Rendezvous with Republicanism:
John Pope vs. Henry Clay in 1816

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About six miles west of Lexington, Kentucky, twenty-one men gathered inside John Higbee's mill on July 20, 1816. The purpose of the meeting was to consider the political canvass about to take place in Kentucky's Second Congressional District—Fayette, Jessamine, and Woodford counties. This meeting had received advanced publicity, and outside the mill there stirred a crowd of several hundred angry citizens. Inside the mill events proceeded without major drama or debate; the men resolved that "the committee are deeply impressed with the importance of selecting a suitable candidate to be recommended to the people for general support in opposition to Mr. Clay." The group, although not unanimously, then selected John Pope as the man to challenge Henry Clay for his seat in the United States House of Representatives.

When the men inside Higbee's mill chose Pope to challenge Clay, they unwittingly set the stage for a political dialectic more comprehensive than a contested seat in the House of Representatives would indicate. The summer campaign presented a microcosm of a larger political struggle that characterized other state and national campaigns during 1816; Pope's battle with Clay became a battle between the dying power of the Federalist party and the growing monopoly of the Republican party and showed that political philosophies could be stronger than personalities. Either by choice or association the two men served as spokesmen for separate ideologies, one of which their constituents regarded with hostility and intolerance.

"Who is John Pope?" demanded a belligerent broadside that appeared in Lexington ten days following the Higbee Convention. The question was rhetorical, for Kentucky voters

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1 Lexington Reporter, July 24, 1816.
3 Ibid.
4 Broadside, July 30, 1816, John McCalla Papers, University of West Virginia Library, Morgantown.
knew well this veteran of western politics who had been a state legislator and for six years Kentucky's senior senator in Washington.5 They also knew that the political broadside was not just making biographical inquiries but was instead probing Pope's political background for campaign issues.

Controversies surrounded the name of Pope, making him a well-known, if not qualified, opponent of Clay. The semi-secret nominating procedures at Higbee's offered witness to the unorthodox methods of the first and only man ever seriously to campaign against Clay in a congressional race.6 The campaign itself would emphasize the unorthodox qualities of Pope's background, and Clay's supporters would use Pope's political irregularities as major issues. Clay soon found it to his advantage to exploit the incongruities in Pope's history rather than to wage a defensive battle.

Pope's early career bore a remarkable similarity to that of Clay. Both were natives of Virginia and had migrated to Kentucky as youths; both had studied law and practiced their profession in a new and relatively untamed state; both had early entered state politics.7 Pope also shared with Clay the gift of eloquence and persuasiveness. Clay's effective use of legal and political oratory prompted Justice Joseph Story to write, "Clay has argued before us with a good deal of ability; and if he were not a candidate for higher office, I should think he might attain eminence at this Bar."8 Pope lacked the physical presence of Clay due to a childhood accident that had necessitated the amputation of one arm just above the elbow. But this handicap did not deter him from forceful argumentation. The sight of him pacing across a speaker's platform with his arm stump flailing had become a familiar one. According to one observer, "when in debate and fully roused, he was unapproachable."9

Pope was also unapproachable in his opinion of his own abilities. Following his short career in the Kentucky legis-

5 Orval W. Baylor, "The Life and Times of John Pope, 1776-1845," The Filson Club History Quarterly, XV (April, 1941), 60-61. See also The Biographical Encyclopedia of Kentucky (Cincinnati, 1878), 207.
6 Clement Eaton, Henry Clay and the Art of American Politics (Boston, 1907), 78-79.
8 Quoted in Van Deusen, Life of Henry Clay, 29.
9 Lucius P. Little, Ben Hardin: His Times and Contemporaries (Louisville, 1887), 250.
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ture, that body elected him to the United States Senate in 1806. A few months after he took office in Washington, he wrote to a friend:

I have embarked in political life and mean to make a business of it. I occupy much higher ground here both on the scale of talents and republicanism than either you or myself expected; except Breckinridge no man from the West ever had more popularity in Congress.  

Whether due to his popularity or his ability as a legislator, Pope’s colleagues elevated him to the position of president pro tempore in 1811, an honor rare for first-term senators.  

Clay first entered national politics when his friends in the Kentucky legislature elected him in 1806 to fill a senator’s unexpired term. He repeated this brief assignment from 1810-1811 when another Kentucky senator’s chair fell vacant. When the Twelfth Congress convened in November, 1811, Clay entered a new career in the House of Representatives; and Pope found his former senatorial colleague now firmly ensconced as speaker, a position seldom given to first-term representatives. Although beginning his political career in the Senate, Clay achieved his first fame in the House.

