resolution. State rights and sovereignty must be asserted in as strong language as possible. Two gentlemen must be sent to Washington to oust if possible the pretenders, who now disgrace their seats in the US Senate. Whether it can be done or not it will have the effect to hold the issue up and serve of all honest men of all parties. Should one of these men be an anti-Lecompton Democrat? If so who?⁷⁹

⁷⁶In the House, Democrats held forty-six seats, Republicans forty-six, anti-Lecompton Democrats six, and Americans four. In the Senate, Democrats held twenty-two seats, Republicans twenty-four, anti-Lecompton Democrats three, and Americans one. Douglas Democrats and Americans held the balance of power in the state legislature. Charles Calhoun, et al., eds., *A Biographical Directory of the Indiana General Assembly: Volume I, 1816-1899* (Indianapolis, Ind., 1980), 516-18.

⁷⁷H. K. Wilson to John G. Davis, “Letters to John G. Davis,” 203-204. Wilson remarked, “I fear for our ticket, the Candidates will have to take the field on the platform as interpreted by them, won't it be rich! Bright and Fitch repudiating and the candidates at home advocating the doctrine of popular sovereignty as held by Mr. Douglas.”

⁷⁸*New Albany Daily Ledger*, October 19, 1858. One of the most influential Democratic sheets in southern Indiana, the *Daily Ledger* trod a fine line between support for popular sovereignty and loyalty to Senator Bright. Located in English's district, the *Daily Ledger* was naturally a vociferous supporter of the English Compromise Bill and heralded his re-election.

⁷⁹John D. Defrees to John G. Davis, October 30, 1858, John G. Davis Papers.



John D. Defrees, 1865. Defrees, editor of the pro-Republican *Indianapolis Daily State Journal*, was an influential voice in the party for a coalition with Douglas Democrats over their shared interests.

Courtesy, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division

He neglected to add that his party, still smarting from the 1857 election, intended to keep one seat for themselves.

Henry S. Lane's rising celebrity almost guaranteed his nomination by the Republicans.⁸⁰ Some American Party leaders now hoped that Lane would use his influence in their favor. W. K. Edwards and others believed that nominating Richard W. Thompson, leader of the Indiana Americans, would unite the two parties for the 1860 presidential election. Edwards stated that Douglas Democrats "ought to be satisfied with the Agents of State and a Clerkship or two."⁸¹ Lane coolly declined, expressing concern that some Republicans would not support an American Party candidate for the office.⁸² Stung by this response, Americans withdrew from the coalition, sending Lane scrambling to assuage bruised egos. American Party contributions to the coalition, he wrote to Edwards, were valuable and necessary to "overthrow the present weak and wicked administration" and place in power "sound, honest and conservative men, whose positions, talents, and antecedents will give the country assurance of a return to the principles of our fathers." Lane reminded him that only through unified efforts could the current administration and its supporters be replaced. He recognized the autonomy of the Americans and hoped for their continued friendship.⁸³ The episode exposed the difficulties of managing a coalition composed of such diverse interests. Republicans had made substantial gains among American Party voters but would need continued outreach to secure their votes in 1860.

Republicans and Douglas Democrats coalesced to challenge the elections of Bright and Fitch after Democratic senators loyal to President Buchanan removed Douglas as chairman of the Committee on Territories.⁸⁴

⁸⁰J. W. Gordon to Henry S. Lane, October 20, 1858; John D. Defrees to Henry S. Lane, November 1, 1858 [typescript], both in Henry S. Lane Papers; John D. Defrees to Henry S. Lane, October 27, 1858, Lane-Elston Family Papers.

⁸¹W. K. Edwards to Henry S. Lane, October 30, 1858, Henry S. Lane Papers.

⁸²Henry S. Lane to William K. Edwards, November 2, 1858, Henry S. Lane Papers. Lane claimed he did not know Thompson's politics thoroughly enough to discern if he would unite all elements of the opposition.

⁸³Henry S. Lane to William K. Edwards, January 2, 1859, Lane-Elston Family Papers. Lane wrote, "We can neither carry Indiana nor the U.S. on a strictly Republican basis, and still I have no doubt that there is a vast majority of the American people opposed to Lecomptonism in all its forms, if the opposition can be made available and it surely can without any sacrifice of principle on the part of any one, if we listen to the voice of patriotism rather than to the suggestions of party spirit and party pride."

⁸⁴John D. Defrees to Henry S. Lane, December 13, 1858, Henry S. Lane Papers.

