

Daniel D. Pratt: Senator and Commissioner

*Joseph E. Holliday**

The election of Daniel D. Pratt, of Logansport, to the United States Senate in January, 1869, to succeed Thomas A. Hendricks had come after a bitter internal struggle within the ranks of the Republican members of the Indiana General Assembly. The struggle was precipitated by James Hughes, of Bloomington, who hoped to win the honor, but it also uncovered a personal feud between Lieutenant Governor Will E. Cumback, an early favorite for the seat, and Governor Conrad Baker. Personal rivalries threatened party harmony, and after several caucuses were unable to reach an agreement, Pratt was presented as a compromise candidate. He had been his party's nominee for a Senate seat in 1863, but the Republicans were then the minority party in the legislature. With a majority in 1869, however, the Republicans were able to carry his election. Pratt's reputation in the state was not based upon office-holding; he had held no important state office, and his only legislative experience before he went to Washington in 1869 was service in two terms of the general assembly. It was his character, his leadership in the legal profession in northern Indiana, and his loyal service as a campaigner that earned for him the esteem of many in his party.

Daniel D. Pratt's experience in the United States Senate began with the inauguration of Ulysses S. Grant in March, 1869. Presiding over the Senate was Schuyler Colfax, another Hoosier, who had just been inaugurated vice-president of the United States. During the administration of President Andrew Johnson, the government had been subjected to severe stress and strain between the legislative and executive branches. Differences over reconstruction policy for the southern states and the attempted impeachment of the President in the summer of 1868 had tended to shift the center

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DANIEL D. PRATT

Photograph from Russell M. Seeds
(ed.), *History of the Republican Party
in Indiana* (Indianapolis, Ind., 1899), 283.

of gravity of the governmental system from the presidency to Congress. But with the advent of the Grant administration, closer working relationships between the two branches was expected. As the months progressed, initiative and power came to rest principally with a small group of senators—Roscoe Conkling, of New York, Zachariah Chandler, of Michigan, Simon Cameron, of Pennsylvania, and Oliver P. Morton, of Indiana, who had entered the Senate in 1867. Pratt never belonged to this coterie of administration senators. His arrival on the national scene was too recent to give him such prestige. Nor had he served his state in as illustrious a capacity as Morton, who had been governor of Indiana, 1861-1867. Moreover, in a body that included these leaders as well as the brilliant Carl Schurz, of Missouri, and the rugged Lyman Trumbull, of Illinois, the modest Pratt could never compete for leadership. He did, however, earn a reputation for steady work, honesty, and sterling character.

These traits were, perhaps, best exemplified in his services on various committees of the Senate. During his term (1869-1875) he served on four standing committees and two select committees of that body. Throughout his term he was a member of the committees on claims and pensions, serving as chairman of the latter from December, 1872, until March, 1875.¹ He also served on the Committee on the District of Columbia for two sessions of the Forty-first Congress (1869-1870), and on the Committee on Public Lands for three sessions of the Forty-third Congress (1873-1875).² He served on two select committees—one, on the revision of the laws, from December, 1870, to May, 1871, the other, on alleged outrages in the southern states, from December, 1871, to March, 1873.³ But it was on the committees on claims and pensions that he served most faithfully and where he made his greatest contribution. It was asserted that during his last session in the Senate, he wrote seventy-five committee reports.⁴ David Turpie, who studied law under Pratt and whose later service in the Senate made him a competent observer, wrote that

¹ U.S., *Congressional Globe*, 41st Cong., 1st Sess., 1869, 27; *ibid.*, 42d Cong., 3d Sess., 1872-1873, Part 1, 56.

² *Ibid.*, 41st Cong., 1st Sess., 1869, 27; U.S., *Congressional Record*, 43d Cong., Special Sess., 1873, 48.

³ U.S., *Congressional Globe*, 41st Cong., 3d Sess., 1870-1871, Part 1, 40; *ibid.*, 42d Cong., 2d Sess., 1871-1872, Part 1, 42.

⁴ *Cincinnati Commercial*, June 22, 1877.

"when Mr. Pratt reported favorably on a claim no senator questioned its validity."⁵

From his experience with claims, Pratt found that at least one set of injured persons had no legal redress at that time. These were southern Unionists whose property had been in the theater of war or in the path of Union armies. In an able speech delivered on April 27, 1870, and which was probably the finest he gave in the Senate, he pleaded for the recognition of claims for damages from these loyal citizens. "The records of patriotism during the world's history," he said, "do not show sublimer examples of fortitude than were furnished by southern loyalists during the devastating war." He indicated the various types of losses by these people; he cited examples of the seizure of fuel, food, or livestock from loyal persons by Union troops, of vessels in southern waters seized from loyal owners, and the occupation of buildings and houses owned by loyal men for use by the Union armies.⁶ According to Turpie, this speech of Pratt's had "a very long history in the sequel," and the rules that he here suggested were later "followed, quoted, and cited as authority."⁷ This question of the claims of any southerner was a highly controversial subject in the postwar era. For several years fair-minded persons had urged that some recognition be given to losses by southern Unionists, but the Radicals in Congress had prevented legislation. Within a year after Pratt's speech, however, the Southern Claims Commission was authorized by Congress on March 3, 1871. Radical opposition was overcome by the votes of southern and border-state members and more liberal Republicans.⁸

Another important type of legislation that resulted from the war dealt with veterans' pensions. By 1871 pension laws were in a confused state. Between 1861 and 1871, nearly every Congress had enacted legislation relating to pensions. Naturally they had liberalized these laws, but this piecemeal accumulation of legislation in many instances became contradictory and irreconcilable. It was asserted that by 1871

⁵ David Turpie, *Sketches of My Own Times* (Indianapolis, Ind., 1903), 215.

⁶ U.S., *Congressional Globe*, 41st Cong., 2d Sess., 1869-1870, Part 4, 3015-3020.

⁷ Turpie, *Sketches of My Own Times*, 215.

⁸ Frank W. Klingberg, "The Southern Claims Commission: A Postwar Agency in Operation," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XXXIII (September, 1945), 198.

there were forty-four acts relating to pensions, many of which were open to varying interpretations. There was general agreement that a codification was seriously needed. A codification bill coming from the House Committee on Pensions passed the House in April, 1872. In the following session the Senate took it up, and Pratt, as chairman of the Committee on Pensions, was in charge of steering the bill through the Senate. After consideration of amendments and various conferences, it was approved by both houses and became a law on March 3, 1873.⁹ This law was a landmark in the history of Civil War pensions, not so much by reason of its novel features, but because of its clarification of basic principles and a relatively uniform rating of disabilities.

The bills introduced by Pratt during his term in the Senate ranged over widely diverse fields. The greatest number were private bills for pensions and claims, originating from Pratt's membership and work on the pensions and claims committees. But a senator must give attention to the local interests of his constituents. One such proposal about which there was considerable discussion in Indiana was the need for a second Federal District Court. The only existing district court for the state sat at Indianapolis; the necessity for travel to that city, with accompanying hardships and expense, was the chief reason behind desire for a second court. Various members of Congress from Indiana sponsored bills to establish one.¹⁰ Among the first duties of Pratt was to present a memorial to the Senate from Hoosiers asking to have another court established. The Judiciary Committee, however, was opposed to a new judicial district for Indiana at that time.¹¹ After a few months, Congress voted approval (1870) for additional terms of the Indiana District Court to sit at New Albany and Evansville, but suits for these terms were still to be instituted at Indianapolis. Pratt then introduced a bill in the Third Session of the Forty-first Congress which would have authorized the appointment of deputy clerks in New Albany and Evansville, in order to reduce

⁹ John W. Oliver, *History of the Civil War Military Pensions, 1861-1885* (Bulletin of the University of Wisconsin, No. 844, *History Series*, Vol. IV, No. 1; Madison, Wis., 1917), 35-37.

¹⁰ D. P. Jenkins to Pratt, December 6, 1869, Daniel D. Pratt MSS (Indiana Division, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis, Ind.). Cited hereafter as Pratt MSS.

¹¹ U.S., *Congressional Globe*, 41st Cong., 1st Sess., 1869, 31; Lyman Trumbull to Pratt, December 29, 1869, Pratt MSS.

expenses of travel for institution of cases. A similar bill was introduced in the House of Representatives by Michael C. Kerr, Democratic representative from New Albany, and passed that body. Pratt devoted his efforts to secure passage of Kerr's bill in the upper house. He was successful, and the bill became a law.¹² But this accomplishment did not completely satisfy Hoosier constituents. Under additional pressure from the Indiana legislature in March, 1874, Pratt again sought authorization of a second district court in his state, but his bill was once more adversely reported by the Judiciary Committee.¹³

Another proposal which was urged by officials and legislators in Indiana was one to obtain from the federal government what was regarded as the state's share of the "Two per-cent Fund." This fund referred to a donation promised by the federal government to Indiana at the time of her admission to the Union in 1816. From proceeds of the sale of public lands in Indiana, 3 per cent was to be given for internal improvements within the state and an additional 2 per cent was to be used by the federal government for roads leading to and through the state.¹⁴ While the 3 per cent had been paid, it was asserted that the 2 per cent had not. Similar arrangements with the states of Ohio and Illinois had not been carried out. On January 4, 1872, the governors of Ohio and Illinois joined with the governor of Indiana to urge their respective delegations in Congress to work for payment of the 2 per cent. Pratt was one of those who urged the Senate to take action on this matter, but without success.¹⁵

One of Senator Pratt's pet proposals was a series of bills granting to his state the beds of small unsurveyed lakes and rivers. Many areas of northern Indiana were originally marsh and swamp lands with winding, sluggish streams. Under the Swamp Land Act of 1850 most of these lands had been handed over to the state.¹⁶ Since the surveys under that

¹² U.S., *Congressional Globe*, 41st Cong., 3d Sess., 1870-1871, Part 3, 1740, 1865; U.S., *Statutes at Large*, XVII (1871-1873), 330.