Pope’s and Clay’s rapid rise to political prominence resulted partly from their obvious ability and ambition and partly from the growing influence of Kentucky and other western states in national affairs. Although their political paths often crossed while they served together in Congress, few records exist concerning their personal contacts or the differences of opinion that must have occurred regarding their divergent votes. Not until the summer of 1816 did their policy clashes become fully apparent to Kentucky voters. When Pope emerged from Higbee’s Convention to challenge Clay, the revelation of past differences and the recording of

10 John Pope to Ninian Edwards, January 9, 1808, in E. B. Washburn (ed.), The Edwards Papers; Being a Portion of the Collection of the Letters, Papers, and Manuscripts of Ninian Edwards (Chicago Historical Society Collection, Vol. III; Chicago, 1884), 34. Edwards had been a close associate of Pope before becoming governor of Illinois Territory and later senator from Illinois. The Breckinridge to whom Pope refers was John Breckinridge, a perennial Kentucky politician and President Jefferson’s attorney general.

11 Ibid., 35, and Orval Baylor, John Pope, Kentuckian (Cynthiana, Ky., 1943), 74.

12 Bernard Mayo, Henry Clay, Spokesman of the New West (Boston, 1937), 244, 343.

13 Van Deusen, Life of Henry Clay, 77.
new ones became a part of written history. And these differences, no matter how unrelated, became the materiel in the battle between Federalism and Republicanism.

Clay had unknowingly set the stage for his campaign on March 7, 1816, when he spoke in favor of a proposed bill to raise congressional salaries. Clay pointed out that even though his salary as speaker of the House was twice that of his colleagues, he still could "not make ends meet." Concluding his speech advocating this Compensation Act, he vowed to cast his "most decided vote for the bill." In doing so, he helped to pass the bill and at the same time created a storm of public protest.

Congressmen who had only wanted to earn more than six dollars per day found themselves receiving abuse from their constituents and from organized protest movements. The editor of the *Argus of Western America* in Frankfort wrote, "In Kentucky, particularly, it has excited much controversy, and produced an opposition to some men whose popularity might have been supposed invulnerable." Amos Kendall, who edited the Georgetown *Patriot* in the county bordering Clay's Fayette County, saw the issue even more sharply. He noted in his private journal, "It seems a great ferment is raised in Fayette . . . with regard to the Compensation Bill, and Mr. Clay is likely to have a competitor."

Attempting to justify his vote for the bill, Clay explained to his constituents later that summer the necessity for the salary raise. He pointed out that living expenses in Washington in 1816 were double those in New York City at the time the original pay scale had been determined in the late eighteenth century. The Compensation Bill had raised the salary of congressmen to meet the rising cost of living, and the new salaries of $1,500 per session would be paid in a lump sum rather than allotted at the old six dollars per day. This lump sum, Clay said, only made the amount seem excessive; if broken down into daily amounts, it would equal only about ten dollars or so per day. He continued his analysis.

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14 *Annals of Congress*, 14 Cong., 1 Sess., 1174-75.
15 Frankfort *Argus of Western America*, June 28, 1816.
by commenting on the major point of public disapproval—that Congress had made the pay raise retroactive to the previous year, thus granting each congressman an additional $1,500 for the 1815 session. Clay admitted that this extension had met with disfavor in all parts of the country. He confessed that “we have sinned, we have been guilty of indelicacy in making the law retrospective. . . .”

Many Kentuckians charged Clay with more than indelicacy. The *Western Monitor*, a Lexington newspaper, demanded that citizens take a closer look at these representatives who were “mercenary and encroaching; selfish and insensible to shame.” Tabulating that the speaker’s salary would double the regular congressman’s pay and would be supplemented with an additional double allotment from the previous session, readers arrived at a total of $6,000 that Clay would take from the public treasury in 1816. The *Western Monitor* molded these figures into an indictment that ended, “Is this not the potter shaping the clay to his own will and purpose?”

From time to time this paper also reprinted stanzas of a current ditty that asked:

O! Wont you hear
What roaring cheer
Was spent by Johnny Congress O!
And how so gay
They doubled their pay
And doubled the people’s taxes O!

. . .

There was Clay in the Chair
With his flax-coloured hair,
A signing tax bills cheerily O!
And smiled as the rabble
So lowly did gabble

. . .