On December 22, 1858, the Indiana legislature went into joint session and elected Republican Henry S. Lane and Douglas Democrat William M. McCarty. On January 14, 1859, another joint session ratified a memorial to be presented to the U. S. Senate that introduced the candidates, recounted the proceedings that had resulted in the “bogus” election of Bright and Fitch, and called for their removal.⁸⁵

Lane and McCarty’s arrival in Washington, D.C., reopened the controversy that had surrounded the seating of Bright and Fitch. In 1857, the Senate had accepted the contested credentials and referred the question of legality to the Senate Judiciary Committee. The committee, composed of five Democrats and two Republicans, eventually ruled the election legitimate but did not immediately seat Bright and Fitch, ardent champions of the administration in the Lecompton debates. On June 12, 1858, two days before the session adjourned, the Senate voted on party lines to formally seat the two, with Douglas voting against. In the context of the debates over Lecompton, the admission of the two Hoosiers was perceived as quid pro quo for their loyalty to Buchanan.⁸⁶

On January 17, 1858, the Indiana memorial was presented to Vice President John Breckenridge to be laid before the Senate. On January 24, the Senate referred the memorial to the same Judiciary Committee that had awarded the Indiana seats to Bright and Fitch. Douglas announced his support for Lane and McCarty and offered a motion to allow the men to present individual arguments on their own behalf. On February 3, the Judiciary Committee announced that no U. S. Senate vacancy existed in Indiana; that the elections of Lane and McCarty were void; and that the men could not speak before the committee. Lane and McCarty’s supporters argued against the ruling for a week to no avail. The incident drew considerable attention from the press, temporarily thrusting Lane and McCarty into the national spotlight. After their return home, Republican leaders invited the discouraged Lane to an Indianapolis rally that included a reading of the resolutions adopted by the legislature, a recounting of all the “facts” of the contested election, and a concluding series of speeches at the Masonic Hall. Defrees wrote to Lane, assuring him that the people of Indiana were anxious to voice their indignation at the way Lane had

⁸⁵Office of the Secretary of the Senate, James H. Vawter to Henry S. Lane, December 22, 1858, Henry S. Lane Papers. McCarty, a prominent Democratic lawyer, railroad promoter, and Mexican War veteran from Franklin County, had chaired the February 1858 Democratic State Convention.

⁸⁶Nichols, *The Disruption of American Democracy*, 176-81. The vote to seat Bright and Fitch was 30 to 23.

been treated by the Senate. He asked Lane to use the proceedings to jump start the Republican campaign for 1860, suggesting that Republican success would provide Lane with another opportunity to challenge the Senate and validate his personal honor.⁸⁷

On February 24, 1859, Lane spoke before a large and enthusiastic crowd in Indianapolis. He recounted the events of the last two years: the 1857 selection of Bright and Fitch, the attempt to foist Lecompton on the people of Kansas, the 1858 campaign that renounced the course of the administration, and his recent experience in Washington, D.C. He used the opportunity to articulate his personal commitment to popular sovereignty, states' rights, the non-extension of slavery, and reform of corrupt government. He took special care to embrace the Democrats who had worked closely with Republicans on the campaign trail and in the state legislature. Heaping scorn on the Buchanan administration and on Jesse Bright and his Senate supporters, he accused them of betraying the democratic heritage of Thomas Jefferson and Andrew Jackson and cynically dividing the nation over sectional issues for the sake of maintaining power. Lane consciously minimized differences between Republicans and Douglas Democrats, stating that the two groups had more in common with one another than not.⁸⁸

Lane characterized the Republican Party as pragmatic, open, and essentially a party of limited but necessary reform. The party, he reminded listeners, grew out of the repeal of the Missouri Compromise and the efforts of ultra-southern politicians to extend slavery into the free territories—a significant break from the intentions of the Revolutionary generation. Lane appealed to the tradition of compromise among the states, dutifully pledging to protect slavery “where it exists by virtue of positive law and under constitutional sanctions.” Republicans were constitutionally bound to support territorial populations that lawfully enacted measures to protect slave property. However, the “free peoples of the West” were not about to stand idle and allow corrupt politicians to impose an unwanted institution upon a vulnerable population. “Whilst we demand justice we are ready to do justice,” Lane continued, “while we maintain our rights under the constitution we will not forget the duty we owe to our sister republics in the confederacy.” Lane optimistically looked to the future, when everyone

⁸⁷John D. Defrees to Henry S. Lane, February 21, 1859, Henry S. Lane Papers.

