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## Indiana in Political Transition, 1851-1853

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While Indiana, along with the rest of the Northwest, had lapsed after the Compromise into a period of political normalcy, superficial as it may have been, there were manifestations that the Hoosiers were undergoing a transition in the development of their state. Indiana politicians in their estimate of the situation could not always artfully dodge these changes—indeed in some instances, they pushed them along with the result that politics, business, morals, religion, and banking became mixed up together, further confusing the setting.

After the taking of the census of 1850, Indiana found herself to be seventh among the states in population. In the number of representatives in the national House and in the number of presidential electors, the state was tied with Massachusetts and was surpassed by only four other states—New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Virginia. By 1850, therefore, Indiana had become an important state politically, certainly not to be ignored by the national party leaders.

Still a predominantly rural state, Indiana had become an important leader in agricultural production. It was perhaps the greatest pork-producing state in the Union, and the second largest producer of corn. Wheat was also making tremendous strides as an agricultural crop, not only in the northern and central sections but in southern Indiana as well.

This was the statistical side of Indiana, but these sets of figures meant more than mere rank in the family of states.

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The Hoosiers were entering an era which lacked many of the crudities of a pioneering life, but which as yet had escaped an industrial civilization: they remained farmers in a rural world, and their progress was channeled into agrarian development. Although Indiana had been a slow starter, the state spurted forward in the decade of the fifties.<sup>1</sup>

Throughout the state, rural attitudes predominated, and prosperity was determined by the state of agriculture. The average citizen was more or less isolated; even though transportation sought him out to carry his goods to markets, he was far removed from the ultimate consumer of his products. The land was the only true source of Indiana's wealth which was industriously tapped by free labor, and everywhere throughout the state an agricultural economy predominated.

Early in 1851, the Indiana farmer was given a sounding board by the legislature when the State Board of Agriculture was founded. This organization began with a limited program, and those who needed its advice most probably did not trouble themselves to participate in its program. The records of the board are scanty, but a few speeches printed in the early annual reports do exist which shed some light on the Hoosier farmer.<sup>2</sup> There are two common themes in these collected addresses by both farmers and nonfarmers: first, the farmer was urged to improve his farming practices; second, he was urged to obtain his share of the benefits of the government at all levels.

More specifically, the farmer was frequently asked to diversify his crops. When Governor Joseph A. Wright pled with Hoosier farmers to raise sheep and cultivate new crops, he pointed out that Indiana which had only half as much improved land as Ohio produced nearly as much corn and twice as many hogs.<sup>3</sup> The corn and hog mania was criticized by some who pointed out that the once rich soils, having been

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<sup>1</sup> Harvey L. Carter, "Rural Indiana as Transition, 1850-1860," *Agricultural History* (Baltimore, 1927- ), XX (1946), 107-21.

<sup>2</sup> A search of the state archives failed to disclose any great amount of material that seemed to have any special significance.

<sup>3</sup> *Third Annual Report of the Indiana State Board of Agriculture for the Year 1853* (Indianapolis, 1854), 217. Jesse Bright, the governor's foe, took great delight in circulating stories about the state that Governor Wright was importing "hydraulic rams" to improve the breed of Indiana's sheep herds. Bright used such devices as these to ridicule Wright, the gentleman farmer.

exploited for thirty or forty years, would soon resemble the worn-out lands of Virginia and Maryland.<sup>4</sup>

The farmer was often asked to take a firm stand in the operation of the government; at the same time he was warned to beware of the scheming politician. One such opinion purported to illustrate the traditional position of the farmer in politics. The Hoosier man of the soil, the speaker declared, did not have the social and political status in Indiana society to which he was entitled because he lacked education and energy. "On other occasions," he continued, "we see whole communities of farmers greatly excited on some political question, not originating with themselves or for their interest, especially, but which has been gotten up by some politician with not half the brains of themselves, but a little more education and address. Unfortunately our farmers are much more apt to *follow* than to *lead* in all matters of general or public interest—too apt to remain quiet until some village politician whose bread and butter depends on such things tells them what to do, then every one of them, Whig, Democrat, and Freesoiler are up in arms brandishing their swords as though each was the hero of some great war, gotten up on his own account."<sup>5</sup>

Another county fair orator said that no longer should the legislative halls be filled with doctors and lawyers: farmers should represent their own interests in the government. The governor himself urged farmers to take their stand in the Capitol of the nation. A Terre Haute politician and judge tried to whip up the enthusiasm of the farmers by pointing out that the general government had done nothing for them because the farmer had not forced his representatives to act. He continued, "In the next place we are running after log cabins, and polk stalks, and ash poles, and hickory poles, and coons and roosters, and we are pleased with them as children are with their rattles."<sup>6</sup>

The implications to be drawn from this incipient movement to bring the Indiana farmers in step with progress are often hazy, yet the clues cannot be discarded. The Board of

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 99-100.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 99-100, 220; *Second Annual Report of the Indiana State Board of Agriculture for the Year 1852* (Indianapolis, 1853), 304-5.

Agriculture created a sense of official sanction for a group interested in benefiting itself through representative government. A plea was made for new political leadership to meet the farmers' needs. Governor Wright was, of course, a politician, but he urged the farmers to act in the interest of farmers, whether they be Democrat or Whig. Farm leaders were inclined to ridicule the "politicians" whoever they might be, but they left the door open for political action. Over all was the feeling that the old methods of farming and "politicking" should be discarded for new and more efficient means of reaching out to new and more beneficial goals.

At the same time that the farmers were being prodded out of their lethargy, discontent over the persistent squabbles in the parties was being expressed by other groups. The repeated excitement had stirred at least one educator to voice his suspicions for in 1852, Daniel Read, a professor at the state university, wrote a pamphlet demanding improved common schools for Indiana's children. He asked: "Where are our men of ambition and talent; shall politics, the miserable strife of politics forever engross them? Shall mere physical improvements command all the spirit and enterprize of the State?"<sup>7</sup>

Ministers, too, were airing their discontent. For example, the graduates of Indiana Asbury University were called upon to "redeem their time" by one Methodist minister who declared: "We want no more territory; no more aggressive war. We want men of great and conservative minds, who will mould the heterogeneous masses that are collecting in this vast country into republicans—men who will develop our own vast resources, who will sustain our educational enterprises—God-fearing statesmen, who will recognize the immutable principles of truth and righteousness drawn from the Bible, and incorporated with masterly skill into the declaration of our independence, and into the constitution of our federal government. And then all this will be nugatory unless the church moves."<sup>8</sup>

Here then was an example of the ministry also preaching

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<sup>7</sup> Daniel Read, *Address on Means of Promoting Common School Education* (Indianapolis, 1852).

<sup>8</sup> Lucien W. Berry, *The Obligations of Young Men to Redeem Their Time: A Discourse to the Graduating Class of the Indiana Asbury University, July, 1852* (Indianapolis, 1852), 29-30.

the merits of the great conservative cause of the Northwest, at the same time filled with suspicion toward the manifest destiny rage of the 1840's. The young men were being called upon to get in step with progress through God's sanction.