And the Salary bill was carried O!

An anti-Clay attack from the *Western Monitor* would not have surprised many Kentuckians in 1816, for this paper had gained a reputation for opposing President Madison’s Republican administration. Clay need not have worried about

18 Ibid.
19 *Lexington Western Monitor*, June 7, 1816.
20 Ibid.
21 Ibid., August 23, 1816.
its criticism; his concern should have been, and doubtless was, directed to the proceedings at Higbee's mill on July 20. This meeting of twenty-one men recalled Pope from political retirement, sent him into serious battle against Clay, and thus changed the political complexion of the campaign. Since his Senate term had expired in 1813, Pope had resumed his Lexington law practice and had taught law at Transylvania University. Now Higbee's Convention had chosen to reactivate his skills of persuasion to further its own goals.

The announced motives of Higbee's Convention seemed clear and definite. The resolutions which appeared with Pope's nomination indicated that the attending delegates, being discontent with the Compensation Act, intended to support a candidate who would work for its repeal. They advocated the principle of rotation in office because "long continuance in public life is apt to corrupt the purest patriots." These resolutions gave no clue, however, as to the manner in which the convention had come about or who had been responsible for it.

One of the first public notices concerning the convention appeared in the anti-Clay Western Monitor on June 21 as a short news item. This story reported a meeting conducted earlier in the spring by two Kentucky militia units under Captains Lewis Faulkner and William Sullivan. From this meeting had come a proposal that each military district in Fayette, Woodford, and Jessamine counties select two delegates to attend a convention at Higbee's mill. These delegates would nominate a candidate to oppose Clay and would pledge themselves to support this candidate in the August election.

Clay, if not the general public, knew of the convention long before the Western Monitor's announcement. He confided to a friend on March 25:

Nothing, certainly, can be more revolting and monstrous than that a militia company should pledge itself (as parts of Faulkner's and Sullivan's in this county have done) to support any candidate (whom they know not) that may be designated by a caucus at Higbies [sic] composed of persons of whom also they are ignorant. It is giving up that greatest right of freedom, the elective franchise.25

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24 Lexington Western Monitor, June 21, 1816.
Clay continued by suggesting that other militia companies should meet and pass resolutions condemning the Higbee plan.26

Whether Clay's suggestion served as the catalyst is unknown, but he soon received a reaction that more than fulfilled his wishes. Captain John McCalla of the Lexington Light Artillery Company published a resolution that his men had formulated. It declared their refusal to participate in any semi-secret and unofficial scheme that would bind a company to vote for a candidate chosen by a "military cabal."27

The Western Monitor fired an immediate volley of protest at Captain McCalla's Light Artillery Company and at the same time revealed its political allegiance. This anti-Clay paper rebutted the charges that Higbee's Convention was a military cabal; it was instead the outpouring of public sentiment that had "appointed delegates to unite, nominate a candidate, and recommend him to the people." Military districts, and not military companies, were asked to choose delegates because these districts comprised logical and geographical divisions of the three counties.28 An avid Clay newspaper, the Lexington Reporter, joined the fray by asking the Western Monitor, "do the editors ... expect to palm on the community the scheme of assembling at Higbee's as a scheme of THE PEOPLE? ... It seems to be a monstrous and deformed brat ... cast into society, without parentage."29 Whatever the true origin of the convention, it prompted a month long debate among the district's three major newspapers. While the pro-Pope Western Monitor paraded weekly lists of citizens' delegates to the convention, the pro-Clay Reporter and Kentucky Gazette continued to picture the meeting as a farce directed by Pope and a destruction of voting freedom.30

Proving neither that the Higbee meeting was to be an open convention nor a closed cabal, the newspaper debate did succeed in advertising the underlying purpose of the delegates and in forcing the results to be made public one week

26 Ibid., 182.
27 Lexington Kentucky Gazette, July 1, 1816.
28 Lexington Western Monitor, July 5, 1816.
29 Lexington Reporter, July 10, 1816.
30 Lexington Western Monitor, June 28, July 5, 1816; Lexington Reporter, July 17, 1816.
before they were a reality. To squelch the growing wave of rumors that his nomination was a foregone conclusion, Pope formally disavowed any design on his part to dominate or control the meeting. He said that he considered Higbee’s a free forum of the people; and if given an obvious mandate there, he would postpone his political retirement and campaign against the Compensation Act.31

