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## Insurgent Democrats of Indiana and Illinois in 1854<sup>1</sup>

MILDRED C. STOLER

Before the actual beginning of debate on the Nebraska measure of 1854, the "Appeal of the Independent Democrats" was given to the public. It was the work of Senator Salmon P. Chase. It was signed by him, Senator Charles Sumner and four members of the House.<sup>2</sup> The "Appeal" was widely published, and excerpts from it appeared in a vast number of newspapers. By the time the Kansas-Nebraska Act became a law in May, a great opposition to the abrogation of the anti-slavery restriction of the Missouri Compromise had developed. Much of this was certainly due to the effectiveness of the "Appeal", which included the following passages well calculated to arouse deep hostility to the measure championed by Douglas:

We arraign this bill as a gross violation of a sacred pledge; as a criminal betrayal of precious rights; as part and parcel of an atrocious plot to exclude from a vast unoccupied region immigrants from the old world, and free laborers from our own States, and convert it into a dreary region of despotism, inhabited by masters and slaves.

Take your maps fellow citizens, we entreat you and see what country it is which this bill, gratuitously, proposes to open to slavery.

We appeal to the people. We warn you that the dearest interests of freedom and the Union are in imminent peril. Demagogues may tell you that the Union can be maintained only by submitting to the demands of slavery. We tell you that the safety of the Union can only be insured by the full recognition of the just claims of freedom and man. The Union was formed to establish justice, and secure the blessings of liberty. When it fails to accomplish these ends, it will be worthless; and when it becomes worthless, it cannot long endure.

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<sup>1</sup>This paper was read before one of the sessions of the annual Indiana History Conference, at the Hotel Lincoln in Indianapolis on December 11, 1937.

<sup>2</sup>*Cong. Globe*, 33 Cong., 1 Sess. (1853-1854), 281-282. Besides the Senators mentioned, the signers were: Representatives Joshua R. Giddings (Ohio), Edward Wade (Ohio), Gerritt Smith (New York), and Alexander DeWitt (Mass.).

Practical suggestions for giving direction and purpose to the inevitable protest against the bill were offered. The signers promised to resist by speech and vote, but they asked for the support of Christians and Christian ministers who believed in the brotherhood of men. Their protests should take the form of letters, memorials, petitions, resolutions in public meetings and legislatures, and editorials. If, in spite of their efforts, failure resulted, the signers declared that they would return to their constituencies, "erect anew the standard of freedom, and call on the people to come to the rescue of the country from the domination of slavery. We will not despair; for the cause of human freedom is the cause of God."<sup>3</sup>

In the note appended to the "Appeal" appeared the politician's sharp thrusts. Having appealed as if interested only in idealism and humanitarianism, in Christian principles and the welfare of the nation, they now asked: "Will the people permit their dearest interests to be thus made the mere hazards of a presidential game, and destroyed by false facts and false inferences?"<sup>4</sup>

The Kansas-Nebraska Bill passed the Senate in the early morning of March 4, after an all-night debate. The vote was 37 to 14. Four regular Democrats and Chase, an Independent Democrat, voted against it. The four were Henry Dodge and Isaac P. Walker of Wisconsin, Charles T. James of Rhode Island, and Hannibal Hamlin of Maine. The last named became a prominent Republican and the first Vice-President elected by that party. Fourteen Democrats from the free states remained faithful to the Administration leaders. Among them were the two Illinois Senators, Douglas and James P. Shields, and John Pettit of Indiana. The other Indiana Senator, Jesse D. Bright, did not vote.

The final vote in the House was 113 to 100. The northern Democrats divided almost evenly—44 to 43. At least three of the five Democrats from the free states who did not vote were opposed to the bill. Illinois was represented by five Democrats and four Whigs. Two of the Democrats opposed the bill, but

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<sup>3</sup> Chase, Sumner, Giddings, Wade and Gerritt Smith certainly kept their pledge to resist the bill by speech and vote. To their aid came a goodly number of Democrats. Some participated in the debates; more supported them with their votes. Of the Democrats from Illinois and Indiana, only one spoke against the Bill. That one was Representative Daniel Mace of Lafayette, Indiana. Whether the classes opposed to the measure were influenced by the suggestions in the "Appeal" in regard to the methods to be used or not, they certainly did not omit any of the proposed methods in the fight that followed.

<sup>4</sup> For a copy of the "Appeal" with the appended note, see *Cong. Globe*, 33 Cong., 1 Sess., 281-282.

only one, John Wentworth of Chicago, voted. William H. Bissell was too ill to be present, but he offered to come if his vote would defeat the bill. The Indiana delegation of ten Democrats and one Whig contained three anti-Nebraska Democrats. Daniel Mace and Andrew J. Harlan voted, but the third, Ebenezer M. Chamberlain, was detained at home by illness in the family. All of the Whigs from both states voted *nay*.<sup>5</sup> Thus the defection in the Democratic ranks was considerable, for half of the Democratic congressmen from the free states refused to obey the dictation of the party leaders.

While the Senate Chamber was resounding to the sonorous phrases of Sumner and the logical arguments of Chase, great excitement prevailed throughout the North. During the debates in Congress speakers often referred to the general agitation which rivaled that of 1849-50. Then the crisis had been bridged by a compromise which both party platforms had accepted in 1852. As Chase remarked, however, the peace of 1852 had turned into the storm of 1854.<sup>6</sup> Reference was made to the "seething agitation" and to the "wild spirit of discord" which was "poisoning the air."<sup>7</sup> Isaac P. Walker, Democratic Senator from Wisconsin, thought it "most unfortunate that it [Kansas-Nebraska Bill] has ever been introduced." He warned the party of the consequences:

But if this bill passes, I, for one, expect to see no quiet in Congress . . . . I believe agitation will go on, and I believe that the example set by some of the States, my own among the rest, of instructing their Senators, will be followed up until there will be a prohibition of slavery wherever it can be enacted. I shall not promote this agitation, but do all I can to prevent it; and when it shall come, as come I fear it must, no one will deplore it more than I; but at the same time you will have deprived me of the power to deny that the agitation began with you. . . .<sup>8</sup>

Reuben E. Fenton, Representative from New York, also a Democrat, added his admonition:

Hitherto we have acted on the defensive; but let me tell gentlemen, a sentiment exists at the North, call it what you will, philanthropic or fanatical, which will justify itself by this want of good faith in taking

<sup>5</sup> George Bliss, of Ohio, was also absent, but he had published his anti-Nebraska speech, which his health did not permit him to deliver, in the *Congressional Globe* (*Appendix*).

<sup>6</sup> *Cong. Globe*, 33 Cong., 1 Sess., *Appendix*, 134.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 502.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 290-91.

an aggressive attitude; and if it do not carry a war into the very camp of Africa, will enter the outposts, and clear what it conceives to be the taint of slavery from the territorial soil, which, by the spirit and genius of our institutions, and the great base of the superstructure—the inalienable rights of men—should be devoted to freedom's uses.<sup>9</sup>

The repercussions from the excitement began to be felt in Congress very early. Less than a week<sup>10</sup> after the publication of the "Appeal of the Independent Democrats" resolutions of protest from the Rhode Island legislature were presented to the Senate. After February 9, petitions, memorials, and remonstrances poured in almost daily. These were signed sometimes by single individuals; usually by large groups of citizens; a few were signed by women alone as the one by Harriet Beecher Stowe and eleven hundred women of Andover, Massachusetts. One was sent by several thousand working men of New York City. Others came from the students of Hamilton College, in New York, the officers of Yale College, the Society of Friends, the Free-Will Baptists, and from clergymen of all denominations. One hundred fifty clergymen of one Massachusetts county sent Congress a memorial. Some days later there appeared a memorial signed by three thousand fifty New England clergymen. They opposed the repeal of the Missouri Compromise as a great moral wrong, as a breach of faith which was subversive of confidence in all national contracts, as dangerous to peace and to the Union, and as an act exposing the country to the righteous judgments of God. Senator Douglas demanded that it be read and then delivered a fiery invective against it and the signers. Early in May, twenty-five ministers of Chicago sent a petition to Douglas to be presented in the Senate, and a little later it was followed by one signed by five hundred four clergymen of the northwestern states. The proceedings of many of the mass meetings, which were being held in all parts of the free states, were presented in Congress. The legislatures of New York, Massachusetts, Maine, and Connecticut, following the example of Rhode Island, sent resolutions opposing the passage of the bill.<sup>11</sup> The Illinois legislature, however, passed pro-Nebraska resolutions. The legislature of Indiana was not in session.

The mail of Congressmen must have included many let-

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 157.

<sup>10</sup> January 30, 1854.