⁸⁸Speech at Indianapolis, February 24, 1859 [typescript], Henry S. Lane Papers.

who stood opposed to the Buchanan administration would unite.⁸⁹ If the whole of the opposition patriotically rallied for the sake of the country, Lane concluded, then victory would prove certain.

The speech launched Lane's political star, and many Republicans now saw him as the party's best candidate for governor in 1860. The extensive canvass associated with the campaign would put Lane in all corners of the state, including the important southern counties whose voters were attracted to Lane's conservative interpretation of Republicanism. Four years earlier, Oliver P. Morton had failed to rally "the full Whig vote" of the state, particularly in the southern counties. Lane's election as governor was a "fixed fact," one friend in Parke County told him, while Morton's success was far less certain.⁹⁰ Moreover, Lane's candidacy gave the party the best chance to deliver Indiana's electoral votes to their presidential nominee.

The events of 1857 to 1859 reveal three important facts regarding Indiana politics and political culture on the eve of the Civil War. First, the national debates over the viability of the Lecompton Constitution provided a space for anti-Bright Democrats to coalesce and assert their independence against his leadership. By focusing on Lecompton as the sole justification for the Democratic rupture, historians ignore the long history of intra-party factionalism that had simmered at the state level. Since his ascension to the U. S. Senate in 1844, Bright had endeavored to assert control over the Democratic state machine. By 1857, this tireless political maneuvering finally elevated him to a position of unrivaled dominance. His betrayals of those who stood in his way, including popular Democrats like Joseph Wright and Stephen Douglas, alienated large portions of the party. Rebellious Democrats rejected Bright's support of Lecompton because they perceived him as opportunistic and self-seeking. Even after passage of the English Compromise ensured that Lecompton would face a popular vote, hostility towards Bright did not abate.⁹¹ Anti-Bright Democrats continued their coalitions with Repub-

⁸⁹Ibid. Lane fully expected future coalescence with "anti-Lecompton Democrats who recently battled with us for the true and ever living principle of States rights and popular sovereignty."

⁹⁰William Nofsinger to Henry S. Lane, November 28, 1859, Lane-Elston Family Papers.

⁹¹Many historians take the mainline Republican view of the English Bill as a "bribe" designed to force slavery on the settlers of Kansas. See, for example, Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln* (New York, 2005), 718-19. A more suitable view is to see the compromise as an effort to breach the Democratic Party divide. English's Indiana nativity and the depth of division in the state party make this point all the more conspicuous.

licans, defeating Bright-backed candidates and momentarily threatening Bright's security in the Senate. That Bright repulsed these efforts to unseat him highlights the depth of his power. Reconciliation, however, would remain elusive, and the Indiana Democratic Party would remain divided for the election of 1860.⁹²

Bright's unapologetically pro-southern position on Lecompton further cemented Douglas Democrats' opposition. Northern Democrats in the late 1850s were proud that their party represented interests across sectional lines.⁹³ Popular sovereignty, with its commitment to local self-determination and majority rule, found adherents in all sections of the nation. Popular sovereignty protected communities from undue unilateral influence from the federal government—in direct contrast to the 1856 Republican platform—and allowed settlers to shape internal rules based on local custom and tradition, a point Douglas often emphasized, linking jurisprudential uniformity with despotism.

Legal diversity and the choices it engendered were particularly important with reference to race. Many Democrats unquestioningly regarded blacks as racial inferiors and wished to exclude them from the West. Congressional support of Lecompton, however, prevented Kansans from choosing their communities' preferred racial compositions.⁹⁴ Hoosiers could look to their own territorial history as proof that popular sovereignty could achieve preferred racial composition and national harmony.⁹⁵ Thus Bright's refusal of choice to the people of Kansas for the sake of appeasing the South was unacceptable.⁹⁶

⁹²A. James Fuller placed considerable influence on Democratic divisions as contributing to Republican victory in 1860. A. James Fuller, "The Election of 1860 and Political Realignment Theory: Indiana as a Case Study," in *The Election of 1860 Reconsidered*, ed. A. James Fuller (Kent, Ohio, 2013), 197-201, 217-18.

⁹³Baker, *Affairs of Party*, 183-88, 317-27; Martin H. Quit, *Stephen A. Douglas and Antebellum Democracy* (New York, 2012), 124-28.

⁹⁴Thomas E. Rodgers emphasizes this point of local communities defending their values by engaging in national politics. Rodgers, "Saving the Republic," 178-79.