Since Pope’s nomination seemed assured, judging by the number of his active supporters who were delegates, the conclave at Higbee’s only served to formalize the act. One day before the meeting, the Western Monitor set the tone for the anti-Clay resolutions that accompanied Pope’s nomination. It asserted, “we do not wish to banish Mr. Clay forever from our public counsels, but we do think it important that he should feel the indignation of an offended people.”32

Considering the hundreds of angry citizens who gathered outside Higbee’s to protest the convention, Pope probably felt as much public indignation as the Western Monitor had wished upon Clay. The following day the Kentucky Gazette chided the “formidable phalanx” of twenty-one delegates who could muster only seventy-five per cent of their number (15 of 21) to sanction Pope’s candidacy. It also pointed out that of the fifty militia districts in the three counties only eleven had sent delegates to the meeting.33 Was this a public mandate, Amos Kendall asked in his Georgetown Patriot? Were these fifteen men supposed to be the voice of public demand that would rouse Pope from his political retirement?34

Although the publicity from the poorly managed convention had not been as favorable as he had hoped, Pope did capitalize on the money-conscious sentiment of his Kentucky neighbors. Using the Higbee resolutions, which condemned the Compensation Act, he sought to wage a battle of offence centering on this one issue; temporarily he succeeded because opposition to the congressional pay raise continued to manifest itself in an anti-Clay reaction. One political broadside, appearing after the convention, railed against “NOBILITY, NOBILITY, NOBILITY” in huge headlines and continued:

31 Lexington Kentucky Gazette, July 15, 1816.
32 Lexington Western Monitor, July 19, 1816.
33 Lexington Kentucky Gazette, July 22, 1816.
34 Georgetown Patriot, July 27, 1816.
Now my noble Lord Clay, if you get the compensation doubled once more . . . you may vie with the noble lords on the other side of the great water, from whom you have learnt your notions of high salaries and splendid living.35

This broadside envisioned Clay raiding the public treasury even further so that he could ride in a fashionable carriage drawn by his two horses, the Kentucky Gazette and the Reporter.36

Pope rode the crest of this reaction, for it appeared to be gaining votes for his candidacy. Perhaps the best known episode from the entire campaign concerned one of Clay's perennial boosters who had defected to Pope's camp. Clay encountered this former ally in Lexington and questioned him about his intention to vote for Pope. The Irish friend answered, paying tribute to Pope's physical handicap, "Och, Misther Clay, I have concluded to vote for the man who has but one arm to thrust into the sthreasury."37

Pope's real handicap in the summer of 1816 turned out to be his lack of more than one durable issue. When Clay grudgingly agreed to work for the repeal of the Compensation Act if reelected, he left Pope without a major campaign tactic.38 Pope attempted to use the national bank issue as a second line of attack, but this approach opened his own legislative record for Clay's exploitation.

Clay's relationship to the national bank had been a political issue for some years and would continue to be so for many more. The irony of the bank issue in this campaign sprang from the fact that Clay's vote for the second Bank of the United States in 1816 coincided with the congressional majority and received public approval. Even the anti-administration Western Monitor applauded the resurrection of the bank although it condemned Clay for his political inconsistency. While the paper approved of the congressman's action, it explained that his vote directly contradicted the one he cast in 1811 against rechartering the first Bank of the United States.39

35 Broadside, circa July 30, 1816, McCalla Papers.
36 Ibid.
37 George W. Ranck, History of Lexington, Kentucky (Cincinnati, 1872), 165.
38 Congress did repeal the act during the next session but in 1818 raised the pay scale to eight dollars per day rather than the former six dollars per day. Van Deusen, Life of Henry Clay, 114.
39 Lexington Western Monitor, April 26, 1816.
Antibank sentiment had run high in Kentucky in 1811, as it had in many other states. The legislatures of Virginia, Maryland, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania all had passed resolutions instructing their congressmen to oppose rechartering the national bank. During congressional debates on the subject, Kentucky’s general assembly sent the following resolution to all of her legislators: “Resolved . . . that our Senators and representatives in Congress be requested to oppose a renewal of the character of the Bank of the United States.”

Pope had differed with Clay in 1811 and had voted for rechartering the ill-fated bank, defying Kentucky’s instructions. For this unpopular vote he had undergone much criticism. The Western Monitor now pointed out that:

The people of Kentucky cannot so soon have forgotten the violent clamor that was raised against it five years ago—how Mr. Pope was denounced and insulted for approving the very thing which Mr. Clay now approves without receiving the slightest censure. . . .