<sup>11</sup> *Cong. Globe*. 33 Cong., 1 Sess. These Resolutions may be found by consulting the "Index."

ters from their constituents during those weeks. Three of the letters received by William H. English, from a district of southern Indiana, have been preserved. On February 8 John B. Norman, editor of the *New Albany Ledger*, a Democratic paper, wrote him in frank criticism of the course of Douglas:

It seems to me the Nebraska bill is a very ill-advised scheme and ought not to have been introduced. I do not think the South asks the annulment of the Missouri Compromise, or thant [*sic*] it will thank Douglas for introducing his proviso to that effect. Of course if *one* compromise is annulled another can be, and, the North having the power, possibly *may* be, in some particulars, before many years. It is certainly new to many that the Compromise of 1850 was intended as an annulment of that of 1820. Certainly no such avowal was made at the time that Compromise was pending. The indecent haste of Douglas in attempting to force this bill through the Senate without debate, and the various amendments he has at different times proposed, shows [*sic*] that he himself doubts its propriety or its popularity. His wholesale denunciation of the opponents of the bill as 'abolitionists' and 'nigger' sympathizers will avail him but little. People are not to be frightened from their propriety by such epithets now-a-days, whatever may have been their effect a few years since. . . .<sup>12</sup>

J. B. A. Archer had sampled the opinion of English's district and sent him a friendly warning:

Having been recently in the lower part of your District, & ascertained as far as practicable the sentiments of the leading ones in other sections on the subject of Douglas Nebraska bill, I have concluded to 'drop you a line'—which I do confidently. Knowing as I do your willingness & anxiety to reflect the sentiments of your constituency in all matters in which they are directly interested.

In a word, then, the Douglas bill, (as it is understood out West here,) is exciting no little interest. The popular voice is strong against any & every measure having for its object the repeal of the 'Missouri Compromise'. While all seem perfectly willing to abide in good faith by the acts of 1850, & give the South all of its benefits, no one is willing to [have] an additional foot of slave Territory to come into the Union. Personally I have not the remotest idea that any part of the new Territory aluded [*sic*] to would ever become slave *states* even were the restrictions of the 1820 act withdrawn. But the people will not view it in that light.

I will say that (from present indications) should you vote for the measure in its present form, it will be used as a powerful weapon against you in the approaching or any future canvass. Nothing will work so readily & profoundly, you know, on the minds of the mass of the people

<sup>12</sup> William H. English Collection in the William Henry Smith Memorial Library, Indianapolis, MSS.

as a real or imagined effort to restrict the area of freedom. . . .<sup>13</sup>

These letters indicate that Indiana, in common with the remainder of the North, was considerably concerned with the Nebraska question. As early as January 13 editors took cognizance of the possible effect of the Nebraska Bill on the extension of slavery.<sup>14</sup> Before long editorials appeared almost daily in which the changes were rung on the arguments set forth by the "Appeal". This topic vied for space with such previously important subjects as railroads and the "Maine Law" movement.<sup>15</sup>

A number of Democratic editors in both Indiana and Illinois opposed the opening of formerly free territory to slavery. In Indiana five of the leading Democratic papers were anti-Nebraska. In the southern part of the state Michael C. Garber reached thousands through the columns of the *Madison Courier*. This paper claimed to have five or six thousand readers "the largest list of daily subscribers, in proportion to population, of any paper in any of the western cities."<sup>16</sup> Garber had been read out of the party by Jesse D. Bright, autocrat of Indiana politics, in 1851, but he still claimed to be a Democrat, though a very independent one, censuring the Bright faction most freely. He believed that slavery could only exist where it was expressly established by law. For this reason, he said, he had won the enmity of Bright.<sup>17</sup> In May, 1854 he warned the Democratic party that if it continued to follow "strange gods" another such scourging as those of 1840 and 1848 would be necessary to bring it "back into the paths" marked out by Jefferson and Jackson.<sup>18</sup> The *Princeton Democratic Clarion* denounced the bill as a violation of a sacred compact.<sup>19</sup> As we have already seen from his letter to English, Norman of the *New Albany Ledger* was at first opposed to the repeal of the Missouri Compromise, but his opposition soon grew lukewarm and he finally fell in line with the Ad-

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, Feb. 23, 1854. A third constituent enclosed an anti-Nebraska petition signed by neighbors of English who lived in Lexington (Scott County, Indiana), adding his own emphatic protest, which he felt would be echoed by forty-nine fiftieths of the people. J. S. Maughlin to English, Lexington, n.d., English Collection.

<sup>14</sup> *Indiana State Sentinel* (daily); *Illinois Journal* (Springfield, daily).

<sup>15</sup> The people of Maine were experimenting with legal prohibition. People in other states who wished to substitute law for moral suasion in relation to the problem of intemperance were often referred to as "Maine Law" advocates.

<sup>16</sup> *Madison Courier* (daily), Nov. 1, 19, 1853.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, Nov. 2, 1853.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, May 8, 1854.

<sup>19</sup> Logan Esarey. *A History of Indiana*, II, 637, note 16. This paper did not become an insurgent. *Indiana State Journal* (weekly), July 1, 1854.

ministration papers which were led by William J. Brown of the *Indiana State Sentinel*.<sup>20</sup>

In the northern part of the state the Goshen *Democrat* and the Lafayette *Courier*, both important Democratic papers, were strongly anti-Nebraska. R. Lowry, editor of the former, regarded the reöpening of the slavery question as destructive of the good will between the sections and as tending inevitably to the overthrow of the Democracy.<sup>21</sup> William R. Ellis of the *Courier* also waged an editorial campaign against the Douglas bill.

At the capital, the powerful pen of Jacob P. Chapman, veteran newspaper man and formerly for nine years joint editor of the Democratic organ at Indianapolis, the *Indiana State Sentinel*, was directed against the extension of slavery. Late in 1853 he was called from his retirement by his son, George, who wanted to publish an independent weekly which he called *Chapman's Chanticleer*. The two young partners, George H. Chapman and Horatio S. Garner, felt that the success of their venture depended largely upon the skill and judgment of the older man, and J. P. Chapman was glad for an opportunity to write his opinions untrammelled by party management. The paper, he stated in the first issue, was to be independent but not neutral, adding that "any chicken heart may be a neutral, but it requires a stout heart of the real game cock breed to be really and truly *independent*."<sup>22</sup> Chapman, like Garber, had been too strongly anti-slavery to harmonize with the leaders of his party and had withdrawn from the *Sentinel* in 1850. Three years later he had been denied the appointment as postmaster at Indianapolis even though the people had shown their preference for him.<sup>23</sup> Although he denied that he had any regrets in the matter, this incident must have made it a little less difficult to cut the party ties which he had known for so many years.

Much the same situation existed in Illinois. The revolt of the Democratic press in Chicago was so extensive that Douglas was forced to establish a new party organ. John L. Scripps and William Bross, editors of *The Democratic Press*, were among the earliest to come out in open opposition. Scripps had been added to the editorial staff of the Chicago *Tribune* in

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 638.

<sup>21</sup> *Morning Journal* (Indianapolis), Feb. 28, 1854.

<sup>22</sup> *Chapman's Chanticleer*, Nov. 17, 1853.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, Jan. 5, 1854.

1848 when that paper supported Van Buren for President, but he sold out his interest in 1851, because, as a Free Soiler "with Democratic proclivities," he was not in harmony with his Whig associates. Shortly afterwards he met William Bross, a young Democrat, whom he found willing to join him in a venture which they called the *Democratic Press*.<sup>24</sup> They supported Douglas until the Nebraska issue arose, but then young Scripps followed his conscience and his Free Soil tendency as a letter to his father shows:

Douglas's course on the Missouri Compromise, I regard as unfortunate. I have taken the course on the subject which both reason and conscience dictated. It will doubtless cost me something and may greatly retard me in my undertakings, but as I cannot help it, I do not suffer it to afflict me. William [his brother] writes me that I have ruined myself. If I am to be ruined at all, let it be from meeting the responsibilities of my position with a conscience void of offense toward God and man, I am content.<sup>25</sup>

The Chicago *Democrat*, edited by "Long" John Wentworth, the dean of the editorial profession in his state and the only Democratic member of the Illinois delegation in Congress who had actually voted against the Nebraska Bill, took an anti-Nebraska position on March 11.<sup>26</sup>

Downstate papers also joined the revolt. The Alton *Courier*, edited by George T. Brown, had the largest circulation in the area outside of Chicago. Brown boldly stated his grounds for opposition:

It opens the door for a great outrage on human rights, the introduction of slavery into territory now free, and which we would be glad ever to remain so. . . . We desire to see that aggressive spirit [of slavery] met, repelled, and driven back to within the area in which we believe the compromises of the constitution intended it should be permitted to exist, but this bill extends its area, under the specious plea of democratic principle.<sup>27</sup>

Dr. Charles H. Ray, an editor of the leading Democratic paper in northwestern Illinois, the Galena *Jeffersonian*, early took anti-Nebraska ground:

Mr. Douglas's Nebraska bill is a bomb shell in our camp. We rejoice to know that it will be actively and vigorously opposed. It asks too much, and it asks for Slavery. The friends of the Compromise of

<sup>24</sup> William Bross, *History of Chicago* (Chicago, 1876), 81.

