

WISCONSIN EDITORS AND THE CIVIL WAR A STUDY OF
THE REACTION OF WISCONSIN EDITORS TO THE MAJOR
CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES OF THE CIVIL WAR

By

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	page
INTRODUCTION.	1
CHAPTER I. The Editors	5
II. Abolitionists and Copperheads	25
III. State Issues.	40
IV. Political Issues.	52
V. The Military Controversies.	83
VI. Foreign Policy.	108
CONCLUSION.	127
BIBLIOGRAPHY.	131

INTRODUCTION

The newspapers of Wisconsin during the Civil War were highly personal. The editors performed all the duties in connection with publishing and editing their paper, often without any other help. The practice of cutting items of news and editorials, known as the art of scissors and paste, from other newspapers was prevalent during this period. That is, an editor would print in his own newspaper articles from other newspapers. There was considerable opposition to this practice, especially from the larger newspapers which were usually the victims. The smaller newspapers often followed the lead of the larger newspapers, deriving the particular line that they would follow from the larger papers. The larger papers often set the stand that the party which they represented would take on a certain issue.

The stands taken by the editors on the issues which became controversial or were a major issue in the Wisconsin newspapers are to be discussed in this paper. The reactions of the Wisconsin Civil War editors generally followed the stand which their party took on the issue. The Republican editors supported the administration in most of its acts, while the Democratic editors frequently opposed the party

in power. There was a small group of the Democratic papers which supported the administration in order to further the war effort. The stands taken by the two opposing groups often brought them into direct conflict.

The Democrats accused the Republicans of advocating the abolition of slavery. Abolition at the beginning of the war was supported by only a small radical group of the Republican party. The Democrats felt that the abolishment of slavery was not in the federal realm, but was the prerogative of the states in which it existed to decide whether they could have slavery or not. As the war progressed the Republicans tended to lean towards abolition until the viewpoint of the radicals prevailed. When Lincoln issued his Emancipation Proclamation it indicated that the abolition point of view had prevailed.

The position of the Democratic papers on slavery left them open to attack from the Republican papers. The Republicans charged the Democrats with being in sympathy with the southern rebellion using the term copperhead to describe a Democrat who held such sentiments. The opposition of the Democrats to the administration also brought on charges by the Republicans that they were favoring the south.

The Republicans began to regard any opposition to the administration as opposition to the war. Even when the Democrats attacked the suspension of the writ of habeas corpus which they had good reason to do, the Republicans said that this attack was supporting the south.

The antagonism between the newspapers of the two parties was reflected in most issues but when referring to foreign affairs the two factions concurred and opposed any foreign intervention or mediation in American affairs. The Wisconsin editors felt that foreign powers had no right to aid the Southern Confederacy because the war was an internal affair and had nothing to do with foreign relations.

On all issues but foreign policy the two groups were in opposition. The papers tried to influence the people along their party lines, but the Democrats did not have much success after 1862. The Republican propaganda that the Democrats opposed the war and were in sympathy with the south was too much for the Democrats to combat.

The reaction of the editors to Military, Political, State, and Foreign issues are to be taken up in the subsequent chapters. The reaction at times was very violent with much animosity between editors representing the two parties. The study shows that some of the editors would never compromise on any issue, while others were willing to come to an agreement in order to support the war effort. In general the editors followed the stand which their party took on a particular issue.

The editors of Wisconsin in their individual capacities had much influence in their own immediate area, some even throughout the whole state. A few of the newspapers did have a small degree of influence in other states in the

middle-west. The rare exception would have influence even on the east coast.

CHAPTER I

The Editors

Over 100 newspapers were published in Wisconsin during the Civil War, of these 99 were available to the author. The others are either non-existence or at some inaccessible location. The 99 papers covered included seven dailies, one a semi-monthly and the rest were weeklies. Over 200 editors were connected with the Wisconsin papers during the war. Some editors did not remain with the Wisconsin press long but others edited one or more papers during all of the period. Information on many of these editors is inadequate or not available. The editors who appeared to have the most influence with the public, other editors or their political party were chosen by the author to represent all of the Wisconsin editors. Those chosen depict every variation of opinion apparent in the Wisconsin newspapers. The editors who had no particular influence or who followed the lead of more prominent men were eliminated because of their large number and to give an adequate discussion to the more influential men.

David Atwood was one of the most prominent Republican editors. Atwood came to Wisconsin from Illinois in 1847. He had apprenticed in a printing firm in Hamilton, New York. He worked so hard on this paper that he impaired his health. In 1845 he migrated to Illinois and spent two years farming. Atwood's first experience with the newspapers of Wisconsin was with the Wisconsin Express at Madison. Atwood soon was able to buy this paper and in 1850 he merged it with another Republican paper and it became the Wisconsin Palladium. The Palladium was suspended soon after the merger because of bitter disagreement amongst the staff.

In 1852 Atwood founded the Wisconsin State Journal as a Whig paper. In 1854 the State Journal took an active part in organizing the Republican party. The Journal has remained Republican in politics all through its long history. From 1854 for the next twenty-five years it invariably served as the official state paper of Wisconsin whenever the Republicans were in power.¹

Atwood devoted his newspapers at first to Whig principles and later when the Republican party was organized in 1854 to Republican principles. Atwood received many appointive positions under Governors of these two parties. In 1851, he was appointed quarter-master General of the state

¹Dictionary of American Biography, David Atwood, Vol. I, p. 419.

by the Whig Governor Farwell. In 1855 he was appointed chief clerk of the assembly and in 1857 a Major-General of the state militia by the Republican Governor Randall.² His efforts were rewarded by President Lincoln in 1862 when he received the appointment of United States Assessor of Internal Revenue for the Madison district, but President Johnson removed him from this position in 1866 after the State Journal came out strongly against Johnson.³

Horace Rublee was Atwood's partner in the Wisconsin State Journal from 1854 to 1869. Rublee was born in Vermont in 1829 and came to Wisconsin when only thirteen years old. He attended rural schools in Vermont and Wisconsin. When he was only eighteen years old Rublee taught school in Sheboygan County, Wisconsin.⁴ In 1850 he entered the University of Wisconsin but was compelled to withdraw, after attending only one year, because of ill health. In 1853 he became an editorial writer on the State Journal and in 1854 bought a half interest in the paper. Rublee stayed with the Journal for fifteen years after which he sold his interest to enter the diplomatic service of the United States.

²Proceedings of the Wisconsin Editorial Association, David Atwood by Horace, Rublee, Winter Session 1890, Edgerton, Wisconsin, 1890.

³Hernan J. Deutsch, David Atwood, Dictionary of American Biography, Vol. I, p. 419.

⁴Horace Rublee to Horace S. Tenney, October 24, 1847, in the Henry S. Baird papers, in possession of the Wisconsin Historical Society.

Rublee was a very able editor, his style was simple and clear and he had a knack for using adequate illustrations or quotations to make his point. The success of the State Journal was credited by the Milwaukee Sentinel to Rublee's ability as an editor.⁵

Rublee like Atwood was active in the Republican party serving as chairman of the Wisconsin Republican state committee for ten years from 1859 to 1869. In 1869 he was appointed Minister to Switzerland by President Grant and remained in this position for seven years. He also held many minor jobs within the party and in the state government when the party was in power. Rublee was well rewarded by the Republicans for his actions in the party.⁶

The Wisconsin State Journal, during the period when Atwood and Rublee were the editors, obtained a very wide circulation especially in Wisconsin, and according to the Milwaukee Sentinel held a political influence equal to that of any paper in the state.⁷

Another Madison editor who attained prominence amongst the Wisconsin editors of the Civil War was Stephen Decatur

⁵Milwaukee Daily Sentinel, October 19, 1896 in Wisconsin Necrology, in possession of Wisconsin Historical Society, Vol. 6, pp. 58-67.

⁶Willard G. Bleyer, Horace Rublee, Dictionary of American Biography, Vol. XVI, pp. 213-214.

⁷Milwaukee Daily Sentinel, October 19, 1896, in Wisconsin Necrology, Vol. 6, pp. 58-67.

Carpenter. Carpenter was born in Chatauqua County New York. He started his newspaper career in 1838 as an editorial writer for the Maysville, N. Y. Sentinel. Carpenter left New York in 1845 and after a brief stay in Pennsylvania he moved to Freeport Illinois where he published and edited the Freeport Prairie Democrat. David Atwood worked for Carpenter on the Democrat. Carpenter's wife died of cholera in Freeport and shortly after he moved to Madison. Carpenter arrived in Madison in 1850 and worked for Atwood on the Wisconsin Express. In 1851 Carpenter bought a share in the Wisconsin Argus with Horace Tenney. In 1852 Carpenter and Beriah Brown of the Madison Democrat combined their newspapers under the title of the Argus and Democrat. He withdrew from this paper in April, 1853 and in November 1854 he bought the Wisconsin Patriot with S. H. Carpenter as his partner. From then until George Hyer joined him in April 1859 Carpenter had a series of partners none of whom stayed with him very long. The Patriot was a strong Democratic paper under the editorship of Carpenter. Although he supported the war effort Carpenter felt that he had the right to criticize any action taken by the administration of which he did not approve and he exercised his prerogative quite often.

Carpenter was also known for his inventions. In 1855 he invented a rotary pump and sold the patent for \$35,000. The pump earned him the nickname of "Pump." The Republicans

used this nickname whenever they wanted to deride him.⁸

In April 1859 George Hyer joined Carpenter on the Patriot as a partner. Hyer stayed with the Patriot until 1864 when failing health induced him to retire. Hyer was born in Fort Covington, New York in 1819. He apprenticed on the St. Lawrence Gazette at Ogdensburg N. Y. In July 1836 he moved to Wisconsin as a surveyor. In 1838 he joined Josiah Noonan on the Wisconsin Enquirer at Madison.⁹

Carpenter and Hyer were often the targets of attack by the Republican newspapers of Wisconsin. Although they were not directly attacked for being pro-southern, many of the editorials in the Patriot opposed the administration of Lincoln, which to the Republicans was almost the same as being in favor of the rebellion. The Patriot always supported the principle of states rights, especially when it involved the abolishment of slavery in the established states.

Beriah Brown of Milwaukee, another Democratic editor, was also attacked for being in favor of the rebellion. Brown apprenticed in the same upstate New York printing office as Horace Greeley. Greeley and Brown had been very good friends, but Brown decided to move West and Greeley went to New York. In 1845 Brown bought an interest in the

⁸McMurtie, D. C., Early Printing in Wisconsin, pp. 112-113.

⁹Draper, L. C., Life and Services of George Hyer, Wisconsin Historical Collection, Vol. VI, pp. 136-149.

Mineral Point Democrat with C. C. Britt as his partner. The Democrat was suspended only a few months after its start and Brown then moved the equipment to Madison where he began the Wisconsin Democrat. In 1852 he merged the Democrat with the Argus to form the Argus and Democrat. Brown left the Argus and Democrat in April 1855 and devoted all his time to speculating in land. In land speculation Brown did very well, accumulating a fortune but he lost it in the panic of 1857. In January 1859 he returned to the Argus and Democrat but after three months withdrew just before the paper failed. He then became an associate editor on the Wisconsin Patriot and stayed there until August 1860 when he moved to Milwaukee and established the Daily People's Press and also bought a half interest in the Milwaukee News. Brown merged these two papers in December, 1860 under the title, the Daily Press and News. In July, 1861 Brown left this paper and also the state and moved to California.¹⁰

Brown's successor as editor of the Milwaukee News was George Paul. Paul was born in Vermont in 1826. He graduated from Harvard Law School and in 1861 he moved to Milwaukee. Before coming to Milwaukee, Paul had been editing a paper in Southport (now Kenosha). Paul like Brown was accused of being in favor of the rebellion.¹¹ Accusing prominent

¹⁰McMurtie, D. C., Early Printing in Wisconsin, pp. 108-110.

¹¹Proceedings of the 38th Annual Meeting of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, 1891.

Democratic editors of being in favor of the rebellion was a favorite trick of the Republicans to lessen the influence of those papers amongst the people of Wisconsin.

Paul's reputation however did not rest entirely on his ability as an editor, rather he was noted for his active interest in educational affairs. He was superintendent of schools in Milwaukee and a member of the board of regents of the state university. In this latter capacity he exerted a large influence on the affairs of the university.¹²

William Cramer of the Milwaukee Wisconsin accused both Brown and Paul of being secessionists. Cramer was born in Watertown New York and moved to Milwaukee in 1847. In June 1847 Cramer bought the Milwaukee Courier and changed its name to the Daily Wisconsin. He edited it from that time until shortly after the Civil War. A. J. Aikens was the assistant editor of the Wisconsin from 1854 until 1868. In 1868 Aikens became a partner of Cramer's on the Wisconsin. The Wisconsin was widely read in the state, one writer claimed that it was read in more Wisconsin homes than any other single publication.¹³

Another Republican editor of Milwaukee was Christopher Latham Sholes. Sholes came to Wisconsin from Pennsylvania.

¹²Wisconsin State Journal, (Madison), March 14, 1863.

¹³Proceedings of the 38th Annual Meeting of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, 1891.

His chief claim to fame was not as an editor, but as inventor of the typewriter. He sold the rights to manufacture the typewriter to Remington and Sons of Ilion, New York.

Sholes started his career as an editor in Wisconsin as editor of the South port Telegraph. He later moved to Milwaukee and when Rufus King entered the army leaving the editorship of the Milwaukee Sentinel open, Sholes became the editor. Sholes was rewarded for his support of the administration and the Republican party by being appointed collector of customs of the port of Milwaukee. He held this job through the administrations of both Lincoln and Johnson.¹⁴

In July 1849, Charles Clement became a partner of C. L. Sholes in the Southport Telegraph. In December, 1849 Clement became the sole owner, but in December, 1852 he sold the paper back to Sholes. In November, 1858, Clement revived the defunct Racine Journal and published and edited it as an anti-slavery paper.¹⁵

Clement sold the Racine Journal to Charles W. Fitch in May 1863. Fitch's connection with the newspapers of Wisconsin began in November 1850 when he founded the Manitowoc Herald. Fitch was a Democrat, but during the war supported the administration and its war policy. While still conducting the Manitowoc Herald Fitch joined John P. Hume in establish-

¹⁴McMurtie, D. C., Early Printing in Wisconsin, p. 114.