The campaign issue involved not just the bank itself but Clay’s ability to vote on both sides of the same question. The editors of the Western Monitor wanted to know “If Mr. Pope was in the wrong then, is Mr. Clay in the right now?”

Clay obviously felt that he was right to reverse his vote. In a Lexington speech explaining his legislative acrobatics he defended both votes as being the correct thing to do at the time each was cast. Three factors had determined his negative vote in 1811: the first Bank of the United States was abusing its powers and serving the private needs of the Federalist party; state banks were capable of transacting national finances and revenue collection—hence the national bank was unnecessary and therefore unconstitutional; and Kentucky’s legislature had instructed him to oppose the bank.

Other equally clear factors had dictated his affirmative vote in 1816. He pointed out that approximately three hundred private banks, under no national or state control, were rendering the national currency worthless. The fluctuat-

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40 Lexington Reporter, March 3, 1811.
41 Lexington Western Monitor, April 26, 1816.
42 Ibid., March 29, 1816.
43 Lexington Kentucky Gazette, June 10, 1816.
ing value of money from one state to the next and the suspension of specie payments on bank notes made the problem apparent. In light of these circumstances, partly caused by the War of 1812, Clay felt that creation of the second Bank of the United States was proper and “not only necessary, but indispensably necessary.”

The Reporter repeated his logic and agreed that the changing economic situation had made the vote reversal not only acceptable but commendable.

Unsatisfied with Clay’s explanation of this policy change, the Western Monitor reprinted in full his 1811 congressional speech which attacked the bank. Within the text of the speech the editors italicized and set in bold type each argument that Clay had reversed in his 1816 speech supporting the bank. The sections which discussed the unconstitutionality of the early bank received particular attention. The editors noted that Clay could change at the slightest whim; but the Constitution remained constant, thus implying that Clay had taken great liberties with the Constitution to suit his own purposes. Clay’s sympathetic biographer, Glyndon G. Van Deusen, maintains that this charge of constitutional juggling contained much validity. He states that Clay based his 1811 vote on an extremely strict interpretation of the Constitution and that this action returned to haunt him like Banquo’s ghost.

During the summer campaign Clay found that it better suited his purposes to de-emphasize the constitutional subtleties of the bank issue and to switch the bulk of public attention from his bank votes to that of Pope in 1811. Clay told a Lexington audience at the start of the campaign that the Kentucky legislature had instructed him to oppose the bank;

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44 Ibid. This Lexington speech, delivered on June 3, 1816, is generally accepted to be the same one Clay gave in Congress supporting the passage of the bank bill in March of the same year. However, the speech was not inserted in the Annals of Congress until a later date.

45 Lexington Reporter, June 19, 1816. Economic historians agree with Clay’s appraisal of the 1816 banking crisis. Davis R. Dewey relates that virtually worthless state bank notes increased from $45,000,000 in 1812 to $100,000,000 in 1817, and the national government lost over $5,000,000 by accepting state payments in poor notes. Another $7,000,000 drained from the national treasury when foreign investors withdrew their funds after the dissolution of the first Bank of the United States. Financial History of the United States (4th. ed., New York, 1912), 144-45.

46 Lexington Western Monitor, April 26, 1816.

47 Van Deusen, Life of Henry Clay, 68.
although he had done so, Pope had voted contrary to instruc-
tion, the only Kentuckian to do so. Clay added, “I hold in-
struction binding when given to a Senator by the legislature
of the State . . .”48 By asking Kentucky’s voters to recall
this episode and to consider its anti-Republican nature, Clay
reopened one of the most controversial incidents in Pope’s
career. He thus hoped to reactivate the opposition that had
been directed against Pope in 1811.

Kentuckians that year had not been very receptive to
hearing Pope’s reasons for voting for the rechartering of the
bank. Other than printing his congressional speech in the
Frankfort Palladium, Pope had little chance to reveal his
motives for defending the bank. An analysis of Pope’s 1811
bank speech reveals a liberal constitutional interpretation, a
defense of the bank as a stable institution, and a prediction
that financial chaos would result if banking were turned over
to the states. He asserted that he had cast his vote in good
conscience to protect the agrarian economy of Kentucky.49