¹³ U.S., *Congressional Record*, 43d Cong., 1st Sess., 1873-1874, Part 5, 4978.

¹⁴ John D. Barnhart and Donald F. Carmony, *Indiana: From Frontier to Industrial Commonwealth* (4 vols., New York, 1954), I, 229.

¹⁵ U.S., *Congressional Globe*, 42d Cong., 2d Sess., 1871-1872, Part 2, 1759; *ibid.*, Part 3, 2085-2090.

¹⁶ Benjamin H. Hibbard, *A History of the Public Land Policies* (New York, 1924), 273.

act had been completed some rivers had meandered and some ponds and rivers had dried; their beds were then exposed and usable for farming.¹⁷ Squatters and owners of adjoining tracts clashed over title to these lands.

One such controversy involved the bed of Beaver Lake in Newton County. This was a lake of about sixteen thousand acres. The area around it had been given to the state under the Swamp Land Act, and when the adjacent area was drained, the lake disappeared. Its bed was claimed by three sets of persons. One group claimed it under the pre-emption laws, a second, under the state laws, while a third sought rights as riparian owners. In 1872 Congress passed a bill giving the area to the state.¹⁸ A similar bill, urged by Pratt, applied to the Little Calumet River area in Porter and Lake counties, but it was buried in committee.¹⁹

Pratt then sought passage of a general bill that would have ceded beds of all unsurveyed lakes to the states wherein they lay.²⁰ Even though the commissioner of the General Land Office recommended the passage of such an act, Pratt met with no success. During the closing weeks of his term, he sought to persuade the Senate to take some action on his bill. He concluded his remarks by saying:

Mr. President, in a few weeks more I shall cease to be a member of this body. Senators have not failed to see that this bill is a pet scheme of mine. I would fain carry with me into my retirement the consciousness that I have contributed to place upon the statute-book a measure which will commend me to somebody's gratitude. I think I shall experience a positive satisfaction when I visit, as I often do, the beautiful lakes which gem the northern part of my State in the reflection that they are now hers, and hers because of my suggestion and of the kindness with which the Senate has listened to my advocacy.²¹

A point of law which Pratt had encountered in his legal practice related to maritime jurisdiction in inland waters, and this was the basis for another bill introduced by him. Recent decisions of the United States Supreme Court had

¹⁷ A. B. Ball, County Auditor, to Pratt, December 21, 1876, Pratt MSS.

¹⁸ U.S., *Congressional Globe*, 42d Cong., 2d Sess., 1871-1872, Part 2, 1348-1352; U.S., *Statutes at Large*, XVII (1871-1873), 409.

¹⁹ U.S., *Congressional Globe*, 41st Cong., 2d Sess., 1869, Part I, 896.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 42d Cong., 3d Sess., 1872-1873, Part I, 339.

²¹ U.S., *Congressional Record*, 43d Cong., 2d Sess., 1874-1875, Part 1, 414.

transferred exclusive jurisdiction in maritime cases to the federal courts. This meant that even for minor suits citizens had to use those courts. In the Forty-first Congress (1869-1870), Pratt introduced a bill that would have restored concurrent jurisdiction in torts and minor contracts in maritime cases to the states. In his first lengthy speech before the Senate on January 13, 1870, he spoke for his bill. He reminded the Senate that "citizens in certain western states have found themselves deprived of justice in a prompt and reasonable way" by such exclusive jurisdiction of the federal courts. This was a complaint that was closely related to that of only one district court in the state—the expense and delay in the federal court contrasted with the "easy and convenient redress in the state courts near at hand."²² But the Senate committee never reported the bill.²³

From his membership on the Committee on Public Lands, Pratt became concerned about rights of pre-emption. During the Forty-second Congress (1871-1873) he introduced two bills that would have strengthened the rights of settlers on the national domain who might have difficulty with the land-grant railroads. One was adversely reported by the committee, and the other was buried in committee.²⁴ Other bills introduced by Pratt included an act to authorize the construction of the Wyoming and Montana Railroad, a project in which John D. Defrees had an interest,²⁵ and a bill to establish a national university.²⁶ Neither was successful.

Pratt's record, then, as a sponsor of successful legislation was not impressive. To assume, however, that he was a "back-bencher" would be unwarranted. He was not a silent witness in the Senate chamber. Not only was he active in committee work, but from time to time he forcefully stated his views on national issues that loomed large at the time. Among these were the southern question, the demoralization of the civil service, financial questions, and railroad regulation.

²² U.S., *Congressional Globe*, 41st Cong., 2d Sess., 1869-1870, Part 1, 413-416.

²³ *Ibid.*, x.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 42d Cong., 1st Sess., 1871, Part 1, 92-96; *ibid.*, 3d Sess., 1872-1873, Part 1, 725.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 42d Cong., 3d Sess., 1872-1873, Part 1, 590; John D. Defrees to Pratt, April 20 and June 22, 1870, Pratt MSS. For identification of Defrees, see pp. 26-27.

²⁶ U.S., *Congressional Record*, 43d Cong., 1st Sess., 1873-1874, Part 1, 77.

The southern question occupied an important place in politics during Pratt's term in the Senate. When he took his seat, there were a number of pieces of unfinished business relating to reconstruction still to be debated. The Fourteenth Amendment had been adopted, and the Fifteenth Amendment had just been submitted to the states before he took his seat. The session of the Indiana General Assembly which had elected Pratt as senator (1869) was concluded by the resignation of the Democrats in an attempt to prevent ratification of the controversial Fifteenth Amendment. A special session was then called, and ratification was pushed through "in a manner of doubtful constitutionality."²⁷ The last of the former Confederate states was not admitted to representation in Congress until 1870, and it was in 1872 that all but the most prominent ex-Confederates were relieved of political disabilities by a general amnesty act. Violence appeared in many parts of the South during this time, resulting in the passage of the Enforcement Acts of 1870 and 1872. Senator Charles Sumner's Supplementary Civil Rights Bill was also being urged by some Radicals to protect more of the civil rights of Negroes.

Pratt had never been considered an extremist before his election. His reputation was that of a conservative. Perhaps this was partly because of his comparative absence from public life during the war years. During the early years of his senatorial term, he was sought as a campaigner in those localities in which a moderate position on the Negro question was expected to win more Republican votes than a radical one.²⁸ Yet during his term in the Senate, he supported the reconstruction program of the Radicals and was one of the most forceful advocates of Sumner's Civil Rights Bill.

When in April, 1869, Senator Morton introduced a bill to add ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment to the requirements for readmission of the remaining former Confederate states, Pratt voted for the proposal.²⁹ The reports of the committee investigating election disorders in North Carolina in 1871 shocked him. "It is a reproach to the Republic," he said in the Senate, "and a confession of its failure as a Government that such things may occur. . . ." ³⁰ Appointed

²⁷ Barnhart and Carmony, *Indiana*, II, 197.

²⁸ W. C. Gooding to A. H. Conner, August 23, 1870, Pratt MSS.

²⁹ U.S., *Congressional Globe*, 41st Cong., 1st Sess., 1869, 656.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 42d Cong., 1st Sess., 1871, Part 1, 504.

to membership on the select committee on alleged outrages in the southern states, he was given an opportunity to tour Mississippi and Alabama to hear testimony. This experience convinced him of the need for strengthening the Enforcement acts.³¹ Nevertheless, when the General Amnesty Bill of 1872 was discussed, Pratt announced his willingness to vote for it, declaring that while he believed that most Southerners were not "cured of their heresy," it was then safe to remove penalties—even expedient to do so.³²

When Sumner's Supplementary Civil Rights Bill was debated in 1874, its sponsor had just died. Sumner had believed that existing legislation was not adequate in guaranteeing equal rights to Negroes. His supplementary bill, consequently, would guarantee rights in hotels, theaters, public schools, and other public places and forbid the exclusion of Negroes from jury duty.³³ Pratt had long been an admirer of this old antislavery leader. In a strong speech given on May 20, 1874, Pratt took an advanced position on civil rights. It reflected the altruism and idealism of the Hoosier Senator. He stated his premise that:

I believe what our fathers who laid the foundations of our political edifice taught, that all men are created equal. I believe in a still older teaching—that God is no respecter of persons, and that he made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on the face of the earth. . . .