In still another quarter—the Odd Fellows Lodge—fears were expressed as to the nature of the tempest which the politicians had created out of sectional discord. This benevolent society, which appealed to the fraternal instincts of Democrats and Whigs alike, explained to the brotherhood in its journal that: "The tendencies of Odd Fellowship, in a political point of view, may be estimated by the humanizing influence it exerts over the angry passions and discordant dispositions of our nature, and the wide dissemination of that moral virtue which is the true cement of our civil institutions."<sup>9</sup> Two months later the *Banner of the Union*, another Odd Fellow journal, published in Kentucky, became involved in a slavery discussion with its northern correspondents. The Indiana editors deplored this situation and reminded the order that: "We think the unhappy division of the Methodist E. Church upon this question, should stand as a beacon for all Odd Fellows to beware of introducing the subject into the ranks of the Order." No longer certain that the order's humanizing influence would be able to quell the political storms, the editors advised the Odd Fellows to steer clear of the distracting slavery question. They warned: "But once let the voice of fanatics upon this subject be heard in our councils, the seeds of discord will be sown, a firebrand will be thrown in our midst, which all our brotherly love, possessed as we are with human passion, will not be able to eradicate or purge from our Order, and disunion will follow—and then farewell to our beloved institution in this land. . . ."

"We believe that the question of slavery is a purely political question . . . . We must steer clear of the matter entirely but suppressing it at the start, and show to the world that we will not let the local institutions of States interfere with the peace and harmony of our Order."<sup>10</sup> The lodge was having its troubles in maintaining brotherly love in the face of a political question that was capable of arousing enough hu-

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<sup>9</sup> *Western Odd Fellows Magazine* (3 vols., New Albany, Indiana, 1852-1854), I, 21.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

man passion to wreck the fraternal spirit of the order. Among the Indiana Odd Fellows were politically-minded men who apparently believed in the finality of the compromise.

So it was in colleges, churches, and lodges that men were asking questions about and suggesting solutions to political affairs, but at the same time they would not admit their own involvement in politics.

During the lull in national political affairs, the Hoosier politicians were busily engaged in political matters that also were indicative of the changing times. The most important of these, perhaps, was the new constitution. The squabbles it occasioned over the Compromise of 1850 have been noted above. The debates in general provoked long political quarrels among Whigs and Democrats, but only those matters that reflected political behavior and sectional consciousness will be considered here. As to the new document itself, it significantly gave sanction for future legislation which typified the newer path that politicians would tread.

The delegates to the constitutional convention had little difficulty in agreeing on some revisions, especially those that had been the objects of complaints for years. Among these were biennial sessions for the legislature, and abolishment of legislative divorces, the latter of which the churches had also attacked at length. Local and special legislation were in this same category since they too had been widely heralded as reasons for revising the Constitution of 1816.

At the convention as in the legislature, the Democrats held a whip hand over the Whigs, with the result that the atmosphere was heavily laden with Jacksonian Democracy. One of the evidences of this spirit was the provision for a tremendous increase in the number of elective offices, ranging from the Justices of the State Supreme Court to the local justices in the townships; another was the lowering of the bars on suffrage requirements: the politicians provided that unnaturalized citizens be permitted to vote after one year's residence in the state. The new constitution also gave all male citizens the right to practice law. As one delegate remarked, "Throw the profession open to all like medicine and divinity; these were his sentiments."<sup>11</sup> Almost all of

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<sup>11</sup> *Report of the Debates and Proceedings of the Convention for the Revision of the Constitution of the State of Indiana, 1850* (2 vols., Indianapolis, 1850), II, 1847.

these new provisions passed the convention with comparatively little difficulty.

There were, however, other constitutional matters that consumed a greater portion of the convention's time; for the most part these concerned changes that had not been as universally demanded by Hoosiers in the preceding years and which involved principles as well as practices. Among these were homestead exemption, the property rights of married women, and the treatment of the Negro.

The first of these, homestead exemption, was eagerly sought by the delegates from northern Indiana. The proposed provision was supported by both political parties prior to the convention, with interest centering on exemption as a debtor issue. James W. Borden, faithful Jacksonian, raised this question concerning land policy: "Sir, it was the combined evils of land monopoly and slavery, that overturned the republic of Rome. And let me say, that, while we may never expect that in the free States of this Union, slavery will ever be directly tolerated; yet, sir, unless we shall restrict capital within proper limits, and prevent its having too much the advantage over the labor of the country, the time may come when the lands of this country will be monopolized to a much greater extent than we could now anticipate."<sup>12</sup> Among the other claims that were made for exemption were: that it would promote prosperity; that it was patriotic; that it would safeguard democracy. Whether the Eastern land reformers exerted any influence over the delegates seems questionable, for Indiana had local problems in its northern section of which its politicians had been aware for many years.<sup>13</sup> The members of the small minority who opposed homestead exemption were primarily from the southern area of the state. In reality, Indiana was merely following the course of several other states which had made similar provisions since Texas had first initiated homestead exemption in 1839. The Indiana provision was copied directly from the Wisconsin constitution.

Although prior to the convention the civil equality of married women in Indiana had not been discussed widely

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 755.

<sup>13</sup> Lena London, "Homestead Exemption in the Indiana Constitution of 1851," *Indiana Magazine of History* (Bloomington, 1905- ), XLIV (1948), 267-80.

among the citizenry, the subject became the most verbose one in the convention. The leading advocate of this constitutional change was Robert Dale Owen; opposed to him as his chief antagonist was a "New Light" preacher, Oliver P. Badger of Putnam County. Altogether, Owen introduced four separate plans, each time in a weaker form, and after a series of successes and reversals, his proposition met final defeat. After one of his plans had been approved by the convention, some of the women of Indianapolis, including several wives of delegates led by Sarah Bolton, celebrated the happy event by publishing a card of thanks to Owen for his efforts. This card caught the eye of Owen's political opponents who, fearing the sudden popularity of the New Harmony reformer, particularly in view of the coming senatorial election, asked to have his plan reconsidered. It passed again. Still undaunted, Owen's opponents brought up the measure for further consideration, and this time it went down to final defeat amid cries of political chicanery. Owen's biographer attributed the defeat to several factors: the conservative lawyers in the convention feared any inroads upon English common law; newspapers linked the reform to the women's rights movement in the East, which to many Hoosiers put it in the abolitionist category; and Owen's political rivals for the Senate feared his growing popularity.<sup>14</sup> The politics and excitement that grew out of this controversy have significance as another illustration of the incipient reform movements that were complicating the political machinery of the parties.

The third question, which concerned the rights and privileges of the Negro in Indiana, was discussed on two counts: the right of suffrage for those Negroes already in the state; whether all further Negro immigration into the state should be halted. The only delegate in the convention who was willing to permit Negro suffrage, and that with restrictions, was Edward May of Steuben County. His resolution was defeated by a vote of 124 to 1.<sup>15</sup> Negro suffrage did not come to Indiana until long after this time, in 1881. Schuyler Colfax proposed that the second issue, exclusion, should be carried

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<sup>14</sup> Richard W. Leopold, *Robert Dale Owen* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1940), 276.

<sup>15</sup> *Report of the Debates and Proceedings of the Convention for the Revision of the Constitution of the State of Indiana, 1850, I, 244-46, 252-53.*



to the people. He was successful in getting it on the ballot approving the new constitution as a separate referendum.