<sup>25</sup> Mrs. Grace Locke Scripps Dyche, "John Locke Scripps, Lincoln's Campaign Biographer," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*, XVII, 342-43.

<sup>26</sup> Chicago *Democrat* (daily), March 11, 1854.

<sup>27</sup> Alton *Courier*, quoted by *Illinois Journal* (daily), May 26, 1854.



1820, and of the Compromise of 1850, which latter affirmed the former, are not to be crowded into a measure looking to the repeal of the one or the other. We shall take occasion to speak, at length, of the true relation of the two, and of the manifest duty of Democrats at this crisis. Let it suffice for the present that we shall oppose the measure with what ability and industry we may possess.<sup>28</sup>

Before the battle of editorials had well begun the people began to take action. The procedure was that common to American democracy. The citizens of town or county met in the court house or some large hall and organized by the selection of a chairman and secretary and the appointment of a committee on resolutions. While the committee was at work, addresses were made by local orators whom the crowd spontaneously called to the front.<sup>29</sup>

In a study of the Democratic insurgency of 1854, the reaction of the Germans must not be overlooked, for large numbers of them belonged to that party. In fact, the Germans were among the first to voice their protest. They opposed the Clayton amendment because it affected their political rights should they emigrate to the new territory. In common with all others in the Northwest who desired cheap land, they were interested in the effect of the extension of slavery into the Nebraska Territory upon free labor and homesteads. Many of them also sincerely abhorred slavery and opposed its extension on moral grounds.<sup>30</sup> Before the end of January, George Schneider became the leading spirit in a mass meeting of Germans in Chicago; another was held on March 16, after the Senate passed the bill, at which Schneider, Frances A. Hoffman, and Edward Schlaeger, prominent German Democrats, were present. Schlaeger, the editor of the *Deutsch-Amerikaner*, played a leading part in the second meeting.<sup>31</sup> Eight hundred German voters of Chicago sent an anti-Nebraska petition to the state legislature.<sup>32</sup> The German Democrats of In-

<sup>28</sup> Galena *Jeffersonian*, quoted by *Morning Journal* (Indianapolis), Feb. 7, 1854. Some other anti-Nebraska Democratic papers were: *Aurora Guardian*; *Chester Herald*; *Greenville Journal*; *Rock River Democrat* (Rockford); *Urbana Union*; *Southern Illinoisian* (Shawnesstown, in "Egypt"); two German papers, *Illinois Staats-Zeitung*, George Schneider, editor, Chicago, and Alton *Vorwärts*. See Franklin William Scott, *Newspapers and Periodicals of Illinois, 1814-1879*; Alton *Courier* (daily), Aug. 12, 1854.

<sup>29</sup> Such a meeting was apt to be called by a group made up of men from all parties. Such a group would insert a call in a newspaper. In some instances meetings were sponsored by insurgent Democrats only.

<sup>30</sup> *Chapman's Chanticleer*, March 9, 1854.

<sup>31</sup> William Vocke, "The Germans and the German Press," *Transactions of the McLean County Historical Society* (Bloomington, Ill.), III, 53; Andrew Jacke Townsend, *The Germans of Chicago* (Reprinted from the *Jahrbuch der Deutsch-Amerikanischen Historischen Gesellschaft von Illinois*, 1932), 27.

<sup>32</sup> *Illinois Journal* (daily), Feb. 21, 1854.

dianapolis also held an anti-Nebraska mass meeting. After hearing addresses in their native tongue, they called out Lucian Barbour and Jacob P. Chapman, both Democrats of long standing, for speeches.<sup>33</sup>

Democrats played a significant rôle in some of the mass meetings, which were held in every corner of these two states while the Nebraska Bill was pending in Congress. At Chicago on February 8, the chairman, James Curtiss, former mayor and prominent in the party, declared that he could follow Douglas no longer. A few days later, the pro-Nebraska wing of the party tried to hold a meeting but the anti-Nebraska men prevented the passage of their resolutions and substituted instead those of the earlier meeting. Leaders in this strategem were Curtiss, E. G. Larned, and Francis C. Sherman, former state representative.<sup>34</sup> The pro-Nebraska men of Marion, Indiana, had a similar experience about a month later.<sup>35</sup> Hon. Charles Reemelin, German Democratic leader of Cincinnati, addressed a meeting at West Union, Indiana.<sup>36</sup> Meetings in districts represented by Chamberlain and Harlan endorsed their opposition to the bill in Congress.<sup>37</sup> It must not be forgotten, however, when considering insurgency in the Democratic party, that thousands of Whigs and Free Soilers were participating in these mass meetings which were in many cases dominated by their leaders rather than by Democrats.

This brief survey indicates a considerable opposition among the Democracy of Indiana and Illinois. Two Indiana newspapers felt that it was serious enough to threaten the party's supremacy in the state. The *Lafayette Courier* claimed that "it would be suicidal to undertake to make it [Nebraska Bill] a Democratic measure by endorsing it in the State Convention." The *Madison Courier* declared that the anti-Nebraska Democrats were determined to prevent the extension of negro slavery into formerly free territory where it would surely degrade free labor, but he feared that they would not be able to control the state convention.<sup>38</sup> These editors belonged to the insurgent faction, but a regular Democrat could also see breakers ahead. P. M. Kent, of New Albany, wrote

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<sup>33</sup> *Indiana State Journal* (weekly), March 11, 1854.

<sup>34</sup> *Morning Journal* (Indianapolis), Feb. 20, 1854.

<sup>35</sup> *Indiana State Journal* (weekly), March 25, 1854.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, May 20, 1854.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, March 25, 1854.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, June 3, 1854.

William H. English, his Congressman, that he had only seen two copies of Douglas's last masterly speech on the bill "when thousands should have been circulated. Mark what I say, that the temporary opposition to this measure may do us some political damage, if not looked to in time." Later he wrote that "The political horizon looks very well in this portion of the state; but it is very certain the coming canvass must be managed very carefully, and with unusual skill & energy."<sup>39</sup> Moreover, the cool reception which was accorded the returning Senators boded evil for the approaching campaign. In Chicago, always so friendly to the Little Giant, Douglas was refused a hearing by the assembled crowd. His voice was drowned in the tumult.<sup>40</sup> Senator Pettit found his audiences at Lafayette and Indianapolis quite hostile. In the former place resolutions endorsing his vote on Nebraska were defeated, and probably he was saved a similar humiliation in the capital only because no resolutions were presented. His Indianapolis hearers greeted some of his statements with hisses, however, which irritated him considerably.<sup>41</sup>

The opposition of the anti-Nebraska wing of the party developed into insurgency at the state convention on May 24, the day before the Senate acted upon the bill for the second time. This faction had hoped to send enough delegates to Indianapolis to prevent the endorsement of Douglas and his bill. William R. Ellis thought that silence was the best policy. He could not see how a question which divided the party vote in the House of Representatives almost equally could be rightfully considered a Democratic measure. In any event it would be dangerous to party harmony to endorse this particular bill. In his opinion such action could be prevented if the anti-Nebraska Democrats would attend the convention and put forth a united opposition. Michael C. Garber doubted this in view of the character of the membership of the convention which, he said, had been packed.<sup>42</sup> There were anti-Nebraska men present at the convention, but they controlled the delegations of only three counties, Henry, Randolph, and Lake. The Tippecanoe county anti-Nebraska Democrats were ably represented by Henry L. Ellsworth and William R. Ellis. From Wayne

<sup>39</sup> P. M. Kent to [W. H. English], New Albany, Ind., April 17, May 17, 1854. English Collection.

<sup>40</sup> *Memoirs of Gustave Koerner, 1809-1896*, Edited by Thomas J. McCormack (Cedar Rapids, Iowa, 1909), II, 1-3.

<sup>41</sup> *Morning Journal* (Indianapolis), June 16, 1854.