⁹⁵For a recent argument that popular sovereignty rather than the anti-slavery provisions of the Northwest Ordinance kept the institution out of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, see John Craig Hammond, *Slavery, Freedom, and Expansion in the Early American West* (Charlottesville, Va., 2007).

⁹⁶James L. Huston, *Calculating the Value of the Union: Slavery, Property Rights, and the Economic Origins of the Civil War* (Chapel Hill, N. C., 2003), 225. Huston's summation of the 1858 elections describes the debates surrounding the issue of Lecompton and popular sovereignty as an "anomaly," and tangential to the main concerns of the contest, which were economic and related to the Panic of 1857.

Second, these events suggest that scholars should reassess the nature and pervasiveness of free soil ideology among Indiana Republicans. Eric Foner's dominant *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men* argued that free soil ideology articulated a belief that the North and South were two separate and distinct societies with principles, concerns, and goals in acute, if not dire, conflict with one another.⁹⁷ However, in his effort to show a North unified by free soil ideology that elected Lincoln in 1860, Foner minimized internal party divisions. Foner's work has led scores of historians to assert that those who voted Republican did so with the belief that the party alone provided the necessary means to stop the expansion of slavery.

The Indiana Republican Party's decision to endorse popular sovereignty should prompt consideration of this assertion. Foner acknowledged the shift, characterizing it as a Republican attempt to curry favor with anti-administration southerners. In the short term, however, the move presented a practical opportunity for the party to improve relations with hostile or suspicious voters at the local level. Simply put, the Democratic split presented an opportunity which Republicans had to seize. Popular sovereignty became just another strategy designed to advance free-soil objectives.⁹⁸

Republicans never abandoned popular sovereignty as a strategy. Following Henry S. Lane's Indianapolis speech in February 1859, party leaders continued to endorse the issue.⁹⁹ When Lincoln visited Indianapolis that September, he spent considerable time responding to contentions that popular sovereignty and Republicanism could co-exist.¹⁰⁰ The speech, which favored congressional non-extension, was not warmly remembered by some party organizers. John Defrees refused to abandon the position, arguing adherence to congressional non-extension to be "inexpedient," "provocative" to the South, and a "burden" on the upcoming campaign.¹⁰¹ The 1860 state nominating convention did not repudiate popular sovereignty, instead arguing against the idea that the Constitution carried and

⁹⁷Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men*, 69-72. This argument known as the "Irrepressible Conflict" thesis claims that differences between slave and free sections of the nation were so pronounced that secession and war were all but inevitable.

⁹⁸*Ibid.*, 204-205.

⁹⁹*Indianapolis State Journal*, May 13, June 2, 1859.

¹⁰⁰"Lincoln's Speech at Indianapolis, Indiana," Roy P. Basler, *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* (8 vols., New Brunswick, N. J., 1953), 3:464-70.

¹⁰¹*Indianapolis Daily Atlas*, October 22, 1859.

protected slavery into territories. Slavery, it argued, remained a creation of local laws, crafted by local constituencies which could also exclude the institution from entering a territory.¹⁰² Ultimately, the nomination of Douglas in June 1860 by Northern Democrats upon an explicit popular sovereignty platform closed the door on fusion.

Lastly, the events revealed the centrality of Henry S. Lane to any future Republican victory in Indiana. Lane inspired confidence among constituencies that were weakly affiliated, or outright hostile, to Republicans, especially conservative ex-Whigs with ties to the South. Throughout the winter of 1859, Lane received dozens of letters requesting that he allow his name to be put forth for governor. "We in this part of Indiana are to a man," wrote a self-identified Whig from the Ohio River town of Vevay, "in favor of you for the next candidate for Governor of Indiana."¹⁰³ In Harrison County, also along the Ohio River, Republicans requested that Lane attend their county convention: "We are satisfied that you can do us more good than any other man in the state... We know that early work is absolutely necessary in this region and a speech from you in exposition of Republican doctrines now would be of infinite service."¹⁰⁴ New Albany Republicans, across the river from Louisville, predicted Lane would "bring the undivided vote of Southern Indiana," while "Morton will not go here because of the American element."¹⁰⁵ Sentiments from Terre Haute, an American Party stronghold in 1856, were similar: "Whigs and Americans in the convention....recommended you for Governor. You begin 5-10 thousand votes stronger than Morton... many old Whigs will vote for you who would otherwise hold back."¹⁰⁶ In portions of the state where Republicans had been weakest in 1856, voters were clamoring for Lane to run.