Pointing out that the real objection to the proposed bill came from prejudice, he continued: "The negro does not seek nor does this bill give him any of your peculiar social rights and privileges. You may still select your own society and invite whom you will to your table." The objection to "mixed schools," Pratt believed, had aroused the greatest antagonism to the bill. Facing this issue squarely, he indicated that since the Negroes would be voters, it would be folly to leave them uneducated. "Common gratitude, if nothing else," he urged, "should prompt us to pass this bill."³⁴ This speech was printed and mailed to Pratt's constituents. Its frank and candid statements on the controversial racial question evoked mixed

³¹ *Ibid.*, 2d Sess., 1871-1872, Part 5, 3586-3593.

³² *Ibid.*, Part 4, 3252.

³³ Moorfield Storey, *Charles Sumner*, Vol. XXX of *American Statesmen*, ed. John T. Morse, Jr. (32 vols., Boston, 1882-1900), 402-406.

³⁴ U.S., *Congressional Record*, 43d Cong., 1st Sess., 1873-1874, Part 5, 4081-4083.

reactions in Indiana. In some parts of the state, particularly in the southern section, it was not too well received.³⁵ But there was a genuine quality and righteous fervor in his remarks that was reminiscent of the older idealistic character of the antislavery movement. Pratt's statements elicited a complimentary letter from Frederick Douglass, the Negro leader, who called it "a noble effort" and "a nail in a sure place."³⁶

Idealists and reformers had long been troubled over another feature of public life—the growing demoralization of the civil service. The scramble for public offices had been increasing. Pratt witnessed the vicissitudes of appointive office during the first month of his term as senator, when an old Hoosier friend and co-worker, John D. Defrees, was removed from the office of congressional printer by a Republican senatorial caucus. Defrees was an old-line Whig newspaper editor and one of the founders of the Republican party in Indiana. He was regarded as a teammate of Schuyler Colfax, who was vice-president. He had been appointed superintendent of public printing by President Lincoln in 1861 and had weathered an earlier effort to remove him from office. During the controversy between President Johnson and Congress, Johnson attempted to remove Defrees from his office, but Congress responded by making the office elective by the Senate. Congress saved Defrees then, but in 1869 its Republican caucus voted to remove him.³⁷

The action of the caucus was widely reported to have been the result of a bargain between the carpetbaggers in the Senate and the New Yorkers. This arrangement gave to A. M. Clapp, of the Buffalo, New York, *Express* the post of congressional printer, while John R. French, a carpet-bagger from North Carolina, was elected to the lucrative post of sergeant-of-arms of the Senate.³⁸ Berry R. Sulgrove later claimed that Defrees was turned out because of his known

³⁵ T. R. McFerson to Pratt, August 17, 1874; George W. Friedley to Pratt, August 15, 1876, Pratt MSS.

³⁶ [Daniel P. Baldwin], "Daniel D. Pratt," *History of the Republican Party in Indiana*, ed. Russell M. Seeds (Indianapolis, Ind., 1899), 287.

³⁷ *Cincinnati Commercial*, March 16, 1869; U.S., *Congressional Globe*, 39th Cong., 2d Sess., 1866-1867, Part 3, 1840.

³⁸ *Cincinnati Commercial*, March 19, 24, 1869; John Defrees to Henry S. Lane, March 20, 1869, Henry S. Lane Papers (Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Ind.).

opposition to Grant and Morton.³⁹ Whatever the reasons might have been, the incident is an illustration of the precarious tenure of any federal official at that time.

On his election to the Senate, Pratt at once became aware of pressure from party workers seeking federal posts. Having never before been in a key position to recommend candidates for government offices, he was doubly sensitive to the clamor for appointments when the Grant administration took over. It seemed impossible to satisfy everyone. Representatives of factions and cliques within the party relayed to him conflicting stories of party loyalty of various candidates for appointments. If an applicant had been loyal to President Johnson in the previous administration, Pratt was soon informed by his rivals.⁴⁰ It is not possible to cite here the scores of letters requesting government positions that reached Pratt; a few examples must suffice.

The Cumback-Baker feud, which had been uncovered during the senatorial election of 1869, had many ramifications in the patronage field. After his defeat for the Senate, Cumback himself was an applicant for "a first-class appointment" with the federal government, preferably a foreign mission to a major country.⁴¹ Yet when he was appointed minister to Portugal, he declined it.⁴² Finally, reasonable satisfaction was found when he was appointed collector of internal revenue for the Fourth Indiana District.⁴³ When news leaked out that Cumback had declined the offer of minister to Portugal, Ebenezer Dumont, of Indianapolis, forwarded his request for that post to the two Indiana senators.⁴⁴

Pratt's delay in recommending Hiram Iddings, of Kendallville, to the post of pension agent brought forth a

³⁹ [Berry R. Sulgrove], "John D. Defrees," *Indiana Magazine of History*, II (September, 1906), 148. Defrees was reappointed to the office by President Rutherford B. Hayes and held it thereafter until 1892.

⁴⁰ Godlove S. Orth to Pratt, April 5, 1869; A. L. Robinson to George W. Julian, April 7, 1869; A. J. Way to Pratt, April 9, 1869, Pratt MSS.

⁴¹ Will E. Cumback to Pratt, February 23, 1869, and May 17, 1869, Pratt MSS.

⁴² Will E. Cumback to Pratt, February 24, 1870, Pratt MSS; Hamilton Fish, Secretary of State, to Cumback, February 7, 1870, Will E. Cumback Papers (Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Ind.).

⁴³ A. Pleasanton, Commissioner of Internal Revenue, to Cumback, April 1, 1871, Will E. Cumback Papers.

⁴⁴ Ebenezer Dumont to Pratt, February 14, 1870, Pratt MSS.

number of letters. Iddings was a Republican member of the Indiana General Assembly at the time of Pratt's election to the Senate. He was a bolter who had refused to support the decision of the party caucus to elect Cumback to the Senate. Pratt's delay appeared to some of Iddings' friends to indicate that Pratt was being influenced by Cumback and his friends.⁴⁵ Pratt denied that this was the reason for his hesitation and stated that he never intended to "discriminate against Mr. Cumback or the Bolters." He wrote that he "took no sides" in that contest but simply wished to investigate.⁴⁶

On at least one occasion President Grant gave no opportunity to the Indiana senators to propose an appointee to a vacancy in the state. In August, 1869, David McDonald, judge of the United States District Court in Indiana was reported to be dying, and a letter came from J. J. Hayden to Pratt urging the appointment of Abram W. Hendricks to that post.⁴⁷ When McDonald died, however, President Grant surprised everyone by appointing Walter Q. Gresham as the new judge before any recommendations reached him from the Indiana senators.⁴⁸

Uncertainty and pressure from office-seekers thus claimed too much time of members of Congress. In 1872, speaking in favor of an appropriation to continue the recently appointed and short-lived Civil Service Commission, Pratt recalled the contest for offices in 1869:

No one can forget the scramble for office which took place on the inauguration of General Grant. . . . For weeks the public business was obstructed. . . . The mails were loaded with applications and recommendations. . . . Little was thought of or done by members of Congress but to weigh the merits of applicants. . . . I recur to it, sir, as a horrid dream, and I hope never to be subjected to such humiliation of solicitation again. The system is all wrong.⁴⁹

Not only was the pressure for positions in the civil service a scandal, but the moral tone of the entire public service was low. Corruption touched members of Congress. The scandal that struck closest to Pratt was that implicating his

⁴⁵ James S. Frazer to Pratt, March 30, 1869; Hiram Iddings to Pratt, April 22, 1869, Pratt MSS.

⁴⁶ Pratt to James S. Frazer, April 2, 1869, Pratt MSS.

⁴⁷ J. J. Hayden to Pratt, August 2, 1869, Pratt MSS.

⁴⁸ J. J. Hayden to Pratt, September 2, 1869, Pratt MSS; *Cincinnati Commercial*, September 3, 1869.

⁴⁹ U.S., *Congressional Globe*, 42d Cong., 2d Sess., 1871-1872, Part 2, 1567.

old friend, Schuyler Colfax, with Oakes Ames and Credit Mobilier. The charge that Colfax had accepted twenty shares of stock in this company from Ames and had received dividends from these was a hard blow to the friends of Colfax. Pratt's nephew wrote from Logansport: "Morally, Colfax is guilty; legally, it stands in the category of cases so familiar to us, 'Guilty, but not proved'. He is dead and never will be resurrected."⁵⁰ Other friends voiced similar beliefs.⁵¹ But Pratt refused to believe Colfax was guilty. When Colfax, as the presiding officer of the Senate, asked for a committee of that body to investigate the charges against him, it was Pratt who moved that the request be granted. He did so by saying that "it would require a great deal more evidence than I have seen or heard to convince the people of the State of Indiana that he [Colfax] is a dishonest or dishonorable man." The Senate refused to investigate.⁵²

Colfax was very appreciative of Pratt's testimony, and a few months later in offering to speak in the political canvass for Pratt's re-election, he wrote:

I can never forget that one man spoke out publicly, a few brave, earnest words as to his faith in me when a pitiless storm of calumny was fiercely beating upon me and his name was Daniel D. Pratt. And I say to him now as I did at Washington that Ames never paid or offered to pay one dollar on any account whatever in check or cash or stock or bond.⁵³

One of Colfax's biographers reprints a letter from Pratt to Colfax in which Pratt wrote:

I have thought that he [Ames] was honest in his statement of his memory of the transaction, while I never doubted for a moment that he was mistaken, and that your version was the true one. Such, I have little doubt, will be the ultimate judgment of all, as it is already of most.⁵⁴

Colfax's most recent biographer has very carefully sifted the evidence and reaches the conclusion that while Colfax "tampered with a stock with which he should have had nothing to do," the evidence that he received dividends is far from

⁵⁰ D. P. Baldwin to Pratt, March 25, 1873, Pratt MSS.