<sup>42</sup> *Indiana State Journal* (weekly), June 3, 1854.

county came Oliver P. Morton, Charles H. Test, and Othniel Beeson. Jefferson county sent John A. Hendricks. Reuben A. Riley, a member of the state central committee, was from Hancock county. There were others, but altogether they were too few to overrule Bright and his lieutenants. When the platform was brought up for consideration, Ellsworth of Tippecanoe and A. McDonald from Lake county protested against the resolution which endorsed the Kansas-Nebraska Bill.<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless it was adopted with only three counties dissenting. Morton, Test and Beeson walked out of the convention amid hisses and taunts. They were then read out of the party.<sup>44</sup>

The Democratic party was confronted by another question which needed skillful handling or still other men would be alienated. This was the prohibition issue which had become increasingly pressing since the previous autumn. It cut squarely across party lines. The local option feature of the law of 1853 had been declared void by the state Supreme Court. On January 11 the friends of temperance, regardless of party, had held a state convention at Indianapolis; had appointed a state central committee of three Democrats and two Whigs; and had made plans for county organization. The temporary chairman, James P. Milliken (Dearborn County) and the president, Bishop E. R. Ames (Marion County) were Democrats, as were at least three of the vice presidents, H. L. Ellsworth (Tippecanoe County), James Blake (Marion County) and Milliken.<sup>45</sup> In fact, so many leaders of the meeting were Democrats that "the imputation that this movement" was "but a scheme of the Whigs to distract the Democratic party" proved groundless.<sup>46</sup> The temperance men pledged themselves to vote only for candidates for the state legislature who would work for an effective prohibitory law which embodied "the principle of the right of search, of seizure, of confiscation and destruction of all intoxicating liquors kept for illegal sale." They resolved to make this the paramount issue. They would support the candidates of their respective parties only if they held these views; if one party accepted this as their platform, all would vote for that party's candidates; if neither party

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<sup>43</sup> *Madison Courier* (daily), May 27, 1854.

<sup>44</sup> William Dudley Foulke, *Life of Oliver P. Morton* (Indianapolis, 1899), I, 38-39.

<sup>45</sup> The minutes of the proceedings of the State Temperance Convention were published in the *Morning Journal*, Jan. 21, 1854.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, Feb. 11, 1854.

nominated temperance men, they would bring out a ticket of their own. Such was their ultimatum to the old parties.<sup>47</sup>

A few delegates in the May Convention wished to maintain silence on this delicate question. The editor of the *Indiana State Sentinel* maintained that it was not a political question and therefore should not come before the convention. The plank on temperance did not satisfy the temperance Democrats, even though it may have been designed for that purpose. It declared intemperance to be a great moral and social evil which should be restrained by legislation, but at the same time it opposed any law authorizing the searching for or seizure, confiscation, and destruction of private property.<sup>48</sup> Men like James Blake who might have remained loyal to the party on the Nebraska issue were alienated by this plank. Ellsworth told the convention that Tippecanoe County would be lost if the resolution was adopted.<sup>49</sup> The temperance men had no alternative but to join the opposition group if it should adopt a strong recommendation for a prohibitory law, which it did.

The example of the state convention in reading out of the party the bolting anti-Nebraska delegates from Wayne County was rather generally followed throughout the state by the congressional conventions when they met to select candidates for Congress. Morton's hopes of controlling the Wayne county organization were dashed to the ground by the district convention on May 26.<sup>50</sup> His name had been frequently mentioned for the nomination, but in July he wrote a letter to be read at the district convention stating his anti-Nebraska views. He also authorized the withdrawal of his name from consideration as a candidate for Congress. This convention adopted resolutions which practically expelled from the party any delegate who refused to support the state ticket and the nominee of the convention then in session. When pro-Nebraska resolutions were adopted and Joseph S. Buckles was named as the candidate, the anti-Nebraska men withdrew to the railroad depot and named Joseph Holman as an independent Democratic candidate for Congress. Among the insurgents were

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, Feb. 22, 24, 1854; *Indianapolis Journal* (daily), June 22, 1854.

<sup>48</sup> William E. Henry, *State Platforms of the Two Dominant Political Parties in Indiana, 1850-1900* (Indianapolis, 1902), 9-10.

<sup>49</sup> *A Biographical History of Eminent and Self-Made Men of the State of Indiana* (Cincinnati, 1880), "James Blake" (District 7), 102. The binder's title is *Representative Men of Indiana*. *Indianapolis Journal* (daily) June 6, 22, 1854.

<sup>50</sup> Foulke, *Oliver P. Morton*, I, 39-40.

Charles H. Test, former Secretary of State and delegate to the recent state convention, William Grose, a Pierce elector in 1852, William Baker, three times sheriff, Othniel Beeson and Judge Walter March, both members of the state constitutional convention of 1850, Richard Jones, John Neff, and Joseph Holman.<sup>51</sup>

In the fourth congressional district convention Thomas Smith was expelled. He was one of the best campaigners in the party and had had a long career in politics as state representative and senator, as member of the national House for three terms, and as a delegate to the state constitutional convention. In the sixth the axe fell on Jacob P. Chapman, Judge W. J. Paslee of Shelby County, Dr. James Ritchey, and Lucian Barbour formerly federal district attorney. Thus the so-called Nebraska test was applied very vigorously in Indiana. There was one exception. In the tenth district moderation prevailed. Nebraska was declared not to be a test, and E. M. Chamberlain was renominated by acclamation.<sup>52</sup> In the eleventh district, Harlan declined a second nomination. The anti-Nebraska Democrats made a brave, but losing fight to gain control of the meeting. Only two of their number were placed on the resolutions committee and their candidate, John U. Pettit, received but eight votes.<sup>53</sup>

This test was bitterly resented by the anti-Nebraska insurgents. They claimed to be loyal to the true Democratic principles. They protested that one of the cardinal principles of the party was liberty to hold individual opinions on such questions as this. The very fact that the May convention dictated party orthodoxy on the Nebraska question drove many Democrats into the arms of the fusionists. Probably most of them would have returned to the fold when the election was over had not this been insisted upon as a test.

The delegates to the state convention had scarcely reached their homes before the crystallization of the insurgent forces began. The Lafayette court house was filled to capacity with those who insisted on thinking for themselves and had come to hear their anti-Nebraska Congressman, Mace, explain the reasons for his vote.<sup>54</sup> A few days later, he addressed

<sup>51</sup> *Chapman's Chanticleer*, July 27, 1854; *Indiana State Sentinel* (daily), July 24, 1854.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, Aug. 2, 3, 1854; *Goshen Democrat*, copied in *Indiana State Journal* (weekly), Sept. 2, 1854.

<sup>53</sup> *Chapman's Chanticleer*, July 13, 1854.

<sup>54</sup> *Indiana State Journal* (weekly), June 3, 1854.

a similar audience in Indianapolis. Jacob P. Chapman presided at the latter meeting. Both men declared emphatically that the others, not they, had deserted the party. Mace accused Douglas of being willing to go to any length in order to gratify his "insatiate ambition." He asserted that the cry of popular sovereignty was only a blind to cover the real purpose of the bill which was the extension of slavery over free territory. Had not his test amendment expressly giving the territorial legislature full power to establish or prohibit slavery been defeated? He vehemently denied the right of a "packed" convention to make support of such a bill a test of his orthodoxy as a Democrat. Mace urged his audience to organize with the purpose of restoring the Missouri Compromise even though it seemed impossible of realization for many years due to the composition of the Senate. At least, he insisted, the admission of more slave holding states could be blocked by the House.<sup>55</sup>

Similar meetings occurred in rapid succession at Greensburg (June 9), Wabash (June 10), Danville (June 17), and Marion (June 24). Forty-six Democrats of Decatur county, including Will Cumback, who was nominated for Congress by the People's Convention a month later, signed a pledge to vote only for anti-Nebraska candidates for Congress and for temperance candidates for the legislature.<sup>56</sup> The setting up of tests proved to be a two-edged sword which more than one could wield. Sixty-five Democrats of Wabash County signed a call for a mass meeting

to express their sentiments, independent of party dictation, and in such terms that wrong doers and *endorsers* of the infamy of the Nebraska Bill, may understand and fear. . . . Let all come. The Democracy of Wabash county *know, and fear no power that can make them countenance wrong, they work in no party traces under the lash, and swallow no bitter pill* compounded by political quacks.

This Wabash meeting showed a decided radical tendency. Usually the demands went no further than for a restoration of the Missouri Compromise or the admission of no more slaveholding states, but here the pledge was made to support only those candidates who stood for the repeal of the fugitive slave law. Judge John U. Pettit, who was to become the People's candidate for Congress, addressed this group.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, June 24, 1854; *Chapman's Chanticleer*, June 22, 1854.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, June 15, 1854; *Indianapolis Journal* (daily), June 6, 20, 1854.

The "true" Democrats of Hendricks County were summoned by the following stirring call:

Democrats, Arouse! Those who aspire to be our leaders have betrayed us at the late packed convention; leaving the oldest cherished principles of Democracy, for which we have so long and triumphantly battled, they have attempted to bind and sell us to the slave drivers of the South, and the rumseller of the North. Shall we submit to the gross imposition? Let the answer ring, never! never!<sup>58</sup>

In Grant county sixty insurgents called for a meeting.<sup>59</sup> Thus the work of organization was carried on.

