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Amos Lane, Advocate of Western Democracy

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THE CALL OF THE WEST

In the quarter-century following the War of 1812, Amos Lane was a familiar figure in southeastern Indiana as he traveled the ill-kept roads and bridle-paths of the third judicial circuit, astride his sixty-dollar horse, "Big Sorrel." The fashionable eel-skin queue and "wilted rorum hat" identified him as an itinerant attorney. Eager for political advancement, he mingled in the court yard with tillers of the soil and hewers of wood and won a seat in the lower branch of the first state legislature, which elevated him to the speakership at its second session. A weathervane in politics, he renounced the nationalism of Adams and Clay for the more popular democracy of Andrew Jackson. Although he boasted "That he wore no collar—no man's yoke," so ardently did he defend his hero in congress that he earned the sobriquet of "Wheel Horse." He surpassed his idol in one respect at least; he could swear mightier oaths than even the proficient Jackson. A contemporary asserted that when he mounted the stump and hurled sarcasm and invective at his political opponents, he was "heard to grit and grind his teeth together fifty yards."¹ Indeed his long and loud ebullient tirades annoyed his enemies, and they dubbed him "the Ajax Telamon of the Party." Like his Greek prototype, he was always ready to defend his personal honor, although it is not of record that he ever served in the army.

Amos Lane was not numbered among the great men of his generation, yet as an advocate of western democracy his political career is a fascinating one. He belonged to that stream

¹ Omar F. Roberts, "The Lane Family," in the *Kansas Historical Collections*, XVI, 30. This sketch was dated at Aurora, Indiana, September 17, 1881, and was first published in the *Boone County* (Kentucky) *Recorder*.

of emigrants from the East which "made the central west a political and social power" in the 'thirties. They were "poor or of moderate means, to be sure, but industrious, intelligent, brave, resourceful, seeking in the new lands a free political life and wider industrial opportunity."² The influences of the western wilderness accentuated their aggressiveness and boldness of spirit, and they gave political expression to democratic ideals.

Lane was born near Aurora, Cayuga county, New York. The meagre evidence concerning the date of his birth is conflicting. Dearborn county histories record it as March 1, 1778.³ A sketch of his career which appeared at the time of his death in the Lawrenceburgh *Register*, edited by a son, George W. Lane, places the date exactly one year later.⁴ Amos Lane himself, writing in 1831, implies that he was born in 1785.⁵ His "first fourteen years", he informs us, "were devoted to the assistance of a Father in the cultivation of a farm." He was then apprenticed to a millwright whom he served four years. After trying his hand at school teaching during his nineteenth year,⁶ he began the study of law as a clerk in the office of Joseph L. Richardson at Levanna, a few miles north of Aurora. He remained in that office from September 12, 1803, until February 21, 1805, when he was granted a certificate of good moral character.⁷ Lane then entered the law office of Daniel Shepard at Aurora, and there continued his study until August 7 of the same year.⁸ Shepard awarded him a certificate of character and a letter of introduction to his brother-in-law, Jacob Brown, a resident of St. Lawrence county in the northern part of the state. "The bearer hereof", ran the letter, "has for some time been reading in my office; and is now . . . setting out on a tour in the county of Saint Lawrence, with a view of making a permanent residence in some part of that county, in the practice of law. . . . Any favor you may be able to render him, will be pleasing to

² William MacDonald, *Jacksonian Democracy* (A. B. Hart, ed. *The American Nation: A History*, XV, New York, 1906), 11.

³ Archibald Shaw, ed., *History of Dearborn County, Indiana* (Indianapolis, 1915), 346; *History of Dearborn and Ohio Counties, Indiana* (Chicago, 1885), 150.

⁴ Lawrenceburgh *Register*, quoted in the *Indiana State Sentinel* (Indianapolis), Sept. 13, 1849.

⁵ *Indiana Palladium* (Lawrenceburg), March 12, 1831.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*, Oct. 2, 1830.

⁸ *Ibid.*

us."⁹ Lane did not find Brown, but tarried until the autumn of 1806 at Ogdensburg on the St. Lawrence river,¹⁰ and was there admitted to the bar.¹¹

Lane's ambition to become a lawyer was strengthened by his marriage in 1804 to a capable woman, Mrs. Mary Howes, a daughter of the Revolutionary veteran, John Foote. Mrs. Lane was born in Connecticut of Puritan stock, and belonged to a prominent family of that state.¹² It is probable that she lived at Ogdensburg at the time of her marriage.¹³

It was some time before Lane found a satisfactory location. He returned to Aurora in 1806, and the following year emigrated to Steubenville in eastern Ohio, and after a year's residence there, to Lawrenceburg, Indiana Territory.¹⁴ He sought admission to the Dearborn county bar, but his application was rejected, he later explained, because "he was an ardent friend of Thomas Jefferson." The county officials were Federalists and "were not inclined to show favor to anyone who was not of their household of faith",¹⁵ Older accounts state that Lane was so "incensed at this rebuff" that he immediately crossed the Ohio river to the Kentucky side. It is of record, however, that the Dearborn court of common pleas at its April term, 1810, certified "that Amos Lane, a citizen of . . . this territory, is of good moral character."¹⁶ However that may be, Lane moved to a certain Judge Piatt's farm in Boone county, Kentucky. He soon became dissatisfied, built a large canoe and, accompanied by his wife, floated his scanty household goods some fifty miles down the Ohio river to Carrollton, on the Kentucky side. The place did not appeal to him so he returned at once to Boone county and settled at Touseytown, directly opposite Lawrenceburg. Here the struggle for existence reached a crisis, and Mrs. Lane, who had had unusual educational advantages in Connecticut, opened a school. In 1812 the Lanes moved to Burlington, the county seat of Boone, where Mrs. Lane again taught school and had enrolled at one

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Lawrenceburgh Register, quoted in the *Indiana State Sentinel*, Sept. 13, 1849.

¹² John Speer, *Life of Gen. James H. Lane* (Garden City, Kansas, 1896), 10.

¹³ *History of Dearborn and Ohio Counties*, 805.

¹⁴ *Indiana Palladium*, Oct. 2, 1830. The Lanes stopped at Cincinnati for a short time, and arrived at Lawrenceburg, March 4, 1808.

¹⁵ Roberts, *loc. cit.*, XVI, 29.

¹⁶ *Indiana Palladium*, Oct. 2, 1830.

time seventy pupils.¹⁷ Lane was admitted to the bar and soon had both civil and criminal practice. Absalom Graves, clerk of the Boone county circuit court, attested that "Lane performed all his professional duties with independence, ability and honest integrity, and with an unusual degree of attention, industry and perseverance; and with great success."¹⁸

Lane returned to Lawrenceburg in 1814 and had no trouble when he again sought admission to the bar. It was said that the political situation had changed, but James Dill, who had earlier opposed his application for a license to practice law, was in 1814 clerk of the Dearborn county circuit court.

Southeastern Indiana was a pioneer community when the Lanes emigrated to the Ohio valley. Dearborn county, of which Lawrenceburg was the seat of justice, was organized in 1803 by Governor William Henry Harrison, and named in honor of the secretary of war, General Henry Dearborn.¹⁹ It was the third county to be created,²⁰ and embraced the "Gore", as the triangular area stretching from the Ohio river to Fort Recovery was called.²¹ Lawrenceburg was laid out in April, 1802, and was situated about twenty-three miles below Cincinnati, near the mouth of the Big Miami river. When Lane arrived in 1808 there were a dozen log cabins, a ferry house, a log jail which also housed the jailor, a log tavern, a blacksmith shop, a general store, and a chairmaker's cabin. The houses were built of buckeye logs, and presented "quite a picturesque appearance during the first year of their erection, [as] young shoots would put forth from every log, and give them the appearance of a mass of green bushes." A brick court house was erected in 1810, and by 1813 there were two brick and five frame houses. The town then boasted a blacksmith, a shoemaker, a hatter, a wheelwright, a miller, an inn-keeper, a doctor, a school teacher, a jailor, a constable, and a justice of the peace.²² In 1818 Nuttall described it as a thriving town,²³ and the year following Timothy Flint expressed a similar opin-

¹⁷ For accounts of Lane's wanderings see: Roberts, *loc. cit.*, 29-30; Shaw, *ed. op. cit.*, 346; *History of Dearborn and Ohio Counties*, 150-151.

¹⁸ *Indiana Palladium*, Oct. 2, 1830.

¹⁹ *History of Dearborn and Ohio Counties*, 111.

²⁰ Knox and Clark counties had already been organized.

²¹ See Logan Esarey, *History of Indiana* (Indianapolis, 1918), I, 174, 177, 180.

²² *History of Dearborn and Ohio Counties*, 244-245.

²³ "Nuttall's Journal," quoted in R. G. Thwaites, *Early Western Travels* (Cleveland, 1905), XIII, 62.

ion.²⁴ About the same time Edmund Dana found there "a number of large elegant houses, built with brick, a large grist and saw mill, driven by four oxen, on an inclined plane wheel, a spacious cotton factory, driven by the same power, besides mechanic shops and other buildings, all erected within two years." He estimated the population to be 700 in 1819, and concluded that no town in the state had flourished so much during the past three years.²⁵

AN ITINERANT ATTORNEY

Two years after Amos Lane returned to Lawrenceburg, Indiana was admitted into the Union. The population then lived mainly along the Ohio river and up the Whitewater and Wabash valleys. The new state was divided into three judicial circuits. The third embraced the "Whitewater country" in the eastern part, and contained nearly one-half the population of 1816.²⁶ This district was thus described by O. H. Smith, an early circuit rider:

The country was new, sparsely settled, and being on the western frontier, the towns and villages were filled with Indians, trading their peltries, wild game and moccasins . . . with the settlers, for calicoes, whiskey, powder, lead, beads, and such other articles as met their fancy. The population of the country embraced by the circuit, was a hardy, fearless and generally honest, but more or less reckless people, such as are usually to be found advancing upon the frontiers from more civilized life, and consequently there were more collisions among them, more crimes committed calling for the action of the criminal courts, than is common in . . . the older States.²⁷

The judicial system was likewise primitive. The circuit court consisted of a presiding judge who traveled the circuit, and two associate or "side judges" elected in each county. Clerks though honest possessed few qualifications. Sheriffs were elected because of "their ability to run down and catch offenders", or because their voices enabled them "to call the jurors and witnesses from the woods, from the door of the

²⁴ "Flint's Letters from America," *idem*, IX, 158.

²⁵ Edmund Dana, "Geographical Sketches on the western country designed for Emigrants and settlers (1819)," quoted in Harlow Lindley, ed., *Indiana as Seen by Early Travelers* (Indianapolis, 1916), 203-204. Game was plentiful in the vicinity of Lawrenceburg. In 1817 a traveler "counted two bears, three deer, and upward of 100 turkeys" in traversing seven miles of Dearborn county.—*History of Dearborn and Ohio Counties*, 245.

²⁶ Leander J. Monks, ed., *Courts and Lawyers of Indiana* (Indianapolis, 1916), I, 59. The editor was assisted by Logan Esarey and Ernest V. Shockley in preparing this three-volume work. In 1816 the third circuit included Dearborn, Franklin, Wayne, Switzerland, and Jefferson counties.