⁵¹ A. L. Osborn to Pratt, March 27, 1873; Henry J. Hayden to J. J. Hayden, February 5, 1873, Pratt MSS.

⁵² U.S., *Congressional Globe*, 42d Cong., 3d Sess., 1872-1873, Part 2, 895.

⁵³ Colfax to Pratt, May 6, 1873, Pratt MSS.

⁵⁴ O. J. Hollister, *Life of Schuyler Colfax* (New York, 1886), 433n.

conclusive, and that he should be given the benefit of the doubt.⁵⁵

The same Congress that witnessed the disgrace of Colfax itself angered the country by passing the Salary Grab or Back Pay Bill. This act increased the salaries of high government officials, and a last-minute amendment made the advance for members of Congress retroactive for two years. It was this retroactive feature that aroused so much public indignation. One of Pratt's correspondents wrote that public hostility to the bill amounted "almost to a frenzy. The ordinarily quiet and reasonable become violent and uncompromising in talking about it."⁵⁶ Pratt not only voted against the bill but pointed out the political folly of passing it.⁵⁷ Many senators refused to accept their share of the back pay and followed the leadership of Schurz, Wilson, and Pratt in returning it to the Treasury within a few weeks after it was received. Pratt's bonus was \$4,121, which he returned in April, 1873.⁵⁸ Senator Morton also returned his share.⁵⁹

When Congress assembled in December, 1873, there were many members who believed they should try to undo some of the damage that the Salary Grab Bill had already done to their prestige. Pratt was one of these, and he presented a bill that would have revised downward the compensation for members of Congress.⁶⁰ He was more active in the discussion over compensation than in debate over any other piece of legislation during that session of Congress. He told his colleagues:

Since we left here last spring no act of Congress . . . has been more generally criticised, I should rather say denounced. In every form in which public sentiment finds expression in this country . . . the law has been condemned and its repeal demanded.⁶¹

⁵⁵ Willard H. Smith, *Schuyler Colfax: The Changing Fortunes of a Political Idol* (*Indiana Historical Collections*, Vol. XXXIII; Indianapolis, Ind., 1952), 415.

⁵⁶ T. H. Bringham to Pratt, January 11, 1874, Pratt MSS; see also letter from D. P. Baldwin to Pratt, March 10, 1873, Pratt MSS.

⁵⁷ U.S., *Congressional Globe*, 42d Cong., 3d Sess., 1872-1873, Part 3, 2184.

⁵⁸ *Cincinnati Commercial*, January 6, 1874; Charles Pratt to Pratt, March 25, 1873, Pratt MSS.

⁵⁹ William D. Foulke, *Life of Oliver P. Morton* (2 vols., Indianapolis, Ind., 1899), II, 314-315.

⁶⁰ U.S., *Congressional Record*, 43d Cong., 1st Sess., 1873-1874, Part 1, 2.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 356.

The new bill reducing salaries became a law in January, 1874.⁶²

It would take more than this new bill to restore the confidence of the voters in their government. It was rough political weather for the Republican party. The financial and currency issues of the decade also contributed to its difficulties. There was a strong inflationary sentiment in Indiana during the 1870's. This sentiment was not confined to either major political party, although it found more effective expression through the Democratic party than through the Republicans.⁶³ In 1869 the Indiana General Assembly instructed its senators

to oppose by their influence and votes the passage of any bill that shall specially legalize coin contracts, until the United States shall redeem its Treasury Notes in coin; and to oppose the enactment of any law which shall have the effect to reduce the present volume of the paper money in use among the people of the United States.⁶⁴

Senators Pratt and Morton were both regarded as inflationists, but some of the Democratic leaders appeared to be more convincing to inflation-minded voters of Indiana. Daniel W. Voorhees' speeches in 1870 were so convincing that the state Republican chairman, A. H. Conner, wrote to Pratt to ask for "a good document for immediate circulation on the subject" of finance. He continued:

Voorhees has been making quite a number of speeches on the financial condition of the country, and has succeeded in making a number of former Republicans believe that the country is in great distress, and I fear the circulation of his speech joined with his personal efforts will induce many to leave our party and identify themselves with the Democracy.⁶⁵

With the Panic of 1873, pressure for inflation increased. When Pratt met with a committee of Indianapolis business leaders at the Bates House on November 14, 1873, there was no question about where they stood on this subject—they wanted inflation.⁶⁶ Shortly after Congress convened in

⁶² *Ibid.*, 840.

⁶³ William G. Carleton, "The Money Question in Indiana Politics, 1865-1900," *Indiana Magazine of History*, XLII (June, 1946), 119, 135.

⁶⁴ U.S., *Congressional Globe*, 41st Cong., 1st Sess., 1869, 50; Indiana, *Journal of the Senate*, 46th Sess., (1869), 267 (Joint Resolution No. 10), 468.

⁶⁵ A. H. Conner to Pratt, July 5, 1870, Pratt MSS.

⁶⁶ Henry C. Griffin to Pratt, November 10, 1873, Pratt MSS. For an analysis of western financial views at this time, see George L. Anderson, "Western Attitudes Toward National Banks, 1873-74," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XXIII (September, 1936), 205-216.

December, 1873, Pratt stated his own views on the need for more currency, and his speech was widely circulated in Chicago, Cincinnati, and Indiana newspapers.⁶⁷ Pratt told the Senate:

The voice of the entire West, if I except capitalists and bankers, who have money to loan, is emphatic that we require more currency. There is one test which I regard as demonstrative that we have too little money. I refer to the extraordinarily high rate of interest which prevails throughout the western country. There must be a real scarcity when for legitimate purposes money commands 12 per cent.⁶⁸

Two months later Pratt declared his position with respect to the legal restriction on the volume of national bank notes. He believed that this virtually granted a monopoly to the national banks, and "chartered privilege is hateful to Americans." He maintained he would support every proposal to increase the national bank note circulation. He was also opposed to early resumption of specie payments by the federal government and announced that he would "vote against every scheme looking toward resumption at that time."⁶⁹ In April, 1874, a Senate inflationary bill authorizing an increase in legal tender notes by \$18,000,000 and national bank notes by \$46,000,000 passed Congress. Both Indiana senators voted for it.⁷⁰ When President Grant unexpectedly vetoed the bill, Pratt voted to enact it over the veto, but the effort failed.⁷¹ Up to this time, Pratt's record on the currency question was consistent. But eight months later when the Resumption Act of 1874 was enacted and support for it was made a party test, both Indiana senators voted in favor of resumption. Indeed, the entire Indiana Republican delegation in Congress supported the bill in spite of strong inflationist sentiment in their home state.⁷²

On still another issue that became significant in the 1870's—that of railroad regulation—Pratt favored some type of federal regulation. On December 3, 1873, he offered a resolution directing the Committee on the Judiciary

⁶⁷ J. T. Bryer to Pratt, December 22, 1873, Pratt MSS.

⁶⁸ U.S., *Congressional Record*, 43d Cong., 1st Sess., 1873-1874, Part 1, 195.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, Part 2, 1513.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, Part 3, 2835.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, Part 4, 3436.

⁷² William G. Carleton, "The Money Question in Indiana Politics, 1865-1900," *Indiana Magazine of History*, XLII (June, 1946), 124-125.

to inquire whether Congress, under the powers conferred upon it by the Constitution . . . has authority, without the consent of the State affected, to create corporations to construct railroads or canals penetrating two or more States, and also, whether it has the power to regulate by law, without such consent, the rates of compensation for the carriage of persons and property over existing railroads, chartered by States, which by consolidation have continuous lines running into or through two or more States.⁷³

This resolution appears to have been an attempt to get some expression from the committee on the subject of federal regulation. Again, in June, 1874, in speaking about a resolution to provide cheap transportation, Pratt stated his belief that the public was asking for regulation of fares and freight shipped over interstate lines. "The people," he said, "are not hostile to the railroads, but to their combinations and discriminatory and exorbitant rates."⁷⁴ Pratt was well informed regarding the great strength of the Granger movement in his own state by 1874.⁷⁵ Although he favored some type of regulation of railroads, such national regulation did not come for over a decade.

Pratt's views on these national issues were further developed during his campaigns to aid the Republican ticket in the biennial elections of 1870, 1872, and 1874. Pratt did not attend the Republican state conventions in these years but remained in Washington. Nevertheless he did participate in the campaigns which followed. The Republican state convention that convened in Indianapolis on February 22, 1870, brought Morton back from Washington. Even though his health was poor, whenever possible Morton attended state conventions to mend his political fences and make his presence felt. In 1870 he gave the main address before the convention, devoting considerable attention to the wartime financing of the state and recalling the obstruction by the Democrats to his administration as governor. He was particularly strong in his denunciation of Voorhees' war record. After urging economy in both state and national governments, he reminded the audience that the Republican party was "yet in its youth, fresh and vigorous." The audience applauded wildly. The state Republican platform called for a reduction in the tariff

⁷³ U.S., *Congressional Record*, 43d Cong., 1st Sess., 1873-1874, Part 1, 29.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, Part 5, 4990-4992.