¹⁵Proceedings of the 38th Annual Meeting of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, 1891.

ing the Chilton Times.¹⁶

John Hume was only eighteen years old when he became editor of the Chilton Times. In May 1858 Fitch sold his interest in the Times to Hume. The Times, a Democratic paper, did not support the administration and so the Republica papers accused both Hume and his paper of being in favor of the rebellion.¹⁷

Mark Pomeroy was another Democratic editor who was accused by the Republicans of being in sympathy with the south and the rebellion.¹⁸ Pomeroy entered the ranks of the Wisconsin editors at Milwaukee but his chief work was done while he owned and edited the La Crosse Democrat. Pomeroy bought an interest in the La Crosse Democrat on May 3, 1860, in partnership with A. P. Swineford and F. A. Moore. Pomeroy and Swineford almost immediately got into a fight about which candidate the Democrat would support for the presidency. Pomeroy wanted to support Douglas and Swineford was for Breckenridge. The difference between the two political editors of the Democrat was resolved when Pomeroy bought Swineford's interest in the paper. Pomeroy was then the sole political editor of the paper and used all his influence

¹⁶McMurtie, D. C., Early Printing in Wisconsin, p. 113.

¹⁷Chilton Times, September 7, 1861.

¹⁸Alma Journal, May 21, 1863.

in supporting Douglas for the 1860 election.¹⁹

The Democrat was violently anti-administration during the entire period of the war. The Republicans had better reason to call Pomeroy a copperhead than any other editor of the newspapers of Wisconsin. The attacks made by the Democrat on the administration and the President gained Pomeroy a national reputation as a copperhead. The Democrat gained a wide circulation, primarily in Wisconsin, Iowa and Minnesota.

One of the Wisconsin editors who accused Pomeroy of being a copperhead was George Bliss. Bliss came to Wisconsin from Illinois in 1847. He located in Mineral Point where he founded the Mineral Point Tribune in September of that year. Bliss published and edited the Tribune by himself until 1858 when his son Edward became his partner. The only education Bliss received was during his apprenticeship in printing offices. Under the editorship of Bliss the Tribune became the leading newspaper of southwestern Wisconsin. It did not have much influence outside of that area but within the area its influence was very great. Bliss during the Civil War supported the administration and attacked anyone who did not agree with his stand.

S. A. Pease of the Marquette Express was another small town editor who gained a wide reputation. Pease was a

¹⁹La Crosse Democrat, May 25, 1860.

physician who started a newspaper not to make money but to attempt to educate the people along political lines. He first established his paper, the Express, at Oxford, but in 1862 he moved his medical practice and his newspaper to Montello.

The Doctor was a prominent member of the Democratic party though he was not an absolute follower of the party, holding the opinion that except in national affairs, party principles had little influence. He felt that in all local elections that people should carefully study the candidates and should vote for the man with the best character and qualifications. Pease was known to use his influence to prevent a Democratic candidate from being elected when he thought that the opposing candidate would be more suitable for the job. The influence of Doctor Pease was not limited to his local community. His editorials were frequently copied by newspapers throughout the state in the Republican as well as Democratic papers.²¹

The Fond du Lac Saturday Reporter, like the Marquette Express was an influential Democratic paper which did not necessarily follow the Democratic party line. John Beeson the editor of the Reporter like Doctor Pease would support the

²⁰Neosha, (Missouri) Journal, December 27, 1879, in Wisconsin Necrology, Vol. 3, pp. 83-84.

²¹Montello Express, December 24, 1887, in Wisconsin Necrology, Vol. 2, pp. 30-32.

opposition candidate when he thought he was better qualified for the job than the Democratic candidate. The influence of Beeson and the Fond du Lac Reporter, as a political power, was felt throughout the state.²²

A Democratic paper which strictly followed the party line was the Manitowoc Pilot. Jeremiah Crowley established the Pilot in July 1859. Crowley was strict in his party allegiance and could not understand how a good Democrat could become a Union Democrat, that is one who supported the administration in order to facilitate the war effort. Crowley felt that any Democratic editor who supported the administration was a traitor to the party. Crowley's reputation was not limited to his newspaper work. He was also active in educational work. Crowley was superintendent of schools for Manitowoc County from 1864 to 1870. While in this position Crowley did much to better the public schools in Manitowoc County.²³

One of the war Democrats that Crowley attacked was Charles D. Robinson of the Green Bay Advocate. Robinson felt that party politics should be forgotten during the war and everyone should support the administration in the war effort. Then during peacetime the issues could be clearly fought out.

²²The Evening Wisconsin, December 17, 1898, in Wisconsin Necrology, Vol. 6, p. 148.

²³McMurtie, D. C., Early Printing in Wisconsin, p. 114.

In 1862 draft riots threatened to break out in Green Bay as they had in Port Washington and Manitowoc. Robinson was given credit for preventing them by sensible articles in the Advocate and speeches he gave to the disaffected people. Although the Advocate had little influence outside of the immediate area surrounding Green Bay, it did have a tremendous influence on the people within the area.²⁴

In 1852 Robinson was elected Secretary of State of Wisconsin and served in that capacity for two years. During his absence the Advocate was edited by Daniel W. Ballou. Ballou, after Robinson's return, moved to Watertown where he established the Watertown Democrat. Ballou like Robinson edited his paper as a war Democratic journal. He supported the administration and advocated every measure that would eliminate slavery.²⁵ Ballou and Robinson supported the administration in most of its actions, but in the case of the suspension of the writ of habeas corpus, they criticized the administration severely.

Samuel Ryan of the Appleton Crescent like Ballou and Robinson was a war Democrat. Ryan went so far in supporting the Union as to organize a company of volunteers of which he became the commanding officer. During his absence while

²⁴Milwaukee Sentinel, September 26, 1886, in Wisconsin Necrology, Vol. 4, p. 152.

²⁵Watertown Democrat, August 3, 1876, in Wisconsin Necrology, Vol. 3, pp. 12-13.

-serving in the army the Crescent was edited by Henry D. Ryan. Same Ryan was born in New York in 1806. He came to Wisconsin as a civilian employee of the army at Fort Howard. His first connection with the newspapers of Wisconsin was in the office of the Green Bay Republican where he learned the printing trade. Ryan was active in the Democratic party and held many offices when the Democrats were in power.²⁶

Samuel Ryan's son Frank opposed his father's Democratic principles. Frank established the Appleton Motor in 1858 as a Republican paper. He like his father went into the army. During his absence the Motor was edited by E. D. Ross and Ross finally bought the paper in July, 1863. In his later years Frank Ryan went insane and died in the asylum for the insane at Oshkosh.²⁷

A prominent leader of the Democratic party was Patrick Carney of the Waukesha County Journal located at Waukesha. Carney was a strict adherent to Democratic principles. He was never willing to compromise with the Republicans and opposed all the measures of the administration during the war. Carney was a member of the state central committee of the Democratic party for four years. He was a states rights exponent and felt that Lincoln's proclamation of emancipation was against the constitution.²⁸

²⁶The Evening Wisconsin, March 26, 1907, in Wisconsin Necrology, Vol. 9, pp. 2-3.

²⁷Appleton Post, February 22, 1883.

²⁸Waukesha Dispatch, June 1, 1900, in Wisconsin Necrology, Vol. 7, p. 8.

James Bintliff, editor of the Monroe Sentinel opposed such Democrats as Carney on the question of emancipation. Bintliff was an outspoken abolitionist. He directly supported such men as Phillips, Lovejoy and Garrison. He was among those who helped organize the Republican party of Wisconsin in 1854.

Bintliff with E. E. Bryant purchased the Sentinel in 1860. They were lawyers and the paper was a sideline for them. Both of them served in the Union army, Bryant became a General and Bintliff attained the rank of Captain. When Bryant left for service in the army Bintliff bought his share of the Sentinel and a few months later sold Bryant's interest to Egbert Carr a printer and publisher of experience. Carr edited the Sentinel after 1862 when Bintliff left to go into the army. The paper continued as an abolitionist organ and showed great elation when Lincoln issued his proclamation of emancipation.²⁹

Another "rabid" Republican editor was Andrew Jackson Turner. Turner began his editorial work in Wisconsin as the city editor of the Wisconsin State Journal in 1856. He was very active in politics, and was well known for his ruthlessness when he met opposition. Turner was recognized as one of the shrewdest and most able managers of the Republican party in

²⁹Monroe Sentinel, March 20, 1901, in Wisconsin Necrology Vol. 7, pp. 42-43.

Wisconsin. Turner became one of the editors and proprietors of the Wisconsin State Register at Portage in 1860. Samuel S. Brannan was Turner's partner in editing and publishing the Register. Turner's ability to espouse his cause brought recognition to the Register and it obtained a considerable circulation.³⁰

In Janesville another Republican editor was gaining some prominence. Charles Holt of the Janesville Gazette became associated with the Wisconsin newspapers as an editor in December 1848 when he bought a half interest in the Gazette with Levi Alden as his partner. Holt and Alden established the second daily paper in the state, outside of Milwaukee. In March 1855 Holt bought Alden's share of the paper and remained sole owner until February 1856 when Hiram Bowen became his partner. In 1859, Daniel Wilcox joined the firm as another partner. All three men contributed to the editorial columns of the Gazette. The Gazette had a great deal of influence in southern Wisconsin and northern Illinois. In circulation, claimed the editors, was one of the largest of all the Wisconsin papers.³¹

A paper which gained much popularity with the farmers of Wisconsin was the Hartford Home League edited by Alexander

³⁰Portage Daily Register, June 12, 1905, in Wisconsin Necrology, Vol. 8, pp. 82-87.

³¹McMurtie, D. C., Early Printing in Wisconsin, p. 118.

M. Thomson. The Home League devoted itself to the interests of the farmers who had mortgaged their farms to railroads. The farmers in order to get a railroad through their area had been induced to mortgage their farms and receive stock in the railroads in return. The railroads had sold the mortgages to eastern interests to get the money but had never built the railroads. When the mortgages fell due the holders began to foreclose. In order to defend their interests the farmers formed a semi-secret organization known as the Home League. They also established the newspaper at Hartford by the same name.³² Thomson became the editor of the Home League and was active in supporting the interests of the farmers. Thomson remained with the Home League until January 1864, when he bought an interest and became the editor of the Janesville Gazette. In 1870 Thomson with Daniel Wilcox and W. G. Roberts purchased the Milwaukee Sentinel which he edited for four years. Thomson wrote a book entitled, The Political History of Wisconsin which appeared in installments in the Milwaukee Sentinel and was later published as a book.³³

Another newspaper which supported the farm mortgagors was the Argus and Democrat of Madison. E. A. Calkins was the editor of this paper. Calkins supported the farmers in the Supreme Court test of the validity of the mortgages. Calkins

³²Merk, Frederick, The Economic History of Wisconsin, Wisconsin Historical Publications, Vol. I, pp. 238-270.

³³Milwaukee Sentinel, June 10, 1898, in Wisconsin Necrology, Vol. 6, p. 126.

felt the farmers had been fleeced by the railroads which was contrary to all requirements of right and justice, although it was upheld by the law.³⁴

John Y. Smith followed Calkins in the editorship of the Argus and Democrat. Under the editorship of Smith the Argus and Democrat changed from one of the most prominent Democratic papers in the state to a Republican paper. Smith supported the Republican slate of nominations in 1861.³⁵ The Argus was suspended in early 1862.

In Oshkosh another Democratic paper, the Oshkosh Courier while not changing parties was purchased by a Republican paper, the Oshkosh Northwestern, and absorbed by the Northwestern. The Northwestern was founded by Charles Nevitt in May 1860 as a Republican paper. B. F. Davis who had been editing the Courier and George Cary were the editors after the consolidation of the two papers. The Northwestern supported the administration and depreciated the Democratic papers for not doing so.

Most of the Wisconsin editors came from the states east of Ohio and north of the Mason and Dixon line. The fact that most of the editors were born in the north indicates

³⁴The Daily Argus and Democrat (Madison), December 31, 1860.

³⁵Ibid., September to November 1861.

³⁶Oshkosh Northwestern, November 16, 1907, in Wisconsin Necrology, Vol. 9, pp. 154-157.

why so few backed the south in the Civil War. The majority of the editors had experience on a newspaper before coming to Wisconsin. They saw an open field in the West for newspaper work. Some of them were very successful, but others failed in their efforts to establish a paper in Wisconsin. Many of the failures moved farther west to the rapidly developing Pacific coast. The editors often engaged in activities outside of their newspaper, engaging in business, educational work or other areas where they exerted great influence. The newspapers covered most of the area of Wisconsin and were often able to guide public opinion on political and other issues.

CHAPTER II

Abolitionists and Copperheads

At the beginning of the war the two major political parties tried to be friendly in order to promote the war effort. But as the war continued the differences between the parties over political, military and state issues caused the relations between the parties to become extremely bitter. Early in the Civil War an attempt was made to unite the Democratic and Republican parties which proved unsuccessful. The union movement failed because the principals of the two parties could not come to any agreement, both wanted to be leaders of the new party and would not be subordinate to a leader of the other party. After the attempts to unite the parties drew farther apart. The Democrats accused the Republicans of being abolitionists and the Republicans called the Democrats copperheads. The term copperhead was applied to all Democrats whom the Republicans thought were in sympathy with the rebellion and actively supported it.

During the months after the election of Lincoln in November 1860, and before the beginning of hostilities in April 1861, the Democratic papers suggested that some sort

of compromise could be worked out between the North and the South so a war could be avoided. Charles Robinson of the Green Bay Advocate was one of the Democrats who strongly recommended compromise. Robinson felt that the Republicans did not want to compromise and so destroy any hopes of a settlement between the two sections. In referring to the Republican position an editorial in the Advocate said, "The sullen and obstinate stand made by most of the Republicans in the country including Mr. LINCOLN against the general demand for concession and compromise, is building a wall forever between the sections of the country, and shutting out all hopes of a peaceable settlement of their differences."¹ Beriah Brown of the Milwaukee News and Press also recommended compromise and was appalled at the opposition of the Republican papers to compromise with the South. The News and Press stated, "(The Republicans)...make a special point to defeat every expression which looks to a peaceable adjustment of our present difficulties."²

The Republicans, though not yet calling the Democrats traitors to their country, felt that the attacks made by the Democrats on the party and the administration for not compromising with the southern states, was only partisan politics and they accused the Democrats of being willing to sacrifice

¹Green Bay Advocate, January 3, 1861.