More interested in Pope’s good conduct than his good
conscience, Kentuckians demanded to know why he had
violated instruction rather than why he had supported the
bank. In an open letter published in the Palladium Pope ex-
plained his case. He related that not until one and one half
hours before he delivered his speech in Congress did the
Kentucky instructions arrive. By then he had already ar-
ranged support for the bank and could not readily reverse
his stand.50 With this moderate and almost conciliatory ex-
planation, Pope probably could have avoided the wrath of his
constituents. He chose, however, to assert his independence
and ended his open letter with the statement that “I acted
under a conviction that the Legislature had no constitutional
power to direct my conduct.”51

Pope’s vote and assertion of independence won for him
a barrage of criticism. The Kentucky Gazette said that he
had “wantonly violated” his state and “deceived the people.”52

48 Hopkins, Papers of Henry Clay, II, 216.
in the Frankfort Palladium, April 6, 1811. Financial historian Bray
Hammond implies that Pope probably did cast a conscious vote to
protect the economy of Kentucky because Pope felt that interior and
poor states would be dominated by eastern bankers should the national
bank be discontinued. Bray Hammond, Banks and Politics in America
50 Frankfort Palladium, June 22, 1811.
51 Ibid.
52 Lexington Kentucky Gazette, March 28, 1811.
The *Reporter* carried a long series of abusive letters and climaxed them with a demand for Pope's resignation from the Senate.\(^6^3\) From the *Delaware Watchman* came an often reprinted editorial that stated: "Whether Mr. Pope fancies himself dead or not, we do not know. It is certain, however, that he is politically damned and the sooner he is scared off to the woods the better. The Kentuckians will take care the maniac is not re-elected when his constitutional term expires."\(^6^4\)

Pope's senatorial term following the banking vote fiasco contained two more years in which he underwent an almost identical crisis. The Twelfth Congress found him casting an unpopular vote against the War of 1812. By doing this he defied his state's instructions again, endured an increased barrage of criticism, and in the end, supplied another issue which Clay used effectively in 1816.

War spirit in Kentucky in 1812 seems to have been an aggressive combination of swaggering arrogance and euphoric optimism. Clay reflected this militant spirit during one of his brief terms in the Senate. There, as early as 1810, he informed Congress that although war need not be inevitable with Britain at the moment, "The conquest of Canada is in your power. I trust I shall not be deemed presumptuous when I state . . . that the militia of Kentucky are alone competent to place Montreal and Upper Canada at your feet."\(^6^5\)

Echoes of such chauvinism reverberated in the halls of Kentucky's general assembly. Six months before the Senate debates on war, the Kentucky legislators passed a resolution favoring a new conflict with England. This declaration promised that "the state of Kentucky, to the last mite of her strength and resources, will contribute them to maintain the contest and support the right of their country . . . and that the citizens of Kentucky are prepared to take the field when called on."\(^6^6\) Kentucky newspapers amplified these sounds of war sentiment and mobilized them into a demand for action. The *Kentucky Gazette* typified other press reactions when it demanded war and asked, "What will our Congress say?"\(^6^7\)

\(^6^3\) *Lexington Reporter*, March 9, 30, 1811.
\(^6^4\) Reprinted in *Lexington Kentucky Gazette*, March 26, 1811.
\(^6^6\) *Nile's Weekly Register*, I (January 11, 1812), 337-38.
\(^6^7\) *Lexington Kentucky Gazette*, May 26, 1812.
Thanks to a new flock of War Hawks, the lower house of Congress said "war." Historians disagree on the influence and membership of the War Hawk group, but most agree that Clay's role in the passage of the war bill was substantial. "More than any other individual," Clement Eaton says, "Harry of the West was responsible" for getting the measure accepted.  

Despite a substantial 79 to 49 vote for war in the House, the Senate showed reluctance to commence hostilities with Britain. Pope, in particular, played an instrumental role in the Senate's two weeks of delaying action. Pope and Thomas Worthington from Ohio attempted to halt the bill by proposing that France be included as a belligerent and that the Non-Importation Acts be repealed. Pope also tried to stall the declaration by amending its phraseology. Nevertheless, on June 18, the Senate passed the war declaration, 19 to 13, with Pope on the side of the minority.  

"The news of war was hailed as a second decree of Independence in Kentucky," and Pope's vote was hailed as a second declaration of war on his constituents. In 1811 he had defied instructions and favored an unpopular bank; in 1812 he had again defied instructions and opposed a popular war. For this, he received an immediate censure by his fellow citizens. In Lexington and Frankfort while cannons helped to celebrate the war declaration, Pope's effigy burned in Nicholasville and Mount Sterling. On two successive nights irate Lexingtonians paraded an effigy of Pope through the streets and then burned it in "unrestrained indignation."  