Defrees led the call for Lane's nomination, using the *Daily Atlas* as his sounding board. First and foremost, Defrees claimed, Lane would appeal to the substantial number of ex-Clay Whigs in the region. Born in Kentucky, he still maintained strong familial ties to his native state. His anti-slavery politics, while firm, were non-inflammatory and often

¹⁰²Henry William, *State Platforms of the Two Dominant Political Parties in Indiana, 1850-1900* (Indianapolis, Ind., 1902), 20-21.

¹⁰³Joseph Moore to Henry S. Lane, November 28, 1859, Henry S. Lane Papers.

¹⁰⁴Thomas Slaughter to Henry S. Lane, January 24, 1860, Henry S. Lane Papers.

¹⁰⁵W. T. Otto to Henry S. Lane, January 31, 1860, Henry S. Lane Papers.

¹⁰⁶William K. Edwards to Henry S. Lane, February 13, 1860, Henry S. Lane Papers.

conciliatory towards the South. His prominence within the Methodist Church would energize an important and historically active segment of the electorate. His honorable and patriotic service in the Mexican War revealed him as a man of disinterested character and self-sacrifice as well as courage and decisiveness. If prior Republican losses were attributable to perceived anti-southern attitudes, sectionalism on the slavery issues, and lack of engagement with voters in the southern counties, then Lane's candidacy would prove a powerful tonic.¹⁰⁷

Lane proved a reluctant candidate, writing to John Hanna:

I do hope and pray that the convention may select Mr. Morton or someone else to run the race for governor and let me canvass the state under the endorsement of the convention for the Senate of the United States. I think that in that way I could do as much for our party success as any other. Neither the canvass for governor nor the office has any charms for me while on the other hand I should like to vindicate the honor of the state and to rebuke the United States Senate by a successful canvas for the place now wrongfully held by Dr. Fitch. I have no disguise with you, these are my wishes and my opinion frankly expressed.¹⁰⁸

After convincing him to accept the nomination, Republicans used their candidate to the greatest possible effect. Lane focused heavily on state political issues during his canvass. Highlighting a decade-long record of Democratic extravagance, corruption, and mismanagement, he hammered the party on issues of accountability and good governance.¹⁰⁹ When forced to address the slavery issue, Lane exhibited his characteristic conservatism, ridiculing accusations of abolitionism, refuting assertions

¹⁰⁷*Indianapolis Daily Atlas*, September 7, November 9, 1859.

¹⁰⁸Henry S. Lane to John Hanna, November 16, 1859 [typescript], John Harris Hanna Papers, Kentucky Historical Society, Frankfort, Kentucky.

¹⁰⁹*Campaigning in Indiana: Joint Debate of Messrs. Lane & Hendricks, The Politics of the State and Nation Discussed*, Pamphlet Collection, Indiana Historical Society. See also Mark W. Summers, *The Plundering Generation: Corruption and the Crisis of the Union, 1849-1861* (New York, 1987); and Fuller, "The Election of 1860 and Political Realignment Theory," 202-211. Fuller ties voter anxiety over corruption to the Panic of 1857. The monopoly of state offices held by Democrats during the 1850s plus the failure of temperance and nativist advocates to make meaningful reforms in 1854 and 1855 also contributed to a heightened awareness of corruption.

that slaveholding denigrated southerners, and marking John Brown as a felon who “very properly met a felon’s doom.” Such statements were more effective when uttered by a son of the South—a point of which Lane frequently reminded his audiences.¹¹⁰ His reputation as an engaging speaker drew large crowds, and a carnival-like atmosphere pervaded his stump schedule throughout the state.

Lane exerted a significant influence at the national convention in Chicago, where he endeavored to secure a presidential candidate who would not burden the Indiana state campaign.¹¹¹ Prior to the convention, Lane had offered no public endorsement but he viewed Lincoln more favorably than he did perceived radical New York senator William H. Seward. Lincoln and Lane were remarkably similar, with Kentucky-born Whig antecedents, late entrance to the Republican Party, and restrained positions on sectionalism and slavery.¹¹² Radical Republican Joshua Giddings of Ohio recalled a meeting with Lane the night before the nomination emphasizing the danger of the losing the American Party vote if Seward were selected.¹¹³ The next day, when Lincoln’s name was put forth, Murat Halstead of the *Cincinnati Commercial* reported that Lane leapt “upon a table, and swinging hat and cane, performed like an acrobat.” For all three rounds of balloting, Lane ensured that Lincoln secured the undivided support of the Indiana delegates. On the third round, Lincoln won the nomination amid chaotic and thunderous cheering. Energized by the outcome, he delivered a parting speech to the convention denouncing the dis-unionist sentiment of southern Democrats and predicting a ten-thousand-vote majority in Indiana.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰*Crawfordsville Journal*, March 8, 1860. In the southern portion of the state, Lane repeatedly referenced his Kentucky nativity and his political idol Henry Clay.