²Milwaukee News and Press, March 5, 1861.

the government for the spoils of office. Israel Sanderson of the Grant County Witness used this argument by stating, "They (the Democrats) have made patriotism subservient to partisanship; they have permitted any patriotic love which they ever possessed for the Union and the constitution to be choked out and supplanted for the spoils of office...history will and must record the damnable fact that the democratic party at least attempted to sacrifice this government upon the altar of partisan zeal."³

The Republicans were not willing to compromise with the south on the basis of any further extension of slavery and the south would not compromise unless they got it, so the attempt failed because of the obstacle of slavery in the territories.⁴

At the beginning of the war many editorials printed in the Wisconsin newspapers advocated that parties should be disbanded for the duration of the war and all unite in the great effort of winning the war. Atwood and Rublee, Republican editors of the Wisconsin State Journal, held this opinion. The State Journal in an editorial declared, "... that all the people were now united in the cause of the union and...party feeling so rife and embittered...has almost

³Grant County Witness (Platteville), April 15, 1861.

⁴Randall, J. G., The Civil War and Reconstruction, pp. 202-203.

disappeared."⁵ Charles Swayze, Democratic editor of the Wisconsin Pinery at Stevens Point, also recommended a union of the parties. The Pinery stated, "At the present exigent period of our National government to forego the test and disciplines of party strife.... It is certainly the part of wisdom not to stir up the bitterness of party strife at this time, because it may tend to alien(ate) the ardor of patriotic duty into the contempt of serving antagonistic partisanship."⁶

But by early summer of 1861, the attempt by the Republicans to disregard party politics was defeated by the Democrats. The Democratic papers accused the Republicans of trying to make the union party one controlled by their leaders and advocating Republican principles without any Democratic members having an effective voice in the new party. Mark Pomeroy of the La Crosse Democrat voiced such sentiments. Pomeroy in condemning the union party stated, "The Republicans of Wisconsin now that they are in power, are very busy circulating their no party ideas and proposing to do away with the formality of a convention and allow the present state officers to hold over till the war is closed." But Pomeroy said he was not having any of this, he felt that a minority party should exist to keep the majority party from abusing the power of their offices.⁷ Carpenter and Hyer of the

⁵Wisconsin State Journal, May 6, 1861.

⁶Wisconsin Pinery (Stevens Point), June 1, 1861.

⁷La Crosse Democrat, July 17, 1861.

Wisconsin Patriot agreed with the La Crosse Democrat. The Patriot felt that party feeling was good for the country by saying, "...the two parties must and should for the good of the State maintain their separate organization...the Democrats must watch over the abuse of power by Republicans."⁸

Thus the Republican attempt to form a union of the parties failed because the Democrats did not want to be in a party which was dominated by Republicans and Republican Principles. They felt they might as well join the Republican party as to join this union of parties.

In the fall of 1861, the Democrats made an attempt to form a union party. The Democrats, who opposed a Republican dominated union party, now wanted to form a union of the parties under Democratic domination. The Wisconsin Patriot was the principal advocate of this movement. The Patriot suggested that political activity should be postponed for the duration of the war and supported the union movement by saying, "Postpone your political carnival till the Union convalesces from the dreadful malady that is now preying on its vitals."⁹ Carr Huntington of the Beaver Dam Democrat also backed this Democratic Union movement. Huntington in promoting this movement suggested, "In the way of political

⁸Wisconsin Patriot (Madison), August 1, 1861.

⁹Ibid., September 14, 1861.

organizations, the Union movement alone is national.... The patriotic people must rise in their full strength and crush out these parties or the crushing of the present rebellion will have to be repeated every four years."¹⁰

The Republicans opposed such a move, they did not want a union party dominated by Democrats anymore than the Democrats wanted a Republican dominated union party. The movement would draw the support of many people from both parties and the Republicans did not want to lose the support of these people. Most of their opposition appeared in the Republican newspapers of Madison, due to the fact that the Patriot of Madison was the chief supporter of this movement. Atwood and Rublee of the Wisconsin State Journal commented on the Patriot's position in this movement and the earlier Republican movement. The Journal stated, "The Patriot...expressed themselves through the summer in favor of party nominations...in the usual manner, suddenly...early in September...became enthusiastic supporters of the Union movement. We had good reason then to believe that there was a deliberate plot among certain politicians mainly of the Democratic faith to break up the Republican organization and restore...the sway of Democracy in the State under the plausible cry of Union."¹¹

¹⁰Whig of Seventy-Six and Beaver Dam Democrat, March 8, 1862.

¹¹Wisconsin State Journal, November 14, 1861.

John Y. and H. W. Smith of the Argus and Democrat another Madison paper, which under these editors had switched from the Democratic party to the Republican party, also commented adversely on the Democratic union movement. The Argus stated, "...the arguments of the no-party men is nothing more or less than an insinuation that the minority party will turn traitor under the excitement of a campaign...."¹² The Argus felt that the leaders of the Democratic movement were the real traitors not the Democratic party mass.

So this union movement like the earlier Republican attempt failed due to the partisan feeling existing between the parties. Neither party would be satisfied with a union movement which they could not dominate.

In the summer of 1861, the Republicans began to stigmatize the Democrats as traitors and sympathizers with the rebellion. The Democrats retaliated against these charges by calling the Republicans, abolitionists. William Merrell of the Prairie du Chien Courier voiced this sentiment by calling the Republican party the "Abolitionist-Republican" party. The Courier blamed the Republicans for the war by saying, "The ultra members of the Abolition-Republican party...advocated sectional aggression on domestic interest and constitutional rights of a neighboring section...."¹³ John Hume of the

¹²The Daily Argus and Democrat, September 23, 1861.

¹³Prairie du Chien Courier, March 27, 1862.

Chilton Times also blamed the abolitionists for the war. The Times said, "It is because the abolitionists hate the South that the war was inaugurated."¹⁴ Carpenter and Hyer of the Wisconsin Patriot felt the abolitionists would be highly elated if the Union armies were defeated. The Patriot stated, "The abolitionists had to be removed, until the Union, peace, and liberty could be had."¹⁵ Patrick Duffy of the Shullsburg South-Western Local felt the abolitionists did not want the Union as it existed before the war because they would have to give up the plunder that had made them rich. In commenting on this situation the Local said, "No wonder then that they don't want the Union as it was."¹⁶

The Republicans attempted to dispel the idea that the Democrats were trying to promote that all Republicans were abolitionists. George and Edward Bliss, editors of the Mineral Point Tribune tried to show that the Democrats were repeating rebel propaganda. The Tribune stated, "They (the Democrats) echo the rebel denunciation of Abolitionist against all northern men who do not belong to the Democratic church, and would convey the idea that all Republicans favor the immediate and unconditional abolition of slavery.... With this cry they hope to win votes hereafter for their party

¹⁴The Chilton Times, May 24, 1862.

¹⁵Wisconsin Patriot, July 9, 1862.

¹⁶The South-Western Local (Shullsburg), October 17, 1862.

and thereby resuscitate the putrid carcass of the pro-slavery Democracy."¹⁷ Atwood and Rublee of the Wisconsin State Journal in referring to the Democratic charges said, "Slavery first struck at the Union.... Is slavery so sacred that it must be permitted to do whatever it chooses even to...destroying the Government."¹⁸

The Republicans continued their attack on the Democrats calling them secessionists, copperheads and a number of other names all through the war but the major part of their attack occurred in the fall of 1862 and the entire year of 1863. Some of the Republican newspapers felt that not all Democrats sympathized with the south but they said all southern sympathizers were Democrats. Holt Bowen and Wilcox of the Janesville Gazette expressed this very well by saying, "While it is unjust to say that every democrat is a traitor, it is very true that every traitor claims to be a democrat."¹⁹ The Republicans attacked the Democrats for claiming that Lincoln's manner of conducting the war was unconstitutional. T. L. Terry of the Berlin Courant commented on this by saying that such charges were, "groundless assumptions...without specifications or proof...."²⁰ The Wisconsin State Journal

¹⁷Mineral Point Tribune, June 11, 1862.

¹⁸Wisconsin State Journal, October 27, 1863.

¹⁹Janesville Gazette, October 23, 1862.

²⁰Berlin City Courant, February 19, 1863.

felt that the Democrats thought that constitutionality was a personal thing. The Journal stated, "They (the Democrats) are diligently engaged in teaching the rank and file that each man is to be his own judge of the constitutionality of public measures, that the State is sovereign and that the National Government is to be watched with jealous eyes as the natural enemy of the States. The masses once permeated with these opinions, and instead of one great nation...we become a collection of petty and warring sovereignties, the contempt and scorn of the world."²¹

The Democrats retaliated against such attacks by claiming that their party was the party of the constitution and they supported the administration in all its constitutional powers. The Wisconsin Patriot in supporting the Democrats said, "The Democratic party...is the party of the Union and the constitution."²² John Hume of the Chilton Times also supported the Democrats from these charges. The Times stated that the Democrats were "Devoted to the earnest support of the present Administration in all its constitutional powers, to the maintenance of the constitution...and to a vigorous prosecution of the war...but on the other hand, will every way oppose the mere political principles of the Republican-Abolition party."²³

²¹Wisconsin State Journal, March 9, 1863.

²²Wisconsin Patriot, January 2, 1863.

²³Chilton Times, September 7, 1861.

Besides accusing the Democratic party or at least parts of it for being in sympathy with the rebels, the Republicans also accused some of the individual editors of being pro-southern or using the contemporary term for any pro-southern person, a copperhead. Mark Pomeroy was the principal target of much of the attack directed against individual editors of Wisconsin. R. H. Copeland of the Alma Journal accused Pomeroy of being a copperhead. In supporting this charge the Journal asked, "Brick Pomeroy...do you call yourself loyal? Do you pretend to say that a man who is continually abusing the Government under which he lives—who never speaks disrespectfully of armed rebels.... That cannot see the justness or necessity of a single act or measure of the Administration--is loyal?" The Journal was of the opinion that no one but another copperhead would believe the slanders that Pomeroy printed in his paper.²⁴ The Mineral Point Tribune also accused Pomeroy of being pro-southern. The Tribune stated that the La Crosse Democrat was devoted "to the diffusion of copperhead sentiments."²⁵ Lathrop Smith of the Burlington Standard attacked Pomeroy for calling President Lincoln the "Widow-Maker of the 19th Century." The Standard said that Pomeroy thought that "in the event of the election of a

²⁴Alma Journal, April 30, 1863.

²⁵Mineral Point Tribune, August 24, 1864.

Copperhead President, some especially fat insecure would be reserved for the man whose genius devised the mane of 'widow-maker' for Mr. Lincoln."²⁶ Pomeroy recognized the attack made upon him but tried to make it into a big joke. He thanked the Republican newspapers for calling him a copperhead and damning him without limit. Some Republican papers suggested that his newspaper office should be mobbed. To this suggestion Pomeroy replied, "Please call when we are in."²⁷ The charges did not bother Pomeroy very much, he just multiplied his attacks upon the Republican party and the administration.

Another editor of Wisconsin who was attacked for being in sympathy with the rebellion was William Merrell of the Prairie du Chien Courier. The Baraboo Republic printed the resolution of a Wisconsin Infantry company which declared that Merrell was a copperhead and that these soldiers no longer wanted to receive the Courier because it contained copperhead sentiments. The Republic called Merrell a "traitor editor."²⁸ In an editorial in the Courier Merrell defined a copperhead and stated his position. He challenged the Republicans to call him a copperhead for holding such ideas. The Courier said that copperheads were very dangerous and must be guarded against and defined a copperhead by stating, "They believe in

²⁶Burlington Standard, August 24, 1864.

²⁷La Crosse Democrat, April 28, 1862.

²⁸Baraboo Republican, March 18, 1863.

a Constitution and Union of all the States. They believe in the constitutional rights of the people.--They believe in an honest and economical administration of public affairs.-- They believe it is not treason to denounce corruption in officials.... They are not Republicans, and therefore should not be allowed to speak, to think, or to act. They criticize acts of the President and that is treason.... They find fault with swindling and corruption, and that is giving aid and comfort to the enemy." Merrell suggested that the people who believe in peace should be avoided as he is a very dangerous, detestable and dishonorable, because he believes in all these things.²⁹

The Milwaukee News and indirectly its editor, George Paul, was also stigmatized as copperheads and secessionists. In an attack on Paul and the News, William Cramer of the Milwaukee Wisconsin commented on the Knights of the Golden Circle as a secret organization accused of being in sympathy with the south. Cramer claimed that the News was the organ of this secessionist organization in Wisconsin. The Wisconsin said the News reflected "...the dominant spirit of Secessia."³⁰ The Wisconsin State Journal also accused the News of being secessionist. The Journal published some resolutions of the 12th Wisconsin regiment but said the News, which had also

²⁹Prairie du Chien Courier, March 10, 1864.

³⁰The Daily Wisconsin (Milwaukee), April 4, 1862.

been requested by the regiment to publish them, declined on the grounds that soldiers should not exhibit any interest in the government. "The News," stated the Journal, "prefers to convey the idea that these resolutions are simply the expressions of the officers of the regiment." The Journal claimed they were not dictated by the officers but were endorsed by the unanimous vote of the entire regiment.³¹

John Hume of the Chilton Times also was accused by the Republicans of being a copperhead and his paper a secessionist organ. In an editorial about these attacks, the Times stated, "Several of the woolly-headed Abolition-Republicans of the country--who are opposed to Lincoln's Administration because it does not declare war against slavery--insinuate the Times is a Secession organ...." Hume stated the position of the Times in this same editorial by saying, "The Times is devoted to the earnest support of the present administration in all its constitutional powers, to the maintenance of the Constitution in its full integrity, and to a vigorous prosecution of the war." At the same time Hume said, the Times was unflinchingly Democratic in its principles and would oppose any policy pursued by the administration which he felt was wrong.³²

³¹Wisconsin State Journal, March 14, 1863.