Clay, of course, made effective use of these two episodes in Pope's career. By reactivating these old issues he tapped a reservoir of existing opposition to Pope and channeled it into new hostilities. A great number of broadsides, newspaper letters, and editorials appeared during the summer campaign, all referring to Pope's vote for a "Federalist" bank and his

58 Eaton, Henry Clay, 25-26; Julius W. Pratt, Expansionists of 1812 (New York, 1925), 48-49.
60 Mayo, Henry Clay, Spokesman of the West, 514.
61 U. S., Journal of the Senate, 12 Cong., 1 Sess., V, 156.
62 Ibid., 162.
63 Nile's Weekly Register, II (July 18, 1812), 335.
64 Lexington Reporter, July 1, 1812; Frankfort Palladium, July 15, 1812.
refusal to accept legislative instruction. One such broadside reexamined how Pope had “disregarded and treated with contempt the most solemn voice of the people” on the bank and war measures. Pope’s entanglement with unpopular votes offered damaging evidence for his opponents to use against him, for these votes supplied a direct link with the harmful issue, Federalism. Kentucky had for some time been a strongly Republican state and tended to regard most national issues along party lines. Following the War of 1812, Kentucky party allegiances had been almost unanimously Republican. According to one political biographer the Federalist party had nearly gone out of existence, but its very name was still odious in the West. “Kentucky was overwhelmingly anti-Federalist in sentiment. . . .”

The usual Kentucky voter indiscriminately associated the first Bank of the United States and the war opponents with Federalism; and the abortive Hartford Convention served to heighten the anti-patriotic, eastern, aristocratic image that stereotyped most members of the Federalist party. This tendency to associate voting habits with party membership eventually led to the incorrect, but indelible, matching of Pope with Federalism. In 1816, Clay’s supporters charged him with the combined crimes of all Federalists as is illustrated by a campaign broadside which stated, “On the subject of war, Mr. Pope not only identified himself with the Federalists, but advanced and supported the same doctrines by which the choice spirits of the Hartford Convention deceived the people into an open revolt against the government.”

Another broadside continued this collective indictment of Pope by recalling that he had quoted Federalist Alexander Hamilton in defense of the first bank. According to the campaign account, Pope had “eulogized Alexander Hamilton to the skies. . . .” The Reporter argued that while Pope was “at heart and in truth a federalist, he labors to disguise his real character, and to assume the mask of republicanism.” Another pious broadside prayed that if Pope were a Re-

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65 Broadside, circa July 30, 1816, McCalla Papers.
66 Little, Ben Hardin, 247-48.
68 Broadside, circa July 30, 1816, McCalla Papers.
69 Lexington Reporter, July 24, 1816.
publican, "good Lord, deliver us from such Republicanism." 70

Pope found it nearly impossible to clear himself from these charges. Although he had worked closely with Madison's Republican administration on most measures, his legislative record on certain issues placed him so dangerously close to the outcast Federalists that the distance between membership and friendship became indistinguishable during the campaign. Perhaps the most damaging example of this power of association concerned Pope's relationship to the hated Alien and Sedition Acts. Pope had not been a member of the state legislature in 1798 when the Kentucky and Virginia Resolutions were passed to condemn these Federalist laws; he had taken a seat the following year when the Second Kentucky Resolutions passed, strengthening the original resolutions with a vague threat of nullification. 71 Pope voted against these second resolutions to his later regret; for as one historian observed, "If Kentucky ever had political gods, those same resolutions may be thus classed." 72

In a seemingly desperate attempt to divorce himself from the Alien and Sedition Acts, Pope issued a series of explanatory broadsides during the final week of the 1816 campaign. In them he declared, "I do most positively deny that I ever defended those laws." He stated that he had voted against the Second Kentucky Resolutions only because he did not approve of the nullification remedy that would have allowed Kentucky to invalidate any obnoxious federal measures. If the single nullification clause had been deleted, he would have been willing to support the rest of the resolution. 73 But, the lingering implication of his vote pictured him as an advocate of the Federalist-sponsored Alien and Sedition Acts.

Those voters who were old enough to remember Pope's stand in 1799 were old enough to remember Clay's public address in Kentucky one year earlier. A Lexington crowd had gathered to hear a discussion of the recently passed Alien and Sedition Acts when Clay jumped upon a wagon and held the audience spellbound for almost an hour, denouncing both the laws and the Federalists. 74 This broad denunciation

70 Broadside, circa July 30, 1816, McCalla Papers.
72 Little, Ben Hardin, 246.
73 John Pope, Broadsides, July 30, August 5, 1816, McCalla Papers.
74 Thomas D. Clark, A History of Kentucky (New York, 1937), 153-54.
vied for attention in 1816 with Pope's subtle distinctions on constitutional remedies.