The attitudes of the delegates toward the Negro in general were aired during the course of the debates, for the members of the convention swarmed out onto the floor to get their views into the record. Some expressed extreme sentiments as in the case of David Dobson of Owen County in southwestern Indiana, who warned his colleagues that: "whenever you begin to talk about making negroes equal with white men, I begin to think about leaving the country." Others made this an opportunity to remind their political opponents of the Free Soil enthusiasms of 1848. David Kilgore, a Democrat from Delaware County, announced that this was indeed an "age of progression" since less than two years before "there was not a prominent man in either of the two parties who would have been willing to denounce the Wilmot Proviso as a humbug; yet in this age of progression, at this day, scarcely a single advocate can be found in the ranks of either party." His opponent of two years before was also a delegate; he corroborated Kilgore's remarks that the members of the convention were now denouncing those who had supported Whigs and Democrats in 1848 when he remarked: "it was a contest between Whig and Democrat which should be considered the best free soiler. I recollect about that time I went into the field as a candidate with the gentleman from Delaware, thinking that I was as much of a free soil man as any, but I found that my Democratic friend was so far ahead of me, that the result was a most admirable licking sustained by myself."<sup>16</sup>

Robert Dale Owen, in a speech to the convention in which he combined both the suffrage and exclusion issues, claimed that since the delegates were overwhelmingly opposed to Negro suffrage, he therefore favored their exclusion from the state on the grounds that they could not hope to achieve political or social rights under such conditions. He felt that Indiana ought not have in its midst a race that would remain disfranchised and on whom burdens would be imposed but who would have no voice in deciding what these burdens

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 233-35. Dobson introduced a resolution earlier that would disenfranchise all those who voted for Negro suffrage, unless its proponents be in a majority. *Ibid.*, 232.

would be. Other delegates pled that exclusion was a measure of self-defense to protect Indiana from the encroachments of the Negro. James G. Read of Clark County pointed out that since Indiana bordered a slave state, it was necessary to keep out the superannuated and unserviceable slaves that were set free by their masters. The strongest argument against this proposal was advanced by Colfax who shouted that: "We live surrounded by the beneficent influences of freedom, and yet, forsooth, we must follow the example of slaveholding Kentucky! Sir, the argument of the gentleman is bad—two wrongs can never make one right. Let us do right, that by its superior contrast with the wrong it shall condemn that wrong." Then the South Bend editor pulled down his sails and eulogized colonization of the Negroes as his solution to the problem of the free black. When the vote was taken on the question of exclusion, the provision was approved by a vote of 93 to 40. The popular referendum on the question revealed that only 21,873 out of 136,701 votes cast were opposed to the constitutional provision.<sup>17</sup>

The Hoosiers and their representatives did not consider the Negro their equal, and they did not desire his presence in Indiana. To some, slavery was the best possible condition for the race. Yet, the fact that they were predominantly anti-Negro did not mean that they were necessarily pro-southern in their attitudes. It must be kept in mind that many of the delegates were party politicians who brought their stump speeches with them to the convention, and whenever it seemed to be good politics for them to tirade against the Negro and to claim they were protecting the Hoosiers from the evils that attended the Negro's presence in a free society, that was the stand they took. The solution to the Negro problem, as viewed by the vast majority, was to colonize the Negro; at any rate, slave or free, he should be kept out of Indiana.

The Constitution of 1851 represented another step in the development of the state. The Constitution of 1816 which had represented a victory for the upland southerners and the easterners over the old Virginia aristocrats, the early arrivals in the Northwest Territory, had borrowed heavily on the constitutions of the older states, influenced but slightly by

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 231, 455-57; *ibid.*, II, 1817; Logan Esarey, *History of Indiana* (2d ed; 2 vols., Indianapolis, 1918), I, 520.

the necessities of life in Indiana. In contrast to this, the Constitution of 1851 was a patched up document, reflecting the changing needs of the state. Taken as a whole, it was not a great document. Its strongest features were merely correctives for cumbersome old constitutional provisions that threatened to block the legislative machinery of the state. Experience of a heavy-footed nature guided the convention, and it was in the sphere of correction that it took its most certain steps.<sup>18</sup> The new departures, however, were halting in comparison. While it corrected old abuses, it seems to have greased the ways for the Democracy as a political party. With more offices to strive for and more voters eligible to cast their ballot, the political pot could boil more vigorously. It remained for the Democratic legislature to carry out its provisions.

On August 4, 1851, the electorate went to the polls and by a huge majority approved the new constitution. The new legislature was elected at the same time—on its shoulders fell the task of implementing the work of the convention with suitable statutory acts.

One of the more important of these measures was the revision of the banking structure of the state. The members of the legislature could choose among three viewpoints: a state bank, free banks, or no banks. A sizeable group opposed the state bank on the ground that it was a monopoly, but the balance of power was held by those who supported free banks. When final action was taken, the opposing interests agreed to a compromise with the result that a combination of a state and a free banking system was created over the veto of Governor Wright. Since many restrictions were removed, free banks sprang up everywhere. Merchants found it necessary to subscribe to a periodical which listed the current rates of discount upon the notes of the various free banks which circulated about the state. Bonds or stocks of varying worth were deposited with the state auditor as security for the currency issued by the new banks. Two years later, the disturbances in the money market created by the international crisis of the Crimean War brought on a general withdrawal

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<sup>18</sup> John D. Barnhart, "The Southern Influence in the Formation of Indiana," *Indiana Magazine of History*, XXXIII (1937), 261-76; Esarey, *History of Indiana*, I, 518.

of deposits in banks, including the free banks of Indiana. The Hoosiers joined in the rush to redeem the bank paper and soon the free banks began to close their doors.<sup>19</sup>

The attack on the state bank by the members of the legislature with its subsequent free banking spree was part of a generally hostile attitude toward banking that grew, in part, out of the Jacksonian era. In Indiana, it also meant that the old influential bankers were being pushed hard by the politicians. Some left the state, among them J. F. D. Lanier of Madison, who went to Wall Street. But others remained, many of whom were enemies of the Democrats. James M. Ray stayed on as cashier of the state bank; in the branches were Calvin Fletcher, perennial reformer of Indianapolis; Allen Hamilton and Hugh McCulloch of Fort Wayne; and Samuel C. Sample, former Whig congressman of South Bend.<sup>20</sup> These leaders were successful and influential citizens who were not above dabbling in politics, particularly when the actions of the legislature aroused them to protect their interests. The general result of the new banking system was to create new foment in political circles.

In the field of education, the new constitution contained an article declaring that it would be the duty of the General Assembly "to provide by law for a general and uniform system of common schools, wherein tuition shall be without charge, and equally open to all." It also provided for the election of a state superintendent of public instruction. The General Assembly proceeded to implement the constitutional provision by a law that provided for local taxation to finance the erecting and equipping of buildings; this was to supplement the funds distributed by the state for tuition purposes. Thus at long last life was given to the common free schools of the state, and Caleb Mills' long and arduous campaign had achieved a measure of success. The state Supreme Court, however, declared a portion of the law unconstitutional in 1854, which all but paralyzed the movement for another

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<sup>19</sup> Maurice O'Rear Ross, "An Analysis of Commercial Banking in the State of Indiana" (Ph.D. dissertation, Department of History, The University of Chicago, 1936), 66-68; Leonard C. Helderman, *National and State Banks* (New York, 1931), 52-55.

<sup>20</sup> "Report of the State Bank of Indiana," *Indiana Documentary Journal*, 1851-1852, pp. 212-13.

decade.<sup>21</sup> Indiana was not yet ready to move up in the ranks of the literate states of the union.

The consequences of the developments in agriculture, law, banking, and education revealed an uneven picture of progress and deadlock. In each of these fields of endeavor, there was disquietude interspersed with self-satisfaction. This unequality was typical of the general state of adjustment through which the Hoosiers were passing. They were moving forward, pulling in the "loose ends" as they went. For the most part, these events were shaped at a time when many Hoosiers were dwelling in a political atmosphere of "finality" sustained by the comforting words of those who were willing to accept compromise, and there seemed to be many in Indiana who claimed their willingness to preserve the federal solution to the irritating problems of sectional discord.