³²Chilton Times, September 7, 1861.

At the beginning of the war the leaders of the two major parties attempted to bring about a reconciliation and form a coalition party with the purpose of supporting the war. This union of parties could not be consummated because the leaders of both parties wanted to be the dominant leaders and to build the new party around the principles of their particular party. After these failures to unite, the Democrats and Republicans became very belligerent toward each other. The Republicans accused the Democrats of holding pro-southern sentiments and certain individuals in the Democratic party of being in sympathy with the rebellion even actively supporting it. The Democrats felt the attack on them by the Republicans was unfair. They felt that they had a legitimate right to criticize the actions of the administration. The Democrats accused many Republicans of being abolitionists. To a Democrat being an abolitionist meant to advocate federal suppression of slavery which was against the principle of the right of states over their own domestic institutions. They felt that the federal government had no right to abolish slavery as some of the Republicans advocated.

CHAPTER III

State Issues

The chief concern of this chapter is with the issues which were primarily state issues but which concerned national policy in varying degrees. These issues were the currency problem, soldier's bounties, and the right of the soldiers to vote. The currency and bank issue was partially a national problem, but all that is to be taken up in this paper is the concern of Wisconsin with the difficulty. The bounties, to a great extent governed the number of volunteers from the state who would go into the army and so was a national issue. By helping to decide from which party the state officers would be chosen, the right of the soldiers to vote in the state elections indirectly affected the federal government. Having a Republican state administration would greatly facilitate the work of the national Republican administration by lessening the opposition to the national policy.

Although the currency problem and the banks which issued much of the currency did not become a real partisan issue, those newspapers opposing the action of the banks were Democratic and those upholding them were Republican. While, as

has been indicated, it was not a partisan issue it did involve a problem of principle. The Democrats felt the banks were the cause of all the monetary problems and they were a curse upon mankind. The Republicans defended the banks by claiming that the perilous times and not the banks were responsible for the problem. Mark Pomeroy of the La Crosse Democrat attacked the banks as a curse upon mankind. Pomeroy stated, "If the curse of man and of God should rest on anything, it should be the Banks and Banking Associations--legalized gambling houses, sustained by the necessities of the poor--controlled by the dishonest rich."¹ David Atwood and Horace Rublee, editors of the Wisconsin State Journal attempted to defend the banks from such attacks. The Journal stated, "Some of our state exchanges...(accuse) the banks as the cause of the present financial difficulties.... It is not the bankers who are at fault. It is not the banking system that is at fault. The framers of our banking law performed their work with reference to a stable government and not revolution and secession."²

On April 17, 1861, the legislature of Wisconsin passed a law exempting all banks of Wisconsin from redeeming the deflated currency circulating in the state with specie payments until December 1, 1861. C. L. Sholes of the Milwaukee

¹La Crosse Democrat, April 8, 1861.

²Wisconsin State Journal, May 28, 1861.

Sentinel felt suspension of the specie payments was an attempt "to save the people from the loss they would inevitably have to suffer should the banks be put into liquidation and their securities sacrificed...."³

The currency situation in Wisconsin got steadily worse. Many of the Wisconsin banks had issued currency backed by the bonds of southern states. The threat of war caused these bonds to decline rapidly in value and caused the currency, which those bonds supported, to take a comparable drop. The Milwaukee Bankers Association was organized to compel wildcat banks to redeem their currency at a central seat of exchange, forcing the Milwaukee banks to take the deflated currency. The Association had a special meeting and agreed to guarantee the notes of 70 banks which were in fairly stable condition. On June 22, 1861, the Milwaukee Bankers Association published a repudiation of their pledge and agreed not to take the notes of ten of the most insolvent banks. The laboring men of Milwaukee accused the banks of getting rid of the poor currency in the payrolls of June 21, and then refusing to accept it on June 22. A large group of laboring men got together and started a riot, completely destroying two of the most prominent banks of Milwaukee.⁴ The riot caused considerable comment in the Wisconsin newspapers as to why such action

³Milwaukee Daily Sentinel, April 18, 1861.

⁴Merk, Frederick, The Economic History of Wisconsin, Wisconsin Historical Publications, pp. 187-207.

was taken by the people of Milwaukee. John Herron, editor of the Mineral Point Home Intelligencer declared, "The origin of the affair is this: At a Bankers' Convention held some time ago at Milwaukee, they pledged themselves to take notes of certain Banks at par until the 1st of December. On Saturday, however, the Banks of Milwaukee in violation of this pledge threw out ten of these banks.... This action at once created great indignation among the people...who unable longer to control their anger, made what appeared to be a regularly organized assault upon the Banks...."⁵ C. N. Stone of the Calumet Republican, also felt the banks were at fault. Stone in discussing the riot said, "The rioters are not without a show of cause for their outbreak. They...were led to believe by the 'Milwaukee Bankers Circular' published some time since, that all bills good at that time would be received as currency until December next. This allowed the Milwaukee bankers to get rid of a little more 'stump tail' followed by a refusal to retake it and a row by justly enraged citizens, who had been duped by the swindle followed."⁶ The Republican papers tried to defend the Milwaukee banks for the action that they took. The Wisconsin State Journal stated, "...any bank which was faced with the problem of people trying to demand the redemption of worthless currency at par would refuse to take

⁵Home Intelligencer (Mineral Point), June 29, 1861.

⁶Calumet Republican (Gravesville), July 1, 1861.

it."⁷ James Pond of the Markesan Journal, another Republican paper, portrayed the riot as the act of a large number of laborers who would not listen to any explanation but aware only that they had been the losers whom attacked at least two banks which they almost completely destroyed.⁸

The Wisconsin papers regarded the Milwaukee bank riots as detrimental and wrong. Yet the papers sympathizing with the rioters, felt that they had good reason to object to the action taken by the Milwaukee bankers. The papers supporting the bankers felt that the tumultuous disturbance was inexcusable. After the riot the Milwaukee bankers made a conscious effort to stabilize the state currency, with much success. This ended the problem as a major issue in the Wisconsin newspapers.

The granting of bounties to men who enlisted in the army was another state issue which, like the currency problem, did not become a real partisan question. Most of the Wisconsin newspapers favored the payment of bounties by the federal and local governments, at first hand and later money payments well supported. The disagreement came when a bill was introduced into the State Legislature which provided for bounties to be paid from state funds. Even on this point the arguments did not become partisan and papers from both

⁷Wisconsin State Journal, June 25, 1861.

⁸Markesan Journal, June 28, 1861.

parties favored or opposed the payment of the state bounties. E. D. Ross of the Appleton Motor, a Republican paper, favored the payment of state bounties. The Motor stated, "...Wisconsin would easily fill her quota under these circumstances."⁹ George Paul of the Milwaukee News, a Democratic editor, also favored state bounties. The News urged the State Legislature to pass a law providing for bounties for the state.¹⁰ William Merrell of the Prairie du Chien Courier, in referring to the bill before the legislature to provide for state bounties said, "If this were done--say by giving the volunteer \$200--there would be no draft in the State."¹¹

The opposition to state bounties based their arguments on the fact that many of the local governments had already passed bounty taxes and state bounties would tax these people a second time for the benefit of communities which did not have bounties. Atwood and Rublee of the Wisconsin State Journal used this argument in opposing state bounties. "Many of the counties," the Journal asserted, "have passed bounty laws and so the state law should not be passed to help Milwaukee, Washington and Ozaukee counties fill up their deficiencies when the other counties have almost reached their quotas."¹² Holmes and Turner of the Wisconsin State

⁹Appleton Motor, January 14, 1864.

¹⁰The Daily Milwaukee News, January 30, 1864.

¹¹Prairie du Chien Courier, February 18, 1864.

¹²Wisconsin State Journal, February 4, 1864.

Register at Portage, used this same argument in opposing the state bounties. The Register stated, "if no bounties had hitherto been paid by municipalities, and if several localities of the state had hitherto exhibited a uniform zeal in responding to the calls for men, there might be some plausibility in providing a state bounty."¹³ Stephen Carpenter, editor of the Wisconsin Patriot objected to state bounties and all other bounties. "...soldiers," said the Patriot, "only get a small part of it, most of it goes into the pocket of the soldier broker." Carpenter thought a better and cheaper method would be to offer the soldiers better pay.¹⁴ F. S. Haughawout of the Grant County Witness at Platteville objected also to bounties of any kind because he had been in the army and received no bounty when he enlisted and he did not think it was fair for any veterans of the war to have to help pay the bounty of any recruit. He wondered if patriotism in the North was so low that in order to get anyone to volunteer they had to be paid for it. He felt that such a tax would be an oppression on all men who were or had been in the service and had received no bounty.¹⁵

A state issue in which the opposing sides did follow party lines was the issue of the right of the soldiers to

¹³Wisconsin State Register (Portage), February 13, 1864.

¹⁴Wisconsin Patriot, February 10, 1864.

¹⁵Grant County Witness, March 24, 1864.

vote. The Republicans were in the state administration and thus were able to appoint the officers of the volunteer regiments. These officers both parties knew, would have a great influence on the vote of the soldiers. The Republican state administration appointed good Republicans as army officers whenever possible, so they knew that they could be quite sure that the soldier vote would be Republican. The Democrat also knew that the Republicans would get this part of the vote so they tried every possible trick to prevent a bill authorizing the soldiers to vote, from passing through a special session of the legislature in the fall of 1862. When this attempt failed they tried to get the Supreme Court to declare it unconstitutional. Reid and Hughes, the Republican editors of the Dodge County Citizen at Beaver Dam attacked the Democrats for these attempts. In an editorial on the subject the Citizen stated, "The Ryan-rebel party (Democrats) has made a party issue against the right of suffrage in our State regiments. At the extra session of the legislature they tried to stop the passage of the bill by every type of delaying tactic. But the bill finally passed by a strict party vote.... Failing there, they next made a persistent effort to get the Supreme Court to declare the law to be unconstitutional and void...."¹⁶

¹⁶Dodge County Citizen (Beaver Dam), September 8, 1862.

The Democrats felt that giving the soldiers the right to vote was dangerous, because it would not be a fair election due to the influence of the officers of the regiments. William Cramer of the Milwaukee Wisconsin, an independent, in referring to this situation said, "We regard the project of allowing soldiers out of the State to vote as not only a humbug, but a very dangerous one.... Besides the strong temptation to the soldier to follow the wish of those above him, regardless of right, there is the additional consideration, that he is in most cases profoundly ignorant of everything of a political character that transpires during his absence in the enemy's country. This is a fact which soldiers readily admit...."¹⁷ D. W. Ballou, editor of the Watertown Democrat, feared that many frauds would be committed by the officers in charge of the regiments and nothing could be done about it. "No offense," stated the Democrat, "can be punished in the State committed out of it, whether it be a fraud on the ballot-box or anything else, and this opens the door for any amount of swindling, without the slightest remedy. If the vote cast happens to suit the Colonel, he can send it in, and if it don't he can suppress it or put it in his pocket, and there is no help for it; and if he does not choose to hold an election there is no way of compelling him to do so. Illegal voting may be carried to any extent, and not a

¹⁷The Daily Wisconsin, September 16, 1862.

single man can be reached by the laws now in force against it."¹⁸ Stephen Carpenter and George Hyer, co-editors of the Wisconsin Patriot, thought the soldiers vote was unconstitutional and they prophesied that many contested cases of voting frauds would grow out of this gross violation of the constitution.¹⁹

The Republicans accused the Democrats of trying to gain control of the state government by not allowing the soldiers to vote. They claimed that most of the soldiers who enlisted were Republicans. The Republican part of the Wisconsin press was of the opinion that the soldiers were the most patriotic and loyal men in the state and certainly should have the right to decide who were going to be the state officers. Justus Smith, editor of the Viroqua Expositor writing of the right of the soldiers to vote said, they were some of the best citizens and should have the right to vote. "Now we say, by all means let our brave-hearted, loyal, sacrificing soldiers vote; for they are the ones above all others who are interested in having good men and loyal ones to rule over them."²⁰ S. W. Smith of the Manitowoc Tribune tried to answer the charges that had been made by the Wisconsin

¹⁸The Watertown Democrat, September 25, 1862.

¹⁹Wisconsin Patriot, December 9, 1862.

²⁰Viroqua Expositor, September 27, 1862.

that the soldiers would be controlled by their officers and were not interested in politics. The Tribune stated, "We can tell the Wisconsin that the soldiers in the army of the Union are intelligent thinking men, entirely different from the machines that it alludes when speaking of the military supporters of the despotisms of the old World. They prize their birthright as American freemen at all times and doubly so when their voice is to decide their own as well as their country's destiny. They will be less liable to sell that birthright in the army than at home, and they are most of them far better posted in the issue which are now before the public, than hundreds of those whom the crafty and designing politicians (Democrats), have discouraged from enlisting in order that they might buy their votes with whiskey at the coming election."²¹

In the question whether the soldiers had the right to vote in the state elections the Republicans won, but the Democrats felt that the Republicans were just trying to practice a fraud in order to keep themselves in power.

In the State issues which came up in the Wisconsin newspapers only one that made a true partisan issue was that of the right of the soldiers to vote. The currency problem and the bounty question appeared in the Wisconsin papers not as a partisan issue but as principles held by the particular

²¹Manitowoc Tribune, September 20, 1862.

editors involved and the editors involved did not necessarily follow party lines. The soldiers vote was a partisan attempt on the part of the Republicans to secure more votes. The Democrats knew that most of the soldier vote would go to the Republicans, therefore they opposed such a measure very violently. The Democrats tried to stop the bill from being passed by the legislature and when they failed in this attempt they tried to get it declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court. But in both these attempts the Democrats were to meet with failure.

CHAPTER IV

Political Issues

The political problems which were taken up by the Wisconsin newspapers created more contention between the papers representing the two major parties than any other group of issues. The political issues which the Wisconsin newspapers discussed were the Emancipation Proclamation, the suspension of the Writ of Habeas Corpus, the election of 1864, Lincoln's Amnesty Proclamation and Reconstruction of the Southern states. The newspapers of Wisconsin followed their respective party lines on all political issues. The Democrats opposed the administration in all of the questions of this nature, while the Republicans followed the administration, supporting it in all of its political activities.