²⁷ O. H. Smith, *Early Indiana Trials and Sketches* (Cincinnati, 1858), 5.

court building". But the "most important personages in the country . . . were the young lawyers, universally called 'squires' ". They wore eel-skin queues three feet long, and mingled among the people in the court yard with an air of superiority, as they electioneered for seats in the next legislature.²⁸

Notwithstanding spring thaws, swollen streams, and poor roads, the life of circuit riders was in many respects an enviable one. Travel was a liberal education in itself, and their varied experiences assured a cordial welcome at inns and taverns where they found "cheerful landlords and good-natured landladies." Their horses were the finest available, "trained to the cross-pole mud roads, and to swimming." Those used by the riders of the third circuit ranged in value from forty to ninety dollars.²⁹ Under an act of 1824 this itinerary stretched from the Ohio river to Fort Wayne, a distance of 150 miles.³⁰

In Lane's generation "the Dearborn county bar was the most ceremonious and pompous in the state",³¹ and included nearly a score of men who distinguished themselves in politics.³² Amos Lane "stood in the front ranks of the first generation of Indiana lawyers".³³ He "was tall and commanding, . . . his gestures easy and graceful, his enunciation distinct and deliberate."³⁴ Like his contemporary barristers he used "the appeal to the jury" effectively.³⁵ His success as a lawyer is revealed by the large number of cases he had on appeal before the Indiana supreme court. In the period from 1817 to 1845 he appeared on forty-six cases, twenty-seven times as plaintiff's attorney and nineteen times for the defendant. In twenty-eight cases he was sole counsel. Twenty-six were appealed from Dearborn county, eight from Franklin, three from Switzerland, two from Bartholomew, Decatur, and Jefferson, and one from Fayette, Ripley, and Wayne. It is

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 5-6.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 117-119.

³⁰ Monks, ed., *op. cit.*, I, 66-67.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 59. The Lawrenceburg court house was probably the finest in the state in 1816. "It was a two-story brick, the lower floor being used for the court room, and the upper for the juries."—*Ibid.* At this time court houses were usually frame or log buildings.

³² Such were Jesse L. Holman, William Hendricks, John Lawrence, Thomas Wardell, James Dill, Elijah Sparks, James Noble, J. B. Thomas, Moses Hitchcock, Stephen C. Stevens, Daniel C. Caswell, and Amos Lane.—*History of Dearborn and Ohio Counties*, 147.

³³ Monks, ed., *op. cit.*, I, 83.

³⁴ Smith, *op. cit.*, 87.

³⁵ Monks, ed. *op. cit.*, I, 66-67.

as Richmond. "Causes" of litigation in which he was retained³⁶ include assault, murder, slander, riot, award, ejectment, note, bond, contract, damages, real estate, taxes, trespass, forcible entry, trust, partnership, rent, bastardy, replevin.³⁷

One of Lane's most important cases, and the one which established his reputation as a criminal lawyer, was *Fuller vs. Warren*.³⁸ It was tried in the Dearborn circuit court in 1820, over which Judge Miles C. Eggleston, a young Virginia lawyer, presided. Amasa Fuller and Palmer Warren both proposed marriage to a young lady who accepted Warren. The rejected Fuller shot his successful rival. Lane and John Test appeared for the state; John Lawrence, Samuel J. Richardson, Daniel J. Caswell, Merritt S. Craig, and Charles Dewey served as counsel for the accused. "The evidence was positive and conclusive," said a contemporary circuit rider, "still the arguments of counsel occupied several days. Every appeal that it was possible to make to the jury by the able counsel for the prisoner, was fully met by the closing speech of Mr. Lane for the State." The jury found Fuller guilty of first degree murder, and the supreme court upheld the decision of the lower tribunal. The trial excited wide-spread interest.³⁹

From 1815 to 1823 Lane served as prosecuting attorney of Dearborn county.⁴⁰ In 1826 he succeeded O. H. Smith as prosecutor for the third judicial circuit.⁴¹ Under an act approved January 30, 1824, this official was appointed annually by the governor; his salary of \$250 was payable quarterly by the state treasury; and in addition he received a docket fee of \$5.00 for every criminal case successfully prosecuted. His duties were "to prosecute all pleas, complaints, indictments, pre-apparent that Lane traveled the circuit at least as far north

³⁶ Lane appeared on three cases in 1817, five in 1818, one in 1819, ten in 1820, three in 1822, four in 1825, one in 1826, two in 1828, three in 1829, two in 1831, four in 1832, two in 1833, four in 1843, and two in 1845.

³⁷ From the Supreme Court Docket Record, printed in Monks, ed., *op. cit.*, I, 210-244.

³⁸ Another case with which Lane was connected illustrates the petty origin of much litigation. A certain Isaac Jones sued Edward Harper of Connersville for \$2.50 damages, arising out of Harper's refusal to pay for a quarter's worth of beef which he claimed had made his family sick. The plaintiff was awarded twenty-five cents by a justice's court, but the case was carried on appeal to the circuit court, Judge Eggleston presiding. Amos Lane, James Noble, John Test, and James B. Ray appeared as counsel for Jones; Daniel J. Caswell, William W. Wick, and William C. Drew represented Harper. The jury returned a verdict for the defendant.—Smith, *op. cit.*, 11.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 8-9; *Indiana Oracle*, May 7, Aug. 15, 1820, quoted in *History of Dearborn and Ohio Counties*, 252-255; Monks, ed., *op. cit.*, I, 155.

⁴⁰ *Indiana Palladium*, Aug. 12, 1825, March 12, 1831.

⁴¹ *Indiana Palladium*, Aug. 26, 1826.

sentments, and suits of every discription, on the part of the State".⁴² An amendment, approved two years later, increased the tenure to two years, but reduced the salary to \$200 and the docket fee to \$2.50.⁴³ Lane was appointed to the office by Governor James B. Ray, and began his duties August 1, 1826.⁴⁴ But prosecuting attorneys under such a system were too powerful and independent. Governor Ray quarreled with the legislature, and a bill was passed which took the appointment out of the hands of the executive, and vested it in a joint session of the general assembly.⁴⁵ The bill was approved December 28, 1826, and two days later the legislature balloted on district attorneys. For the third circuit, Cyrus Finch received fifty-six votes, Lane thirteen, and eight were scattered. In only two of the five circuits were the incumbents appointed by the governor continued by the legislature.⁴⁶

Lane continued to practice law, and in 1827 he occupied an office in Lawrenceburg "next door to Mr. Hunt's Hotel". He notified "the public that he will *constantly* attend the Terms of the Supreme Court; the District Court of the United States, at Indianapolis; the Franklin, Dearborn, Switzerland and Ripley Circuit Courts; and any other Court in the State, on special application. That in the *future* his *undivided* and *persevering attention* and *talents* will be devoted to his profession."⁴⁷ A few years later the partnership of "Major & Lane" was formed, with an office on High street. The firm announced that it would practice "in the Superior and Inferior Courts of Indiana, & in the counties of Boon, Ky., and Hamilton, Ohio."⁴⁸

POLITICAL BEGINNINGS

Soon after Lane settled down at Lawrenceburg following his migratory years in Kentucky, he entered politics. He was elected to the first state legislature which convened at Corydon on November 4, 1816.⁴⁹ That he took an active part in

⁴² *Revised Laws of Indiana, Adopted and Enacted by the General Assembly at their Eighth Session, 1824* (Corydon, 1824), 127-128.

⁴³ *Laws of the State of Indiana, 1826* (Indianapolis, 1826), 58-59.

⁴⁴ *Indiana Palladium*, Aug. 26, 1826; Monks, ed., *op. cit.*, II, 636.

⁴⁵ *Laws of the State of Indiana, 1826-1827*, 22. See also *Senate Journal, 1826-1827*, 105-106; *Indiana Palladium*, Dec. 30, 1826.

⁴⁶ *Senate Journal, 1826-1827*, 119-120; *House Journal, 1826-1827*, 217-219.

⁴⁷ *Indiana Palladium*, Aug. 18, 1827.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, Nov. 16, 1833.

⁴⁹ *House Journal, 1816-1817*, 3, 6.

debate is revealed by a perusal of the *House Journal* during the sessions that he was a member. It is a conservative estimate to say that he introduced more bills than any other member. Procedure in the early sessions was expedited by means of special committees, and Lane's name appeared on almost every one appointed. On November 9 the speaker, Isaac Blackford, named five such committees and Lane was chairman of four of them. These were to consider those portions of the governor's message which recommended a revision of the statutes of a general nature; the prevention of illegal removal of free negroes from the state; provision "for the more regular discharge of the duties of the justices of the peace;" and "the punishment of crimes in proportion to the enormity of the offense."⁵⁰ Throughout the first session Lane was tireless in providing legislation for inaugurating forms and functions of a new state government.

Again in 1817 he was chosen to represent Dearborn county in the general assembly. His record of the previous year won for him the speakership of the house,⁵¹ and he discharged his duties with the ability of a veteran. He served a third term, 1821-1822,⁵² and during that session he was chairman of the committee for enrolled bills and a member of the committee on the judiciary.⁵³ In addition he served on numerous select committees, presided frequently when the house was in committee of the whole,⁵⁴ and was one of five managers to prosecute the impeachment of the clerk of Vigo county, Curtis Gilbert.⁵⁵

In the 'twenties there began a new era in internal improvements. Although states were anxious to obtain federal aid, "they preferred to build their own roads and dig their own canals."⁵⁶ De Witt Clinton of New York, the "Dean of Internal Improvements," visited the Ohio river states in 1825 in the interest of canal construction.⁵⁷ He attended the Ohio Canal celebration near Newark on July 4 and inaugurated

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 16-17.

⁵¹ *Idem*, 1817-1818, 3-4.

⁵² *Idem*, 1821-1822, 5.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁵⁴ For example, see *ibid.*, 36-37.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁵⁶ F. J. Turner, *Rise of the New West* (A. B. Hart, ed., *The American Nation, A History*, XII, New York, 1906), 293-294.

⁵⁷ S. P. Orth, *Five American Politicians: A Study in the Evolution of American Politics* (Cleveland, 1906), 113-114.

work in that state.⁵⁸ Returning East from Louisville *via* the Ohio river, he stopped at Lawrenceburg July 18, and Lane made an eloquent and adulatory address of welcome.⁵⁹ In unselfish devotion to his country Clinton was to be compared with Washington. He concluded:

Governor—we cannot receive you with splendor, nor entertain you at the luxuriant board. But permit me to assure you of that which will be infinitely more gratifying . . . that in our admiration you stand high; in our confidence firm; in our gratitude and affections full.⁶⁰

In the gubernatorial campaign of 1825, Lane supported James B. Ray who ran on an internal improvement platform.⁶¹ Although Lane had formerly been a close friend of Judge Isaac Blackford, and had probably urged him to stand for election, a bitter quarrel now arose. Shortly before the election, "Indianian" wrote an article for the Lawrenceburg *Palladium*, attempting "to prove Blackford all that was amiable and great—Col. Ray all that was contemptible and degraded". Lane replied in two articles over the signature of "An Elector" in the *Indiana Spectator*. His purpose, he declared, was to provide the electors of the state, "in a plain, simple, unvarnished manner, without design, prejudice, or partiality, . . . just such information as they wanted—a biographical and political history of the two rival candidates for the first office of the state."⁶² Blackford realized the significance of Lane's opposition and visited Dearborn county a few days before the election. In a hand-bill which was presented to voters on election day, he characterized Lane as "a cowardly scoundrel, and a base fabricator of falsehood." He deemed it his duty to reveal the authorship of the "slandorous publications. . . . They were written by AMOS LANE, whose infamous character is too notorius to require, or even excuse, any comments from me, respecting anything he can write." Appended to the "Card" were sundry statements, one by John Spencer, an editor of the *Spectator*, naming Lane as the author of the articles signed "An Elector", and another by George H. Dunn, certifying "that at Indianapolis, during the last term of the

⁵⁸ *Indiana Palladium*, July 15, 1825.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, July 22, 1825.