Editors also joined the revolt against the domination of the May Convention. The *Whitley Pioneer* did so with the expectation of being expelled from the party, but the editor was consoled by the thought that he would then be in the "biggest crowd."<sup>60</sup> The *Wabash Valley Olio* of Peru voiced a spirit of revolt:

The address we consider exceedingly puerile, its tone undignified, and uses any quantity of soft soap and flattery to entice our adopted citizens to maintain "the great constitutional, permanent, and indissoluble Democratic party." Our sympathies and feelings have *always been for the Democratic party*, but when we see them depart so far from the path of honesty as to sacrifice the prosperity of the State for the express purpose of carrying an election, we are compelled to stop square off and do the next best—which would be to vote for, and use our influence (and we make no pretensions to having an abundance,) for the election of honest Temperance men, from whatever party they may hail. . . .<sup>61</sup>

On the extent of the insurgency another Democratic paper, the Rockport *Planter*, observed that it

would be no difficult matter to find three very good, very true, and very intelligent democrats, who would not sanction more than one each of these measures [Nebraska Act and evasion of the temperance question], and a far less difficult matter to find hundreds of democrats who would not coincide with the convention in their views on either of these measures.<sup>62</sup>

At Covington a new paper, the *Democrat*, was started because its editor, L. S. Swart, could not stand the "whiskey" and Nebraska planks in the platform.<sup>63</sup> The prophesy of Reuben E. Fenton, anti-Nebraska Democrat of New York, made

<sup>58</sup> Logansport *Journal* (weekly), June 24, 1854.

<sup>59</sup> *Indiana State Journal* (weekly), June 24, 1854.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, June 24, 1854; *Indianapolis Journal* (daily), June 19, 1854.

<sup>61</sup> *Indiana State Journal* (weekly), June 10, 1854.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, July 8, 1854.



on the floor of the House of Representatives, had indeed been realized in Indiana:

But I tell gentleman, if this is by any process sought to be applied as a *test*, you will find 'Softs,' not only in New York, but they will spring up all over the northern States as thick as seed sown in reinvigorated fallow ground. Ay, sir, like the fabled Antaeus, they will spring from the earth; and it will require more than the power of a *little giant*, or the labor of a Hercules, to crush them out or put them down.<sup>64</sup>

Protest by resolution no doubt relieved the feelings of the insurgents, but something more was necessary if the party dictators, as they called the leaders of the state convention, were to be humbled. As Mace declared, some organization of their power was needed to render it effective. The *Madison Courier*, *Richmond Palladium*, and *Rushville Republican* each suggested that a plebiscite be taken on the Nebraska question by putting a ticket made up of independent Democrats in the field to oppose the regulars. The two latter, both Whig, were willing to support such a ticket, and in their opinion their party should also, because they were in a minority and could not expect to elect a ticket, should they name one, without outside aid.<sup>65</sup> Apparently the idea did not appeal to the Whigs as a whole. Instead they were very generally willing to fuse with the Democrats and Free Soilers for the purpose of defeating the Democratic party and at the same time placing some of their own members in office. During the month of June, the calls for conventions of anti-Nebraska men regardless of party were published in the press. Jefferson County, the home of Michael C. Garber, was in the van of this phase of the movement. Many prominent Democratic insurgents participated in the meeting at Madison on June 13. Addresses were delivered by ex-Congressman Thomas Smith and by John A. Hendricks. Also present were Garber, Samuel Wilson, and Rev. David Stiver. Their influence can be traced in the resolutions, especially in that one which declared:

That, we cannot stand on the platform of the Democratic party, manufactured recently at Indianapolis, for three reasons: 1st, Because the democracy is thereby pledged to the extension of whiskey; 2d, to the extension of slavery; 3d, to the contraction of religion.

The pledge to work for the restoration of the Missouri Compromise and to support only those candidates who would

<sup>64</sup> *Cong. Globe*, 33 Cong., 1 sess., 1853-4, Feb. 15, 1854, *Appendix*, 156.

<sup>65</sup> *Madison Courier* (daily), May 2, 23, 1854; *Chapman's Chanticleer*, July 13, 1854.

make the same promise have a familiar ring after one has read the resolutions of the anti-Nebraska Democratic meetings. The statement that squatter sovereignty was not to be found in the Kansas-Nebraska Act was also of peculiar significance to the insurgent element, for popular sovereignty was considered a part of the Democratic creed.<sup>66</sup>

Other counties followed the example of Jefferson. William R. Ellis was a secretary of the meeting at Lafayette, which included in its resolutions one favoring an effective prohibitory act. Dr. J. B. McFarland, an Old-Line Democrat, made one of the addresses. Ellis and McFarland also attended and addressed another gathering at Rossville.<sup>67</sup>

Delegates to a mass meeting of the people of the entire state were appointed by these local groups. Such a convention had been recommended by the Free Democratic Association of the state which met in the latter part of May, but no definite date had been suggested. The Madison meeting of June 13, however, proposed that the people gather on the anniversary of the passage of the Ordinance of 1787, that is on July 13. Two days later, *Chapman's Chanticleer* carried a brief item concerning the movement for "a great meeting of the people" and added that it was "high time for the WEST to speak for itself." Not until four days after this notice did the Whig organ at Indianapolis mention the matter and then only to notice the existence of a general sentiment in favor of it. However, the same issue did carry a call for a state convention which was signed by sixty-eight men of Floyd, Parke, Ripley, and Dearborn counties. Among the signers were twenty-nine Democrats, eighteen Whigs, and two Free Soilers. The political affiliation of the others was not given. Two familiar names in the list were those of Thomas Smith and James P. Milliken.<sup>68</sup> Thus the movement seemed to spring spontaneously from the people themselves. Not until the meeting was assured did *Chapman's Chanticleer*, on June 29, put at the head of its editorial column in conspicuous type a notice of the impending "People's Mass Meeting." In a private letter the editor of the Whig organ gave his reasons for the seeming indifference of the *Journal*. He wrote to Schuyler Colfax, another Whig editor:

<sup>66</sup> *Indiana State Journal* (weekly), June 10, 1854.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, July 8, 1854.

<sup>68</sup> *Madison Courier* (daily), May 30, 1854; *Indiana State Journal* (weekly), June 17, 1854; *Indianapolis Journal* (daily), June 19, 1854.

I have been prevailing on others to make the move for a State Convention, preferring that it should come from Democrats, if possible. Had the *Journal* been the first to move, it would have been set down as a Whig movement. . . . Efforts must be made to prevent its becoming a failure. Come down, with as many Democrats as you can bring.<sup>69</sup>

It can scarcely be doubted that Defrees, Chapman and many others had been working quietly to bring about the consummation they desired—a fusion of all the elements that were antagonistic to the Democracy.

Indianapolis citizens of all parties lent their aid in the preparations for the occasion. Chapman, Barbour, and John L. Ketcham, from the insurgent element, were active. Delegations began to arrive on July 12. They met on the evening of that day and organized with Chapman as chairman and a Whig as secretary. Then, as was the custom, speeches were in order. Chapman once more stated his position on the issue of the day and was followed by Reuben A. Riley, until very recently a member of the Democratic state central committee. The crowd was treated to a "most thrilling and eloquent" address by Schuyler Colfax which suffered nothing in contrast with the "excellent, argumentative speech" of S. S. Harding, the Free Soiler. This in turn was lightened by the delightful humor of Judge John W. Wright, and the whole reached a climax in the "unrivalled style of popular oratory" for which Henry S. Lane was noted.<sup>70</sup>

On the following day, July 13, a crowd, variously estimated at from three to ten thousand people, assembled on the state house lawn. Many anti-Nebraska Democrats were present. The Tippecanoe County delegation of six hundred arrived on a special train and marched in a body to the state house. The Old-Line Democrat, Henry L. Ellsworth, led this group, at least half of whom were Democrats according to the *Indiana State Journal*.<sup>71</sup> Thomas H. Bringhurst, of the *Logansport Journal*, thought he saw "almost the entire Democratic party from Lafayette" there, and also most of that party from Howard county. He also noticed "prominent Democratic leaders from Plymouth, Rochester, and Peru."<sup>72</sup> Even William J. Brown, of the *State Sentinel*, gloomily admitted that hundreds of deluded members of his party would be there, as well as

<sup>69</sup> O. J. Hollister, *Life of Schuyler Colfax* (New York, 1887), 78, footnote.

<sup>70</sup> *Indiana State Journal* (weekly), July 15, 1854.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> *Logansport Journal* (weekly), July 22, 1854.