Slavery, closely associated with the causation of the war, became the subject of swift-changing policy on many fronts while the Civil War progressed. In his inaugural address on March 4, 1860, President Lincoln in referring to southern apprehensions in regard to his stand on slavery, said he would not interfere with the domestic affairs of any

state. Each state has the right to control its own domestic institutions, said Lincoln. Back of such disclaimers as this was the fundamental concept that federal authority was controlled by the constitution, that such domestic institutions as slavery were the exclusive right of the states. The intention of the Republican party was not to change any existing arrangements except to keep slavery out of national territories.¹

This was the way things stood when the war began. The administration soon changed its attitude when political reasons made such a change necessary. Congress solved such problems as what to do with fugitive slaves, slaves fighting in the Confederate or Union armies, and slaves of southern people active in the rebellion, by passing acts which set them free. The question of the right of emancipation soon came up in the newspapers of Wisconsin. The Democrats thought that the federal government had no right to interfere in the domestic institutions of any state and slavery was such a domestic institution. These sentiments were reflected in the Democratic newspapers of Wisconsin. D. S. Curtiss of the Oconomowoc Free Press took the attitude that while slavery could not be extended to the territories the states in which it existed had the right to keep it. The Free Press stated

¹Randall, J. G., The Civil War and Reconstruction, pp. 477-481.

"However we may regard its moral character, under the constitution of the United States the states where slavery existed when it was adopted have an undoubted right to practice it so long as they see their interest in so doing, and none have the right to compel them to emancipate till they choose to."² John and H. W. Smith of the Madison Argus and Democrat tried to answer the question of the emancipation of slaves by basing their answer on an opinion of John Quincy Adams in which Adams declared, so claimed the Argus, that the President alone, by virtue of his military authority has the power to free the slaves whenever it becomes a military necessity. "So soon," said the Argus, "as the necessity of proclaiming emancipation as a means of crippling the rebellion...is clearly manifest the President has the power in question, and not until then."³

The Republicans in the early months of the war, not knowing exactly how the administration would meet the issue, tried to stay away from the question until the party indicated to them what their stand should be. Atwood and Rublee of the Wisconsin State Journal felt that all this talk of emancipation, when a rebellion menaced the existence of the government, was fruitless. "The question," said the Journal "of the

²Oconomowoc Free Press, March 8, 1861.

³The Daily Argus and Democrat (Madison), August 24, 1861.

disposition of the slaves can be safely left for the future, at the present time, blows stern and swift are what is most needed."⁴ C. Latham Sholes editor of the Milwaukee Sentinel in referring to the question, said, many had asked what should be done with the negro after he is emancipated. Sholes did not feel that it was necessary to do anything with them. If they could not take care of themselves then why emancipate them? The Sentinel said, "To assume that he (the negro) must fall under guardianship and be taken care of in some shape, is to admit the whole ground on which slavery is maintained."⁵

In March 1862, President Lincoln advised Congress to pass an act to encourage emancipation especially in the border states. The recommendation suggested state emancipation with federal compensation. The Republican newspapers of Wisconsin met the President's suggestion with enthusiasm. William Cramer, editor of the Milwaukee Wisconsin said, "It (the recommendation of the President) will be hailed with pleasure by all loyal men as an indication that the President desires not only to crush out armed rebellion but also to encourage such measures as shall cripple forever the undue political power of slavery which caused it."⁶ Lute Taylor of

⁴Wisconsin State Journal, December 16, 1861.

⁵Milwaukee Sentinel, February 18, 1862.

⁶The Daily Wisconsin, March 10, 1862.

the Presscott Journal in writing of the recommendation stated, "It is to be regarded as the last blow to American Slavery-- the cutting of it off from the protection and patronage of the Federal Government."⁷ Barrett and Lathrop Smith of the Beloit Journal and Courier also wrote favorably about the suggested action by the President. The Journal and Courier stated, "Thursday, March 6, 1862, marks an important epoch in the history of the United States. On that day President Lincoln transmitted a message to Congress recommending the adopting of a joint resolution...(for) a gradual abolishment of slavery...."⁸

The Democratic papers were silent on this particular phase of emancipation. Whether they did not grasp the significance of the recommendation of the President or did not think it important can only be guessed at, that they did not think it particularly important is the most plausible of the alternatives.

On April 16, 1862, Congress passed a bill which abolished slavery in the District of Columbia with compensation to the owners of the slaves. This act also included emancipation in the territories but without compensation. When the news of the passage of this act reached the Wisconsin papers it was met with enthusiasm from the Republican papers and with somewhat mixed sentiment on the part of the Democratic sheets.

⁷Presscott Journal, March 12, 1862.

⁸Beloit Journal and Courier, March 13, 1862.

The enthusiasm of the Republican papers had no bounds. Ansel N. Kellogg of the Baraboo Republican stated, "Over this measure every friend of freedom will rejoice...."⁹ J. Bond of the Kenosha Times, another Republican paper, recognized the argument of the Democrats that the federal government had no power over slavery in the states, but, said the Times, "... within the district they had full power, and were bound by every consideration of honor, decency and policy to exercise it."¹⁰ Holt, Bowen and Wilcox, of the Janesville Gazette felt that the passage of this bill "initiated the great movement which is destined to abolish slavery in the whole country." The Gazette felt the federal government had set a good example to the states.¹¹

The Democratic papers acknowledged the right of Congress to pass such legislation for the District of Columbia, but felt that they had no right to interfere with the states. There was some criticism of the act such as that of John Hume of the Chilton Times who saw it as a partisan move on the part of the Republicans. The Times said, "...it will accomplish all it is designed to accomplish--afford an opportunity to stimulate the agitation that brought the present dominant party into power and which alone can sustain it." The Times

⁹Baraboo, Republican, April 16, 1862.

¹⁰Kenosha Times, April 17, 1862.

¹¹Janesville Gazette, April 18, 1862.

hoped that the President would veto the bill.¹² Edward Beeson of the Fond du Lac Saturday Reporter was glad to see the first step taken toward eliminating this source of "contention and evil." But said the Reporter "Congress has done what it can towards it (emancipation), and it now remains for the States to act to the same effect."¹³

During the summer of 1862, prior to the issuance of Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, the Wisconsin newspapers discussed the practicability of freedom for the slaves. The Democratic papers were of the opinion that the war was for the suppression of the rebellion and to sustain the Union and the constitution. William Merrell editor of the Prairie du Chien Courier said, "The duty of loyal citizens is to sustain the Union and the Constitution whether slavery lives or dies."¹⁴ S. A. Pease of the Marquette Express followed the Democratic line that the federal government had no right to interfere with slaves states. The Express stated, "It requires no argument now to convince men of the fact that there is no civil authority on the face of the earth--outside of a slave State--to abolish slavery in said State."¹⁵ Stephen Carpenter and George Hyer of the Wisconsin Patriot thought

¹²Chilton Times, April 19, 1862.

¹³The Saturday Reporter (Fond du Lac), April 19, 1862.

¹⁴Prairie du Chien Courier, May 1, 1862.

¹⁵Marquette Weekly Express (Montello), June 6, 1862.

the best thing to do was to leave slavery alone and it would die of its own accord. The Patriot said, "The institution of slavery is growing weaker every day and if the rebellion continues for a time will fall of its own weight."¹⁶

The Republicans felt that it was the duty of the administration and Congress to emancipate all slaves owned by any persons who were actively engaged in promoting the rebellion against the government of the United States.¹⁷

On September 23, 1862, Lincoln issued his Proclamation of Emancipation. The proclamation provided that on the first day of January, 1863 all persons held as slaves in any state or designated part of a state in which the people were in rebellion against the United States shall be from that date on free. In the case of the loyal slave states he declared again his policy of compensated emancipation.¹⁸

The Wisconsin papers split along party lines in the stand taken on the Emancipation Proclamation. The Republican papers were all for it and the Democratic papers violently opposed it. The Republicans felt that all the loyal people in the states would greet the proclamation with acclamation. Atwood and Rublee of the Wisconsin State Journal in commenting on how the proclamation would be received by the people said, "This proclamation will be hailed with joy by the

¹⁶Wisconsin Patriot, June 13, 1862.

¹⁷Wisconsin State Journal, June 2, 1862.

¹⁸Rhodes, J. F., History of the Civil War 1861-1865, p.101.

people of the loyal states.--None can object to it except those who believe that rebels and traitors are entitled to all the constitutional privileges and immunities of loyal men."¹⁹ Josiah Bond of the Kenosha Times also felt the people would be behind the President and his proclamation. The Times stated, "Every sincere Union man--every hater of slavery will sustain the President....Every sympathizer with treason will oppose him."²⁰ The Republicans were also of the opinion that the proclamation would cripple the rebellion and would bring a much quicker end to the war. H. North Ross of the Evergreen City Times of Sheboygan commented on this point by saying, "President Lincoln...has now taken a step which... will soon crush it (the rebellion) out utterly and forever."²¹ George and Edward Bliss of the Mineral Point Tribune thought that the Emancipation Proclamation would shorten the war. The Tribune said, "...the emancipation of their slaves will tend to weaken their cause and hasten a termination of hostilities."²²

The Democratic newspapers felt that Lincoln had finally succumbed to the influence of the abolitionists. They felt that the proclamation would consolidate opinion in the south

¹⁹Wisconsin State Journal, September 25, 1862.

²⁰Kenosha Times, September 25, 1862.

²¹Evergreen City Times (Sheboygan), September 27, 1862.

²²Mineral Point Tribune, October 1, 18 62.

and turn all the southern people and the people in the border states who had union sentiments against the Union. George Paul of the Milwaukee News used such arguments in opposing the document. The News said, "...that the proclamation will in fact, secure freedom to any great number of slaves...is difficult to suppose. We apprehend that its effect on the contrary, will be to embitter the fearful controversy going on, and to alienate from us the few friends left in the border states and to hasten the intermediation of foreign powers."²³

John Herron of the Mineral Point Home Intelligencer felt the abolitionists had influenced Lincoln. The Home Intelligencer stated, "'Honest Old Abe' has finally gone over to the Abolitionists...."²⁴ "Jere" Crowley of the Manitowoc Pilot attacked the President by saying his declaration was as foolish as if the President would declare that there would be no more rebels in the South. "Either declaration," stated the Pilot, "...would stamp the author as an ignoramus, and incapable of judging between common sense and silliness."²⁵

Edward Beeson of the Fond du Lac Saturday Reporter could not see that the proclamation would have much effect. Beeson stated, "The proclamation will have effect just where our armies carry it, and no farther...."²⁶

²³The Daily Milwaukee News, September 24, 1862.

²⁴Home Intelligencer, September 25, 1862.

²⁵Manitowoc Pilot, September 26, 1862.

²⁶The Saturday Reporter, September 27, 1862.

In the elections of November 1862, the Democrats made gains in the number of members they could send to Congress. They were able to win some of the elections in the middle western states. The election was a defeat to the Lincoln administration with the Emancipation Proclamation a contributing factor. The Democrats now reproached the Republicans by saying that the war instead of being for the reestablishment of the Union and the sanctity of the constitution was now for freeing the negroes of the rebels. The Democrats used the slogan "the Constitution as it is and the Union as it was" and not a war for the freeing of slaves. The Republicans were unable to present any real argument to combat this Democratic slogan.

On January 1, 1863, in spite of the defeat at the ballot-box and reverses to the Union army in the fall of that year, Lincoln issued the final proclamation. The Wisconsin newspapers again took up the proclamation with the papers still following their particular party lines. The Republicans went all out in their support of the President. They regarded the proclamation as the most important document ever issued in American history and as the most powerful blow dealt to the rebels up to that time. Reid and Hughes of the Dodge County Citizen at Beaver Dam thought the proclamation was a fulfillment of the Declaration of Independence. The Citizen stated, "We do not expect any sudden or decisive help to our armies from this edict; but we do expect the final overthrow

of slavery on this continent, and the firm and final establishment of the righteous principles of our glorious and immortal Declaration of Independence."²⁷ George and Edward Bliss of the Mineral Point Tribune felt the proclamation was a great document of history. "We hold this proclamation," stated the Tribune, "the most important document ever issued by an American Statesman."²⁸ Another effect the Republicans expected from the proclamation was that many rebels would immediately have to go home to defend their homes against the slave insurrections which would occur. S. W. Smith of the Manitowoc Tribune reported rumors to this effect. The Tribune reported that the "Rebels were skedadling(sic) for home..." to protect their homes and families from the slave riots brought on by the Emancipation Proclamation.²⁹

The Democrats attacked the administration as they had in the November elections asserting that the war was a war against slavery instead of a war to suppress rebellion and to uphold the Union and the constitution and the reiterated the statement that it would consolidate sentiment in the south against the Union. Carpenter and Hyer of the Wisconsin Patriot attacked the proclamation as a change of policy in fighting the war and that it was illegal. The Patriot said,

²⁷Dodge County Citizens, January 8, 1863.

²⁸Mineral Point Tribune, January 9, 1863.

²⁹Manitowoc Tribune, January 9, 1863.

"It is not now a war to put down rebellion against our constitution, but it is a war waged as is here admitted for the purpose of putting down slavery, in violation not only of the constitution but of sound policy."³⁰ S. A. Pease of the Marquette Express reported on the effect the proclamation had on the sentiment in the south by stating that "it has had the effect to dispel every Union impulse in the South is now admitted by its friends and enemies."³¹ Charles Robinson of the Green Bay Advocate reported the proclamation as either "...a gigantic folly or a deed of righteousness." But he felt that in such a desperate war as this the declaration could not be carried out without conquering the area and this had been made much harder because the proclamation would consolidate opinion in the south making it almost impossible to conquer.³² In a later editorial in the Advocate Robinson said that he was willing to ignore the constitutionality of any policy that President Lincoln could devise if it meant the suppression of the rebellion. The Advocate stated it would "willingly give it support...if it might be the means of quelling this unholdy rebellion."³³

³⁰Wisconsin Patriot, January 3, 1863.

³¹Marquette Express, April 17, 1863.

³²Green Bay Advocate, January 8, 1863.

³³Ibid., March 5, 1863.