⁶⁰ Lane's address and Clinton's reply were published in *Indiana Palladium*, Aug. 12, 1825. See also the *Political Beacon* (Lawrenceburg), Aug. 3, 1839.

⁶¹ Esarey, *History of Indiana*, I, 343.

⁶² Amos Lane "To the Public," Aug. 10, 1825, in *Indiana Palladium*, Aug. 12, 1825.

Supreme Court, I heard Amos Lane urge Mr. Blackford to become a candidate for Governor at the ensuing election, at the same time assuring him that he would get most of the votes of this county."⁶³

Lane countered with a broadside of his own on election day. Blackford's hand-bill had appeared in the *Palladium*, and the next issue carried Lane's circular, together with an explanatory statement. These two incendiary and provocative documents from Lane's pen are important in that they reveal his use of sarcasm and invective and his appeal to the masses for support. Blackford, he said, was a "diminutive, weezle-faced sparrow," who preferred to lose fifty elections rather "than call Amos Lane to the *field of honor*, in order to test his firmness or his courage." He asked the public to review the newspaper controversy from the beginning, "and then determine where . . . lives the villain, the liar, the coward, the poltroon, in Vincennes or Lawrenceburgh.—I pronounce, to the world, his name, Isaac Blackford, of Vincennes." Lane then recited the facts in the case:

On Saturday morning preceding the election, Blackford arrives in Lawrenceburgh. He had promised himself an undivided vote in Dearborn—His prospects had failed him—He inquired the cause—His desponding friends pointed him to 'Elector,' and to Amos Lane, as the cloud, which had obscured his political horizon. A sudden paleness came over him—Folly, madness, and desperation seized him—He ran to the printer—demanded the name of him, who had thus dared to inform the Plebeian ranks, the people, who Isaac Blackford was. The editors disagreed. He then met me in the road, with an advance and rear guard; and with all the insolence of a *Turkish Lord*, demanded if I was the author? To which I substantially replied, that I would say nothing to him in the highway; but that if he would call on me in a proper manner, time, and place, I would give him such information as to which I might consider him entitled. The Judge then, between hope and despair, *begot* his hand-bill, a most unfortunate child, and still more unfortunate father; . . . and the little illegitimate brat barely survives, as evidence of its father's folly and wickedness.

Thus did Blackford, the "*princely slanderer*", resort to calumny and defamation for revenge. Lane's own career stood in sharp contrast with that of the "proud, overbearing aristocrat." For, said he, "I keep no servants; but labor with my own hands, in the performance of my domestic concerns."

⁶³ *Ibid.*, Aug. 5, 1825.

Professionally, he "made it a rule . . . to do the business of the poor man, the widow, and orphan, without fee or reward". He replied to Blackford's hand-bill because it "was an insolent reflection, and high insult to my fellow citizens of Dearborn county, who have so repeatedly honored me with their confidence".⁶⁴

In the national contest of 1824, Lane thought only Adams and Clay qualified for the presidency. "I considered Mr. Adams the more solid, Mr. Clay the more visionary man. I therefore espoused the cause of Mr. Adams with great zeal and voted for him."⁶⁵ The secretary of war in Adams' cabinet, James Barbour of Virginia, soon honored Lane with an invitation "to attend the examination of the cadets at West Point."⁶⁶ Included on the board of visitors were General Sam Houston of Tennessee and Governor Jeremiah Morrow of Ohio, the latter of whom had accompanied DeWitt Clinton to Lawrenceburg the year before.

As the election of 1828 approached, it appeared that Lane intended to support Adams. On November 27, 1827, he presided at a political meeting held in the cabin of the steamer *Velocepede* forty miles below Louisville. Resolutions were adopted approving the measures of Adams' administration, pledging those present to use all honorable and fair means to secure his reelection, asserting that other qualifications than "military talents and fame" were necessary for office, denying that Jackson possessed "sufficient diplomatic information and experience" to exercise executive power, and declaring "That we do not believe that John Q. Adams was elected President of the United States by any intrigue, bargain, sale, or unfair means whatever."⁶⁷

In 1831, after Lane had become a loyal Jackson Democrat and a candidate for congress, he experienced some difficulty in explaining his former support of Adams. The result of the house contest of 1825, he said, astonished him. It bore "the appearance, if not, of bargain, of concert," and Clay's "ready acceptance . . . of the secretaryship" he "considered even more objectionable." He further asserted:

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, Aug. 12, 1825.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, March 12, 1831.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, July 8, 1826; March 12, 1831.

⁶⁷ Hardinsburgh (Kentucky) *Compiler*, quoted in *Indiana Palladium*, Dec. 15, 1827.

From this moment, but for the pride of opinion, I should have abandoned both Adams and Clay; and but for the doubts entertained of the qualifications of Gen. Jackson for civil rule, become his friend and advocate. I continued however apparently to sustain the former and condemn the latter. My acquaintance with certain individuals in 1826, removed much of my former prejudice against Gen. Jackson. In the latter part of the year 1827 I became fully persuaded, that all my former opinions, my prejudices had been founded upon misrepresentations. In the spring of 1828, I visited St. Louis and saw and became acquainted with gentlemen upon whose judgment I could rely, and whose integrity I could not suspect. They removed all my doubts; since which I have been satisfied, that Andrew Jackson's qualifications for the presidency, were as eminent, as his military career had been successful and brilliant.

From the moment I became the advocate of Andrew Jackson and sustained his pretensions and claims for the presidency with an untiring zeal, and voted for him at the polls.⁶⁸

This labored explanation is a politician's justification of his course, and therefore must be discounted. Sources have been searched in vain for evidence of Lane's political activities in 1828. A month after he presided at the administration meeting on the *Velocepede*, Adams men of Dearborn county assembled at Lawrenceburg and issued an address, but there is no record that Lane participated.⁶⁹ Nor did he attend any of the numerous Adams or Jackson conventions held at Indianapolis. It is probable that he purposely remained inactive that he might profit by the outcome. Jackson carried Indiana by 5,000 votes, with six out of ten counties in Lane's congressional district, including Dearborn.⁷⁰ Undoubtedly it was at this time that he first openly declared himself "the advocate of Andrew Jackson", and supported him with that "untiring zeal" that he later emphasized.

Contemplating politics in a wider field, Lane took advantage of every opportunity to inform the public of his merits. To those who attempted to slander his character he replied in kind and usually got the better of the argument. In September, 1830, he wrote an "Appeal to the People of the State of Indiana", an answer to those politicians who had conspired for sixteen years "to misrepresent, slander, and persecute

⁶⁸ *Indiana Palladium*, March 12, 1831. See also the *Political Beacon*, Aug. 3, 1839. The editor says: "Was he [Lane] not once the most bitter reviler of Gen. Jackson, and did he not afterwards become his most venal sychophant?"

⁶⁹ *Indiana Palladium*, Jan. 5, 12, 1828.

⁷⁰ *Indiana Journal* (Indianapolis), Nov. 27, 1828; *Indianapolis Gazette*, Dec. 4, 1828.

Amos Lane." He reviewed his record and presented certificates of "good moral character" from various periods of his career.⁷¹ In another article he berated the senior editor of the *Western Statesman*, Milton Gregg, whom he characterized as "an outlaw to all principles of humanity, charity, benevolence, truth, and decency—a fit companion for the demon and the damned."⁷²

On December 18, 1830, Democratic members of the legislature and other friends of the administration met in caucus at Indianapolis. Lane was placed on the resolutions committee, and was also appointed a member of a standing committee of twenty.⁷³ A few weeks later he announced his candidacy for congress.⁷⁴ In March, 1831, he again reviewed his early career for the press, and emphasized the circumstances of his change from Adams to Jackson. In this communication he stated his policies. He favored a protective tariff, liberal appropriations to complete the Cumberland road, additional appropriations of land for the Wabash canal, the construction of a road from Fort Wayne to the mouth of the Kentucky river *via* Lawrenceburg, removal of Indians from the state, graduation of the price of public lands, free homesteads for actual settlers, rotation in office, economy in the use of public money, and a rigid accountability of a representative to his constituents.⁷⁵ On March 30 he addressed a political meeting in the Lawrenceburg court house. He defended the policies of the administration, especially rotation in office and the Maysville road veto, but he insisted that Jackson was in favor of systematic internal improvements.⁷⁶

An embarrassing situation soon arose in the fourth congressional district. Jonathan McCarty, also a Jackson man, was a candidate, and Lane withdrew in the interest of party harmony.⁷⁷ A state Jackson meeting at Indianapolis promised him support for lieutenant governor, but two months later he withdrew from that contest. Private business called him from the state, it was explained, which prevented him from making a canvass. Further, Ross Smiley desired the office,

⁷¹ *Indiana Palladium*, Oct. 2, 1830.

⁷² *Ibid.*, Sept. 25, 1830.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, Jan. 15, 1831.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, Feb. 5, 1831.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, March 12, 1831.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, April 2, 1831.

⁷⁷ *Indiana Democrat*, quoted in *Indiana Palladium*, May 14 1831.

and Lane had consented to run "with the expectation that there would be no opposing candidate from our own ranks."⁷⁸

In 1833 Lane entered the congressional contest in earnest, declaring that he would continue a candidate regardless of opposition.⁷⁹ He canvassed the district thoroughly, making at least twenty speeches.⁸⁰ Lane complained that his opponent, John Test, would not meet him in joint debate, and Test accused Lane of "expressing different opinions in different parts of the district." Lane therefore addressed a communication to the voters in which he set forth his views. He favored reduction of the price of refuse lands to fifty cents an acre, Clay's compromise tariff bill, a uniform national currency, and recharter of the United States Bank with restrictions.⁸¹ In the election he carried five of the six counties in the fourth congressional district, and received 4,262 votes to 3,455 for Test.⁸²

A MEMBER OF CONGRESS, 1833-1837

According to the most reliable reckoning, Lane was fifty-five when in December, 1833, he entered the twenty-third congress. His residence at Lawrenceburg "was so situated that he could travel [to Washington] either by water or by stage from his own door."⁸³ As he was nearing the capital for a subsequent session, the coach upset near Hancock, Maryland, and he was forced to tarry there two or three days because of a severe injury to his head.⁸⁴

Arriving in Washington for his first session, Lane immediately subscribed for several "daily papers and Congressional Journals" at his own expense. His purpose, he said, was to disseminate "correct political information" and to keep his constituents "constantly advised of his own views and acts." He therefore provided "each Editor in the district and several citizens of each township . . . with the earliest possible political and Congressional information . . . In the performance of this duty," he explained. "I shall not be

⁷⁸ *Indiana Palladium*, July 9, 1831.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, April 20, 1833.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, June 15, 1833.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, July 20, 1833.

⁸² *Indiana Journal*, Sept. 7, 1833; *Indiana Palladium*, Aug. 24, 1833.

⁸³ *Cong. Globe*, 24 Cong., 2 Sess., 128.