Politics, however, was never entirely forgotten—there were still elections and conventions during each year. The most important of these political affairs in the state in 1851 was the senatorial race.

The August elections in 1850 had assured a strongly Democratic legislature. Because the troublesome Free Soil movement had collapsed, the choice of an old-line Democrat had been rendered almost certain. No senator from Indiana had succeeded himself in twenty years, and it appeared that Jesse Bright would be rotated out of office; his strongest opponent, Robert Dale Owen, had wreathed himself in laurels in the constitutional convention, but his chances were being weakened by the barbs of politicians on both sides of the fence who feared his upward surge in the public eye.

Jesse Bright, however, was not yet ready to leave the Senate; consequently, he devoted the fall to mending his political fences about the state, and not until mid-December did he leave Indiana to return to Washington. At a mass meeting of the Democrats in Madison, he read Michael C. Garber of the *Madison Courier* out of the party, along with Governor Wright. Although the editor continued to support Bright, and the friends of both men attempted to reconcile their political differences, the Senator was adamant, claiming that Garber and Phineas M. Kent of the *New Albany Ledger*,

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<sup>21</sup> William O. Lynch, "The Great Awakening," *Indiana Magazine of History*, XLI (1945), 110-11.

along with the Governor, had plotted his defeat. "Traitors and honest democrats cannot affiliate," Bright wrote to his friends.<sup>22</sup>

The campaign took on more exciting aspects when Owen, who thought he had discovered a clear case of bribery among Bright's followers, published his findings. The day after the story broke, the Senator arrived from Washington after a dramatic race from the capital by special train. Owen and Bright held a secret conference, and the charges were retracted. The Senator's stock soared, and when the Democrats met in caucus, Bright had more than enough votes to be nominated. In the balloting in the legislature the next day, he received all the Democratic votes, in addition to four Whig votes, giving him a total of ninety-nine to his opponent's forty-six.<sup>23</sup> This was a far healthier plurality than had been possible a few years before. Jesse's political fences were getting stronger in Indiana.

The election of 1852, it may be said, had had certain original features, but whether they were of any great significance is doubtful. It was more a campaign of cover up than of revelation. Both parties in the state paid homage to "finality" as a means of keeping the disconcerting question of slavery from upsetting the best laid schemes of the politicians.

The visit of the Hungarian patriot, Louis Kossuth, to the United States aroused the liberty-loving instincts of the citizens and politicians of Indiana as well as of the nation. Since the visiting dignitary arrived in the Ohio Valley at the time of the state conventions, the platforms of the Whigs and Democrats alike burst forth with long eulogies to the cause of freedom which had been recently trampled by the Russians: "no nation may lawfully interfere with the domestic concerns of another," said the Democrats. The Whigs, on the other hand, reaffirmed their sympathy for "Republicanism and free principles in Europe," which the convention had approved in 1849.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> William S. Garber, "Jesse D. Bright and Michael C. Garber," *Indiana Magazine of History*, XXVIII (1932), 34-35.

<sup>23</sup> Leopold, *Robert Dale Owen*, 278-79; Charles B. Murphy, "The Political Career of Jesse D. Bright," *Indiana Historical Society Publications* (Indianapolis, 1895- ), X (1933), 120-21.

<sup>24</sup> W. E. Henry (comp.), *State Platforms of the Two Dominant Political Parties in Indiana, 1850-1900* (Indianapolis, 1902), 5-7.

The Indianapolis press extended a magnanimous welcome to Kossuth, with each paper declaring itself to be the special apostle of freedom. The Whigs claimed credit for all previous aid to Hungary, as well for the independence of Texas. The *Sentinel* answered the Whig outbursts thus: "They say we have no right to open our mouths. They, therefore, sympathize with the master who forges upon his serfs the iron collar of slavery. They sympathize with the splendor of the court and the golden drapery of the monarch."<sup>25</sup> The verbiage of the press contained the familiar phases of recent domestic political battles placed in a new context.

The Indiana legislature was the first in the West to invite Kossuth to its capital, and rather triumphantly a delegation from that body journeyed to Cincinnati to accompany the Hungarian patriot to Indianapolis.<sup>26</sup> Robert Dale Owen, a member of the delegation, enthusiastically explained the new constitution of Indiana to the foreign visitors, which prompted Madame Theresa Pulszky, a member of the party, to inquire about the inconsistency of the document: while it began with the declaration that all men were created equal, it contained an article forbidding any Negro or mulatto to come into the state. Owen's answer, in the lady's words, is interesting. He repeated, his declarations that social and political rights could not be obtained by the Negro owing to the antipathy of the two races; therefore, he should find a home in other lands. The conversation, recorded by Madame Pulszky, continued: "'Our children shall not have helots before their eyes,' said he. 'But why are they to be helots,' asked I. 'In Massachusetts, as far as I know, in Vermont and in New York, they are free citizens of the United States, if they possess landed property.' The answer was, that public opinion disapproved this in Indiana."<sup>27</sup>

Among those who entertained the visitors was Mrs. Sarah Bolton, who impressed Madame Pulszky more than any of the other wives of the delegation, described in her diary

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<sup>25</sup> Dale Beeler, "The Election of 1852 in Indiana," *Indiana Magazine of History*, XI (1915), 303.

<sup>26</sup> One of the members of Kossuth's party was Madame Theresa Pulszky who has left an account of the Indiana journey. Her memoirs reveal an interesting commentary on the state in the winter of 1852.

<sup>27</sup> Francis and Theresa Pulszky, *White, Red, Black* (2 vols., New York, 1853), II, 8.

as being from "country towns and from the farms." According to their account of the Indiana visit, the Hoosiers particularly impressed the visitors with their feeling of equality—they did not like to work for wages.

A description of the governor's levee afforded a revealing look into society in the Indiana capital: "In thronged the society and people of Indianapolis, ladies and gentlemen of every description. Muddy boots and torn clothes; and again desperate attempts at finery; glass jewels and French silk dresses, which, after having found no purchasers in New York, have been sent to the West. Some of the mothers had their babies in their arms, workmen appeared in their blouses or dusty coats just as they came from the workshop; farmers stepped in in high boots. Once more we saw that the house of the Governor is the property of the people. And yet this incongruous mass did not behave unbecomingly to a drawing room. There was no rude elbowing, no unpleasant noise, or disturbing laughter. Had they but shaken hands less violently! I yet feel Western cordiality in my stiff arm."<sup>28</sup>

Governor Wright participated in the round of visits through the muddy streets of the town, and he took the guests to the Methodist church. Again the foreigners were impressed: "No glittering formalities, no working on the imagination: not much of reasoning; but powerful accents and appeals to the conscience, with continuous reference to the Scriptures; interwoven with frequent warnings pointing to heaven and hell. The audience seemed deeply moved; they sang unmusically, but prayed earnestly. I could not doubt the deep religious conviction of the people." Wright was patriarchal in his behavior during the Sabbath tour of Indianapolis. In each Sunday school, he explained that religion was the basis of the social order and instruction the only way to freedom. He illustrated the obligation to submit to the law of the country "by several happy examples from recent events in America."<sup>29</sup>

Back in Madison, the Germans who had not welcomed Kossuth at first came out to greet him and his party as they left for Louisville. If nothing else, the Kossuth episode had relieved the tedium of the winter, for it gave the politicians an opportunity to vow their devotion to the cause of freedom

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 10-11.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.



over the world, and it provided excuses for meetings, which to the Hoosiers meant entertainment and excitement. In the legislature, the members could orate and perchance find political capital in it. George C. Dunn of Bedford, "the sleeping lion of Lawrence," made a rattling speech against the heresy of armed intervention and denied that Hungary deserved the aid of the United States. Afterwards he explained that his position was in deference to the fact that he had two thousand German Catholics in his constituency who opposed the cause.<sup>30</sup>

Sharing the stage with other political questions at this time was the rising temperance movement. During the sessions of the legislature, an unsuccessful attempt was made to enact a Maine law. In a special election in Indianapolis early in 1852, the campaign was fought out on the temperance issue, which provided a political straw in the wind. A great number of citizens, including the governor himself, had signed the pledge, and Democrats, Whigs, and Free Soilers alike condemned the liquor traffic, but they were reluctant to suggest specific cures. Meanwhile, the Indiana Conference of the Methodist church passed resolutions to the effect that it was the duty of every Methodist to oppose and overthrow "the guilty practice of inebriation."<sup>31</sup> Politicians anxiously watched the "cold water boys" in their districts.