"such Democrats as have deserted their party on account of a failure to obtain office." When the work of the convention was done, he observed that these disappointed office-seekers "have found this a favorable opportunity to wreak their slum-bearing vengeance. . . . These deserters have been made captains of the host. They are the commanders and the old and tried Whigs are ordered into the ranks to fight under the lead of their former enemies."<sup>73</sup> The Democratic editor observed rightly. Democratic insurgents did play a prominent rôle that day. Chapman served as temporary chairman; Thomas Smith was named permanent chairman and was introduced by Garber. Four of the vice-presidents belonged to the same element—J. P. Milliken, Dr. James Ritchey, O. P. Davis, (state senator) and H. L. Ellsworth. Garber and Reuben A. Riley were secretaries.<sup>74</sup>

The resolutions committee had no small task if it were to reconcile all of the conflicting interests and principles represented in this assemblage of anti-Nebraska and "Maine-Law" Democrats, Whigs, Free Soilers, and Know Nothings. On one point all could agree—their opposition to the repeal of the Missouri Compromise. The committee put in a plank explicitly repudiating and denouncing the "self-styled" Democratic convention of the 24th of May for the benefit of the insurgents. There was also a judiciously worded resolution on prohibition which it was hoped would satisfy the temperance men without alienating any prospective recruits from the anti-Nebraska German element in the state. The committee may have seen the announcement in the *State Sentinel* of July 10 that the Germans of St. Joseph county had passed anti-Nebraska resolutions but had also declared the "Maine Law" to be wrong and undemocratic. Chapman considered this too weak a plank to draw many new converts from among the temperance Democrats who had, of course, threatened to place their own ticket in the field if both parties failed to take a sufficiently strong position on a prohibitory law. George W. Julian, Free Soil leader, was even less pleased with the platform. His minority report had been tabled. It stated much the same principles but in much clearer and bolder terms. It did go further in saying that the Nebraska Act exonerated the North from the observance of the Compromise of 1850 or in other words

<sup>73</sup> *Indiana State Sentinel* (daily), July 12, 19, 1854.

<sup>74</sup> The minutes of the official proceedings were published in the *Indiana State Journal* (weekly), July 22, 1854.

from obedience to the hated fugitive slave law. Consequently he termed the People's platform "narrow and equivocal." On the whole, however, the fusionists were well pleased with their maiden effort.<sup>75</sup>

The Whigs were willing to allow their Democratic allies the lion's share of the offices in order to attract votes from the party which had dominated state politics for so many years. They admitted that only by a breach in their opponent's ranks could they hope to overthrow them. Luckily for the Whigs, then, just when their own organization seemed about to fall into ruin, the break came in the other party. They were quick to seize the issue, to make the most of their opportunity, and to remain in the background until their goal was accomplished. It is true that they, themselves, had some deserters, but they expected to be more than compensated by the votes of their allies. Defrees, himself, suggested that three places on the state ticket be assigned to the Democratic insurgents.<sup>76</sup> Accordingly E. B. Collins, Hiram E. Talbott and Dr. William R. Nofsinger, all Democrats, were named for secretary of state, auditor, and treasurer, respectively. Two Whigs, Samuel B. Gookins, and Caleb Mills, were nominated for judge of the superior court and superintendent of public instruction.

The interest of the campaign was divided between the congressional and state elections. In both cases the Nebraska issue was at stake, for the state legislature would choose a successor to United State Senator John Pettit. However, in the election of members of the legislature, the paramount question was the "Maine Law." Daniel Mace was the choice of the People's party in the eighth Congressional district. Another Democratic insurgent was chosen in the eleventh district, where Harlan refused to run again—John U. Pettit. In Chamberlain's district the Democracy did not make Nebraska a test and renominated him. The Fusion papers at once charged him with acquiescing. In this district the fusionists, therefore, supported Samuel Brenton, a former Whig. In two other districts, the fourth and sixth, the People's candidates were anti-Nebraska Democrats. Will Cumback was the nominee in the former and Lucian Barbour in the latter. The extent of the Democratic influence in the councils of the sixth

<sup>75</sup> *Chapman's Chanticleer*, July 20, 1854; George W. Julian, *Political Recollections, 1840-1878* (Chicago, 1884), 144; *Logansport Journal* (weekly), July 22, 1854.

<sup>76</sup> *Indiana State Journal* (weekly), July 15, 1854.

congressional district is indicated by the fact that the three names voted upon were all anti-Nebraska Democrats—Barbour, James Ritchey, and Reuben A. Riley.<sup>77</sup>

So extensive was insurgency in the Democratic party and such was the nature of the issues, with their moral implication, that the Democracy found themselves on the defensive in a state which they had considered safe for many years.<sup>78</sup> Arrayed against them were all of their former foes plus the insurgent Democrats, all united now, whereas before, the opposition was divided. Whigs and Free Soilers, whose separate organizations had practically disappeared by 1854, were now co-operating in the support of common candidates. Had this been all, the Democrats might still have been victorious, but there was the schism within its own ranks. The Know-Nothings furnished some restless Democrats a convenient and secret bridge to full-fledged membership in a new party.<sup>79</sup> A campaign charge was that the People's state ticket had been made up by a group of Know-Nothing leaders in secret session the night before the convention.<sup>80</sup> The Nebraska test drove many Democrats into the opposition. As has been revealed, some of the best old leaders and some of the promising young Democrats were among the "renegrades." The fusion papers were naturally prone to make the insurgency seem as extensive as possible, but even the *State Sentinel* had to admit the presence of a serious schism:

We have been pained exceedingly to know that many of those who have heretofore acted with the Democratic party, and defended its principles, (among them the principle of non-intervention) men who have been honored, too, with the confidence of the party, have abandoned that party and united with Free-soilers and Abolitionists in their crusade against Democracy. We regret it. We know that many of them did not comprehend the schemes of Abolitionism, and were deluded by the belief that the issue would simply be the reinstatement of the act of 1820, and as they regarded it, the maintainence of plighted faith with the South.

. . .<sup>81</sup>

The prohibition issue carried off still more of their Old-Liners. In this group were James Blake, a life-long Democrat, and G. M. Overstreet, who came out as a prohibition candidate

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, Aug. 5, 1854.

<sup>78</sup> Lew Wallace; *An Autobiography* (N.Y., 1906), I, 237.

<sup>79</sup> David Turpie, *Sketches of My Own Times* (Indianapolis, 1903), 154; *Logansport Journal*, (weekly), June 24, 1854.

<sup>80</sup> *Democratic (Logansport) Pharos* (weekly), July 19, 1854.

<sup>81</sup> *Indiana State Sentinel* (daily), Sept. 9, 1854.

for the legislature.<sup>82</sup> The Methodist Church, many of whose members were Democrats, also threw itself into the battle.<sup>83</sup> The Methodist members of the party seceded on two grounds—slavery and temperance. The North Indiana Methodist Conference, in the fall of 1853, had condemned slavery in all of its forms, and during the campaign of 1854 two quarterly conferences resolved to support only strong temperance men for the legislature and anti-Nebraska men for Congress.<sup>84</sup> The epithets which John L. Robinson applied to their clergy did nothing to aid the Democratic cause. William H. English was advised by a friend upon this subject that he

*must early take occasion to repudiate the sentiments aroused by Robinson in regard to the Methodist clergy. I say this because unfortunately, his remarks, though no doubt exaggerated [sic], have been and are being used to the general disadvantage of the Party and might effect you, and I mention it to you because I heard B. C. Pile, a prominent Methodist democrat say that he intended to interrogate [sic] you upon this point.*

. . .<sup>85</sup>

In view of the prevailing situation, Graham N. Fitch, Democratic leader of Logansport rather understated the case for his party when he said: "The recent union of all the *isms* against us will give us a fight just sufficiently warm to be interesting."<sup>86</sup>

In Illinois, too, anti-Nebraska mass meetings voiced the protest of the people without regard to party. These were followed by attempts upon the part of the anti-Nebraska Democrats to prevent the endorsement of the Douglas measure by the county and state Democratic conventions, and, only when they were ignored and the despised, and to their minds undemocratic, test had been applied, did they join the opposition elements or announce their own independent candidates.

Large mass meetings were held in Chicago, Ottawa, Rockford, Alton, and Belleville. The Alton meeting in June was well attended by men of both parties and by many Germans. The chairman, Timothy Souther, was a Democrat, as was the chief speaker, David J. Baker.<sup>87</sup> During July and August, the county Democratic conventions met and nearly all adopted

<sup>82</sup> *Indiana State Journal* (weekly), June 17, 1854.

<sup>83</sup> Hugh McCulloch, *Men and Measures of Half a Century* (N.Y., 1888), 75.

<sup>84</sup> Esarey, *History of Indiana*, II, 611; *Indiana State Sentinel* (daily), July 29, Aug. 24, 1854.

<sup>85</sup> W. F. Collum to W. H. English, Jeffersonville, July 24, 1854. English Collection.

<sup>86</sup> Fitch to W. H. English, Logansport, July 18, 1854. English Collection.