⁸⁴ *Washington Globe*, Nov. 27, 1834, quoted in *Indiana Palladium*, Dec. 20, 1834.

influenced by the political complexion of the paper or the individual."⁸⁵

Lane was a veteran in politics when he began his quadrennium in congress, and at once entered actively into the business of the house. A month after he took his seat the *Palladium* praised his initial efforts: "Mr. L. has proved that he can speak, and to the point, when necessary, as well on the floor of Congress as elsewhere—though his course has thus far been prudently circumspect In him, the people of this district have a representative capable of maintaining their rights in a dignified and commanding manner."⁸⁶ His speeches were colored by two considerations. On numerous occasions he went out of his way to extol and defend the virtues of the "venerable Chief Magistrate."⁸⁷ He applied opprobrious epithets to those of the opposition who, regardless of "the subject or the occasion," took "a dash at the Executive or his friends."⁸⁸ He was just as faithful in his advocacy of measures peculiarly western. As the sessions drew to a close and the house began to discuss adjournment, Lane would plead that "not a bill in which the West was interested had yet been acted upon."⁸⁹

His aggressiveness elicited the attention of a visitor from Tennessee, who wrote to a friend in Columbus, Mississippi, December 21, 1836:

Mr. Lane of Indiana, a man by the way that Mr. Wise dreads more than any other in the House for his pungent satire and caustic humor—made a capital speech to-day. He cut Peyton into mince meat, and hashed up Wise and Bell in capital style. Mr. Lane is by no means equal to either gentleman in point of talents; but he has a plain-dealing, mater-of-fact manner about him; a nack of calling things by their right names; a method of cutting up and giving side-swipes, and fifth-rib thrusts, peculiar to himself, and it is astonishing how he annoys these three distinguished gentlemen. Wise knows he can gain nothing by picking a quarrel with the member from Indiana, for he is known to be a man 'familiar with fight' in all its shapes, from the Kentucky hug to the ten paces with pistols. He handles his fist and rifle equally well, and is the most thorough and regular bred *tongue lasher* in Congress. You will see Lane's speech reported—It was a . . . hit, and it is a remarkable fact that while Webster was speaking in the Senate to-day on the treasury order, Lane kept a crowded audience in the House and

⁸⁵ *Indiana Palladium*, Dec. 21, 1833.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, Jan. 11, 1834.

⁸⁷ *Cong. Globe*, 23 Cong., 1 Sess., 128.

⁸⁸ *Idem*, 24 Cong., 1 Sess., 144. See also, *ibid.*, 91; *idem*, 23 Cong., 1 Sess., 155, 358.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 390. Also, *ibid.*, 414; *idem*, 24 Cong., 1 Sess., 446.

its galleries! I never did see two men suffer so much as Peyton and Wise. As for Bell, he winced for half an hour and made a precipitate retreat.⁹⁰

John Quincy Adams recorded in his diary, however, "That there had not been a quorum in the House one-third of the time while Lane was speaking." The member from Indiana, he said, "was charged with a speech of an hour" on Wise's resolution of enquiry into the executive departments, "which he accordingly delivered—a full glorification of Martin Van Buren."⁹¹ But Lane was willing to cross swords with Adams. About a year before he recalled "A day when by *management*, and by means of which it becomes us not to speak, eighty-four was made to prevail over ninety-nine."⁹²

On at least one occasion Lane was very unfortunate in the outcome of a personal altercation. Two of his colleagues from Indiana, Jonathan McCarty and John Ewing, supported an investigation of alleged frauds committed by Indian agents. Lane desired to correct the impression that any such frauds had been committed in Indiana. He had known the agents there for twenty years and declared that they were "incapable of committing a fraud." As was his habit he seized the opportunity to eulogize his constituents and those of his colleagues. "Sir," he said, "a purer, more intelligent, high-minded, and honorable population than that of Indiana, cannot be found in any other State."⁹³

It soon appeared that Lane had accused his colleagues of locating the frauds in Indiana, but later wrote a speech for publication in the *Globe* in which the tone of his remarks was softened. The gratuitous eulogy which Lane had pronounced, said Ewing, was "uncalled for," as the reputation of the people of Indiana had not been questioned. Lane then reproached Ewing for claiming "the exclusive privilege of eulogizing and defending his own constituents." Further, when he desired "to impugn the motives" of his colleagues, "he would do it elsewhere than in that House; he would do it as a gentleman, and not in a manner to protect himself with the splendid walls

⁹⁰ Columbus (Miss.) *Democrat*, quoted in *Rising Sun Times and Farmers' Journal*, March 4, 1837. The letter was dated Dec. 20, 1836, but that is undoubtedly a mistake. The *Globe* did not record Lane's speech. The last entry for Dec. 21 reads: "Mr. Lane who was entitled to the floor, addressed the House at length, in reply to the remarks of Messrs. Peyton, Underwood, and Wise."—*Cong. Globe*, 24 Cong., 2 Sess., 43.

⁹¹ C. F. Adams, ed., *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams* (Philadelphia, 1876), IX, 330.

⁹² *Cong. Globe*, 23 Cong., 2 Sess., 150.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 156.

of that hall." And if any one contradicted him, it would "be at the peril—," but the speaker called him to order and he did not complete the sentence.⁹⁴

A few days later McCarty replied at length. Regardless of repeated disclaimers that he had not made charges against any particular district, he said, Lane continued his false accusations. It was his duty to "expose this mis-representation, which was intended to operate more *elsewhere* than here." Even in Dearborn county acts had transpired "not *altogether consistent with honesty and fair-dealing*." Nor was his resolution introduced "for the purpose of ferreting out and making charges against the administration." He was, in fact, "an older soldier in the support of the administration than" Lane. He likened that gentleman to "a species of animals in our forests, with whom, notwithstanding their weakness and abject meanness of spirit, the lion himself would shun a controversy."⁹⁵

Ewing added his chastisement of Lane's conduct. He informed him that "The people require services, not flattery;" that the house was "no place to play the braggart," that the "peril" to which he alluded was "fudge," that he did not seek the "protection from the walls, dome, or drapery," that he held himself "personally responsible" for his remarks there or elsewhere, and Lane "may pursue what course he chooses." He would admit, however, that his colleague manifested "art" in his attempts "to injure faithful Representatives at home."⁹⁶

The controversy had taken a turn unforeseen by Lane. Realizing that he was getting the worst of it, he attempted to divert attention of members to the fact that they were "in the house of mourning" for the loss of one of their number. Recoiling into his shell of "saint-like sanctity," he placed himself above the petty controversies of this world: "Sir, there is a manner, a language, a courtesy, a delicacy, and sweetness of expression, in the heat of even angry debate, that characterises the gentleman and the scholar— a language, a look, that distinguishes him from the vulgar ruffian. To look at such a man is to know him a gentleman, elevated in mind, pure in thought, sensitive in feeling, alive to his honor, always re-

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 172; *National Gazette* (Philadelphia), Jan. 31, 1835.

⁹⁵ *Cong. Globe*, 23 Cong. 2 Sess., 186-187. McCarty's speech and Lane's reply were published in the *National Gazette*, Feb. 5, 1835.

⁹⁶ *Cong. Globe*, 23 Cong., 2 Sess., 187.

specting the feelings and regarding the honor of others." On the other hand, there was the man whose "ruling passions" and "weapons of warfare" were "envy, revenge, detraction, calumny." He did not apply the pattern to his colleagues, but if contrary to his "wishes and intentions, a claim should be asserted, I assure the House . . . that nothing shall be charged for the cutting or the making."⁹⁷ One thing he would say in his own defence, he had continually been at his post, "not a day or an hour absent," a "faithful sentinel over the rights and the honor" of his state and district. McCarty, he said, had been absent at roll-call eighty-two times and Ewing forty-seven. On these "occasions, what would have been the condition of their constituents, had their honor or their interests required an advocate?"⁹⁸ But the point was seized by McCarty and Ewing, and they renewed the attack. It was known that Lane had been "filching" extracts from the clerk's records regarding their absences, which he had published in their districts. But that he had "voluntarily given testimony to his own depravity" was unbelievable.⁹⁹

Lane made no reply. Three weeks later his eldest son, John Foote Lane, a West Point graduate, assaulted Ewing with a heavy cane as the latter was returning to his boarding house from the capitol, and he was unable to resume his seat for several days.¹⁰⁰

During his first term in congress Lane served on the com-

⁹⁷ *Ibid.* See also *National Gazette*, Feb. 5, 1835.

⁹⁸ *Cong. Globe*, 23 Cong., 2 Sess., 187-188.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 188.

¹⁰⁰ *National Gazette*, March 3, 5, 1835; *Indiana Palladium*, April 11, May 16, 1835; John Ewing to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Feb. 28, 1835, in *Cong. Globe*, 23 Cong., 2 Sess., 314:—"Sir: My situation compels me to apologize to the House, and through you, to my constituents, for my absence from my seat. While on my way to my boarding house, after the adjournment on the evening of the 26th inst. I was waylaid, and assaulted in the most outrageous and dastardly manner, by John F. Lane, a Lieutenant in the army and son of the Hon. A. Lane, of Indiana, for no other known cause than for words spoken in debate some weeks since, in reply to his father on the floor of the House of Representatives.

"I had but a casual acquaintance with the person who committed this outrage, and no intercourse whatever with him to lead to this assault. A blow from an iron cane, with a leaden head, accompanied the first notice of his intention to attack me, and was repeated by several others, with a violence which I regret to say, at this important and pressing period of the session, has entirely disabled me from taking my seat."

For the proceedings of the "Court of Inquiry on Lieutenant Lane," see *Niles' Weekly Register*, XLVIII, 80. Major General Winfield Scott, president of the court, did not recommend that the case be sent to a general court martial, but expressed the hope "that nothing similar will ever again occur for legal investigation, or public censure." President Jackson advised the secretary of war, after reading the report, that John Lane's action "was highly improper, and deserves reproof; but as neither the committee of the house of representatives nor the court of inquiry . . . have thought the conduct of lieut. Lane deserving further investigation, the secretary of war will cause the result to be made known . . . as a public reprimand to lieut. Lane, and direct him to be relieved from his present duty, and report to his regiment." Lane was then serving as assistant quarter master. He soon rose to be lieutenant colonel, and was killed while leading a regiment in the Florida war of 1836.

mittee on post offices and post roads.¹⁰¹ He presented numerous petitions for new mail routes in his own district and those adjacent in Indiana, Kentucky, and Ohio.¹⁰² and secured the establishment of a number of them.¹⁰³ He was placed on the committee on the District of Columbia during his second term,¹⁰⁴ and was instrumental in investigating imprisonment for debt in the national capital.¹⁰⁵ In this capacity he had opportunity to acquire first-hand information relative to the slave trade.

Toward slavery and slavery agitation Lane assumed a conservative attitude. In 1835 he voted to table petitions praying for abolition in the District of Columbia, and opposed printing such papers.¹⁰⁶ In March of the following year Wise presented a memorial from a resident of the District, "protesting against the course of the northern abolitionists, . . . and insisting that all abolition petitions should be forthwith rejected." He moved to refer it to the select committee on abolition with instructions to report a resolution "That Congress has no constitutional power to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia, or in the Territories of the United States." The speaker decided that the motion to instruct was not in order, and Wise appealed from the chair's decision. Lane grew impatient at what he considered a waste of time. Six weeks, he said, had been consumed "in the presentation and consideration of memorials and resolutions on the subject of abolition from the North, to the entire exclusion of all petitions and memorials from the western States and Territories. Having, after this protracted period, passed Mason and Dixon's line, it was fondly hoped no further delay would have occurred from this all exciting subject. In this it seems we are mistaken. The fire brands of abolition seem to thicken around us from the south, and threaten equal if not more delay. To avert this storm, and to enable the people of the west to be heard in this House, *he* would move the previous question." The house voted to sustain the decision of the chair, and the memorial was referred without instructions.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰¹ *Cong. Globe*, 23 Cong., 1 Sess., 17-18.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 116, 263; *idem*, 2 Sess., 27-68; *idem*, 24 Cong., 1 Sess., 25, 83, 197.