Kossuthism and temperance were supplementary factors, then, that tended to draw public interest away from the old issues, particularly the sectional question. Although it is difficult to believe that all politicians were hiding from the slavery issue, still some may have honestly convinced themselves after the compromise that the slavery issue was settled. It was an uneasy solution, to be sure, but men have since shown their willingness to believe slogans of their own creation. "Peace for our time" had a comfortable ring to many almost a hundred years later.

The state conventions met early in the year to select an imposing number of candidates; not only was it a presidential year, but there was a full state slate to be elected. Since the

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<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 13; John Lyle King, *Memoirs of the Legislature of 1851-1852* (n.p., n.d.).

<sup>31</sup> Charles E. Canup, "Temperance Movements and Legislation in Indiana," *Indiana Magazine of History*, XVI (1920), 15.

new constitution had made more offices elective, there were more candidates than ever.

The Democrats met at the Masonic Hall in Indianapolis on February 24, 1852. Although Jesse Bright had hoped his old enemy Joe Wright would be defeated, the governor was renominated with little trouble.<sup>32</sup> The remainder of the ticket was amply filled with Bright Democrats who, with few exceptions, resided in the area south of the National Road. The Free Soil sentiments of the Democrats of the Upper Wabash had robbed them of influence in the party councils. Yet, the presence on the ticket of John Pettit of Lafayette, a consummate politician himself, indicated that Jesse Bright had not been able to rule the selections completely. Congressional nominees included some new names, for example, William H. English and Thomas A. Hendricks, from both of whom Indiana voters would hear much in the future. The convention finally endorsed the Compromise of 1850, despite pre-convention predictions of some of the Free Soil papers. The platform also endorsed General Joseph Lane for the presidency.<sup>33</sup>

The Whigs met two days later and nominated for governor Nicholas McCarty, a retired businessman, but erstwhile opponent of William Wick in the congressional races of the forties.<sup>34</sup> The ticket as a whole represented northern and central Indiana; none of the nominees came from the river counties. General Winfield Scott was endorsed for the presidency, and John J. Crittenden of Kentucky, who had stood arm in arm with Governor Wright during the compromise excitement two years before, was the Indiana Whigs' choice for the vice-presidency. In the platform, the Whigs revealed their reluctance to elaborate on the compromise, other than

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<sup>32</sup> Jesse D. Bright to William H. English, Washington, December 16, 1851, English Collection, Indiana Historical Society Library, Indianapolis.

<sup>33</sup> Stephen A. Douglas had written English prior to the convention expressing his hope that Indiana would line up with Illinois and support him. Douglas, however, claimed that he did not want to interfere with their efforts for Lane. He would be equally pleased as second choice of the Indiana Democrats. Apparently Douglas hoped that he could step into the picture following the collapse of the Lane boom at the national convention. Stephen A. Douglas to William H. English, Washington, December 29, 1851, English Collection.

<sup>34</sup> In Indianapolis, the McCarty family was of the nobility, so to speak, second only to the Morris in the commercial life of the town.

to cite Crittenden's patriotism and integrity in "his opposition to everything tending to disunion." The party sympathized at length with the Republican movement in Europe, and bade a "hearty welcome to all who should seek an asylum on our shores." Resolutions were included in favor of a high protective tariff and internal improvements.<sup>35</sup>

The Free Soilers met in May, having announced throughout the state that: "The friends of freedom and of Free-Soil, including all those opposed to the 'Fugitive slave Law,' will hold a State convention at Indianapolis, on the third Monday in May—the 17th—for the purpose of deliberating upon the interest of the cause of liberty and of our State and Nation. Each township is requested to send on a delegate to the convention." When the convention assembled it was clear that the accretions of 1848 had fallen away from the Free Soilers; consequently, its nominations came from the old Abolitionist and Liberty party core that persisted in maintaining a separate organization. Andrew L. Robinson of Vanderburgh County was an old worker for the cause. John B. Semans and Stephen C. Stevens, both on the ticket, had been nominees of the Liberty party many years before. Also included was Rawson Vaile of Wayne County, abolitionist editor. In an address before the convention, George W. Julian attacked what he termed the obsolete issues between the Whigs and Democrats, referring to the two parties as being merely factions fighting for the spoils of office.<sup>36</sup>

The national conventions in June gave the Indiana politicians an opportunity to express their views and state their positions. The Democrats were keenly interested in convention affairs, feeling that they had a potential choice of the national party with General Joseph Lane; on the other hand, the Whigs were wary in their approval of any national candidate, remembering the campaign of 1848 when Taylor had been reluctantly accepted by the Indiana leaders of the party.

The Lane supporters in the national Democratic pool made hardly a ripple, but to the Indiana Democrats, he appeared to be an answer to their needs. Following the Mexican War, this military leader had served as governor of the

<sup>35</sup> *Indiana State Journal*, February 27, 1852; Henry, *State Platforms*, 7-8.

<sup>36</sup> *New Albany Daily Ledger*, May 6, 1852; Beeler, "The Election of 1852 in Indiana," *Indiana Magazine of History*, XI, 315.

Oregon Territory, returning to Indiana in 1851. Jesse Bright took "Jo" Lane in hand and invited the Democrats of southern Indiana to his home to confer with the candidate.<sup>37</sup> In Washington, John L. Robinson took charge of the Lane movement. This Hoosier politician, partisan to the core and faithful friend of Bright, reported in January that the Stephen A. Douglas bubble had exploded and the battle would be between James Buchanan and Lewis Cass. He predicted that a stalemate would develop between these two men, Douglas would make an unsuccessful bid, and the choice would then be among Lane, William L. Marcy, and William O. Butler. In the Indiana congressional delegation, some of the members were playing a game, it seemed, proclaiming to close friends that they were supporters of Douglas while publicly pledging support to Lane. In this group were Willis A. Gorman, a Bright enemy, and Daniel Mace of Lafayette who was also inclined to support the Wright faction of the party. Graham N. Fitch and Judge James Lockhart were doing what they could for Lane. There was some basis for believing that Lane had a chance since Robinson claimed that the southern Democrats would support Lane while as a class they would not approve of Cass.<sup>38</sup>

Proof that at least some southerners agreed with Robinson came from a correspondent who wrote Howell Cobb: "Some of the Western men begin to suggest the name of Genl. Lane as a fitting man to rally upon as a compromise in the event of failing to unite upon another. Lane himself is a true Union man, and he and his friends are in *good faith* the friends of Cass. This idea, or something like it, may grow more important as things are developed." In Indiana, however, the Lafayette *Courier*, which declared it would support Lane, disapproved of his too liberal views on the Fugitive Slave Law. As early as 1850, Robert Dale Owen had joined the Lane movement, at which time he led at least four Lane meetings in the Hoosier capital. He also wrote an anonymous biography of Lane which was distributed widely. In May, 1852, Owen traveled to Baltimore in order to add a final word for his candidate.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>37</sup> "Some Letters of Jesse D. Bright to William H. English," *Indiana Magazine of History*, XXX (1934), 374.