Clay's inconsistencies also vied for voter's attention in the final days of campaigning. Among the flurry of last minute polemics, one Pope supporter published a broadside that attempted to place Clay's career in proper perspective. It lamented that "Mr. Clay, it seems may do anything with impunity—He is a Republican. He may denounce a Bank today, and vote for it tomorrow—He may put his hand into your public Treasury and carry off your money contrary to the Constitution. Still he is Republican."

Both candidates, vowing that they were Republicans, agreed to meet for a public debate on July 31 outside Higbee's mill. This mill, which seemed to be a favorite assembly area for the three-county district, played host to the only formal confrontation of the opponents. While the controversial Higbee's Convention had received full newspaper coverage and is mentioned in private correspondence, the supposedly climactic Higbee's debate received little or no coverage. A probable explanation for this lapse in contemporary accounts is that the newspapers appearing the following week carried the election returns; hence, the editors chose not to report the final stages of campaigning when the votes had already been tabulated.

Only one extensive account of the debate seems to have been recorded and that appeared fifteen years after the event. George D. Prentice, a twenty-eight year old journalist, came to Kentucky in 1830 commissioned by New England Whigs to write a biography of Clay for the 1832 presidential campaign. Prentice held several conversations with Clay, interviewed Clay's friends and acquaintances around Lexington, and briefly researched his subject before publishing the biography the following year. The book lionized Clay and maintained a dramatic tone that approached almost total romanticism. Prentice reconstructed the Higbee debate as a battle of giants limited to thirty minutes of verbal jousting.

15 Broadside, August 1, 1816, McCalla Papers.
16 Clark, History of Kentucky, 340.
17 George D. Prentice to Peter B. Porter, August 6, 1830, Henry Clay Papers, Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington. Some historians suspect that several chapters of the biography were written by John Greenleaf Whittier. Different editions of the book also exist which contain different versions of a few events. See Betty C. Congleton, "Prentice's Biography of Henry Clay and John Greenleaf Whittier," The Filson Club History Quarterly, XXXVII (October, 1963), 325-29.
Pope opened the exchange with a vigorous oration, then Clay assumed the offensive.

[Pope] fell gradually back till he was pressed against the wall, and there his conqueror dealt blow after blow upon his now naked and defenceless head, till the scene became intensely painful to the spectators. Mr. Clay, finding that it would be inglorious to prolong the strife, turned with dignity away from his fallen foe. . . .

The result of the campaign, if not the debate, did reveal a defeated Pope. Of the 4,330 votes cast, Clay accumulated 2,493, or a majority of 656. He carried both Fayette and Jessamine counties and lost Woodford by only 50 votes. The ever-impatient *Reporter* dismissed the results with a terse, "Neither the soil, atmosphere, nor climate of Kentucky is adaptable to the propagation and growth of Federalism." Pope concurred with this analysis; he wrote to his friend Ninian Edwards that the seemingly irrefutable and untrue charges of his sympathy to the Alien and Sedition Acts contributed most heavily to his defeat.

The 1816 elections carried a new wave of Republicans into the so-called Era of Good Feelings in which Federalism remained either dormant or dying. Rufus King, the unsuccessful presidential aspirant, was the last candidate to campaign for the White House on a Federalist ticket; and in several states, former Federalists conducted gubernatorial campaigns as new Republicans. Neither in state legislatures nor in the national Congress could Federalists command a position of power, their poor showing in the elections having further strengthened the general Republican majorities. The summer's dialectic between Pope and Clay can be seen as a symbol of this nationwide trend. Whether Pope did harbor Federalist tendencies made little difference. The fact that he had rubbed at least one elbow with Federalist issues removed him permanently from Washington politics.

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78 George D. Prentice, *Biography of Henry Clay* (New York, 1831), 126-27. The devoted *Western Monitor* had nothing to say about Pope's performance at the debate. Its only reaction was an indignant comment about Clay's rudeness at the meeting. Lexington *Western Monitor*, August 2, 1816.

79 Lexington *Kentucky Gazette*, August 12, 1816.

80 Lexington *Reporter*, August 14, 1816.