After early 1863, the Emancipation Proclamation did not create much comment in the Wisconsin Newspapers. Another action of the President which caused a tremendous amount of controversy in the newspapers of Wisconsin was Lincoln's orders for the suspension of the writ of habeas corpus. The Democratic newspapers of Wisconsin came out violently against the suspension of the writ. The Democrats had more justification in their criticism of this act than in any other act of the administration. It was a violation of the right of the people to have a trial by jury. The Republican papers did their best to uphold the President and the administration in this action by condoning it on a basis of military necessity. William Cramer of the Milwaukee Wisconsin stated, "It is acknowledged that the suspension of the writ is a measure which may become necessary to the defense of the government and the nation. It is acknowledged that its suspension may help to save the state."³⁴

In the first year of the war the Democratic papers did not offer much opposition to the suspension of the writ. Some of them even supported the action. John Y. and H. W. Smith editors of the Madison Argus and Democrat stated, "The writ of habeas corpus had indeed been suspended in a few instances, and the Constitution provides that it may be suspended in certain emergencies, and if such emergencies have not

³⁴The Daily Wisconsin, June 13, 1861.

occurred they never can. With the Government surrounded by traitors open and secret, infesting its army and navy...."³⁵ Carr Huntington of the Beaver Dam Democrat also upheld Lincoln's action by saying, "It is not unconstitutional for the President to array means in his power for the preservation of the Union."³⁶

On September 24, 1862, shortly after he had issued the Emancipation Proclamation Lincoln issued another proclamation in which a general suspension of the writ of habeas corpus was authorized and the use of military trials in suppressing disloyalty was announced.³⁷ By this time the Democrats were united in the opposition to the suspension of the writ.

P. H. Carney of the Waukesha County Democrat in commenting on the reports that had reached the Wisconsin papers of this action, could not understand what the necessity for such an action would be. The Democrat compared the two proclamations issued by the President by saying, "A white man is now presumed to have no rights until the niggers are emancipated."³⁸ This same sentiment in exactly the same article appeared in the Manitowoc Pilot at a later date.³⁹

³⁵The Argus and Democrat, August 20, 1861.

³⁶Beaver Dam Democrat, July 6, 1861.

³⁷Randall, J. G., The Civil War and Reconstruction, p. 597.

³⁸Waukesha County Democrat (Waukesha), September 30, 1862.

³⁹Manitowoc Pilot, October 10, 1862.

One of the arguments the Republican papers used when commenting on the complaints made by the Democrats was an attempt to show that the Democrats had approved of such action when the suspension of the writ was included in the fugitive slave law. Holt, Bowen and Wilcox of the Janesville Gazette in commenting on this point wondered if the reason for the silence of the Democrats on the fugitive slave law was to be found "...in the fact that in one case it protects the interest of the slaveholders and in the other it is necessary to the preservation of the government?"⁴⁰

In late September 1863, Lincoln declared the writ suspended in all the northern states on military matters. The Democrats again attacked the administration. Mark Pomeroy of the La Crosse Democrat felt this action of the President was "...a suspension of the judiciary by the executive... there does not remain a single guarantee for civil rights and freedom."⁴¹ J. C. Bunner of the Beaver Dam Argus pictured the action as a partisan political move. The Argus stated, "...it is supposed that it is for the benefit of the opposition in the fall elections."⁴² George Read of the Oshkosh Courier cited the great English jurist Blackstone in condemning the action of the President. Blackstone, said

⁴⁰Janesville Gazette, October 1, 1862.

⁴¹La Crosse Democrat, September 20, 1863.

⁴²Beaver Dam Argus, September 23, 1863.

the Courier, was of the opinion that the most dangerous weapon of arbitrary government is confinement of any person without accusation or trial.⁴³

The Republican papers came to the defense of the President immediately. Holt, Bowen and Wilcox of the Janesville Gazette stated that the writ had only been suspended in cases "...connected with the army and navy of the United States." The Gazette also recognized the constitutionality of the action by stating, "The necessity and propriety of the suspension of this writ is expressly recognized in the Constitution and Congress at its late session authorized the President to suspend it...."⁴⁴ The Racine Advocate felt that all patriotic people would be glad to hear of this action because it would stop the attempts of the copperheads to hold up the war.⁴⁵

The papers of Wisconsin dropped mention of the subject of the suspension of the writ of habeas corpus after this last major flurry against such action although there were a few sporadic attacks made by the Democrats but no serious or sustained attack was again made.

The Wisconsin papers became interested in the election that would take place in November of 1864 as early as March

⁴³Oshkosh Courier, September 25, 1863.

⁴⁴Janesville Gazette, September 22, 1863.

⁴⁵Racine Advocate, September 23, 1863.

of that year. But no great interest developed until the Radical Republican convention in late May of 1864. The Campaign of 1864 got underway when this convention met at Cleveland. The Republican papers opposed the Radical break from the party. J. M. Bundy of the Milwaukee Sentinel felt that his convention was just a farce. The Sentinel stated "... this convention is a sort of mass meeting, easily led by weak but persistent men."⁴⁶ The convention nominated John C. Fremont as its candidate for the Presidency and John Cochrane of New York for the Vice-presidency. Fremont took his nomination seriously and violently criticized the Lincoln administration.⁴⁷ The nomination of Fremont brought on an attack against him by the Republican papers of Wisconsin. Rufus Crosby of the Dodgeville Chronicle termed the convention a "serio-comic sort of affair, convention of no-bodies.... Its fruits are the nomination of John C. Fremont for President and John Cochrane of New York, for Vice President."⁴⁸

On June 7, 1864, the regular Republican convention at Baltimore renominated Lincoln for President and Andrew Johnson of Tennessee for Vice President.⁴⁹ The Republican newspapers of Wisconsin greeted this news with unbounded

⁴⁶Milwaukee Sentinel, June 1, 1864.

⁴⁷Randall, J. G., The Civil War and Reconstruction, p. 612.

⁴⁸Dodgeville Chronicle, June 9, 1864.

⁴⁹Randall, J. C., The Civil War and Reconstruction, p. 614.

enthusiasm. Reid and Hughes of the Dodge County Citizen called the nomination of Lincoln the expressed wish of a large majority of the loyal people of the nation. They said the convention was wise in nominating Johnson as Vice President because he would have an immense weight in bringing the South back into the Union.⁵⁰ A. C. Sandford of the Racine Advocate felt that the loyal people of the United States determined the nomination of Lincoln long before the convention assembled. The Advocate said, "Abraham Lincoln's name stands endeared to every patriotic heart in the land, for the unswerving fidelity, honesty of purpose and unflinching patriotism with which...he has administered the affairs of the nation during the bloody struggle of the past three years."⁵¹

The Democratic papers matched the Republican enthusiasm for Lincoln with a vicious attack on the President. The Wisconsin Patriot accused Lincoln of hand-picking the delegates for the Baltimore convention in order to assure his nomination. The Patriot stated, "The convention represented the power and patronage of the present administration."⁵² S. A. Pease of the Marquette Express made the same type of attack on the administration. The Express called the members

⁵⁰Dodge County Citizen, June 9, 1864.

⁵¹Racine Advocate, June 15, 1864.

⁵²Wisconsin Patriot, June 9, 1864.

of the convention "...a pack of unprincipled thieves... organized for the purpose of running and managing the machinery of this government; and the history of the past three years is a complete vindication of the charge here made."⁵³ "Brick" Pomeroy of the La Crosse Democrat shortly after Lincoln's nomination began to carry a picture of Lincoln with the caption "The widow-maker of the 19th century and Republican candidate for the presidency." The Democrat carried this picture and caption until the election in November.⁵⁴

The Democratic convention did not meet until late August of 1864. This convention represented a union of war and peace Democrats and to please the war Democrats McClellan was nominated for the presidency on August 29, 1864. As a sop to the peace Democrats, Pendleton of Ohio was nominated for Vice President.⁵⁵ The Democratic papers came out strongly in favor of McClellan. George Paul of the Milwaukee News stated that McClellan's nomination "will be hailed throughout the country with the most enthusiastic feelings of hope and joy...."⁵⁶ Charles Swayze of the Wisconsin Pinery at Stevens Point also eulogized McClellan by saying, "The Demo-

⁵³Marquette Express, June 15, 1864.

⁵⁴La Crosse Democrat, June 1864-November 1864.

⁵⁵Randall, J. G., The Civil War and Reconstruction, p. 619.

⁵⁶Milwaukee News, September 1, 1864.

cratic National Convention, in obedience to the manifest wishes of the great body of the Democracy of the Union, have presented the gallant, chivalrous and patriotic McClellan for President and the gifted and noble Pendleton for Vice President."⁵⁷ John Hume of the Chilton Times referring to the popularity of McClellan stated, "...the enthusiastic demonstrations with which his name has everywhere been received, are proof of the most positive character that the voice of the people has prevailed...."⁵⁸

The Republican editors attacked McClellan with as much contempt for him as the Democrats had for Lincoln. J. N. Brundage of the Wood County Reporter at Grand Rapids (now Wisconsin Rapids) stated, "George B. McClellan was nominated on the first ballot as the nominee of the peace men for President." The Reporter also wondered who would get the most electoral votes, McClellan or Fremont. They were sure that Lincoln would win the election.⁵⁹ Rufus Crosby of the Dodgeville Chronicle said the worst feature of the nomination of McClellan on a peace platform is that its success depends on the defeat of the Union armies.⁶⁰ A. Paine of the Beloit

⁵⁷Wisconsin Pinery, September 8, 1864.

⁵⁸Chilton Times, September 10, 1864.

⁵⁹Wood County Reporter (Grand Rapids), September 1, 1864.

⁶⁰Dodgeville Chronicle, September 8, 1864.

Journal felt that McClellan was a traitor to the country for accepting the Chicago nomination "upon a treasonable platform especially since he was a General in the Union army."⁶¹

After the reaction to McClellan's nomination was spent, the Wisconsin newspapers of both parties, eulogized their particular candidate and deprecated the Opposition's choice. The Republicans tried to show Lincoln as the savior of the Union and McClellan as its worst enemy. A. C. Sandford of the Racine Advocate reported on an editorial published in the Charleston Courier which according to the Advocate said, that southern success in the war would insure the success of McClellan and if the rebel forces failed McClellan would be defeated. The Advocate said such a statement by a rebel newspaper was "...incontrovertible evidence that the success of Lincoln is the death knell of the Confederacy and the ruin of all rebel hopes. "Then," said the Advocate, "is there any doubt on the part of any patriot which candidate he should vote for."⁶² A. Paine of the Beloit Journal followed this same line of argument but he also implied that all Democrats were traitors. The Journal stated, "...it is a fact that cannot be denied, that among those who fervently wish the election of McClellan and the defeat of Lincoln are to be found the bitterest enemies of our Government."⁶³

⁶¹Beloit Journal, September 22, 1864.

⁶²Racine Advocate, October 5, 1864.

⁶³Beloit Journal, October 20, 1864.

The Democratic papers tried to make a hero out of McClellan and show that his election would bring peace and the election of Lincoln would mean a continuance of the despotic government than in existence and would also mean the war would continue for four more years. Sam Ryan of the Appleton Crescent commenting on the merits of the two candidates said, the election of Lincoln would mean a continuance of the war with ultimate disunion and a continuance of despotic government but the election of McClellan would give the United States liberty, an end of the war and the reestablishment of the Union.⁶⁴ John Herron of the Mineral Point Home Intelligencer felt the vote for Lincoln would sanction the violation of the laws and constitution, a continuance of the odious draft, and for every man that voted for Lincoln a pledge of his life and property and the continuance of the war until slavery was abolished by conquering the south, which, according to the Home Intelligencer would mean at least another four years.⁶⁵ "Jere" Crowley of the Manitowoc Pilot in supporting McClellan stated, "If you would have peace restored on the basis of the old Union of independent states, and have the army of office-holders, who are eating out their substance, scattered--you must vote for George B. McClellan."⁶⁶

⁶⁴Appleton Crescent, September 3, 1864.

⁶⁵Home Intelligencer, October 1, 1864.

⁶⁶Manitowoc Pilot, November 4, 1864.

On November 8, 1864, the people of the Union states went to the polls and reelected Lincoln for another four years. The Republican papers of Wisconsin saw in this result a great victory and a continuance of the war until the Union was reestablished instead of immediate peace and the break-up of the Union which a Democratic victory would have meant. Atwood and Rublee of the Wisconsin State Journal were overjoyed by the results of the election. The Journal called, the results of the election "a glorious victory which meant the preservation of the Union."⁶⁷ J. M. Bundy of the Milwaukee Sentinel felt the election of Lincoln meant "the (maintenance) of the...Union, the authority of the Constitution and the will of the American people constitutionally expressed...."⁶⁸ N. B. Moody and Samuel Train editors of the Boscobel National Broad-Axe said, "The triumphant reelection of Abraham Lincoln to a second term of the Presidency, is the strongest assertion the American people could make of their determination to subdue the present and all future attempts to overthrow their government."⁶⁹

The Democratic papers felt that the election of Lincoln meant continuance of the war and despotic government for four

⁶⁷Wisconsin State Journal, November 9, 1864.

⁶⁸Milwaukee Sentinel, November 10, 1864.

⁶⁹The National Broad-Axe (Boscobel), November 16, 1864.

more years. Yet they felt that the people had made the decision so they had to abide by it until they had another chance in a later election to get the Republicans out of office. Sam Ryan of the Appleton Crescent in referring to the election of Lincoln said, "So we are to have four more years of war...(but) the verdict of the people is law, and we can stand it if the(y) can."⁷⁰ Mark Pomeroy of the LaCrosse Democrat thought that this might be the last free election in the United States. The Democrat stated, "Election is over--we fear for the last time in this country, but we hope for the best."⁷¹ William Merrell of the Prairie du Chien Courier reported that the election of Lincoln meant the continuance of the war and the complete submission to all his violations of constitutional liberty, but the people would eventually rise against the tyranny and force the administration from power.⁷²

A factor which was important in the election of Lincoln in 1864, was his proclamation of amnesty. The leniency of his policy appealed to the people. The proclamation did not create much excitement amongst the newspapers of Wisconsin, especially the Democratic papers. The Republican papers did hail it as the answer to all the attacks on the administra-

⁷⁰Appleton Crescent, November 12, 1864.

⁷¹La Crosse Democrat, November 10, 1864.