<sup>38</sup> William W. Woollen, *Biographical and Historical Sketches of Early Indiana* (Indianapolis, 1883), 417-20.

<sup>39</sup> Ulrich B. Phillips (ed.), *The Correspondence of Robert Toombs*,

Shortly before the convention, Jesse Bright also had high hopes for Lane. "Genl Cass," he wrote, "however is greatly stronger than any other man. Can he ever get %." *Regard this as Confidential.*"<sup>40</sup> At the Baltimore Democratic convention, John W. Davis of Indiana as president exhorted to his fellow delegates that the guiding law of the party should be everything for principle—nothing for men.

For more than thirty ballots, the Hoosier delegation cast its vote for Lane, but he was unable to draw any other support. When Douglas took the lead, Jesse Bright switched the delegation to Cass, the second choice of the Indiana Democrats, and the Lane boom was finished and done. Franklin Pierce, the eventual nominee, was never supported by the Indiana delegates, and therefore he felt no obligation to the Hoosier Democrats for his success.<sup>41</sup>

The nomination of General Winfield Scott by the Whigs was accepted by the Indiana members with complacency, since they had supported him for a year before the convention. The *Indiana State Journal*, the party organ with John Defrees at the helm, had long advocated the General's nomination. In northern Indiana, Schuyler Colfax considered Scott safe, believing he would not make devotion to the Compromise a shibboleth of party faith. Not all the Whig leaders, however, were willing to scrap Fillmore. The conservatives were alarmed over the sectional feeling that persisted. Dick Thompson wrote the Indiana delegation to the convention urging them to support the President since it "would be appropriate because the Whig party in Indiana was conservative." The delegates, however, did not heed his advice and never faltered for fifty-three ballots in their support of Scott.<sup>42</sup>

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Alexander H. Stephens, and Howell Cobb, *Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1911* (2 vols., Washington, 1913), II, 277-78; Beeler, "The Election of 1852 in Indiana," *Indiana Magazine of History*, XI, 303; Leopold, *Robert Dale Owen*, 294-97.

<sup>40</sup> "Some Letters of Jesse D. Bright to William H. English," *Indiana Magazine of History*, XXX, 377.

<sup>41</sup> Leopold, *Robert Dale Owen*, 297; Roy F. Nichols, *The Democratic Machine, 1850-1854* (New York, 1923), 131-44.

<sup>42</sup> Beeler, "The Election of 1852 in Indiana," *Indiana Magazine of History*, XI, 319-22; Charles Roll, "Richard W. Thompson: A Political Conservative in the Fifties," *ibid.*, XXVII (1931), 187; Willard H. Smith, "Schuyler Colfax: Whig Editor, 1845-1855," *ibid.*, XXXIV (1938), 278-79.

The national Free Soil convention did not meet until August; the state convention, however, met in May, at which time an attempt was made to renew the party zeal of 1848. At this meeting, the Free Soilers adopted the old Liberty and Abolitionist slogans, although the leaders, George W. Julian and Andrew L. Robinson, were former Whigs. The *Journal* reported the convention briefly and mentioned the delegates that were to be named to the national convention. They were familiar ones: Stephen C. Stevens, Stephen S. Harding, John B. Semans, Ovid Butler, James H. Cravens, and Henry L. Ellsworth—all, with the exception of Butler and Ellsworth who were former Democrats, were long-time Liberty men. When the national convention met in Pittsburgh, George W. Julian was nominated for the vice-presidency, apparently surprising the convention as well as Julian himself. The convention was, in reality, a throwback to the old Liberty party days. The leader of the Indiana delegation was Stephen S. Harding. After the meeting, the reception of the Hoosiers back in Indiana on the stump was, for the most part, one of neglect, prompting one Free Soil politician to write to the *National Era*, "We seem to have been slighted by all men . . . the friends aboard seem to have given us over to our own defence, whilst we had the most powerful odds to contend against of any of the Free States."<sup>43</sup> Only in the Quaker strongholds of the Whitewater did the old Liberty spirit flare up again.

The campaign of 1852 in Indiana was characterized by a long series of political meetings in all parts of the state. The gubernatorial race resolved itself chiefly around state issues of varying importance. McCarty, the Whig, seemed ready to capitulate long before election day in October, for Joe Wright, his opponent, was impressive in any canvass and the retired noteshaver was no match for the Governor. The Whig press, not so easily discouraged, took aim at the Democratic candidate, but with little effect.<sup>44</sup>

Wright based his campaign on the claim that the Democrats had freed the state from Whig indebtedness, with an

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<sup>43</sup> Indianapolis *Daily Journal*, May 20, 1852; Theodore C. Smith, *The Liberty and Free Soil Parties in the Northwest* (New York, 1897), 245-46, 253-54; Grace Julian Clarke, *George W. Julian* (Indianapolis, 1923), 127.

<sup>44</sup> Woollen in his sketch of Jesse Bright related an incident during which a Whig editor was given political ammunition by the Indiana Senator to fire at Wright. *Biographical and Historical Sketches*, 224.

occasional switch to the tariff issue or to the happy sale of the state's interest in the Madison and Indianapolis Railroad.<sup>45</sup>

The efforts of the Free Soilers in the campaign were generally unsuccessful; their meetings were often disturbed, or even broken up. Andrew L. Robinson, the gubernatorial candidate, who conducted most of his campaign from church pulpits, was not even permitted to speak in Terre Haute, and his fellow party member Stephen S. Harding, the perennial abolitionist, was taunted by Jesse Bright to "quit paddling his little boat in the dirty goosepond of abolitionism." Meanwhile, Julian, the vice-presidential candidate, was having his difficulties: his uncle, David Hoover, announced that he would support the Democracy, whereupon Julian wrote to his elderly relative that since he was beyond the age of political ambition, he could not conscientiously unite with the opposition. Julian had struggled with his conscience some years before on this question, and lost. During the campaign, Robinson reported to Julian, who seemed to be titular head of the party in the state. His listeners, Robinson claimed, agreed that he was right in his views but that he could not be elected since, as he put it, one "can't set niggers free among the white folks." Robinson assured Julian, however, that he planned to continue his crusade after the election and until the slaves were emancipated.<sup>46</sup> The Free Soil cause had lost much of its momentum in the state and had reverted back to its original course, albeit a determined one.

In the presidential campaign, there was again the problem of issues. The military prowess of both candidates, Pierce and Scott, came in for its share of acclaim as well as ridicule.

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<sup>45</sup> There seems to have been a difference of opinion again between Bright and Wright. In February, Bright praised English for his fight "against the efforts of certain hireling Jobbers to get a road from the 'Tax payers' in Ind for \$600,000 which is well worth *One Million Two Hundred Thousand*." John Brough, president of the Madison and Indianapolis Railroad, later governor of Ohio, attempted to purchase the state's share of the road, while Michael Bright, brother of Jesse, who had a large interest in a railroad being built from Jeffersonville to Indianapolis, was attempting to break the Madison Railroad's hold on trade to the river. "Some Letters of Jesse D. Bright to William H. English," *Indiana Magazine of History*, XXX, 376.