¹⁰³ *Indiana Palladium*, May 31, 1834.

¹⁰⁴ *Cong. Globe*, 24 Cong., 1 Sess., 21.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 411; *idem*, 2 Sess., 122.

¹⁰⁶ *Idem*, 1 Sess., 24-25.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 196.

On May 25 and 26 an exciting debate occurred on resolutions presented by Henry L. Pinckney of South Carolina, from the select committee on abolition. Especially was the controversy warm between Speaker Polk and John Quincy Adams. The latter observed "that a slaveholding Speaker occupied the Chair," and was at once called to order by several members. The previous question cut off debate, and Adams after taking various appeals from the chair's decisions, exclaimed, "Mr. Speaker, am I gagged or not?"¹⁰⁸ The house adopted the first resolution on the 25th and the second and third on the 26th. The resolution "That Congress possesses no constitutional authority to interfere in any way with the institution of slavery in any of the States of this Confederacy," passed, 182 to 9, Lane voting in the affirmative.¹⁰⁹ The second, "That Congress ought not to interfere in any way with slavery in the District of Columbia," was adopted by a vote of 132 to 45, Lane voting in the negative. The "gag" resolution, to table all slavery petitions and memorials without debate, printing, or reference, passed, 117 to 68, Lane voting in the negative.¹¹⁰

The following year, 1837, another great debate grew out of the presentation of abolition petitions, and occupied the attention of the house for four days, February 6, 7, 9, and 11. After having presented a number of such petitions, Adams inquired of the speaker if a paper which "came from twenty persons declaring themselves to be slaves" would come "under the rule." The chair said the case was novel, and requested the "advice and counsel" of the house. Southern representatives were much alarmed. Charles E. Haynes of Georgia "moved that the petition be not received," but immediately withdrew the motion. Dixon H. Lewis of Alabama "thought that the Representatives of the slaveholding States should *demand* that the *attempt to introduce such a petition* should instantly put in requisition the power of the House to punish the member for such attempt. If this is not done, and that promptly, every member from the slave States should immediately, *in a body, quit this House*, and go home to their constituents. We have no longer any business here." The proposal of Julius C. Alford of Georgia that the memorial "be instantly burnt" should Adams insist on presenting it, was met

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 401.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 402.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 406.

with "Cries of 'No!' 'No!' 'Expel him!' 'Expel the mover!'" Waddy Thompson of South Carolina moved that Adams "instantly be brought to the bar, to receive the severe censure of the Speaker." Lewis proposed a substitute, accepted by Thompson, that Adams' "*attempt* to introduce into this House a petition of slaves for the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia" was "an outrage on the rights and feelings" of the Southern people, and "a flagrant contempt on the dignity of this House," and he should therefore be censured at the bar.¹¹¹

It soon developed that the memorial prayed that abolitionists desist from presenting their petitions. The resolutions were then modified by declaring that Adams had "trifled with the House" in creating a wrong impression.¹¹² On the last day of the debate Lane obtained the floor.

"That Congress have no power to interfere with slavery, as it exists in the States," he said, "is a proposition too clear to admit of a doubt. The wildest fanatic does not claim this power on the part of Congress.

"That Congress does possess that power over the subject, in the District of Columbia . . . was equally true." The exercise of that power, however, "would be injurious to that species of property, in the hands of the owners in the neighborhood of the District, and fearfully dangerous to the tranquillity of the Union." He then explained what abolitionists desired:

They set forth that, in their opinion, slavery, in the abstract, is a great moral, political, and religious evil, and pray its abolishment in the District of Columbia, together with the slave trade—a traffic carried on within the District as inhuman as it is disgraceful to the American people. That as a member of the Committee for the District of Columbia, he had examined the jail—the common property of the people of every portion of this Union; and to his surprise he found that prison the common receptacle for the safekeeping of slaves brought up in the neighboring States by the dealers in human flesh, and there detained until the master or an agent shall find it convenient to drive them to a southern market; and all this without regard to comfort or convenience. In one instance he found in a damp, loathsome room of eight feet square, a mother and six or seven children; nor is this all, within this District are private prisons, into which they are driven in droves, and kept for weeks and months, and then shipped to the south. This, all this cruelty, this loathsome suffering, this inhuman traffic, is carried on in open day

¹¹¹ *Idem*, 2 Sess., 164-165.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 165.

in [the] presence of the American people, at the seat of liberty and boasted freedom. It is this cruel, this disgraceful trade, those petitioners humbly and respectfully pray you to abolish. To this end . . . he would receive these petitions, refer them, and act upon them promptly and effectively.

As to the resolution then before the house, presented by Pickens of South Carolina, "That any member who shall hereafter present any petition from the slaves of this Union, ought to be considered as regardless of the feelings of the House, the rights of the southern States, and unfriendly to the Union," Lane thought it too equivocal. It might be inferred that members had "been in the habit of presenting such petitions; . . . that it had been lawful to do so; . . . [that] the slave not only possessed such right, but had exercised it." Were it adopted

you would have seen the disappointed and ambitious politicians of the south . . . fanning the flame of discontent; yes, upon every stump, at every muster, in every hall, sounding the alarm, danger, danger, disunion. The resolution would have been tortured into any and every possible meaning, to prove any and everything. It would have been rightly denounced at the South as loosening, instead of drawing, the cord upon the slave.

The South would have been in a political flame; in the North the politicians would have blown the tide of abolition to its height, and all brought to bear upon the Administration.

Lane therefore favored an explicit declaration—"that the slaves of this Union have no right to petition Congress for the abolition of slavery."¹¹³ Such a resolution was adopted by a vote of 162 to 18, and the house refused to receive the petition presented by Adams, 160 to 35.¹¹⁴ In the meantime Adams had explained that "he now believed the petition to be a 'forgery,' designed as a 'hoax' upon him."¹¹⁵ It is highly probable that his presentation of it was designed as a hoax upon Southern members that they might commit themselves to principles and policies which would serve as abolition thunder in the North.

Throughout his services in congress, Lane introduced pension petitions from soldiers in his own and adjacent constitu-

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 180.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 185.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 184.

encies.¹¹⁶ Early in the twenty-third congress Thomas Chilton proposed to amend the general pension law of 1832 by extending it to include veterans of Indian wars between the Revolution and the treaty of Greenville. Lane declared "that a body of more meritorious men than these had never been provided for by Congress."¹¹⁷ On January 23, 1834, he made a long speech on the subject, which he concluded the following day. He refuted the arguments of those who insisted that the principle underlying pensions was "*immoral, corrupt, and corrupting*," that it substituted "indolence for industry and enterprise," and that additional pensions would constitute "a burden to society." The bill should pass without objection or amendment, he said, "from respect to the wishes of the western people, . . . if not as a matter of courtesy to the western delegation." These "frontier men of the West," who fought at greater disadvantages than many already pensioned, had acquired vast territory for the United States now populated by migrants from the older states.¹¹⁸ Parenthetically he defended the career of General Arthur St. Clair, against whom, he said, great injustice had been done.¹¹⁹

In the disposition of the public lands Lane favored preemption¹²⁰ and restriction of sales to actual settlers,¹²¹ principles of vital importance "to the interest of the people of the western country."¹²² The preemption bill of 1834 received his support and passed the house, 124 to 53.¹²³ In December, 1836, he urged congress to prevent fraudulent practices which obtained at auction sales. He explained that

there were thousands of individuals, who traversed the wilderness in search of land, with their one hundred dollars to pay for eighty acres, . . . Well, sir, after they have made their selections, and come to the sales, prepared to pay for their lands, there are some ten, fifteen, or twenty agents of speculators, who have never put themselves to the expense and inconvenience of searching after lands, with their hundreds of thousands of dollars, and when the poor man bids his one hundred dollars for eighty acres, the speculators bid five or ten more, and take

¹¹⁶ *Idem*, 23 Cong., 1 Sess., 143; *idem*, 2 Sess., 30, 197, 254; *idem*, 24 Cong., 1 Sess., 25, 197, 247; *idem*, 2 Sess., 19.

¹¹⁷ *Idem*, 23 Cong., 1 Sess., 58.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 124-125, 128. See also *Indiana Palladium*, Dec. 21, 1833; Jan. 11, 1834; Oct. 17, Nov. 7, 1835.

¹¹⁹ *Cong. Globe*, 23 Cong., 1 Sess., 125.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 124-125; *idem*, 24 Cong., 1 Sess., 84.

¹²¹ *Idem*, 24 Cong., 2 Sess., 33.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 64.

¹²³ *Idem*, 23 Cong., 1 Sess., 445-446. See also *Indiana Palladium*, June 21, 1834; Benjamin H. Hibbard, *A History of the Public Land Policies* (New York, 1924), 154.

the land. Thus, perhaps, the Government gets a few dollars more, but it is at the expense of the poor man, who is afterward compelled to pay a higher price to the speculators. Thus are the speculators enriched, and the poor men, who intend to become actual settlers, either forced to pay them an extravagant price, or take second or third-rate land.¹²⁴

Lane was a strong advocate of the graduation bill. It was one, he said, "in which the western people had more at stake, and felt a more lively interest in than any other".¹²⁵ The first resolution he introduced in congress was one suggesting reduction in price to actual settlers, of lands which had been on the market for fifteen years, with preëmption rights for squatters.¹²⁶ A year later, December, 1834, he introduced a similar resolution which would permit cultivators to enter a quarter-section of land remaining unsold after twenty years, at fifty cents an acre.¹²⁷ Such a measure, he said, "will give homes, and ease, and independence, to thousands of our honest and intelligent, but less fortunate fellow-citizens."¹²⁸ For the benefit of the forty and eighty-acre men, he "would reduce the price to even nothing."¹²⁹

It would seem that registers and receivers of the public land offices were unpopular with Lane. On two occasions he successfully opposed further compensation for them. On December 22, 1834, a bill was introduced authorizing them to administer oaths in the entry or purchase of public lands, and receive compensation therefor at the legal rate. Lane offered an amendment making it their duty to administer such oaths without remuneration. He explained that their income was already so great that the positions "were eagerly sought after". Although the salary was only \$500, they received in addition one per cent on sales and a commission on deposits, making the total in many cases from \$1,500 to \$3,000 a year. If they were further compensated for administering oaths, some would receive as much as \$5,000.¹³⁰ Again on April, 15, 1836, he successfully opposed an amendment to pay land officers office rent not to exceed \$300.¹³¹

¹²⁴ *Cong. Globe*, 24 Cong., 2 Sess., 64.

¹²⁵ *Idem*, 23 Cong., 1 Sess., 390.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 36.

¹²⁷ *Idem*, 2 Sess., 27.

¹²⁸ A. Lane to the Editor of the *Palladium*, Dec. 7, 1833, in *Indiana Palladium*, Dec. 21, 1835.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, Feb. 21, 1835.

¹³⁰ *Cong. Globe*, 23 Cong., 2 Sess., 57-58.

¹³¹ *Idem*, 24 Cong., 1 Sess., 310.