⁷²Prairie du Chien Courier, November 24, 1864.

tion of despotism and that the war was a war of extermination. Train and Moody of the Crawford County Standard Bearer at Prairie du Chien in referring to the attacks on the administration and President Lincoln stated that the, "Amnesty Proclamation refuted the charges of tyranny which the democratic papers accused President Lincoln of exercising. The Amnesty Proclamation showed rather the leniency of the President."⁷³ There was some opposition from the Democratic newspapers to the provision in the proclamation that provided that at the time when one-tenth of the population of a state took the oath of allegiance they could organize a state government. The Democratic papers said this meant that a minority of only ten per cent of the people could control the other ninety per cent. The Wisconsin State Journal conceded that such a condition could occur but said the Journal "Very well, we are in favor of having loyal men control rebels and traitors."⁷⁴

The Democratic papers of Wisconsin did not pay much attention to the proclamation. But there were a few Democratic editorials written. Carpenter and Hyder of the Wisconsin Patriot had an editorial on the proclamation in which the Patriot stated that because the rebels in order

⁷³Crawford County Standard Bearer, (Prairie du Chien) April 29, 1864.

⁷⁴Wisconsin State Journal, March 1, 1864.

to become citizens had to support all the proclamations Lincoln might make, meant "the rebels would be coming in blind," because who could tell what Lincoln might think of next.⁷⁵

Reconstruction in general caused more comment in the Wisconsin papers than Lincoln's Amnesty Proclamation, especially in the Democratic papers. William Merrell of the Prairie du Chien Courier felt the Radical Republican concept of Reconstruction would allow European countries to recognize the Confederacy. The Courier stated, "to admit...this position in order to get a reconstruction of our government, the Confederate states are entitled to be recognized by the nations of Europe." But Merrell felt that this was not at all true and the southern states only had to send their representative to Congress and vote in Union elections to again be in the Union.⁷⁶ Edward Beeson of the Fond du Lac Saturday Reporter had the same idea as to the relation of the seceding states to the Union. The Reporter referred to a letter which they claimed General Sherman had written on Georgia's return to the Union, in which the General was supposed to have said, "Whenever the people of Georgia quit the rebellion, elect members of Congress and Senators, and these take their seats, the State of Georgia will have resumed her

⁷⁵Wisconsin Patriot, December 18, 1863.

⁷⁶Prairie du Chien Courier, April 7, 1864.

functions in the Union."⁷⁷

The Republican papers violently disagreed with this position and claimed that when the southern states passed their ordinances of secession, they automatically destroyed their loyal state governments. But many of the Republican papers did not agree with the Radical Republican view, that Congress should establish territorial governments for the seceded states; they agreed with Lincoln's policy as stated in the Amnesty Proclamation. T. L. Terry of the Berlin Courant supported Lincoln's position. The Courant stated that the south would solve the problem by agreeing to come back into the Union under the Amnesty Proclamation. But said the Courant before the government allowed any state back into the Union, slavery should be abolished in that state.⁷⁸ J. M. Bundy of the Milwaukee Sentinel felt the reconstruction of the south should be done by the military generals. In an editorial supporting this position the Sentinel said, "In our opinion the work of reconstruction will not be accomplished by Congress, but must be the result of wise policy on the part of our generals commanding in the conquered districts."⁷⁹

⁷⁷The Saturday Reporter, January 28, 1865.

⁷⁸Berlin City Courant, January 28, 1864.

⁷⁹Milwaukee Sentinel, December 15, 1864.

An issue which met more opposition from the Democratic papers of Wisconsin than the reconstruction issue was the passage of the bill by Congress which was to become the thirteenth amendment. To the Democrats this was the abolishment of one of their greatest principles; that is the right of the states to control their domestic institutions. Gerrit Thorn of the Jefferson Banner tried to uphold this principle by commenting that the Democratic party could never concede to Congress the authority to abolish slavery in the states. The Banner stated, "The Democratic party has some respect for the right of the states that form this Union, and to subvert and destroy these reserved powers of the states... we believe will prove as much a destruction of the Union and a subversion of our form of government as will the treason of the South should it prove successful. The treason of the South and this abolitionism of the North are both the conceptions of fanatics and both tend to the destruction of our government."⁸⁰ George Paul of the Milwaukee News stated the south itself was about to abolish slavery so the proposed amendment would prove to be inoperative. The News felt that the status of the negro would not be changed by any legislation. It would take a slow development on the part of the negro to alter his situation.⁸¹

⁸⁰Jefferson Banner, February 15, 1865.

⁸¹Milwaukee News, January 17, 1865.

The Republicans believed that the election of November 1864, had given them the mandate of the people to put through the necessary measures to abolish slavery in all the states. Lute Taylor of the Prescott Journal in writing of a speech made by Lincoln in which the President said a constitutional amendment prohibiting slavery was an assured fact said, "In this respect he but reiterates the voice of the people, as expressed in the late election and in this case the voice of the people is the voice of God."⁸²

When the bill finally passed through both houses of Congress the Republican newspapers greeted the news with great enthusiasm. George and Edward Bliss of the Mineral Point Tribune when they heard that the amendment had passed stated, "We thank God that in this nineteenth century our government is to become not only free in name but free in reality."⁸³ S. W. Smith of the Manitowoc Tribune commented on the reaction of the people to the news. The Tribune said, "Rejoicings over the result have been very great...."⁸⁴

The political issues which appeared in the Wisconsin newspapers did not lead to any unanimity between the two parties. A great deal of partisanship was shown on both sides. The Democrats did have a right to criticize the

⁸²The Prescott Journal, December 17, 1864.

⁸³Mineral Point Tribune, February 8, 1865.

⁸⁴Manitowoc Tribune, February 8, 1865.

arbitrary action of the President in suspending the writ of habeas corpus but the Republicans felt that any criticism of the policies of the administration was traitorous and branded any person or group who did criticize it as copperheads.

Much of the Democratic criticism was on purely a partisan basis and instead of being constructive criticism which would have aided the war effort became destructive and often hindered the action of the administration in conducting the war.

CHAPTER V

The Military Controversies

From the political issues we turn to the military factors which became controversies in the Wisconsin newspapers. The issues to be covered are the reaction of the Wisconsin editors to the generalships of George B. McClellan and John C. Fremont and the policy of conscription. The reactions to McClellan and Fremont on the part of Wisconsin newspapers representing both parties was at first favorable, but when there was a question, as to their capabilities the papers followed their respective party lines. Conscription was also a big issue among the military controversies. On this question the party lines were quite well established before it became an issue, so the fight started almost from its inception.

In July 1861 President Lincoln placed General John C. Fremont in charge of the Department of the West which was composed of Kentucky, Illinois, Missouri and Kansas.¹ General Fremont had been Republican candidate for President in 1856 and had polled a large vote so he was recognized as a

¹Burgess, J. W., The Civil War and the Constitution, p. 236.

power in the party. Through the solicitations of many prominent Republicans, Lincoln made him a Major General and put him in charge of the Western Department.² When General Fremont was put in command of this army the Wisconsin newspapers had very little to say outside of stating it as a fact. Reporting on the appointment of the General the Fox Lake Gazette stated, "Major-General Fremont has received his commission. He is to command the western division of the Grand Army with his headquarters at Cairo."³ Comment on Fremont remained at this cryptic level until the issuance of his controversial proclamation which declared martial law and freed the slaves of all persons in the State of Missouri taking up arms against the United States. Congress had, by an act passed August 6, 1861, declared all slaves free who were in any kind of military or naval service used against the United States. Neither Congress nor President Lincoln were willing to go any further on this question at this time.⁴ Fremont's proclamation stirred the anti-slavery feeling of the country to its utmost depths and received the commendation of many people. This anti-slavery feeling was reflected in the newspapers of Wisconsin, with the Repub-

²Rhodes, J. F., History of the Civil War, p. 52.

³Fox Lake Gazette, July 18, 1861.

⁴Burgess, J. W., The Civil War and the Constitution, p. 248.

lican papers supporting General Fremont and his proclamation. Nelson Bowerman, editor of the Ripon Times thought Fremont's proclamation would rally European public opinion on the side of the Union. The Times stated, "The proclamation (will) produce a prodigious influence in England, France and Germany."⁵ David McBride of the Sparta Herald hoped that the administration would not interfere with the action of Fremont.⁶

Fremont did not make an official report regarding his proclamation. Lincoln learned of it through the newspapers.⁷ Lincoln promptly disavowed the confiscation and emancipation parts of Fremont's order. He ordered Fremont to modify them and to show leniency as to martial law. Lincoln's policy on this question was dictated by the position of the border states, he was not sure if they were going to stay in the Union or not and did not want to antagonize them in any way. The Republican papers of Wisconsin although they did not condemn the President they did support Fremont. S. S. Luce of the Galesville Transcript declared, "...while we heartily approve of Gen. Fremont's proclamation, of course it is right that he should obey his superiors and act in accordance with his orders."⁸ T. L. Terry of the Berlin Courant lauded

⁵Ripon Weekly Times, September 13, 1861.

⁶Sparta Herald, September 13, 1861.

⁷Rhodes, J. F., History of the Civil War, p. 51.

⁸Galesville Transcript, September 20, 1861.

Lincoln for other actions he had taken but felt that Lincoln's order to Fremont to modify his proclamation was "...the most discouraging dispatch which has reached us since the inauguration of President Lincoln...."⁹

The only real approval of the President's action came from the Democratic papers. Their reason for supporting the President was that they believed such a proclamation was an encroachment upon the rights of the states. The Democrats felt that only the states had the right to decide if its citizens could or could not own slaves and Fremont's proclamation was by this standard unconstitutional. D. C. Ballou editor of Watertown Democrat took the Democratic position but also attacked the Republican newspapers for condemning the President. The Democrat stated, "...the executive is right and the General wrong....This is a war for the support of the constitution, and it certainly does not become the Administration to violate the principles on which it asks the people to aid it in its efforts to save the Government from destruction."¹⁰

Charges of incompetency as a General and corruption in obtaining supplies made Lincoln decide to remove Fremont from his command. Lincoln had sent a committee to St. Louis to investigate the charges against Fremont. The report of this committee was very unfavorable to the General. The

⁹Berlin City Courant, September 24, 1861.

¹⁰Watertown Democrat, September 19, 1861.

Wisconsin papers could not know of the confidential letters and reports that justified Lincoln's order to remove Fremont, so they played up their hero as a great martyr. Frank Leland and S. F. Bennett editors of the Elkhorn Independent when they heard of Fremont's removal stated, "We have heard it with sorrow--for we firmly believe that no man in the nation has suffered so much calumny as John C. Fremont....We hope that his removal will in no way retard the success of the Union cause in Missouri."¹¹ A. M. Thomson of the Hartford Home League also took this position. Thomson stated, "The traitors both North and South, will no doubt be highly gratified with the removal of Gen. Fremont from the Department of the West...." Thomson went on to say he did not want to find fault with the administration for its action but to him and to all the "loyal" people this looked like a crime and when the war was over the administration would have to answer for taking such a step. Thomson was sure Fremont would go down in history as a great general who had been wronged.¹²

Some of the Republican papers of Wisconsin defended Lincoln for taking this action. They felt the President must have had good reasons for removing Fremont or he would not have done it. N. O. Perkins of the Beloit Journal stated, "We make the announcement of the removal of General

¹¹Elkhorn Independent, November 8, 1861.

¹²The Home League (Hartford), November 9, 1861.

Fremont with regret but believe that the administration would not have taken so important a step without good grounds, we acquiesce in their decision."¹³ J. A. Somerby of the Viroqua Times also used this argument by stating, "That the President in this action has been influenced by any other consideration than the public good we have not the least idea....We have no doubt, as painful as it may be to come to this conclusion, that the Administration had abundant reason for believing him unequal to his command."¹⁴ Flavius J. Mills of the Sheboygan Journal felt Fremont "...was not the right man in the right place. The Administration could not in justice to the immense responsibilities in the present crisis, have done otherwise than remove him."¹⁵

The reaction of the Wisconsin newspapers was not particularly partisan but was based on the principles and prejudices of the individual editors. Some of the Wisconsin papers tried to make a martyr of Fremont for as they thought, a gross injustice on him; while others supported the administration in its action because they believed Fremont was removed for good reasons.

Meanwhile in the eastern part of the country another General was receiving a great deal of acclamation. This was

¹³The Beloit Journal and Courier, November 7, 1861.

¹⁴The Northwestern Times (Viroqua), November 13, 1861.

¹⁵Sheboygan Journal, November 19, 1861.

George B. McClellan the commander of the Department of the East. When the Union forces met defeat at Bull Run, a great deal of confusion and disorganization resulted. The people and the administration lost faith in General McDowell who had been the commander of the Army of Virginia. Lincoln, although he did not want to dismiss General McDowell, was forced by the pressure of political opinion and public sentiment to remove him. The choice of a successor to McDowell, fell on Major-General McClellan who had been very successful in forcing the rebels out of western Virginia. Most of the Wisconsin newspapers met the news of McClellan's appointment with enthusiasm and hearty approval. The Wisconsin State Journal stated, "The best part of the news is that McClellan is to supersede McDowell. It is of the utmost importance that all men should have all confidence in their commander. There is no man except Gen. Scott, in whom the army will repose the same trust as in McClellan."¹⁶

McClellan's task of reorganizing the demoralized army was tremendous. Out of the confusion following Bull Run McClellan was to reorganize the army, gather new war material and build defenses around Washington. He was able to accomplish this tremendous task in three months.¹⁷ The Wisconsin papers reacted very favorably to McClellan during the first

¹⁶Wisconsin State Journal, July 23, 1861.

¹⁷McMaster, History of the People of the United States during Lincoln's Administration, pp. 183-184.

months of his command. C. Latham Sholes of the Milwaukee Sentinel lauded McClellan by saying, "McClellan is not only a great soldier, but an amiable man...."¹⁸ S. W. Smith, editor of the Manitowoc Tribune in commenting on McClellan's feat of reorganizing the army said, "...he (McClellan) knows how to 'organize victory'...."¹⁹ In a later editorial Smith again commenting on McClellan stated, "Twenty-four hours after the arrival of Gen. McClellan, Washington was revolutionized...no longer is the ribald jest, the fierce oath, the drunken leer, and the staggering gait known in the Capitol... all this has been the result of a few firm words from... George B. McClellan, the youthful Napoleon of America."²⁰

One Wisconsin editor, John Walworth of the Richland County Observer, while not objecting to McClellan, had his doubts as to his capabilities to handle such responsible duties. The Observer stated, "Gen. McClellan must now be active and display some energy and generalship or he will go down in the estimation of the country faster than he arose....We confess, we have our fears, but still hope on."²¹

¹⁸Milwaukee Sentinel, August 19, 1861.