⁷⁵ T. H. Bringham to Pratt, January 11, 1874; [first name illegible] Woodward to Pratt, June 2, 1873, Pratt MSS.

and taxes, "rejoiced" in the ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment, and praised Senator Morton for his exertions in favor of it.⁷⁶ Defense of the Fifteenth Amendment was one of the chief tasks of Republican campaigners.

In planning his speaking engagements in the summer of 1870, Pratt wrote to A. H. Conner, Republican state chairman:

I would prefer not to operate in the large cities like Terre Haute, Vincennes, Evansville, and New Albany, which are visited by the best political speakers and where I might do more harm than good. My preference would be to speak to audiences mainly made up of plain farmers and mechanics—and to visit such parts as are omitted by first-class speakers.⁷⁷

This is a rather humble letter, but it was in keeping with Pratt's character. Conner replied that outside of northern Indiana there was need for Pratt's services in certain districts along the Ohio River and in the Terre Haute district. After covering these, Conner wrote, Pratt could canvass northern Indiana.⁷⁸

The southern section of the state required careful attention from Republicans. There, the recent ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment was a heavy burden for the Republicans to carry. Moreover, the Cumback-Baker feud must have had its effect on the smooth working of the party machine, although Cumback loyally supported the Republican ticket in 1870.⁷⁹ W. C. Gooding, who was making a race for Congress against William E. Niblack, of Vincennes, sent an urgent request to have Pratt come into the southwestern district. "By all means send us Pratt and send him soon," he wrote to Conner; "no other man will do as well down here just now."⁸⁰ Vice-President Colfax, who had been accused of neglecting his home state, lent his efforts in the campaign, and Senator John Sherman, of Ohio, came into the state to help.⁸¹ In spite of these efforts, the Democrats made gains

⁷⁶ *Cincinnati Commercial*, February 23, 1870; W. E. Henry (comp.), *State Platforms of the Two Dominant Political Parties in Indiana, 1850-1900* (Indianapolis, Ind., 1902), 37.

⁷⁷ Pratt to A. H. Conner, August 11, 1870, Pratt MSS.

⁷⁸ A. H. Conner to Pratt, August 15, 1870, Pratt MSS.

⁷⁹ Seeds, *History of the Republican Party in Indiana*, 40; *Cincinnati Commercial*, July 25, 28, August 8, 1870.

⁸⁰ W. C. Gooding to A. H. Conner, August 23, 1870, Pratt MSS; see also Millis Record to Pratt, August 30, 1870, Pratt MSS.

⁸¹ *Cincinnati Commercial*, September 20, 1870.

in this campaign. Of the eleven congressmen elected, five were Democrats—a gain of one. The Democrats also elected a majority in the state legislature as well as their slate of state officials.⁸²

As the presidential election year of 1872 approached, the confidence of the regular Republicans was considerably shaken by the growing Liberal Republican movement. This opposition to "Grantism," the high tariff, and radical reconstruction was expressed by a number of Pratt's correspondents. Grant's Caribbean policy, particularly his proposed annexation of Santo Domingo, was also a target for criticism.⁸³ In January, 1871, the Democratic majority in the Indiana General Assembly, with the help of a few Republican votes, enacted resolutions against the proposal to annex Santo Domingo, instructed their senators to vote against ratification of the annexation treaty, and then sent the resolutions to Senator Charles Sumner, of Massachusetts, for presentation to the Senate.⁸⁴ Sumner was an ardent opponent of annexation.

William R. Holloway, postmaster at Indianapolis, hastened to inform Pratt that the author of this resolution, Jason B. Brown, of Jackson County, was "one of the bitterest and most disloyal Democrats during the last war" and had always opposed Sumner's principles. He urged Pratt to explain to Sumner the origin of the resolutions and suggest that Sumner return them.⁸⁵ It is not known if Pratt did so, but Sumner did present them.⁸⁶ As the chairman of the powerful Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Sumner was able to defeat ratification of the annexation treaty. But through the efforts of the administration and its senatorial friends, Sumner was removed from his post as chairman at the next session of Congress. In the party caucus on committee assignments, Pratt was reported as refusing to vote for Sumner's removal.⁸⁷

When the Republican state convention met at Indianapolis on February 22, 1872, William H. H. Terrell, third assistant

⁸² Barnhart and Carmony, *Indiana*, II, 199.

⁸³ C. H. Allen to Pratt, March 12, 1871, Pratt MSS.

⁸⁴ Indiana, *Brevier Legislative Reports*, XII (1871), 52.

⁸⁵ W. R. Holloway to Pratt, January 10, 1871, Pratt MSS.

⁸⁶ U.S., *Congressional Globe*, 41st Cong., 3d Sess., 1870-1871, Part 1, 661; Foulke, *Life of Oliver P. Morton*, II, 168n.

⁸⁷ John B. Niles to Pratt, March 14, 1871, Pratt MSS.

postmaster general, formerly adjutant general of Indiana, came back to lend his efforts toward having the state convention instruct its delegates to the national convention to support Grant.⁸⁸ The ground swell against renominating Grant was assuming proportions that made this question of instruction of delegates a serious threat to party harmony. Opposition to Grant was particularly strong around Richmond and in the Terre Haute district.⁸⁹ The plan of the Grant managers was to include in the platform which would be presented by the Committee on Resolutions instructions to the delegates to the national convention to vote for Grant. In this way they hoped that specific debate on that controversial topic would be reduced. Furthermore, it was arranged to place the presentation of the platform toward the close of the day's work—after the nominees were chosen. During the balloting on nominees a spirited debate occurred over the nomination for a congressman-at-large. It was settled so amicably that Lew Wallace, a strong Grant supporter, believed the moment was an appropriate time to “stampede” the delegates to instruct the Indiana delegation for Grant—a move not in keeping with the carefully prepared plan of Grant's managers. Confusion followed, and Wallace withdrew his proposal. With this dissentious topic temporarily postponed, the convention returned to the choice of nominees. By the time the platform was presented, the delegates were tired and hungry. Included in the platform was a plank instructing the national delegates for Grant and Colfax. The platform was approved as presented, and in this manner Indiana Republican delegates were officially committed to Grant's renomination.⁹⁰

Senator Pratt was not enthusiastic about Grant's renomination. In April, 1871, Senator Morton was serenaded by the Indiana residents of Washington at the National Hotel. At this time, Morton endorsed Grant in a speech in which he claimed that Grant was “a greater Radical today

⁸⁸ *Cincinnati Enquirer*, February 21, 1872; *Cincinnati Commercial*, February 21, 1872.

⁸⁹ *Cincinnati Commercial*, February 17, 22, 1872; C. H. Allen to Pratt, March 12, 1871, Pratt MSS; Charles Roll, *Colonel Dick Thompson: The Persistent Whig* (*Indiana Historical Collections*, Vol. XXX; Indianapolis, Ind., 1948), 203.

⁹⁰ *Cincinnati Commercial*, February 23, 24, 29, 1872; *Cincinnati Enquirer*, February 23, 1872; Henry, *State Platforms of the Two Dominant Political Parties in Indiana, 1850-1900*, 42-44.

than some of those who started out before him." On the balcony with Morton were Colfax and members of the Indiana congressional delegation. But Pratt was not reported by the papers as being present.⁹¹ In the following year Pratt received several letters from the editor of the *Logansport Journal*, J. T. Bryer, expressing extreme dissatisfaction with Grant. He stated that "I am glad you [Pratt] agree with me to some extent on the Presidential question."⁹² But before the Liberal Republican convention met at Cincinnati in May, 1872, Pratt had determined to support the Republican nominee and not affiliate with this reform movement.⁹³ When the Indiana delegates to the Republican national convention at Philadelphia visited Washington in June, 1872, Senator Morton arranged for them to call on President Grant. A short note to Pratt from Morton's secretary informed him of the arrangements and ended with the sentence, "Senator Morton desires you to be there."⁹⁴ It was virtually a command. No evidence indicating whether Pratt responded has been located.

By June the canvass was well under way in the state. Pratt was the chief speaker at the Eighth District convention at Logansport on June 19.⁹⁵ In early August he joined the host of Republican speakers. Most of his engagements were in central and northern Indiana.⁹⁶ The *Winchester Journal* commented on his speech there:

Senator Pratt spoke . . . at the City Hall last Thursday. His speech was like himself; — a great big, sensible one. He made no attempt at oratory, but spoke in rather a colloquial tone, dealing almost entirely with the financial and national questions. He analyzed the impracticability of the financial plank of the Democratic platform. . . . He also gave his reasons for supporting the Civil Rights Bill. . . . There was no mis-statement of facts or abuse of opponents so often indulged in by public speakers. . . .⁹⁷

The elections of that year in Indiana returned a Republican majority for Grant and a Republican majority in the state legislature; seven of the eleven congressmen were

⁹¹ Cincinnati *Commercial*, April 9, 1871.

⁹² J. T. Bryer to Pratt, March 8, 16, April 26, May 1, 1872, Pratt MSS. See also Morgan H. Weir to Pratt, March 18, 1872, Pratt MSS.