Lane opposed the distribution of the proceeds from the sale of western lands. Henry Clay, who advocated the policy, persistently brought forward such bills only to see them fail in the lower house or receive the executive's veto. A bill passed the senate in May, 1835, but was tabled in the house.¹³² Lane argued that it might "dry up all the streams of emigration to the west, and check her growing prosperity." Further, it would "convert the General Government to tax-gatherers, and the West and South to tax-payers." He saw in the measure only the desire of a political party to win the presidency in 1836.¹³³

At the next session of congress, Chilton Allan of Kentucky introduced a distribution resolution in the house. He proposed that public lands be given to seventeen states—the thirteen original, and in addition, Maine, Vermont, Kentucky, and Tennessee—in proportion as congress had already donated lands to the other states for purposes of education and internal improvements. The land grants were to be sold under the existing federal laws, the proceeds to be turned over to the enumerated states. The proposition, Lane said, was unfair for two reasons. In the first place the newer states had received their lands when their population was only a third of what it was at present. Thus Maryland and Kentucky would receive more than Indiana and Ohio had been granted, although they had less population. In the second place, some of the new states had received their land on condition that they would not tax government lands for five years after their sale, and that the government should retain all minerals and salt springs. The new states had received their shares

when the lands were an unbroken wilderness; when there were no roads, no mills, no meeting-houses, no school-houses; and were only inhabited by wild beasts, and the roving savages. But now, when all the comforts of life were to be found in the vicinity of those lands, the old States were to come in for a portion of them, equal to those granted to the new States. Who raised the value of those lands? Those who remained at home in ease, comfort, and luxury; or those hardy pioneers who went into the wilderness, subdued the savage, and made it smile and blossom as the rose? The old States, by this resolution, were to come in for a share of these lands when they were not only easy of access, but when

¹³² *Ibid.*, 460. Curiously, Lane voted against laying it on the table.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 368-369.

their value was raised by the enterprise and industry of the citizens of the new States.¹³⁴

It will be recalled that from 1825 forward Lane favored internal improvements at the expense of the federal government. As a member of congress he was active in securing appropriations to continue the Cumberland road westward,¹³⁵ but a scheme to build a lateral southward through Ohio, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Alabama to New Orleans, which he favored, failed.¹³⁶ He also sought aid for constructing a Whitewater canal from the National road to Lawrenceburg,¹³⁷ and an appropriation of refuse lands to promote the building of a railroad from Lawrenceburg to Indianapolis.¹³⁸ The appropriation bill of 1835 provided \$50,000 to improve the Ohio river between the Falls and Pittsburg. Lane favored it, for the Ohio of all rivers was "the most truly national" in the country. He said "he would not give a fig for the constitution if the Treasury of the nation could not be expended in promoting such works as the present."¹³⁹ He also supported a measure to increase the corps of topographical engineers, greatly in demand for making surveys for internal improvements. William C. Dunlap of Tennessee chided Lane, who had been elected as a friend of the president, for sponsoring measures opposed by the administration. Lane replied that he had "received a lesson in party discipline" which Dunlap should have applied to himself. He admitted that "he had been elected as a friend of the distinguished Chief Magistrate, not to serve the Chief Magistrate, but to serve his constituents, the State, and the Union." He assured the house "That he wore no collar—no man's yoke." His course had been directed by "the dictates of his own conscience and judgment," influenced only by "the interest and prosperity of his constituents, the State, and the Union." He would compare votes with Dunlap and prove himself the more efficient and loyal supporter of the administration. The present measure, required by the secretary of war and recommended by the president in his message, "is emphatically an administration measure." The president, Lane

¹³⁴ *Idem*, 2 Sess., 77.

¹³⁵ *Idem*, 24 Cong., 1 Sess., 474.

¹³⁶ *Idem*, 23 Cong., 2 Sess., 30.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 119, 121; *Rising Sun Times*, Feb. 14, 1835.

¹³⁸ *Cong. Globe*, 23 Cong., 1 Sess., 301, 398.

¹³⁹ *Idem*, 2 Sess., 282.

explained, favored the improvement of "channels of commerce" if they were "in the character of national works." He concluded:

If the gentleman means to be understood that to be a Jackson man is to oppose all appropriations for the improvements of our rivers and channels of commerce, and all aid by the General Government for improvements in the several States, he could only say no such Jackson men could be found in Indiana.¹⁴⁰

In his campaign for a seat in congress, Lane favored a Bank of the United States with restrictions. He would apportion the capital stock among the states according to representation in congress, and limit the number of shares an individual might hold. Foreigners should be incapable of holding stock, but should be allowed five years to dispose of their shares. The Bank should be prohibited from holding real estate, for that "privilege has converted the Bank into a speculator and a landlord with numerous and dependant tenantry." Finally, the stock should "be liable by state laws to the same tax as other funded property."¹⁴¹

On March 29, 1834, Lane wrote a letter which received a great deal of publicity and occasioned much comment. The following paragraph is significant:

Some definite proposition for chartering a new bank, will be brought forward; properly guarded and restricted, so as to render it the servant of, and not the master power in the government. An institution, in strict obedience to, and not above the constitution and the laws—an institution that shall furnish a sound currency, and relieve the country from its present suffering; an institution that shall collect, keep and disburse the revenue of the nation, with ease and safety; an institution for the benefit of the people, *for all*, and not for the *few*.

"For such an institution", said Lane, "my exertions and vote shall be given." Although "the sins of the present bank" prevented its recharter, "Public and individual necessity may, however, call for the temporary extension of its charter," until "a new and safe one can be brought into action and useful operation."¹⁴²

Niles' Register alluded to Lane's letter as "a curious

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 290.

¹⁴¹ *Indiana Palladium*, July 20, 1833.

¹⁴² *Niles' Weekly Register*, XLVI, 202.

paper."¹⁴³ The *Richmond Enquirer* doubted its importance. It remarked:

The Lynchburg Virginian refers to Mr. Lane's letter, and lays great stress upon it, as the United States Telegraph had previously done. *We have again to dispute the propriety of any one's trying to make Mr. Lane speak for his party or for Gen. Jackson.*¹⁴⁴

Soon afterwards, April 21, 1834, Lane wrote a similar letter to William J. Brown of Rushville, in which he expressed the opinion "that a bank of some kind will be chartered before the session closes."¹⁴⁵ "The Bank has set the authority of this House at defiance", he wrote May 30 to the editor of the *Palladium*; it "has refused, utterly refused, to submit to any examination, or to give any evidence . . . before the committee of this House." This was proof enough, he thought, that the Bank had violated its charter, corrupted the press, interfered with elections, caused distress, and created loss of confidence.¹⁴⁶

But if Lane was apparently out of harmony with the administration in predicting that some kind of a bank would be continued, he stood firmly for the policy of removing the deposits. He had not been in congress more than a month before he congratulated

the House on the recovery of the lost Treasury of the United States. Where is the Treasury? has long been asked by all. Where is the Treasury? ay, where is the Treasury? The Treasury is at length found. The President has seized it from the grasp of those with whom it was lost, and borne it off in triumph. The Government can now preserve the Treasury; the people can know where it is to be found; and the nation can have the advantage of it. *Nine millions* of the people's money has been at last recovered. Old Hickory can rejoice every day he sees it, and the people can look to their beloved and determined President to guaranty its safety from the speculations of bank jobbers. . . . Let there be great joy, from Georgia to Maine, that the Treasury is rich, and bountifully replenished.¹⁴⁷

Lane vehemently opposed the resolutions censuring Jackson introduced in the house by Wise,¹⁴⁸ and voted to table the

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ *Richmond Enquirer*, quoted in *Indiana Journal*, June 14, 1834.

¹⁴⁵ *Indiana Sentinel*, quoted in *Indiana Palladium*, May 31, 1834.

¹⁴⁶ A. Lane to the Editor of the *Palladium*, May 30, 1834, in *Indiana Palladium*, June 21, 1834.

¹⁴⁷ *Cong. Globe*, 23 Cong., 1 Sess., 95.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 329-331.

senate's joint resolution disapproving removal of the deposits. However, he had no objection to inquiry into the condition of deposit banks, for he believed them solvent.¹⁴⁹

After returning to Indiana following the close of his first session in congress, Lane inquired "into the social and general condition of the country", and on July 30, 1834, he wrote a long letter to Francis P. Blair, editor of the *Washington Globe*. There was no section of the West, he said, which produced as much surplus for market as southeastern Indiana. Yet he had not found

a single individual who has not informed me that he obtained as fair, if not a higher price for his articles at New Orleans than at any former period. . . . Labor is in great demand at higher prices than at any former times. Money was never in more abundance. The merchants, yes, Clay merchants, say they never made better collections than during the last winter and spring, or had fewer suits to force payments.

The river is in fine boating order. The harvest is full. The prospect of an abundant crop of corn, is flattering.

How I should like to see a delegation composed of Bank attorneys and panic speech makers, with Mr. Clay at their head, all under the command of Admiral Biddle, and after traversing the rich valley of the Ohio and Mississippi and witnessing on every side, health, peace, plenty, and one widespread scene of universal prosperity and ease, fall in with the amiable, talented, and patriotic Taney on some elevated situation, overlooking the entire picture. Think ye, they would look him in the face without a blush. Would they reject him from his elevated position or would they not cower beneath even his modest gaze, retire in shame, covered with guilty blushes, from the bright and cheering prospect, and flee from the presence of an insulted People, upon whom they have labored so ardently to bring ruin and desolation.

By a judicious selection of deposit banks, Lane believed that the secretary of the treasury could "secure the revenue and create as sound and uniform a currency for all domestic and mercantile purposes, as ever was furnished by the United States Bank". Money "deposited with them, will be loaned to the People, the farmer, the mechanic, the young and enterprising trader and merchant." The United States Bank, on the contrary, "belongs to English noblemen, lords, and bankers, and a few American capitalists, whose interest and feeling are identified with them. Their loans are made to the rich, to stock-jobbers and brokers, to gambling politicians, and

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 334.

such editors as could be 'bought and sold as cattle in the market.'"¹⁵⁰

In June, 1836, Lane assumed charge of the senate bill "to regulate the deposits of the public money," and directed its course through the house, where it passed, 155 to 38.¹⁵¹

In his campaign for reelection in 1835, Lane again made an extensive canvass of the fourth district.¹⁵² His opponent was George H. Dunn, "a solid, undemonstrative attorney from the old Lawrenceburg bar".¹⁵³ The contest was close, and Lane received a majority of only 82 votes out of nearly 10,000 cast.¹⁵⁴ A solid Jackson delegation was returned to congress from Indiana.¹⁵⁵

In the national contest of 1836, which began in earnest in 1835, Lane made "long and loud" speeches for Van Buren and Johnson.¹⁵⁶ In May, 1835, he published a campaign circular which began by praising Jackson's administration:

The character and opinions of that great man were formed, in immediate contact with the people, and a mind remarkable for rapidity, compass, and accuracy of thought, has enabled him to administer the Government solely for their benefit. Beset by every influence that could persuade or alarm, he has in every prominent measure, gone beyond his advisors, and the wisdom of his decisions is best proved by the approbation of the people. He has shown, that common sense Democratic principles are not mere professions, but practical and certain guides in the most difficult affairs. He has restored to us confidence and unanimity, and fixed the great landmarks of our future course.

But the Whigs were strong in talents, wealth, newspapers, and privileged institutions, he warned, and a congressional cabal was laboring to barter the presidency in the house of representatives. He pleaded for unity in the approaching election; "all personal prejudices, and all private piques, should be unhesitatingly sacrificed. It is a question, not of persons, but of measures. . . . it is of less consequence who is elected than by whom he is elected." If, however, the choice should

¹⁵⁰ Amos Lane to Francis P. Blair, July 30, 1834, in the *Washington Globe*, quoted in *Indiana Palladium*, Aug. 30, 1834.

¹⁵¹ *Cong. Globe*, 24 Cong., 1 Sess., 455-456, 457-459.

¹⁵² *Rising Sun Times*, June 13, 1835.

¹⁵³ Monks, ed., *op. cit.*, I, 88.