<sup>46</sup> Beeler, "The Election of 1852 in Indiana," *Indiana Magazine of History*, XII (1916), 40; Etta Reeves French, "Stephen S. Harding: A Hoosier Abolitionist," *ibid.*, XXVII (1931), 224; George W. Julian to David Hoover, Centerville, Indiana, June 17, 1852, George W. Julian Papers, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis; A. L. Robinson to George W. Julian, Evansville, August 28, 1852, *ibid.*

Both parties sought to capitalize on the anti-Catholic attitudes of their opponents. The foreign vote appeared to be a ripe plum ready for picking since under the new constitution, more immigrants would be able to cast their ballots. The Whigs hoped to discourage the immigrant vote that normally went to the Democracy while the latter fought to increase it. Another Whig tactic was to sell the national platform to the voters and ignore the political virtues of their candidates; the Scott men also tried to make an issue of the tariff.<sup>47</sup>

The Democrats, on the other hand, showed comparatively little concern over the campaign. They answered Whig charges with counter thrusts at the declining Whig fortunes. Bright, who furnished his campaigners with material on the amount of money spent by Scott and Pierce during the Mexican War out of the national treasury, confidently wrote to English in the heat of the campaign: "Pierce and King, will distance the track, without much grooming." The theme that the election had resolved itself into a scramble for offices cropped up from time to time.<sup>48</sup> The great number of candidates in the field must have helped contribute to this feeling.

On the eve of the election, the press again made a plea for the finality issue in an effort to give the campaign a sense of importance. A Logansport Democratic paper announced that the election would turn "principally and really on the *finality* of the compromise, however much some may attempt to conceal the fact." On the day of the election, the *State Journal* predicted that the unhappy outcome of a Whig defeat would be the reopening of the slavery question, and that which was so happily settled at the moment, would be lost.<sup>49</sup>

When the returns of the October elections came in, it was clear that the Whigs had failed in their efforts. One lone

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<sup>47</sup> W. H. Seward to Schuyler Colfax, July 21, 1852, Schuyler Colfax Papers, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis; Beeler, "The Election of 1852 in Indiana," *Indiana Magazine of History*, XII, 41-44; Smith, "Schuyler Colfax: Whig Editor, 1845-1855," *ibid.*, XXXIV, 279.

<sup>48</sup> "Some Letters of Jesse D. Bright to William H. English," *Indiana Magazine of History*, XXX, 378. One Hoosier wrote: "I have been a Democrat ever since I was anything—now when the democrats forget their true principles, and rush without sence [*sic*], reason or justice to obtain the loaves & fishes, I cannot or will not go with them." John Ketcham to George W. Julian, Monroe County, Indiana, September 1, 1852, Julian Papers.

<sup>49</sup> Beeler, "The Election of 1852 in Indiana," *Indiana Magazine of History*, XII, 47, 48.



Whig was elected to Congress—Samuel W. Parker of the Whitewater district—while the Democrats swept the rest of the field. Then in November, Pierce carried the day with a plurality of fifteen thousand votes. The Free Soil vote totaled a very disappointing seven thousand; time was running out on their bid for support.

Nationally, there were those in the Whig party who sensed the significance of their defeat, but when Horace Greeley began the requiem of the Whigs, the Hoosiers, on the whole, refused to believe him. The discontent that had been kept under cover during the campaign began to creep out into the light; the Webster men who had gone over to Pierce were chided, and Greeley himself was castigated. Schuyler Colfax declared that his paper would remain Whig to the backbone. In Terre Haute, Dick Thompson voiced similar sentiments. The great conservative position was still meritorious in their eyes. In November, 1853, the *St. Joseph Valley Register* announced that "the Whigs are cool, calm, composed—confident that all things will work together correctly for their success in 1856."<sup>50</sup>

The Democracy, meanwhile, had unfinished business in the mill, despite its easy victory in the presidential campaign of 1852. One of the more important matters of party politics was the election of a new United States Senator to fill the seat left vacant by the death of James Whitcomb. Governor Wright, instead of appointing a new senator, had thrown this task to the legislature to fight it out. Jesse Bright, ever anxious to weld the party bonds securely, advocated the cause of Graham N. Fitch of Logansport, his political lieutenant in northern Indiana. The doctor was a great political friend of Bright and was intensely loyal to his party—this was his chief claim to political fame. The Logansport physician had been in politics as an officeholder for more than twenty years. The Wright faction, however, also had its candidates. Among those who entered the race were John Pettit, William J. Brown, Willis A. Gorman, Graham N. Fitch, and the popular Robert Dale Owen. Pettit had flirted with the Free Soil movement and had geographical availability, in that he resided

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<sup>50</sup> Willard H. Smith, "Schuyler Colfax and the Political Upheaval of 1854-1855," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* (Cedar Rapids, Iowa, 1914- ), XXVIII (1941-1942), 384.

in Lafayette on the Upper Wabash. Gorman, although from southern Indiana, was likewise in favor with the anti-Bright forces. Bill Brown had strayed into the opposition, and as editor of the *Sentinel* he was in a position to wield a powerful influence. Bright was depending heavily on William English, a member of the legislature, to swing the election to Fitch. Robert Dale Owen, after his work in the constitutional convention, was a formidable candidate, until the politicians began a campaign against him following the ill-fated women's rights episode.<sup>51</sup> Owen himself feared this fact prior to the election, for he wrote to Joe Lane: "My course last winter, in regard to radical reforms of our State laws, which, (to speak the honest truth) I think *ought* to be an argument of some weight in my favor, may become the reverse." The New Harmony reformer, while he desired the senatorship, was equally interested in securing the post of minister to Naples. Several of the other candidates for the Senate were members of the House of Representatives, and Owen hoped they would support him for the diplomatic post in order to eliminate him from competing with them in the senatorial race in Indiana. Probably at Bright's request, Lane, the go-between in this case, informed Owen of the political bargain to be struck; in Owen's words, after receiving Lane's letter, he replied: "I . . . have held myself bound in honor, from the intimations you have given, not to stand in Fitch's way as a candidate . . . The effect of this was doubtless favorable to Fitch; as a majority of the votes from our end of the State—all of which would have stood by me to the very last—had him for second choice."<sup>52</sup> Thus, by bargaining, Jesse Bright had a hand in strengthening the position of his candidate, Graham N. Fitch.

Yet when the legislature met, John Pettit of Lafayette emerged the victor. Bright was furious. He claimed to be at war with those who "prevailed against honest men." He singled out, in particular, Bill Brown of the *Sentinel*, declaring that he would not negotiate with Brown or "buy him out."

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<sup>51</sup> Thomas B. Helm (ed.), *History of Cass County, Indiana* (Chicago, 1886), 507-8; *A Biographical History of Eminent and Self-Made Men of the State of Indiana* (Cincinnati, 1880), District 10, pp. 17-18; Leopold, *Robert Dale Owen*, 278-83; Oscar O. Winther (comp.), "Letters from Robert Dale Owen to Joseph Lane," *Indiana Magazine of History*, XXXVI (1940), 140.

<sup>52</sup> Winther, "Letters from Robert Dale Owen to Joseph Lane," *Indiana Magazine of History*, XXXVI, 142, 145.

As to his new colleague in the Senate, Bright declared that "with Petit I shall have little or nothing to do. I do not recognize him as a gentleman or as my friend, and this you know, is enough to determine my rule of action."<sup>53</sup>

The senatorial campaign illustrated the Bright strategy and focused attention on the cleavages in the Democracy, which among the political parties was almost alone now in the field. Those who charged that the party had lost its principles to become merely a group of politicians seeking loaves and fishes must have considered factional quarrels like these to be proof of their accusations.<sup>54</sup> The politicians had taken to quarreling among themselves.