<sup>87</sup> *Alton Courier*, (daily), June 5, 9, 1854; *Illinois Journal* (daily), June 6, 1854.

the Nebraska test for party orthodox.<sup>88</sup> John M. Palmer, a state senator, failed to prevent the endorsement of the repeal of the Nebraska principle by the county and district conventions. He believed the bill to be "unwise, and unnecessary—violative of national and party good faith; objectionable, as being likely to disorganize and weaken the Constitutional Conservative party of the North." Consequently, he forthwith withdrew his name as candidate for re-election because he refused to take the Nebraska test.<sup>89</sup> The Madison county convention passed pro-Nebraska resolutions over the objections of George T. Brown, editor of the *Alton Courier*, Henry S. Baker, a young man with qualities of leadership, and P. Stibolt, editor of the *Alton Vorwärts*.<sup>90</sup> As in Indiana the anti-Nebraska editors warned the party of impending ruin if this test was made. The voice of the few moderates in the Nebraska wing of the party was ignored partly because the heavy hand of administration patronage was felt.<sup>91</sup>

In Illinois, the congressional candidates were chosen before the movement for a state fusion convention came to fruition. In most of the districts, the leadership fell to the Whigs and Whig leaders were nominated. In the first, second, and eighth districts, however, fusion was less successful. In each of these, in addition to the Democratic and fusion nominees, there was a third candidate. The call for the first district convention at Rockford on August 30 was signed by both Democrats and Whigs. Thirteen Democrats participated in the meeting, one of whom was Thomas J. Turner, who had served the district in the national House. He was a prominent actor in the proceedings. The nominee was Elihu B. Washburne, a Whig.<sup>92</sup> He had voted against the Kansas-Nebraska Bill. However, a part of the Democratic insurgents did not join the fusionists. Thirty-six of them were delegates to the Democratic convention also held at Rockford. This faction withdrew when pro-Nebraska resolutions were adopted, much as had the Wayne County insurgents in Indiana, and nominated

<sup>88</sup> *Alton Courier* (daily), July 7, Aug. 9, 11, 12, 14; *The Morgan Journal* (Jacksonville), July 6, 1854.

<sup>89</sup> *Alton Courier* (daily), Aug. 31, 1854; *Illinois State Register*, Aug. 9, 1854; *Illinois Journal* (daily), Aug. 10, 28, 1854.

<sup>90</sup> *Alton Courier* (daily), Sept. 6, 1854; *The Bench and Bar of Illinois*, edited by John M. Palmer (Chicago, 1899), II, 689.

<sup>91</sup> *Alton Daily Courier*, July 8, 1854; *ibid.*, quoted in *Illinois Journal* (daily), Sept. 1, 1854; John A. McClernand's letter in *Illinois State Register*, Oct. 17, 1854.

<sup>92</sup> Charles A. Church, *History of the Republican Party in Illinois, 1854-1918* (Rockford, 1912), 20-21; *History of Winnebago County*, edited by Charles A. Church, II, 727; *Illinois Journal*, (daily), Sept. 4, 1854; *Illinois State Register*, Jan. 10, 1855.



Elisha P. Ferry, of Lake county as the Free, or anti-Nebraska, Democratic candidate. Ferry had been a Pierce elector in 1852 and was postmaster at Waukegan, an office of which Douglas soon had him relieved.<sup>93</sup>

Confusion reigned in the second or Chicago district. Robert S. Blackwell was announced as the Whig candidate.<sup>94</sup> Wentworth was seeking renomination by his party but had several rivals for the support of the anti-Nebraska wing.<sup>95</sup> A portion of this wing of the now disorganized party joined the Whigs in a fusion convention at Aurora on September 19. George Manierre, a Chicago Democrat of Free Soil leanings, who had been active in municipal politics, was named chairman of the platform committee. He favored the organization of a new party and suggested the name Republican which was adopted. The platform, like that of the Wabash County anti-Nebraska Democrats in Indiana, was more radical than the rest. It has added interest due to the fact that it figured in the Lincoln-Douglas debates four years later when Douglas by mistake quoted it as the state platform of the fusion party and Lincoln caught his error. The resolution which carried the radical sentiments was as follows:

That, the times imperatively demand the reorganization of parties, and repudiating all previous party attachments, names and predilections, we unite ourselves together in defence of the liberty and constitution of the country, and will hereafter co-operate as the republican party, pledged to the accomplishment of the following purposes;—to restore Nebraska and Kansas to the position of free territories;—to repeal and entirely abrogate the fugitive slave law; to restrict slavery to those states in which it exists; to prohibit the admission of any more slave states into the Union; to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia: to exclude slavery from all the territories—; and to resist the acquirement of any more territories unless the practice of slavery therein forever shall have been prohibited.<sup>96</sup>

For their candidate the Republicans of the second district selected an Old-Line Democrat, James H. Woodworth, who had served two terms in the state legislature and had been mayor of Chicago. The Democrats finally assembled at Aurora early in October only to find that two sets of delegates had come from nearly every county. The tangle was at last reduced to order by the nomination of two candidates. The

<sup>93</sup> *Illinois Journal* (daily), Sept. 10, 27, Oct. 3, 1854.

<sup>94</sup> *Illinois State Register* (daily), Oct. 12, 1854.

<sup>95</sup> *Alton Courier*, July 19, 1854; Cole, *Era of Civil War*, 129-30.

<sup>96</sup> Palmer, *Bench and Bar of Illinois*, I, 553-54; *Illinois State Register*, Oct. 16, 1854.

Douglas men settled on John B. Turner, president of the Gale-na and Chicago Railroad; the anti-Nebraska men decided on James L. Mayo, after the several rivals for the nomination withdrew.<sup>97</sup> Thus in this district the race was four-cornered with the Democracy split into three factions.

The Nebraska test divided the Democracy of the eighth district to such an extent that no nomination whatever was made. However, three candidates entered the list.<sup>98</sup> The anti-Nebraska voters in the district supported Lyman Trumbull, who had been secretary of state and only recently had resigned as judge of the Supreme Court. The *Alton Courier* strongly approved his candidacy:

Judge Trumbull has been acknowledged by all as possessing one of the most clear, comprehensive and logical minds in the West. The character of his mind, and his close method of reasoning, enable him to grasp the scope and design of every measure, and after subjecting it to the most careful and searching analysis, he presents its chief features in the strongest possible light.<sup>99</sup>

Since Brown of the *Courier* was also an insurgent, he might be accused of undue partiality, but Usher F. Linder, a Whig turned Democrat on the Nebraska issue, was not so likely to exaggerate his estimate of Trumbull. He describes him as "a profound and learned lawyer." The *Alton* postmaster, who favored the Nebraska principle, was nevertheless ready to write: "This District of the 8th will elect Judge Trumbull an Anti N.B. Democrat who is a man of fine Talants [sic] . . . if an Anti is to Rep. [represent] this District I would sooner have him then [sic] any one on that side . . . " The *Illinois Daily Journal* spoke of him as a man of "decided talent" who will do "good battle for freedom."<sup>100</sup>

The state convention held at Springfield during state fair week in October is not so important in a study of the Democratic insurgency as was the Indianapolis meeting. The Abolitionist element, led by Owen Lovejoy and Ichabod Coddington, assumed the direction of it and consequently conservative Democrats and Whigs shunned it. A very few of the lesser

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, Oct. 9, 1854; *Illinois Journal* (daily), Oct. 7, 1854.

<sup>98</sup> *Alton Courier* (daily), Sept. 9, 13, 1854.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, Sept. 29, 1854.

<sup>100</sup> General Usher F. Linder, *Reminiscence of the Early Bench and Bar of Illinois* (Chicago, 1879), 168; R. W. English to William H. English, Alton, Ill., Oct. 30, 1854. English Collection.

figures among the insurgents attended and the names of such anti-Nebraska Democrats as David J. Baker, Matthias L. Dunlap, and John F. Farnsworth were included in the abortive state central committee. The name of Lincoln who had not attended was there also but he refused to serve.<sup>101</sup>

The Democracy of Illinois found many of their finest men leading the campaign of opposition. Most of them have been mentioned. There were Trumbull and Lieutenant Governor Gustave Koerner, Wentworth and Woodworth, Palmer and Taylor, Judge Thickliffe Kitchell, Judge Sidney Breese, Francis C. Sherman, N. B. Judd, and a host of others. Abraham Lincoln, astute organizer that he was, appreciated the value of a man like Palmer in the campaign. When Richard Yates was needing support in his race for Congress, Lincoln wrote urging that Palmer be obtained. "Palmer is the best, if you can get him, I think—Jo. Gillespie, if you can not get Palmer . . . . But press Palmer hard . . . ." <sup>102</sup> The *Illinois State Register* was deceiving no one but itself when it wrote rather contemptuously of these insurgents:

It is true there are those who have been of us, an insignificant band, whose hopes for spoils have not met fruition, who are seeking, through two or three nominal democratic papers of the state, to spread disorganization in our ranks, but their efforts will be futile, and their puny endeavors to sow discord whistled down the wind, and their authors consigned to merited oblivion. . . . We have full faith that the sickly efforts of a few to spread disaffection through our ranks will be met by the scorn and contempt that it deserves.<sup>103</sup>

Election day in October, 1854, brought a sweeping victory to the People's party of Indiana. David Turpie later expressed the feeling of the Nebraska Democrats very dramatically:

The result of the election in October, 1854, afforded us. . . much . . . chagrin. A tidal wave of great force and rapidity had swept over our former constituencies. It had submerged the highest and driest places in the political reserves; it had scorned calculation, laughed at prediction and tossed aside apportionments like chaff before the whirlwind. We were beaten on the state ticket, in the legislature, in almost

<sup>101</sup> *Illinois State Register*, Oct. 7, 1854; Paul Selby, "Republican State Convention, Springfield, Illinois, October 4-5, 1854," *Transactions of the McLean County Historical Society*, III, 48-49; Paul Shelby, "Genesis of the Republican Party in Illinois," *Transactions of the Illinois State Historical Society* (Springfield, 1906), No. 11, 272-73; Lincoln to Coddington, Nov. 27, 1854, *Abraham Lincoln: Complete Works* (New York, 1920), edited by John G. Nicolay and John Hay, I, 209-10.