⁹³ Rufus Magee to Pratt, April 17, 1872, Pratt MSS.

⁹⁴ John Burbank to Pratt, June 2, 1872, Pratt MSS.

⁹⁵ Cincinnati *Commercial*, June 20, 1872.

⁹⁶ Richmond, Indiana, *Palladium*, August 10, 1872.

⁹⁷ Winchester, Indiana, *Journal*, August 10, 1872, quoted in Richmond, Indiana, *Palladium*, August 26, 1872.

Republicans, but the Democrats succeeded in electing Hendricks as governor.⁹⁸ The Republican organization now resolved on an unusually speedy arrangement to assure Morton's reelection to the Senate. Since there were discontented groups in nearly every county, and the Liberal Republicans were cooperating with the Democrats in many counties, it was decided to re-elect Morton at a special session of the legislature, rather than wait until the regular time. Governor Baker called a special session to meet in November, 1872, and it was during this session that Morton was re-elected to the Senate.⁹⁹ Two years later, Pratt's term would expire, and by that time Republican fortunes were at a much lower ebb.

In the months following the elections of 1872 came the passage of the Salary Grab and disclosure of the Credit Mobilier scandal involving Colfax. The Panic of 1873 also brought months of ruinous deflation in its wake. The discontent of the farmers increased. To these handicaps facing Republicans, the Republican-controlled Indiana General Assembly of 1873 added another. The Baxter Law, a strict liquor control act, was passed and alienated German-Americans in the state, who constituted a large bloc of Republican votes.¹⁰⁰ Political times could not have been more discouraging than those faced by Republican candidates in 1874.

Pratt sought to prepare the best record possible in that election year. He supported repeal of the Salary Grab Act and overriding the veto of the Inflation Act. But he also voted for Sumner's Civil Rights Bill. When Senator Sumner died in April, 1874, Pratt joined with others in the Senate to eulogize him. He chose to emphasize Sumner's devotion to his convictions and his honesty in public life. "No lobbyist ever approached him with a doubtful proposition," he reminded the Senate; "while suspicion fell from time to time upon many names, often with cruel injustice, . . . his integrity was never called in question."¹⁰¹ In this way Pratt hoped to recall the idealism of one of the former giants of the Republican party.

⁹⁸ Barnhart and Carmony, *Indiana*, II, 199.

⁹⁹ Foulke, *Life of Oliver P. Morton*, II, 268-269; *Cincinnati Gazette*, November 14, 1872; *Cincinnati Commercial*, November 27, 1872.

¹⁰⁰ Seeds, *History of the Republican Party in Indiana*, 45, 47.

¹⁰¹ U.S., *Congressional Record*, 43d Cong., 1st Sess., 1873-1874, Part 4, 3403; George L. Downing to Pratt, May 21, 1874, Pratt MSS.

All members of the lower house of the state legislature, twenty-three members of the upper house of fifty, various state officials, and all members of Congress from the state were to be elected in 1874. To add to the uncertainties, the legislature had again changed the congressional districts in the state in the previous year.¹⁰² Those in charge of the Republican campaign decided to have the state convention later than the usual time. When they gathered at Indianapolis on June 17, 1874, enthusiasm was lacking. A pessimistic mood prevailed, and that mood continued throughout the year. Neither Pratt nor Morton was present. Colonel Richard W. (Dick) Thompson and Benjamin Harrison guided the convention's deliberations. The only unusual episode at the convention was the presentation of a set of resolutions adopted by the German Press Association of Indiana, attacking the Baxter Temperance Act and serving notice that those papers would not support any candidate known to favor that law. Among other things, the platform favored local option regarding liquor control and supported Sumner's Civil Rights Bill, which had just passed the lower house of Congress.¹⁰³

Pratt came home from Washington in June sadly in need of a rest. He was ill with dropsy and suffering from fatigue.¹⁰⁴ The Republican state chairman urged him to start his campaign not later than August 1, "as you are looked upon as a candidate for re-election." He and Senator Morton advised Pratt to concentrate on the "close" counties.¹⁰⁵ Upon the insistence of the state chairman, engagements in sixty counties were arranged for Pratt.¹⁰⁶ After a short vacation, Pratt started his speaking tour at Eaton, Indiana, near Muncie, in the August heat. He continued his campaign for only a few weeks.¹⁰⁷

In the campaign supplement of the *Indianapolis Journal* Pratt's speech at Kendallville on August 29 was printed in

¹⁰² Seeds, *History of the Republican Party in Indiana*, 47; *Cincinnati Gazette*, October 16, 1874.

¹⁰³ *Cincinnati Gazette*, June 18, 1874; Henry, *State Platforms of the Two Dominant Political Parties in Indiana, 1850-1900*, 47-48.

¹⁰⁴ *Cincinnati Gazette*, August 12, 1874; *Cincinnati Commercial*, August 8, 1874.

¹⁰⁵ Thomas J. Brady to Pratt, July 17, 1874; Morton to Pratt, August 7, 1874, Pratt MSS.

¹⁰⁶ Thomas J. Brady to Pratt, July 21, 1874, Pratt MSS.

¹⁰⁷ *Cincinnati Commercial*, August 8, 1874; *Cincinnati Gazette*, August 12, 1874.

full. It was the general pattern for his speeches in this campaign. Very little was said about state issues. He chose to deal with national issues of finance and transportation and to defend the Civil Rights Bill. He recalled the record of the Republican party in securing the adoption of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth amendments, the passage of the Homestead Act, and the Ku Klux acts. He likewise gave credit to that party for abolishing the congressional franking privilege. As far as the scandals of that era were concerned, Pratt claimed that "the glory of the Republican party is that it has never attempted to cover up those sins of its own officers—never."¹⁰⁸

On September 3, because of illness, Pratt was unable to give his speech at La Porte. He soon found he could no longer continue in the canvass.¹⁰⁹ His absence from the hustings made the campaign even more lethargic. Senator John Logan, of Illinois, and Governor P. B. S. Pinchback, of Louisiana, were brought in to help the Republicans.¹¹⁰ Senator Morton returned from Hot Springs, Arkansas, in time to give some speeches.¹¹¹ By late September, the state chairman, Thomas Brady, was most pessimistic about Republican success. He urged Pratt to resume his campaign and deplored the lack of party funds. "The campaign thus far is the cheapest one run in Indiana for twenty-five years," he wrote, and pointedly mentioned that Morton had made "a liberal donation" before leaving for the West. "Can't you raise something among your friends," he asked Pratt. "We need at least \$1,000 more than we can now count on."¹¹²

In his circular letter mailed to precinct committeemen on the eve of the elections, Brady strove to revive some of the fighting spirit by reminding them that "upon the result of this campaign depends the future of Republicanism in this State, the election of a United States Senator, the cause of Temperance, of equal rights for all men, and of National honor." Should the Republicans go down in defeat, he warned, it would mean "the success of the most disreputable pack of

¹⁰⁸ *Indianapolis Journal*, September 16, 1874.

¹⁰⁹ Thomas J. Brady to Pratt, September 5, 1874, Pratt MSS; *Indianapolis Journal*, September 4, 1874.

¹¹⁰ *Cincinnati Gazette*, September 16, 30, 1874.

¹¹¹ Thomas J. Brady to Pratt, September 23, 1874, Pratt MSS; *Cincinnati Gazette*, September 19, 1874.

¹¹² Thomas J. Brady to Pratt, September 30, 1874, Pratt MSS.

political demagogues who ever strove for power, banded together in the name of Democracy, and representing all that is evil in society and the prejudices born of ignorance and hatred."¹¹³

The resurgence of Democratic strength in the postwar period continued in 1874. Only five of the thirteen congressional districts were carried by the Republicans, and the Democrats won a comfortable majority in the next legislature.¹¹⁴ It was this legislature that would elect a United States senator to succeed Pratt.

The Democrats could elect a senator provided they could reach agreement on their candidate, but they were seriously divided on the currency question. Their state platform had explicitly called for inflation, and the inflationists within the party favored Voorhees, who had been a tower of strength on the hustings and who had strong claims to the office. The conservative wing of the party, however, favored Joseph E. McDonald, a hard-money man. The result would be largely determined by Governor Thomas A. Hendricks, who was looking forward to his chances as the presidential nominee of his party in 1876.¹¹⁵ For a time, it seemed as if the Democrats might have as bitter an internecine fight in 1875 as the Republicans had in 1869. The Greenbackers in the legislature also had a candidate for the senatorship, James Buchanan, an Indianapolis lawyer and editor of the *Indianapolis Sun*.¹¹⁶ They hoped to have the balance of power in the election, but no hard-money candidate of either major party could expect to receive the support of this set of thirteen Greenback independents.

While Democratic party lines were very closely drawn, their caucus meetings appear to have been lively. Hendricks threw his support to McDonald, whereupon Voorhees withdrew from the contest. The inflationists in the party then sought to rally the caucus members behind William S. Holman, veteran congressman from the southeastern part of the

¹¹³ Printed circular letter from Thomas J. Brady to precinct committeemen, dated at Indianapolis, October 1, 1874, Pratt MSS.

¹¹⁴ New York *Tribune Almanac and Political Register for 1875*, 78.