At the same time that the Indiana party stalwarts were watching each other and supervising party affairs, all of them had their eyes turned to the growing temperance movement. It appeared to many that the question would create new issues at home. It lacked the sectional aspects of the slavery question and therefore would be fought out in the local sphere. For many years there had been local temperance societies scattered about Indiana, many of which were, to a large extent, the outgrowth of the effort of the Methodist church. The Washingtonian Society in the state in the early forties had given way to the Sons of Temperance first organized at Brookville in 1845. By 1851, there were reported to be more than three hundred and seventy local societies in Indiana. Unlike the slavery question which gradually revolved from its political aspects to the moral side, temperance began as a moral issue and slowly took on a political coloration. Until 1850, temperance legislation in Indiana was purely local in nature. There were many of these local laws passed by the state legislature, and in 1846, the General Assembly enacted

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<sup>53</sup> Jesse D. Bright to William H. English, January 25, 1853, English Collection.

<sup>54</sup> Another incident in Bright's political maneuverings which alienated more of the party leaders came when it was learned in Indiana that President-elect Pierce was considering Jefferson Davis of Mississippi for the cabinet position of secretary of war. Davis had lauded the troops from Mississippi to the detriment of the Indiana volunteers in the Mexican War. James H. Lane wrote a letter of protest to Bright with the instructions that he present it to Pierce. Instead, the Indiana senator showed the letter privately to Davis, his close friend, and then pocketed it. Lane denounced Bright in scathing terms. Wendell H. Stephenson, *The Political Career of James H. Lane*, Kansas State Historical Society Publications (3 vols., Topeka, 1886-1930), III, 35.

a law permitting the voters of each township to place the "no license" question on the local ballot.<sup>55</sup> Temperance agitation increased during the next few years until in 1853, Governor Wright, an ardent Methodist and temperance advocate, recommended legislation that would regulate the sale of liquor. He specifically asked that drunkenness be made a crime. A committee of the legislature, however, declared that such legislation was inexpedient; instead, it drafted and passed a law which prevented retailing of less than one gallon amounts of liquor except by the local approval of the voters of a township. Later in the year, in a test case, the state Supreme Court ruled that the local option feature of the law was unconstitutional; as a result, the state went back to the old system.

There was no end, however, to the signing of pledges and the holding of temperance conventions. The state convention in Madison in September, 1853, pledged itself to support candidates to the state legislature independent of party affiliations. The Methodists also continued their efforts to get political action and at the Northern Indiana Conference in the same year resolved that it would "vote for no man for political office unless he stand pledged in favor of temperance reformation and be its advocate."<sup>56</sup>

The Whig party, desperately in need of new political stimulants to revive its failing health, seems to have accepted the temperance cause with enthusiasm, while the Democrats generally were more reluctant to attempt to outshout their rivals on the question. One rebuttal used by the Democrats was that temperance was a moral question and not a political one. The presence of the German element in the Democracy gave its leaders pause before they spoke, although there was certainly no doubt as to the sentiments of the Governor on the subject. The *Whig Journal*, by reporting that thirty-three of the forty-four liquor dealers in Indianapolis were

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<sup>55</sup> Canup, "Temperance Movements and Legislation in Indiana," *Indiana Magazine of History*, XVI, 17; *Laws of Indiana, General*, 1846, p. 46.

<sup>56</sup> Charles Zimmerman, "The Origin and Rise of the Republican Party in Indiana from 1854 to 1860," *Indiana Magazine of History*, XIII (1917), 213; Esarey, *History of Indiana*, II, 617; H. N. Herrick and William W. Sweet, *A History of the North Indiana Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (Indianapolis, 1917), 43.

Germans wielded a two-edge sword to fight the cause of both nativism and temperance.

The temperance question was growing in importance, becoming an issue in politics that was no longer to be handled as a legislative favor. It is not to be doubted that there was an ever-increasing sense of moral fervor in the air or that some politicians saw in it an opportunity to whip up the electorate in their favor. Yet, there was a new aspect to the question that made temperance a more difficult problem for the politician of Indiana. Prior to the new constitution of 1851, as many as twenty local laws a year had been passed regulating the sale of liquor in a particular locality. The law of 1847, although general in nature, had provided that a majority vote in each township should decide the issue for each particular community. The law of 1853, although more stringent, also had a local option clause which proved to be its downfall when it was tested in the courts, for the judges of the state Supreme Court ruled that under the new constitution, the legislature could not shirk its responsibility of making general laws. The people, it ruled could not make the rules of "license" or "no license" in a local community: this was the duty of its chosen representatives in the General Assembly. The constitution of the state had been formulated "to restore the state from being a coterie of small independencies." There should be a "unity throughout her borders."<sup>57</sup> This meant that if temperance now should come into the legislative sphere, politicians would be acting for the entire state and could not hide behind the shield of local law. This fact threw temperance as well as other matters of law into a new light. The success or failure of the movement fell directly on the shoulders of the politicians, acting for the entire citizenry of the state. Thus temperance moved into a wider sphere of political action since whatever course it took, it would apply to the entire population of the state. At this level, it could very well become a party issue, and being a moral issue, temperance could create havoc within the parties themselves, perhaps even fathering a new party. These were all within the realm of possibility, depending on the way men chose to react to the problem.

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<sup>57</sup> *Maize v. The State*, 4 *Indiana Reports*, 342-51.

The editor of the New Albany *Ledger*, a strong Democratic voice in southern Indiana, was concerned, as were many other politically-minded men of Indiana, when he wrote: "In the political world of Indiana, the Maine law liquor men are carrying every thing before them. Last Saturday, they had a large convention at the court house and nominated delegates to the state convention which you will see by the papers. The issue the next election will be the Maine Law, the thing is certain."<sup>58</sup> This was an early estimate of the situation as seen through the eyes of a Bright Democrat.

There were others on the scene who ventured a prediction on the political weather of the future. In Cincinnati, a correspondent of Governor Wright who was preparing a campaign for the Hoosier Democrat which was to begin with a few nonpolitical articles in the *Western Christian Advocate*, wrote to the Governor: "We hope to see you our next President and at least vice do, or in the cabinet." In South Bend, late in the year, an editorial appeared with the comforting words that "The Whigs are cool, calm, composed—confident that all things will work together correctly for their success in 1856." From his home in Centerville, George Julian informed William Lloyd Garrison that "the cause [antislavery] is passing through a transition period, from unpopular to popular. The slave power has itself become a most efficient helper in its own destruction. Its unhallowed rule has at length set the world to thinking, its great heart to beating and its great voice to agitating."<sup>59</sup>

Politics and weather have in common the element of sudden change, and these political weather prophets, unable to look beyond the horizon, could not see that the sectional storm clouds that had once safely passed over, were now returning with added momentum. In January, 1854, the storm broke: the Kansas-Nebraska Bill was introduced in Congress.

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<sup>58</sup> L. G. Mathews to William H. English, New Albany, December 21, 1853, English Collection.

<sup>59</sup> John D. Elbert to Joseph A. Wright, Cincinnati, July 9, 1853, Joseph A. Wright Papers, Indiana State Library; Smith, "Schuyler Colfax: Whig Editor," *Indiana Magazine of History*, XXXIV, 280-81; George W. Julian to William Lloyd Garrison, Centerville, November 18, 1853, Julian Papers.