<sup>102</sup> A. Lincoln to A. B. Moreau, Springfield, Sept. 7, 1854, photostatic copy of original, Illinois State Historical Library, Springfield.

<sup>103</sup> Aug. 18, 1854.

two-thirds of the counties, and if there had been anything else to lose we should have lost it.<sup>104</sup>

Election day of 1854 created several lame ducks in the Indiana delegation. Of the eight members who stood for re-election only two pro-Nebraska Democrats had succeeded, Smith Miller and William H. English, both from Democratic strongholds in the southern part of the state. But in both cases, their majorities of 1852 had been more than cut in half. John B. Norman wrote English that he would "be quite a lion—a *rara avis*—this winter—a Democrat re-elected to Congress."<sup>105</sup> A third man was returned to his seat, but he was an anti-Nebraska Democrat. The people of the eighth district instead of administering to him "a just rebuke for the manner in which he has misrepresented them on the Nebraska question",<sup>106</sup> as the *Sentinel* wished, triumphantly vindicated his vote with a majority which almost doubled that received by him in 1852. This was Daniel Mace. Chamberlain, who had opposed the bill but had been nominated by the regular Democrats, was defeated along with the rest of their ticket. Three of the counties that had helped him defeat Brenton in 1852 were now found in the latter's column. Only Allen County remained faithful. In Indiana five Democratic congressmen were defeated through defections of their own partisans.

Four Democratic insurgents were elected—Cumback, Barbour, Pettit, and Mace—and they owed their victories to the support of their fellow "traitors," for it was only by the addition of Democratic votes to a Whig minority in those districts that the Nebraska Democrats were overwhelmed. This can be demonstrated by a calculation of the approximate number of insurgents in these districts. When the total vote of 1852 is compared with that of 1854, it is seen that there was an increase. If this increase is apportioned between the two candidates in proportion to the per cent of the total vote which each party polled in 1852, the result shows that the Democrats received less than their full strength in 1854 and the Fusion candidates received more than the full Whig strength. The difference, therefore, would represent the approximate number of defections from the Democratic party. Of course, this argument rests on the premise that all of the Whigs fused. This is not true, but for every Whig who went over to the

<sup>104</sup> Turpie, *Sketches*, 154.

<sup>105</sup> Nov. 21, 1854. English Collection.

<sup>106</sup> *Indiana State Sentinel* (daily), Aug. 28, 1854.

Democrats or stayed at home there would be a compensating increase in the estimated number of Democratic desertions. The problem is rendered comparatively simple in Indiana because in no case was there a third candidate running in any district in 1852. By use of this method of calculation, it is discovered that Democratic insurgents ranged from about 850 in Cumback's district to about 2,000 in Mace's district. Since the latter included Lafayette, where observers had declared the desertion to be very general, it is interesting that the figures bear out the truth of their statements. In 1852 the Democrats polled over fifty-five per cent of the total vote in Tippecanoe county, but two years later the percentage dropped to but slightly more than thirty-four. Thus it can be concluded that the revolt reached deep into the party and affected the rank and file as well as the leaders.

In Illinois the two pro-Nebraska Democrats who ran for re-election succeeded; of the four anti-Nebraska Whigs who were nominated by the fusionists to succeed themselves all save one, Richard Yates, were re-elected; one pro-Nebraska Democrat declined to run again but a man of his same views was returned in his stead; and in the place of the two anti-Nebraska Democrats, Wentworth and Bissell, two other anti-Nebraska Democrats were sent to Congress, the Republican nominee, Woodworth, and the independent anti-Nebraska candidate, Trumbull. Thus one must conclude that the congressional delegation from Illinois had really represented the wishes of their constituents in their vote on May 22, 1854. It is significant, also, that in the seventh district, the Douglas Democrats won by only one vote in 1854, whereas two years before their majority was over twelve hundred votes. That Yates was beaten in a district considered as Whig was not in keeping with the general results. Lincoln attributed it to the "quarrel over the Insane Asylum & the turning of about 200 English whigs in the two counties [Morgan and Scott] against him, because of Know-Nothingism."<sup>107</sup> When the method of calculating the extent of the insurgency already applied to Indiana is applied to the two districts in which Democratic deserters were candidates, that is in Woodworth's and Trumbull's districts, the same conclusion is reached. In neither case would the Democrats have been defeated except

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<sup>107</sup> Lincoln to Orville H. Browning, Springfield, Nov. 12, 1854. Ms. in Illinois State Historical Library, Springfield.

for insurgency in their own ranks. In both Indiana and Illinois the anti-Nebraska party won control of the lower house in the legislature but failed to gain a majority in the senate. In Illinois the candidate for treasurer, a former Whig, failed of election, but in Indiana the entire fusionist state ticket was put into office.

As previously noted, Whig editors before the election admitted that they had no hope of success for their party unless they should gain the aid of other groups. Democratic editors after the election were forced to admit that they had been defeated by their own men. The only question to be discussed was which of the issues or *isms* had proved most enticing to restive members of their party. At first the Democratic state organ of Indiana was inclined to place the blame for the debacle chiefly upon the deluded Democrats who had become entangled in Know-Nothingism, but also attributed their defeat to the "Nebraska humbug" and the ill-advised temperance plank which had lost them thousands of votes. Later the *Sentinel* seemed inclined to blame the temperance issue most. The Whig organ of the state accredited their victory to the revolt of the people against political corruption. It compared the mass movement to "a political sub-soil plough, turning up the people from the bottom, and turning under the weeds that have grown rank upon them." Credit was also given to "the universal and open desertion of their party by most of its ablest, and *all* its conscientious leaders.—Their defeat has come . . . in part from the rebellious sentiment of their own party, refusing to be whipped up to the support of any measure that profligate leaders dared for personal advantage. . . ." Others interpreted it as a victory for principle and as a rebuke to the Administration. Chapman hailed it as a victory of the forces of good over those of evil. Garber considered the Know Nothings the weakest element in the canvass, saying:

But for the dissatisfaction in the ranks of the Democratic party in regard to slavery, free whisky, and the over bearing disposition of the men who held the organization of the State and County Conventions in their hands, it would not have been overwhelmed in defeat. The temperance feeling now in the State is more powerful than the Know Nothings. . . .

Colfax, who was elected to Congress at this time, gave credit

to "several hundred Democrats" for his running ahead of the ticket.<sup>108</sup>

Though other factors played a large part in the Democratic insurgency of 1854, the fact that the party saw fit to set up the Nebraska principle as a test of party orthodoxy when half of the Democratic congressmen from the northern states opposed it, was of much significance. Many Democrats who were at heart anti-slavery men followed their consciences and refused to take the test; others like John M. Palmer in Illinois were mainly anxious to preserve their "personal independence and the right, inside of the party lines, to act according to the dictates of my own sense of personal duty."<sup>109</sup> The Democratic party, like Procrustes of the Greek myth, had erected a bed upon which it stretched its members. Many had been found too long and had been cut off from the party; but on election day the party had been tried by its own test and found wanting by the voters.

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<sup>108</sup> *Indiana State Sentinel* (daily), Oct. 13, 14, 24, 31, 1854; *Indiana State Journal* (weekly), Oct. 21, 1854; *Logansport Journal* (weekly), Oct. 21, 28, 1854; *Chapman's Chanticleer*, Oct. 19, 1854; *Madison Courier* (daily), Nov. 6, 1854; Hollister, *Schuyler Colfax*, 134.

<sup>109</sup> John M. Palmer, *Personal Recollections* (Cincinnati, 1901), 62-3.