¹⁵⁴ *Indiana Palladium*, Sept. 26, 1835; *Rising Sun Times*, Aug. 22, 1835. See also E. M. Huntington to John Tipton, Aug. 11, 1835, in the Tipton Papers, Indiana Historical Library.

¹⁵⁵ Adam Leonard, "Personal Politics in Indiana, 1816-1840," in *Indiana Magazine of History*, XIX, 270.

¹⁵⁶ *Indiana Palladium*, Nov. 7, 28, 1835.

devolve upon the house, he would support that candidate who received a majority in his district.¹⁵⁷ Although Harrison carried the state and Lane's district, Van Buren received a majority of 79 votes in Dearborn county.¹⁵⁸

In the congressional election of 1837, Lane and Dunn were again opposing candidates. Lane announced 42 speaking engagements, covering a period from June 10 to July 22. He had not intended to canvass the district, he said, as every one knew "his fitness or unfitness" for the position he sought. But the "fearful and alarming" financial situation in the state demanded that he "give correct information to the people, in order that the individuals who have brought them into so much difficulty, and embarrassment, and the State to the verge of bankruptcy and dishonor, shall be made to stand forth in bold relief, before an insulted and oppressed people."¹⁵⁹ Dunn's majority was more than a thousand, though Lane carried Dearborn county by nearly four hundred.¹⁶⁰ The *Indiana Democrat* was "sorry to say that Mr. Dunn used such means to succeed, as cannot be justified."¹⁶¹ Of the seven Jackson men elected in 1835, only Ratliff Boon survived.¹⁶²

INTERNAL IMPROVEMENTS IN INDIANA

Soon after his defeat Lane formed a law partnership with Richard H. Holman.¹⁶³ He had no intention, however, of retiring from politics. He had now an able political lieutenant in his third son, James H. Lane, postmaster at Lawrenceburg,¹⁶⁴ a member of the "Select Council",¹⁶⁵ and town "Recorder".¹⁶⁶ By invitation Amos Lane addressed the Democratic county convention, March 30, 1839, "and spoke for nearly an hour, in his usual able and eloquent manner."¹⁶⁷ The list of delegates appointed to attend the district convention, to be held at Napoleon, Ripley county, on April 15, included two of his sons, George W. and James H. It is quite probable that

¹⁵⁷ Huntsville *Democrat*, quoted in *Indiana Palladium*, May 23, 1835.

¹⁵⁸ *Indiana Democrat*, Dec. 7, 1836.

¹⁵⁹ *Rising Sun Times and Farmers' Journal*, June 3, 1837.

¹⁶⁰ *Dearborn County Democrat*, Aug. 15, 1839; *Rising Sun Times and Farmers' Journal*, Aug. 26, 1837.

¹⁶¹ *Indiana Democrat*, Aug. 23, 1837.

¹⁶² Leonard, *loc. cit.*, XIX, 273.

¹⁶³ *Political Beacon*, May 18, 1839.

¹⁶⁴ He succeeded Jesse Hunt in 1838.—*Ibid.*, July 21, 1838.

¹⁶⁵ Elected April 2, 1838.—*Ibid.*, April 7, 1838.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, May 18, 1839.

¹⁶⁷ *Dearborn County Democrat*, April 4, 1839; *Political Beacon*, April 6, 1839.

the elder Lane did not seek the congressional nomination at the Napoleon convention. The *Dearborn County Democrat* observed that "there was one strong objection, and but one, to urge against him—that was, that for the past *eight years* Dearborn County has had the Representative in Congress, and the other counties thought it high time that the Representative should hail from some other portion of the District."¹⁶⁸ The convention nominated Thomas Smith of Ripley county. The selection was ridiculed by the *Political Beacon*, a Lawrenceburg Whig paper. It was charged that he had "on more than one occasion, spurned the trammels of *Party*, and voted with the Whigs—and that too when his political friends most needed his support." It continued:

Upon the whole, we are much pleased with the nomination; because, with such a competitor, the Whigs cannot fail to achieve an easy victory. Had Mr. Lane been nominated we should perhaps have felt it our duty to buckle on our armor, and prepare for a vigorous contest—for, say what you will, we regard him as the most prominent man of that party in the District, and one who would be the hardest to beat.¹⁶⁹

George H. Dunn was again nominated by the Whigs, and it was charged that Lane was secretly supporting him. J. H. Lane, "the political thermometer of his father," was said to have stated to several members of that party in Lawrenceburg, "*that his father wished Mr. Dunn to beat Smith one or two hundred votes more than Dunn had beaten him at the previous election—that his father understood his interest too well to want Smith elected*".¹⁷⁰ The contest resulted in a Democratic victory.

On May 18, 1839, the Dearborn county Democratic convention nominated Lane for the lower house of the general assembly.¹⁷¹ The important issue was the internal improvement policy embodied in the "Mammoth bill" of 1836. In the congressional contest of 1837 both candidates agreed that the "system" should be checked.¹⁷² In the canvass of 1839 twenty-five residents of the county requested that Lane present his views to the public "in reference to such subjects as will probably be discussed before, and the policy which ought to be

¹⁶⁸ *Dearborn County Democrat*, April 25, 1839.

¹⁶⁹ *Political Beacon*, April 20, 1839.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, July 22, 1839.

¹⁷¹ *Dearborn County Democrat*, May 23, 1839; *Political Beacon*, May 25, 1839.

¹⁷² *Rising Sun Times and Farmers' Journal*, April 22, May 13, 1837.

adopted by, the next General Assembly." Lane consented and immediately announced sixteen appointments, believing it his duty to "expose that policy, that system, and its authors, to public view." He admitted that no political party was solely responsible for the untimely policy, and he therefore invited all to attend who wished "to be correctly informed of the common danger, and of the only mode of escape."¹⁷³

The *Political Beacon* ridiculed the public call for Lane to canvass the county. The Democrats, fearing defeat, only wished to provide "some plausible pretext . . . for Mr. Lane to mount the stump, and harangue the people."¹⁷⁴ The *Democrat* said of the Whigs, "Any man but Lane, is their rallying cry."¹⁷⁵ Notwithstanding the efforts of the latter, Dearborn returned a delegation of four Democrats to the lower house, albeit Lane stood third on the list.¹⁷⁶

Though Lane was suggested for the speakership, and probably desired the chair,¹⁷⁷ James G. Read, unsuccessful candidate for governor in 1831 and 1834, was chosen. Lane was made chairman of the important committee on canals and internal improvements.¹⁷⁸ "In that capacity," the *Dearborn County Democrat* wrote, probably to save his face, "he can serve the people much better than in the Speaker's chair; and we have little doubt but he of choice would have preferred the station. The people may now expect that nothing connected with 'the system' will escape the most searching scrutiny."¹⁷⁹

The legislature of 1839-1840 was "one of very limited ability."¹⁸⁰ In many respects Lane was the most outstanding member. The Indianapolis correspondent of the *Madison Courier* called attention to

the appearance of a venerable looking man in the extreme corner to the left of the Speaker's Chair; from his 'furrowed cheeks and lint-white locks' you will readily conclude that Time has touched him with a heavy hand; but be not impatient. Keep your eye steadily upon the man. . . . He is moving toward the aisle; he speaks; his voice is almost inaudible;—but now it swells to a shrill, clear tone, as he warms, and advances in the discussion of his subject; . . . the fire and vigor of

¹⁷³ *Dearborn County Democrat*, July 4, 1839.

¹⁷⁴ *Political Beacon*, June 29, 1839.

¹⁷⁵ *Dearborn County Democrat*, July 25, 1839.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, Aug. 8, 1839.

¹⁷⁷ *New Albany Argus*, quoted in *Dearborn County Democrat*, Sept. 12, 1839.

¹⁷⁸ *House Journal*, 1839-1840, 30.

¹⁷⁹ *Dearborn County Democrat*, Dec. 12, 1839.

¹⁸⁰ Logan Esarey, "Internal Improvements in Early Indiana," in *Indiana Historical Society Publications*, V, 119.

youth are animating him, and he seems to have forgotten that he is an aged man. If the contractor's relief is his subject, he portrays, in glowing colors, his sufferings; the plighted faith of the State; and denounces in terms of bitterness, the 'State Scrip' system, as one that would prove ruinous in its consequences to that portion of the community which it was intended to benefit—the laboring portion, that has thrown up our embankments, and excavated our canals. Such is a brief outline of the Hon. Amos Lane, of Dearborn county. His position is indeed an elevated one, standing as he does, decidedly foremost in either party, in either branch of the General Assembly. Possessed of an almost inexhaustible fund of political knowledge, he is ever ready to advocate or oppose, from fixed and settled principles, any measure of importance that may be presented for his consideration. In short, his mind is replete with the rich and well treasured stores of forty years experience; and notwithstanding weight of years hang heavily upon him, he still retains the energy and vivacity of youth.¹⁸¹

Lane's report on internal improvements, eighteen pages long in the *House Journal*,¹⁸² is an elaborate treatment of the subject, embodying a history of "the system," a statement of present status, and recommendations for the future. The scheme, he said, emanated not from the people, but from Governor Noah Noble, "in all the force of language and official influence." A bill providing for surveys and estimates was rushed through the legislature, followed by a campaign of propaganda to convince the people that the enterprise should be undertaken. The committee on canals and internal improvements, as well as the governor, had assured them that the financial problem was a simple one. He produced evidence to show the fallacy in the assertions of Noble and Chief Engineer Jesse L. Williams, "that the works, as soon as completed, would be sources of revenue." Even the improvements in New York were not self-sustaining. The "fatal error," however, was the prosecution of each work as a separate enterprise, with no coördination of the whole.¹⁸³

Before the "Mammoth bill" was passed,

the people were in the full enjoyment of peace, independence, prosperity, and happiness. The march of all was onward and upward. The State of Indiana was one inclined plane—every avenue to immigration was

¹⁸¹ *Madison Courier*, quoted in *Dearborn County Democrat*, Dec. 26, 1839. The letter was dated Dec. 9, 1839.

¹⁸² Presented Feb. 11, 1840.—*House Journal*, 1839-1840, 721-738. It was also published in the *Dearborn County Democrat*, March 12, 1840. For his attitude towards internal improvements, see also an open letter to Ezra Ferris, Aug. 13, 1839, in *Dearborn County Democrat*, Aug. 15, 1839; *Political Beacon*, Aug. 17, 1839.

¹⁸³ *House Journal*, 1839-1840, 721-734.

full to overflowing—it poured in upon us, like the streams from an hundred hills upon the valleys. To be a citizen of Indiana, was to be respected and honored at home and abroad. The credit of the State was sound and full, and as the giant queen of the West, she was covered with one bright cloud of glory.¹⁸⁴

The picture of the present was somber in contrast:

A foreign State debt hanging over her head, and resting upon her people; the system fallen beneath its own weight; and nothing left but an excavation here, and embankment there; forests plundered and quarries taken from their owners, farms divided and fields laid waste; laborers turned out of employ, for want of ability in the State to pay. The people in debt, and our courts crowded with suitors; property sacrificed; an inventory taken of the farmer's land, his flocks and his herds; of the merchant's goods, the mechanic's tools, and the widow's mite, by some rude assessor, and a collector of taxes darkening every cabin door. The industry of the citizen checked; the enterprise of the people slackened; a mortgage resting upon every land-holder's farm; the State without credit, and a dark cloud of dismay hanging over her territory.¹⁸⁵

But what of the future?