¹¹⁵ Barnhart and Carmony, *Indiana*, II, 201.

¹¹⁶ William G. Carleton, "The Money Question in Indiana Politics," *Indiana Magazine of History*, XLII (June, 1946), 118.

state.¹¹⁷ The *Cincinnati Commercial* sought to throw to Holman any influence it might have in Indiana by devoting two full pages of its issue of January 8 to Holman's record—"A Clean Congressional Record," "Fifteen Years without Stain." It carefully analyzed his performance on war contracts, indefinite appropriations, "moiety grabs" on government contracts, retrenchment in government expenses, soldiers' pay, the banking monopoly, "railroad land grabs," the franking privilege of congressmen, the protective tariff, paper money, and the "Goat Island swindle," and on every count found his record good.¹¹⁸ He was truly weighed in the balance and not found wanting. In vain did Holman's friends in the Democratic caucus insist that the election of McDonald would be a repudiation of their state platform's financial plank.¹¹⁹ McDonald was the party candidate, the Democratic lines held, and he was elected to the Senate on January 20, 1875, to succeed Pratt.¹²⁰

It appeared that Pratt would now have the opportunity which he had earlier claimed he desired—to return to his law practice. But no sooner had he returned home from Washington than he accepted the post of commissioner of internal revenue with the Grant administration. It was at a time when the Treasury Department was convulsed by exposure of frauds. In June, 1874, President Grant had appointed Benjamin H. Bristow as secretary of treasury. Bristow was recognized as a conservative on financial questions, an advocate of civil service reform, and as devoted to efficiency.¹²¹ It was generally assumed that a house cleaning was in order in the Treasury Department. Bristow soon found evidence of a conspiracy between distillers and revenue officers to defraud the government of the tax on liquor. J. W. Douglass, the commissioner of internal revenue, was not dishonest, but he was certainly guilty of negligence. He could

¹¹⁷ *Dictionary of American Biography* (22 vols., New York, 1928-1958), IX, 158-159.

¹¹⁸ *Cincinnati Commercial*, January 8, 1875.

¹¹⁹ *Cincinnati Gazette*, January 13, 1875; Henry, *State Platforms of the Two Dominant Political Parties in Indiana, 1850-1900*, 44-46.

¹²⁰ *Cincinnati Commercial*, January 21, 30, 1875.

¹²¹ *Dictionary of American Biography*, III, 55-56.

not be permitted to continue, and Pratt was induced to take his place.¹²²

Pratt's reputation as a man of sterling honesty, his long association with the Republican party, and his freedom from close obligation to the senatorial clique made him an excellent man for the post. The *Indianapolis Journal* regarded his appointment as "an eminently good one, since he is a man of incorruptible and unquestioned ability."¹²³ The *Cincinnati Gazette* was also complimentary, stating that "the office needs a good lawyer, a man of high executive qualities, firmness, and impregnable integrity."¹²⁴ The news dispatches from Washington stated that the appointment was "well-received in all quarters. His record in Congress was never impeached in the slightest degree, and it is believed he will take hold . . . with much vigor."¹²⁵

The existence of the Whiskey Ring was exposed on May 10, 1875, and five days later Commissioner Pratt took charge of the bureau, just as Bristow's broom began to sweep the bureau clean. He joined another recently-appointed Hoosier in the same department, John C. New, of Indianapolis, who succeeded General Francis Spinner as treasurer of the United States. New had served as quartermaster-general of Indiana during the Civil War. After the war he entered the banking business and was president of the First National Bank at Indianapolis when he was called to the post in the Treasury. He was destined to stay in office for only a year.¹²⁶

Much of the work of furnishing the evidence for the prosecution of the criminals fell to Pratt's direction. It was generally agreed that he performed his work with earnestness and thoroughness.¹²⁷ About 238 persons were eventually indicted and tried in the courts. Within the next few months, Pratt proceeded to reorganize the entire bureau. Among the

¹²² Allan Nevins, *Hamilton Fish: The Inner History of the Grant Administration* (New York, 1936), 762-767.

¹²³ *Indianapolis Journal*, May 6, 1875.

¹²⁴ *Cincinnati Gazette*, May 6, 1875.

¹²⁵ *Cincinnati Commercial*, May 6, 1875.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, April 6, 1875; Seeds, *History of the Republican Party in Indiana*, 208.

¹²⁷ H. V. Boynton, "The Whiskey Ring," *North American Review*, CXXIII (October, 1876), 302; *Cincinnati Commercial*, May 6, 1875.

first steps was the appointment of Homer T. Yaryan as chief of the Division of Revenue Agents. Yaryan was the key man used by Secretary Bristow to unearth the evidence of the frauds. He was one of the most trustworthy agents in the department. Born near Liberty, Indiana, he had been employed as a chemist in Cincinnati before the Civil War. He then studied law in the office of his father at Richmond, Indiana, before taking a post in the Treasury Department.¹²⁸ Other steps in the reorganization of the bureau included a new system of stamps and a consolidation of districts throughout the country, reducing the number from 209 to 163. By November, 1875, Washington dispatches claimed that "it is universally admitted that the Bureau has never been so efficient as now."¹²⁹

As prosecution of those implicated in the Whiskey Ring came before the courts, the cases at St. Louis received the most attention. As the story unfolded, the chief clerk of the Treasury Department and the secretary to President Grant were shown to be implicated. Then President Grant's ardor for reform cooled, and he even became vindictive toward those who had pressed it. Just after the Republican National Convention of 1876 had adjourned, Secretary Bristow resigned.¹³⁰ The new secretary was Lot S. Morrill, a senator, who did not demonstrate any indication to protect his subordinates in the department from presidential removal. What was called by one newspaper correspondent as "a piece of characteristically childish spite-work on the part of the President" was to force the removal of Homer T. Yaryan from the service. Then, it was the turn of Commissioner Pratt to be forced out. It was understood that he chose to leave because of failure to prevent the ousting of his able and efficient chief of revenue agents.¹³¹ Pratt relinquished his duties on August 31, 1876, and once more returned to Logansport expecting to resume his practice of law.¹³²

¹²⁸ Cincinnati *Commercial*, May 19, July 21, 1876.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, November 12, December 29, 1875.

¹³⁰ E. Bruce Thompson, "The Bristow Presidential Boom of 1876," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XXXII (June, 1945), 29-30.

¹³¹ John Yaryan to Pratt, July 6, 1876; W. T. Wilson to Pratt, July 16, 1876; A. H. Holt to Pratt, January 24, 1877, Pratt MSS. Cincinnati *Commercial*, June 29, July 2, 1876.

¹³² President's secretary to Pratt, August 17, 1876, Pratt MSS.

Pratt's reputation, however, was well established. The *New York Times* stated: "The resignation of Mr. Pratt is universally regretted and his forced retirement at this time is charged upon the President by Republicans with expressions of condemnation. Pratt has displayed very great ability and untiring industry."¹³³ The *Indianapolis Journal* commented on his resignation in even stronger terms:

The removal or freezing out of such men as the Hon. D. D. Pratt . . . , not only a strictly honest man, but one of the best Commissioners of Internal Revenue, if not the best, since the organization of the Department—the removal of such a man, we say, is calculated to bring the Administration into contempt.¹³⁴

Former Secretary Bristow wrote to commend Pratt on his "courageous efforts" and "sterling virtues."¹³⁵ A few months later, Carl Schurz, in writing to President-elect Rutherford B. Hayes, recommended Pratt as a possible appointee to the post of secretary of the interior. He called him "a man of high character, good ability, and excellent principles."¹³⁶

Pratt's resignation was only one of many that came in that election year. In fact, there was a virtual collapse in nearly all departments of the Grant administration, and it brought discredit to Grant's party. Since Pratt's resignation came just as the Hayes-Tilden presidential canvass was building momentum, it is not surprising that it had some political repercussions in Indiana. Word reached Pratt in Washington from John Coburn and others that, under the guise of a home-coming reception, the Democrats intended to make political capital out of his resignation.¹³⁷ Pratt hurriedly wrote to his friends to try to avert such an embarrassment, since he had no wish to give any aid or comfort to the opposing party. His friends believed that such a reception could not be avoided, but it was held under the auspices of the local Hayes and Wheeler Club.¹³⁸ Party regularity and harmony again triumphed.

¹³³ Quoted in *Logansport Daily Journal*, July 17, 1876.

¹³⁴ *Indianapolis Journal*, July 14, 1876.

¹³⁵ Benjamin Bristow to Pratt, July 16, 1876, Pratt MSS.

¹³⁶ Carl Schurz to Hayes, January 30, 1877, in Frederic Bancroft (ed.), *Speeches, Correspondence and Political Papers of Carl Schurz* (6 vols., New York, 1913), III, 380.

¹³⁷ John Coburn to Pratt, July 19, 1876; T. H. Bringham to Pratt, July 27, 1876, Pratt MSS.

¹³⁸ J. T. Bryer to Pratt, July 24, 1876, Pratt MSS.