¹¹¹The state campaign went to the polls in October, one month before the national election. A loss in October would certainly portend one in November.

¹¹²I agree with Fuller’s assessment that the decision to go with Lane over Morton was a short-term strategy predicated on Lane’s ability to deliver more votes in southern Indiana. Fuller, “The Election of 1860 and Political Realignment Theory,” 201, 212-14, 218-19.

¹¹³Joshua Giddings to George W. Julian, May 25, 1860, Joshua Giddings–George W. Julian Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. According to Giddings, Lane declared that “it would be difficult and he felt improbable to carry your state for Seward but would much improve it for Lincoln.”

¹¹⁴Charles W. Johnson, *Proceedings of the First Three Republican National Conventions of 1856, 1860, and 1864* (Minneapolis, Minn., 1893), 165-66; Charles Roll, “Indiana’s Part in the Nomination of Abraham Lincoln for President in 1860,” *Indiana Magazine of History* 25 (March 1929), 11.

The elections in October and November resulted in sweeping Republican victories. Republicans elected their entire state ticket, majorities in both chambers of the General Assembly, and seven of eleven congressional candidates, and they awarded their crucial thirteen electoral votes to the Republicans. Lane received joyous letters of congratulation from all over the state. "Lincoln as the nominee was the source of our success," wrote a Republican from Knox County.¹¹⁵ Fort Wayne Republicans echoed similar sentiments: "Lincoln at the top of the ticket redeemed the state... Allen County is no longer the banner county of the Democracy that banner must go to the pocket counties."¹¹⁶ One Republican highlighted the widespread support from old-line Whigs confessing that "no man since Henry Clay ever had in this state such friends as you have!"¹¹⁷

Secession and the war ushered in a new political era. The abolition of slavery ended the tradition of grand political compromise based on differing sectional institutions. Instead, a prevailing rural white evangelical identity emerged in the region, sometimes known today by the cultural designation "Kentuckiana." However, Kentuckians, increasingly unhappy with the postwar trajectory of the nation, gradually affiliated their state with the Confederate myth of the "Lost Cause," thereby staking their cultural loyalty to the vanquished South rather than the victorious North.¹¹⁸ Southern Indianans, despite similar uncertainty over postwar trends towards industrialization, urbanization, and immigration, never expressed sympathy for the Confederacy or its leaders. Historian James Madison has noted that residents of southern Indiana were proud of their contributions to the war effort, even if they only tentatively embraced the modernizing trends the war brought about. For their part, Indiana Democrats vigorously challenged Republican narratives about the meaning of the war, resulting in a rapid return to competitive two-party politics.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵Cyrus Allen to Henry S. Lane, October 11, 1860, Henry S. Lane Papers.

¹¹⁶I. L. Williams to Henry S. Lane, October 11, 1860, Lane-Elston Family Papers.

¹¹⁷M. L. Bundy to Henry S. Lane, October 15, 1860, Henry S. Lane Papers.

¹¹⁸Anne E. Marshall, *Creating a Confederate Kentucky: The Lost Cause and Civil War Memory in a Border State* (Chapel Hill, N. C., 2010).

¹¹⁹Post-Civil War attitudes and expressions of southern Indiana can be found in James Madison, *The Indiana Way* (Bloomington, Ind., 1986); Keith A. Erekson, *Everybody's History: Indiana's Lincoln Inquiry and the Quest to Reclaim a President's Past* (Amherst, Mass., 2012).

As a result of the 1860 elections, Indiana's battleground status would only be deepened. In order to secure Indiana's electoral votes in the decades following the Civil War, national parties nominated one presidential candidate and six vice-presidential candidates with ties to Indiana. As they did so, the locus of economic and political power in the state dramatically shifted northward. Northern Indiana became a major industrial and manufacturing center, serving the Great Lakes trade depots of Detroit and Chicago. The southern half of the state remained largely agricultural; its counties lost population or remained static. With southern Indiana no longer key to the balance of power between the two parties, Republicans effectively abandoned the region to generations of Democratic rule. Even postwar efforts to redistrict the region more favorably to Republican candidates could not secure a stable presence. Republicans would not return to southern Indiana with any consistency until the 1960s.