Let every native and adopted citizen of Indiana double his industry, observe the most rigid economy in his expenses, and go to work with renewed and increased energy, full of hope and confidence. . . . Let every Hoosier son 'pledge his life, his fortune, and his sacred honor,' . . . to pay the interest on the bonds sold, for which we have realized the consideration, and like a good citizen and patriot, let each bear his burden with patience. But on the bonds sold upon credit, for which nothing has been realized, let each make up his mind never to pay the first farthing of interest, or the first dollar of principal, until the full consideration shall be received.¹⁸⁶

The committee recommended to the house a reorganization of the board of fund commissioners, the engineering department, and the board of internal improvements; the completion of the Wabash and Erie canal from Terre Haute to the state line; and the prosecution of two other works, should the next legislature deem it expedient, selected with due regard to the amount of money required for completion, and the estimated revenue they would furnish after finished.¹⁸⁷ Lane himself introduced "a bill to dissolve the present Board of Internal Improvement, the Board of Fund Commissioners and the Engin-

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 736.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 737.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 737-738.

eer Department,"¹⁸⁸ which became law on February 24, 1840.¹⁸⁹

During his campaign for a seat in the legislature, Lane became involved in a quarrel with Milton Gregg, editor of the *Political Beacon*, which arose out of their past records on internal improvements. Amos Lane, "the great Ajax Telamon of the Party," met Gregg on the street and opened fire. "*Alarmed at you sir!*" says he, and then kind reader, it would have made your hair stand on end to witness the volley which was poured in upon us. Talked about *liar*, and *damned liar*,—would give us a d——d whipping if we told any lies about him—had a great mind to do it anyhow—would if we said much, &c. &c. In short he rolled out such a string of expletives on this occasion as would have beggared the vocabulary of Dr. Duncan himself."¹⁹⁰ In a subsequent issue of his paper, Gregg devoted five columns of the first page to an "Address to the People." In a recent speech at Lawrenceburg, Lane had assailed him "with a string of vindictive and unmitigated abuse," and compared him "with such distinguished personages as *Benedict Arnold and Judas Iscariot*." In reply, Gregg reviewed Lane's career as an advocate of internal improvements, printed in full his speech of welcome to De Witt Clinton in 1825, and explained why "Ajax Telamon," "whose voice has often resounded through the lofty dome of the American Capitol!" now condescended to seek a seat in the lower house of the state legislature: "Methinks I see him fixing his ardent gaze upon the gilded and gorgeous trappings of executive office, and executive honor; and if I am not much mistaken, it is through this channel that he hopes ultimately to arrive at the gubernatorial chair of Indiana."¹⁹¹

That Lane hoped to be governor cannot be doubted. Scattered items in various newspapers suggested him as a possible candidate for that office,¹⁹² and the *Dearborn County Democrat* attempted to get up a quarrel between Lane and Noah Noble to supply an issue.¹⁹³ Lane addressed the state Democratic convention at Indianapolis, January 8, 1840, but General

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 775-776. It passed the house, 65 to 25.—*Ibid.*, 831-832.

¹⁸⁹ *Laws of a General Nature*, 1839-1840, 51-52.

¹⁹⁰ *Political Beacon*, July 6, 13, 1839.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, Aug. 3, 1839.

¹⁹² *New Albany Argus*, Aug. 16, 1839, in *Dearborn County Democrat*, Aug. 29, 1839; *Indiana Journal*, Nov. 1, 1839, in *Dearborn County Democrat*, Nov. 14, 1839; *ibid.*, Nov. 21, 1839.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, Dec. 19, 1839.

Tilghman A. Howard was nominated for governor.¹⁹⁴ Lane made a vigorous campaign for both state and national candidates,¹⁹⁵ but the enthusiasm of the Whigs resulted in wholesale defeat for the Democrats.

THE CLOSING YEARS.

Lane had passed the three-score mark when he retired from the general assembly in 1840. By that time he had acquired a competence estimated at \$20,000.¹⁹⁶ He continued to practice law for at least six years, and in 1848 he was serving as postmaster at Lawrenceburg.¹⁹⁷ Although he never again held an elective office, his political battles were not over with the campaign of 1840. Four years later Omar F. Roberts, subsequently a judge of the Dearborn county circuit court,¹⁹⁸

heard Lane deliver one of his powerful philippics against the Whig party. It was in Wilmington, the old capital of Dearborn, at a pole raising. All day long the Democrats had been toiling to raise a pole. Twice it had broken and as often had been spliced. The Whigs, naturally enough, taunted the Democrats with their bad luck, but finally, about ten o'clock at night, patience triumphed and a Polk and Dallas flag waved from the pole. Lane was the orator of the occasion. He was then old, but the taunts of the Whigs raised the fire of youth in the old man. Lane took his stand in the country farm wagon that stood by the side of the street. It was ten o'clock at night when he began his speech, under a full moon that shone in splendor upon the scene. Never will I forget the occasion. I can see that grand old man as he stood there before that audience of spellbound spectators, with his white locks being waved in the moonlight by the evening breeze, giving utterance to some of the most eloquent periods that ever fell upon the ears of a Hoosier assemblage. It abounded in sarcasm, wit, pathos, poetry, legal lore and statesmanship, carrying conviction to the hearts of all who heard him.¹⁹⁹

Lane made an extensive campaign for Polk and Dallas in Indiana. On July 13, 1844, he addressed a letter to the presidential nominee in which he recalled their services in the house of representatives, 1833-1834:

This may be said to have been a period that put to Test the political integrity of men. It was in that Congress that Genl. Jackson learned

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, Jan. 16, 1840.

¹⁹⁵ Smith, *op. cit.*, 349-351; *Dearborn County Democrat*, April 16, July 30, Sept. 3, 1840.

¹⁹⁶ A. C. Pepper to John Tipton, Feb. 24, 1839, in the Tipton Papers.

¹⁹⁷ *Indiana State Journal*, Sept. 11, 1848.

¹⁹⁸ Monks, ed., *op. cit.*, II, 635. His term was from March 29, 1873, to Oct. 21, 1879.

¹⁹⁹ Roberts, *loc. cit.*, 30-31.

who were or were not his fixed firm friends. It was in that Congress that the friends of Democracy were not only weighed in the balance, but had to pass through the political furnace. And the many doubted, while others deserted, the principle of equal rights and equal privileges. Still a sufficient No. stood by their principle, their Country and Gallant Chief, to enable him most Gloriously to triumph over monopoly, the Bank and her bought up attorneys, speakers and bribed presses.

Lane praised Polk's past record and predicted that during his "Administration, the Eagle shall be able to Perch on the Loftiest Peak of the Rocky Mountains while the Star Spangled banner shall waive in every valley on every hill and mountain of Oregon and Texas." Never before had the Indiana Democracy been "so perfectly united," and as for Lane himself, "no one of the public men of our country could have drawn forth from him a more untiring effort than yourself, in whom principle, Patriotism and warm personal friendship are so happily united." Lane received invitations from all parts of the state to make addresses. "I have not a day or an hour I can call my own. . . . On Saturday 20 we have an union mass meeting at Harrison on the line of In[diana] and Ohio, on Monday I shall address the people of the county at Wilmington, in answer to Gov. Corwin of Ohio & Machead of Kentucky, . . .

. . . On Tuesday I leave for the Wabash and shall spend some weeks in that part of the State." He then added as a post-script: "I perfectly recollect on a particular occasion saying to Mrs. Polk that when she should *preside* at the *White House* I should call on her. May Heaven send it a prophetic remark—Say to her if life be spared I will keep my word."²⁰⁰

On November 6, 1844, he sent Polk the election news: "We have had a hard fight, and enough is known to justify the firm belief it [Indiana] has gone for P. & Dallas. . . . Penn is safe, no news from N.Y. or Virginia."²⁰¹

For three years after the election of 1844 the records are silent regarding Lane's activities. In the summer of 1847 he spent several weeks in Washington, where he frequently visited the president and secretary of war.²⁰² His object was to secure a contract to furnish the adjutant general with from 1,000 to 10,000 tons of hay at \$16 a ton, delivered at New

²⁰⁰ Amos Lane to James K. Polk, July 13, 1844, in the Polk Papers, Library of Congress.

²⁰¹ Amos Lane to James K. Polk, Nov. 6, 1844, in the Polk Papers.

²⁰² Amos Lane to Col. J. H. Lane, July 19, Aug. 11, 1847, in the Lane Papers (copies in possession of the late William E. Connelley, Topeka, Kansas).

Orleans.²⁰³ He also used his influence to see that justice was done to his son, Colonel James H. Lane, and his "Steadfast Third," whose contributions to success at Buena Vista, it was believed, were slighted in General Taylor's report.²⁰⁴

In his letters to his son, the elder Lane expressed himself freely upon the political situation at Washington. Many Whigs, he said, "would sell destroy and damn their country if its disgrace would elect that old fire eating [Taylor] President—in fact the leading whigs are the blackest Traitors to this country and ought to be hung."²⁰⁵ Clay "is in Washington making speeches and using all his influence with his friends to disgrace and starve the army. . . . Cass is doing all he can in the Senate at the head of the Military Committee." Calhoun "has proven himself a dotard and insane on arbitration. In fact of all the statesmen on earth he has changed oftenest and accomplished least—He has yet to go with any one administration for a term. . . . he is a most perfect windmill a perfect weather cock—

"Clay and his friends will play the fool and if he is not kicked off[f] the field before the election he will be beaten on it—Taylor in all probability will be the candidate, and if so if Cass is ours we shall be beaten—For if they have a war candidate we must also."²⁰⁶ Later in the campaign Lane assured Thomas Ritchie of the *Union* that Indiana would give Cass a majority of 10,000.²⁰⁷ The prophecy was substantially correct; Cass's Plurality over General Taylor was 5,000.²⁰⁸

Amos Lane did not long survive the election of 1848, as he died on September 2 of the following year.²⁰⁹ His long political career had been a stormy one. Assertive, contentious, provocative, vindictive, he had both faithful friends and implacable foes among his constituents in southeastern Indiana. Although he possessed a violent and ill-governed temper, on occasion he evinced a dignity of manner, a serenity of spirit, and an honesty of purpose that were admirable. He was neither learned nor profound, yet many of his congressional debates and stump speeches reveal a comprehensive knowledge

²⁰³ Amos Lane to Col. J. H. Lane, July 19, Aug. 10, 1847, in the Lane Papers.

²⁰⁴ Amos Lane to Col. J. H. Lane, July 19, Aug. 11, 1847, in the Lane Papers.

²⁰⁵ Amos Lane to Col. J. H. Lane, Jan. 24, 1848, in the Lane Papers.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁷ *Indiana State Journal*, Sept. 11, 1848.

²⁰⁸ Edward Stanwood, *A History of the Presidency* (Boston, 1898), I, 243.

²⁰⁹ Lawrenceburg *Register*, in *Indiana State Sentinel*, Sept. 13, 1849.

of vital issues in which the West was interested. His speeches were often merely caustic arraignments of political enemies, full of emotion and indignation. He was a master in the use of invective, his language was ready and fluent, his vocabulary bristled with expletives. Six feet tall, erect in stature, commanding in appearance, aggressive in manner, with piercing blue eyes and gray locks, he made a remarkable impression upon western audiences. With a minimum of formal education, he was essentially a product of the frontier.

The elder Lane entered national politics too late in life to attain a place of importance. But he transmitted to his son, James H. Lane, many of his characteristics, and his own political career opened the way for the younger Lane's entrance into politics. By inheritance and association the son acquired the political acumen, the manner of speech, and an understanding of frontier influences that made him a dominating personality in the Kansas struggle of a later decade. The essential traits which he displayed as the fiery leader of the Free-State party and as a radical agitator of the Civil War period, had their antecedents in the elder Lane's political career.