An unforeseen change in the state Republican ticket in 1876 further embarrassed Pratt. Even before his resignation there had been considerable sentiment for nominating him for governor on the Republican ticket in 1876, and it was necessary for him to publish a written statement denying that he was a candidate. He stated that he could not be more "usefully employed" as governor than as commissioner; furthermore, the condition of his health did not permit an intensive canvass.¹³⁹ When in the summer of 1876 Godlove S. Orth, who headed the state ticket, withdrew from the race, there was a revival of sentiment to place Pratt in that vacancy. One admirer wrote that "you and Bristow are synonymous for reform and honesty."¹⁴⁰ But Pratt lent no encouragement to these proposals, and it is doubtful if he had much organization support. The state committee, whose choice it was, passed him over in favor of Benjamin Harrison.¹⁴¹

Pratt was still expected, however, to take the stump for the ticket. Campaigners were needed. The lengthy session of Congress had prevented its members from coming home as early as was required for the canvass. The state chairman urged Pratt to speak in order to help take care of numerous requests, as well as to demonstrate that no appearance of dissension within the party might be inferred from his absence.¹⁴² Although weary and disheartened, Pratt entered the lists once more to campaign for Hayes and Wheeler. His engagements that year were nearly as numerous as in 1872.¹⁴³ After the campaign was over, but while the presidential winner was still in doubt, Pratt was quoted in the Washington,

¹³⁹ *Cincinnati Gazette*, December 17, 24, 1875; *Hamilton [College] Literary Monthly*, February, 1876, 229. Pratt's letter in which he declined to be a candidate was written to the editor of the Greencastle, Indiana, *Banner*.

¹⁴⁰ G. I. Reed to Pratt, July 31, 1876; Homer L. Yaryan to Pratt, August 3, 1876; T. S. Rollins to Pratt, August 3, 1876; telegram from John F. Kibby to Pratt, August 3, 1876; George H. Dunn to Pratt, August 4, 1876; D. S. Chapman to Pratt, August 4, 1876, Pratt MSS.

¹⁴¹ *Cincinnati Commercial*, August 7, 1876. For a detailed account of Orth's resignation and the choice of Harrison, see Harry J. Sievers, *Benjamin Harrison* (2 vols., New York, 1952-), II, 93-107.

¹⁴² George W. Friedley to Pratt, August 9, 1876, Pratt MSS.

¹⁴³ George W. Friedley to Pratt, September 21, 25, 1876, Pratt MSS; *Indianapolis Journal*, September 9, 1876.

D.C., *Herald* as having said that Tilden had legally won the presidential election.¹⁴⁴ He indignantly wrote to his friends in Washington that a denial be published.¹⁴⁵ Bristow wrote to him that he hoped Hayes would recall Pratt to the public service; and perhaps Bristow also expressed his own disappointment by stating that President-elect Hayes had not treated well those who had been so shabbily treated by Grant.¹⁴⁶

By the spring of 1877, Pratt was a very sick man. He was able to write two articles for the Logansport *Weekly Star* and was dictating another when he died. His death, which occurred on June 17, 1877, was caused by heart disease.¹⁴⁷ His senatorial colleague, Morton, died on November 1, 1877—less than six months later.¹⁴⁸

It is a commentary on the political life of the time as well as on Pratt that honesty was always mentioned in connection with Pratt's name and record. His nephew, Daniel P. Baldwin, claimed that Pratt never accepted a railroad pass during his term in the Senate.¹⁴⁹ Turpie commented that he "was a man of uncommon honesty, of the purest probity in all his dealings."¹⁵⁰ While he was commissioner of internal revenue a Western Associated Press telegram sent out the story that Pratt had received a handsome, gold-headed cane from his subordinates in the revenue service. He immediately returned it with thanks and with a reference to "the provision of the law which attaches a penalty of dismissal from office to all engaged in the interchange of courtesies of this character."¹⁵¹ One of the most frequent stories coupled with his name was the statement that Wendell Phillips had remarked that "Pratt was the most absolutely honest man" he ever knew. It is a story that is repeated in many of the

¹⁴⁴ S. B. Benson to Pratt, January 14, 1877; J. C. Smith to Pratt, January 15, 1877, Pratt MSS.

¹⁴⁵ J. C. Smith to Pratt, January 22, 1877, Pratt MSS.

¹⁴⁶ Benjamin Bristow to Pratt, January 8, 1877, Pratt MSS.

¹⁴⁷ Cincinnati *Commercial*, June 18, 1877.

¹⁴⁸ Foulke, *Life of Oliver P. Morton*, II, 501.

¹⁴⁹ [Baldwin], "Daniel D. Pratt," *History of the Republican Party in Indiana*, ed. Seeds, 287.

¹⁵⁰ Turpie, *Sketches of My Own Times*, 216.

¹⁵¹ Cincinnati *Commercial*, February 12, 1876.

histories that include a sketch of him.¹⁵² Although the story may be apocryphal, it is one indication of his fine reputation.

Pratt's political life is an illustration of the great importance placed on party regularity by many politicians of that day. At times, Pratt must have been perplexed and disillusioned. He spoke out against corruption in the civil service, and when he later took his place in the civil service, there is ample testimony that he performed his duties in a superior way. He was sound, trustworthy, and honest. His resignation from the Senate and his reconsideration of it, however, was remembered. In permitting it to be known that he had no taste for political life and that he entered politics too late in life to be useful to any degree, he planted the seed of suspicion that he was timid and unprepared and could not be relied upon in the bitter partisan contests waged in those days.¹⁵³ In his own way, he tried to seek reform of his party from within, but he never could bring himself to the position of bolting his party. As commissioner he received very shabby treatment from President Grant. He drew up his will a few months before he resigned as commissioner. Its first provision ordered his executor to place on his gravestone the inscription, "He tried to do his duty."¹⁵⁴ He made no public statement critical of the President, however. As has been seen, after Pratt's resignation he was willing to work for the success of his party's ticket in the campaign of 1876, even though he was in very poor health. The tie of party loyalty was a binding one with him, as it was with a host of others of that generation.

Pratt's early public reputation rested chiefly on his attainment in the legal profession. After studying law in Indianapolis with Calvin Fletcher, he moved to Logansport

¹⁵² Thomas Helm (ed.), *History of Cass County, Indiana* (2 vols., 1886), I, 552; George I. Reed (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Biography of Indiana* (2 vols., Chicago, Ill., 1895-1899), II, 233; *A Biographical History of Eminent and Self-made Men of the State of Indiana* (2 vols., Cincinnati, Ohio, 1880), II, 34; [Baldwin], "Daniel D. Pratt," *History of the Republican Party in Indiana*, ed. Seeds, 287.

¹⁵³ Pratt to John H. B. Nowland, October 19, 1869, in John H. B. Nowland, *Early Reminiscences of Indianapolis with Short Biographical Sketches of its Early Citizens* (Indianapolis, Ind., 1870), 256; *Cincinnati Commercial*, December 17, 1873, June 19, 1877.

¹⁵⁴ Cass County, Ind., Office of the County Clerk, Logansport, Record of Wills, Book 3, June, 1877—September, 1888.

in 1836 to build his practice. His meticulous preparation for the suits in which he was employed as counsel, his skill in appealing to a jury, and the close attention he gave to the interests of his clients enabled him to become a leader of the bar in northern Indiana by the 1850's. Law was his primary interest, for, on several occasions when opportunity in politics presented itself, he did not accept them because his practice would suffer. He withdrew his name when he was suggested as candidate for governor in 1856 because of this conflict of interests; his first decision to resign from the senatorship in 1869 was based partly on the need for returning to his practice. After reconsideration of his resignation, his energies as a senator were chiefly directed toward committee work on claims and pensions—two fields in which his legal experience especially prepared him and for which his services were highly valued.

In politics desire for office never seemed to be a driving force with Pratt. He was certainly not a professional political operator. Moreover, he lacked aggressiveness and boldness. He served in the house of representatives of the Indiana General Assembly in 1850-1851 and in 1853. This gave him his only experience in a legislative body before his senatorial term. On two occasions he was a candidate for presidential elector—as a Whig in the campaign of 1848 and as a Republican in the campaign of 1856. These positions on the ticket required work on the hustings, but few other duties. They were positions of honor. In two campaigns he was a candidate for Congress—in 1847, as a Whig, in which he lost to his Democratic opponent, Charles W. Cathcart, and as a Republican in 1868, in which he defeated Nathan Ross. But he was elected to the Senate in 1869 before he had an opportunity to serve in the lower house. He was the Republican choice for United States senator in 1863 and in 1869, which attests his standing and influence in the state. He did not, however, climb the rungs of the political ladder to reach the Senate. His relatively short service as commissioner of internal revenue after his senatorial term attested his administrative abilities. He brought to that position qualities sorely needed at that time—legal training and integrity. But he seems to have accepted this appointment more from a sense of party duty and loyalty than from eagerness for office.

There was a broad humanitarianism in his nature. The breakup of the Whig party and his antislavery views took him into the Republican party, and later he earnestly supported the Fourteenth and Fifteenth amendments and the Supplementary Civil Rights Act. His advocacy of temperance throughout his life, his work to aid the distressed in Ireland in 1846-1847, and the establishment of a trust fund in Logansport for the worthy poor—all are evidence of genuine interest in his fellow men. It is the character of Pratt that calls forth admiration—his high level of personal and professional honesty and integrity, his sincere, high-minded seriousness of purpose, and his devotion to duty.