¹⁹Manitowoc Tribune, August 1, 1861.

²⁰Ibid., August 16, 1861.

²¹Richland County Observer (Richland Center), November 12, 1861.

The most marked characteristic of McClellan's command during the first five months was its inactivity. During these months McClellan got the support of the Wisconsin papers but by the end of 1861 the inaction of the troops was being attacked. Some Wisconsin papers defended McClellan by saying it was part of his plan. C. L. Sholes of the Milwaukee Sentinel in defending the delay stated McClellan was "progressing in the manner his own judgment tells him is the best, he pay no attention to the clamor and entreaties of those whose impatience is greater than their judgment."²² S. A. Pease of the Marquette Express at Oxford also approved of McClellan's policies by saying, "Gen. McClellan is proving himself worthy of the trust confided in him, by refusing to be coerced or influenced by public opinion."²³ Edward Beeson editor of the Fond du Lac Saturday Reporter, blamed the abolition papers of the country for the attack upon the General. The Reporter asserted, "The strong abolition papers of the country have been for some time vilifying Gen. McClellan." The abolitionists wanted only the abolishment of slavery stated the Reporter, even if it meant the overthrow of the government, but, "...we are fighting to restore the Union, not fighting a crusade against slavery."²⁴ Mark

²²Milwaukee Sentinel, December 26, 1861.

²³Marquette Express, January 4, 1862.

²⁴Saturday Reporter, March 22, 1862.

Pomeroy of the La Crosse Democrat blamed the politicians at Washington for trying "to embarass the movements of Gen. McClellan and render less successful his well laid plans for the defeat and capture of the rebel army in Virginia...."²⁵ Jeremiah Crowley of the Manitowoc Pilot was of the opinion that McClellan would go down in history "as one of the greatest Generals of the age."²⁶

By March 1862 many of the papers of Wisconsin were becoming annoyed with the inaction of the Army of the Potomac. J. C. Keeney of the Fort Atkinson Standard said, "Feeling at the capitol is pretty strong, condemning him (McClellan) for letting the rebels (sic) get away from Manassas without firing a gun. Some pronounce him a 'dead failure'. How far this is deserved, we are not competent to judge, but our own feeling is that McClellan deserves it all."²⁷ T. L. Terry, editor of the Berlin Courant complained of McClellan's action at Manassas, which he pronounced a disastrous failure, but he felt that General McClellan might have a plan of attack of which this was a part. But, said the Courant, in order to deal the "final blow to the rebellion" McClellan had to act immediately.²⁸

²⁵La Crosse Democrat, April 23, 1862.

²⁶Manitowoc Pilot, May 9, 1862.

²⁷Fort Atkinson Standard, March 20, 1862.

²⁸Berlin Courant, March 27, 1862.

During the summer of 1862 the opposition from the Republican newspapers to General McClellan became much stronger. A. M. Thomson of the Hartford Home League in referring to McClellan's conduct of the campaign in Virginia charged, "McClellan has made a most signal and disastrous failure of the Va. Campaign...."²⁹ The Wisconsin State Journal reported rumors of the resignation of McClellan. The Journal said, that if McClellan wanted to resign he should be allowed to do it. "The country," the Journal declared, "can afford to dispense with his services in the future."³⁰

When the news of McClellan's removal reached the Wisconsin newspapers in November, 1862, the editors followed strict party lines in their comments on the event. The Republican papers condemned McClellan and upheld the administration while the Democratic papers lauded McClellan and attacked the administration. The Republicans now stated that McClellan was a poor general and not good enough for the job as commander. The Wisconsin State Journal stated McClellan "...possessed neither genius nor enterprise if he is not deficient in yet more vital respects, and he should have been removed at least nine months earlier."³¹ A. C. Sandford of the Racine Advocate felt that the removal of

²⁹Home League, July 28, 1862.

³⁰Wisconsin State Journal, August 4, 1862.

³¹Ibid., November 10, 1862.

McClellan would mean that the Union forces could now win the war. The Advocate stated, "Thank God, the President has finally...removed two of the obstacles in the way of Union victories, Buell and McClellan,...we may now reasonably hope to soon hear of a forward movement in earnest."³² N. O. Perkins of the Beloit Journal and Courier also was elated when he received the news of McClellan's removal. The Journal and Courier stated, "It is with no small degree of pleasure and gratification that we announce this week the removal of Gen. McClellan from the command of the army of Va...."³³

The Democratic papers hailed McClellan as a great man and soldier. They felt that McClellan had been removed unjustly and that he was the victim of abolitionists and politicians for selfish reasons only and not for the good of the country. They were also sure that the administration would have to put him back in command as they had done before when he had been removed in favor of General Pope. John Herron editor of the Mineral Point Home Intelligencer said that McClellan was too good a man and soldier, "to be controlled and directed by such men as governed the President... These men valued their own interests and the success of their fanatical schemes more than they did the Union, the consti-

³²Racine Advocate, November 12, 1862.

³³The Journal and Courier, November 13, 1862.

tution or the country. When they found that McClellan opposed their plans they determined to get rid of him and in this they were successful."³⁴ Henry Ryan of the Appleton Crescent felt McClellan was maligned and abused without any cause. The Crescent stated, "The abolitionists were afraid he would become the hero whom the people would desire to honor with their choicest gifts. In other words, these bigoted fanatics saw in him a future President, so they resolved to get him out of the public eye so he could not achieve greatness."³⁵ "Jere" Crowley of the Manitowoc Pilot felt the action taken against McClellan was the result of the recent elections which had gone against the administration and that the elections had approved and sustained the policy of General McClellan. The Pilot continued by saying, "...he (McClellan) had been removed before and had been recalled and now he would again be recalled because, the administration cannot afford to remove him."³⁶ C. D. Robinson of the Green Bay Advocate did not think McClellan should have been removed and that he might be recalled. "But," stated the Advocate, "we do not care whether he was removed or not as long as the best interests are subserved thereby."³⁷

³⁴The Home Intelligencer, March 19, 1864.

³⁵The Appleton Crescent, May 16, 1863.

³⁶Manitowoc Pilot, November 13, 1862.

³⁷Green Bay Advocate, November 13, 1862.

McClellan's appointment as commander of the Eastern department was met with great enthusiasm by the newspapers representing both parties. During the period of inaction of the army the split in opinion becomes apparent, the Republican papers began their opposition. By the time of McClellan's removal the Wisconsin newspapers had split into two camps along party lines, the Republican opposing McClellan and lauding his removal and the Democrats upholding him and blaming his removal on partisan politics and the machinations of the abolitionists. Partisan politics is very obvious in both Democratic and Republican editorial written on McClellan's removal.

Another phase of the military issues which met with much partisanship in the Wisconsin newspapers was the policy of conscription which the Lincoln administration inaugurated during the Civil War. The Democrats felt that conscription was unconstitutional and that it was the function of the states to raise the army by calling out the militia. The Republicans supported the administration by claiming that the draft was a military necessity.

The reaction of the Wisconsin newspapers to the draft followed these party lines. The Republicans thought that the draft was a fair system of getting men into the army. William Cramer of the Milwaukee Wisconsin felt that the best way to fill up the army was in this manner. Volunteering according to the Wisconsin had fallen off heavily and "draft-

ing is the fairest and justest policy for all classes, for then the rich as well as the poor must take their chances by lot."³⁸ James Bintliff and Egver E. Carr of the Monroe Sentinel said, "...nothing has created so much excitement as the action of the War department in relation to drafting." But the Sentinel felt that the loyal communities in Wisconsin would receive the order with satisfaction that it evinced determination of the government to bring the war to a quick close. On this point the Sentinel stated, "Loyal men are gratified with the order and are perfectly willing to take their chances...."³⁹

The Democratic newspapers attacked the draft on the basis that married men would now be taken in the army and could not take care of their families, as well as on the constitutionality of the draft. J. C. Bunner of the Beaver Dam Argus used this argument. The Argus stated, that a man with a family should not be drafted because it would create such a hardship in the drafted man's family.⁴⁰ The Wisconsin Patriot said, "If a man of a family freely enlists, he of course has an opportunity to make some provision for the maintenance of those dependent on him. But to force men to leave their families on five days notice is a hardship."⁴¹

³⁸The Daily Wisconsin, August 5, 1862.

³⁹Monroe Sentinel, August 13, 1862.

⁴⁰Beaver Dam Argus, August 8, 1862.

⁴¹Wisconsin Patriot, December 2, 1862.

The Republican papers did not have much to say on the draft until the disturbances in Wisconsin caused by the draft that occurred in December 1862. Organizations for the purpose of resisting the draft had been formed in Manitowoc, Milwaukee and Port Washington. In Manitowoc and Port Washington these organizations got out of hand and rioted. The rioters did not just try to stop the draft but also destroyed some property. Governor Salomon was forced to call out the militia to quell the troubles. About 80 men were arrested at Port Washington for being involved in the riot. They were tried and sentenced either to jail or to serve for a period in the army. Neither Republican or Democratic newspapers condoned the action of the rioters but the Republican papers now had a good issue to use against the Democrats. The Republicans could now blame the Democrats for being responsible for the riots because they had opposed the draft so violently. The Republican papers felt that the men who incited these acts should be arrested and punished as well as the rioters who had been caught in Port Washington, to the Republicans it was the Democrats who had incited the riots. The Republican papers said the actual participants were ignorant and deluded by a set of cowardly leaders. S. W. Smith of the Manitowoc Tribune said, "The men who endeavor to incite others to acts of violence are the enemies of the people....Too cowardly to act themselves they lead their poor dupes on, until danger comes, then they leave

them to shift for themselves...they should be held up to the public contempt, and when detected should be severely punished."⁴² C. Latham Sholes of the Milwaukee Sentinel felt that the riots had only been an excuse for some people to vent their animosities toward other people. The Milwaukee Sentinel stated, "the excuse of the draft was taken advantage of to gratify many slumbering hatreds...."⁴³

The Democratic papers defended themselves by laying the blame on both parties. J. C. Bunner of the Beaver Dam Argus in referring to the riots and trying to defend the Democratic party against the attacks made by the Republicans said, "The mob does not reflect more on one party than another, the crowd having been composed of both parties." The Argus did not like the draft but felt it was a law and laws, no matter how much they were disliked, must be obeyed.⁴⁴ C. D. Robinson of the Green Bay Advocate took a very objective view of the Port Washington affair. He also used the argument that the Democrats should not get the sole blame for the riots and that the disturbances were caused by a misunderstanding, The Advocate stated "...the riots were not the result of any political party. The trouble was the result of ignorance and misunderstanding of the draft. The participants had a vague idea that injustice had been done somewhere and some-

⁴²Manitowoc Tribune, November 11, 1862.

⁴³Milwaukee Sentinel, November 13, 1862.

⁴⁴Beaver Dam Argus, November 14, 1862.

how." In order to show that ignorance of the draft was the principal cause the Advocate stated that all the prominent men in Port Washington used their influence against violence and the principal enmity was directed against the draft commissioner as if he were personally responsible for the draft.⁴⁵

After the excitement of the Wisconsin draft riots dissipated the editors of the Wisconsin newspapers went back to their former positions, but there were no serious arguments presented by either side until the Conscription act of March 3, 1862 passed Congress. Again the Democratic papers attacked the draft and now attacked Congress for passing this abhorrant act. "Jere" Crowley of the Manitowoc Pilot called the act, "The complete overthrow of public liberties. Congress," said the Pilot, "has thought it necessary to give the finishing stroke to its establishment of a military despotism, by removing all checks on the abuse of the enormous monetary and military power with which they have clothed the President." The Pilot feared that there would be no more presidential elections, because President Lincoln could stop them if he wanted to. Congress had taken away all safeguards against abuse of the Conscription Act by the President.⁴⁶ S. A. Pease of the Marquette Express called

⁴⁵Green Bay Advocate, November 20, 1862.

⁴⁶Manitowoc Pilot, March 20, 1863.

the Conscription Act, "a lie, a base lie upon our native and adopted citizens and must be corrected in a legitimate and lawful way." Pease thought that if patriotism was at such a low ebb that the administration had to resort to a draft instead of relying on volunteering, the cause of the Union was in a hopeless state. He blamed the lack of patriotism on the change of war policy by the administration, from a war for restoring the Union to the policy of emancipation. The Express said, "It (the Emancipation Proclamation) was received as the death knell of our cherished government, and looked upon as the winding-sheet of this glorious republic." Pease was of the opinion that proof the present policy was wrong and that it required the use of military force to recruit armies under it.⁴⁷ C. D. Robinson of the Green Bay Advocate who generally supported the administration although he was a Democrat felt that if voluntary enlistments were not sufficient to meet the demands for the army that conscription must be resorted to and "all good and loyal people should submit to and sustain a fair carrying out of the draft."⁴⁸ "Jere" Crowley of the Manitowoc Pilot supported the Democratic party against the attacks made by the Republicans. The Pilot said, "Because the Democrats object to the constitutionality of this law, ...they are constantly

⁴⁷Marquette Express, March 27, 1863.

⁴⁸Green Bay Advocate, April 2, 1863.

accused of being in favor of resisting its enforcement. Our opponents know but little of the spirit of Democracy when they make these charges, for one of the fundamental principles is to obey all laws until by their votes at the ballot-box they secure the repeal of those most obnoxious to liberty and good government."

"While we claim the right to condemn and censure every act of the administration subversive of the constitution, and will at all times so censure and condemn we have but one remedy to correct the evil and that is by ballots."⁴⁹

Soon after the passage of the Conscription Act of 1863 new riots occurred, this time in New York City. The New York riots created a great amount of comment in the Wisconsin newspapers. The Republicans blamed the riots on the Democrats who opposed the policy of the administration. George and Edward Bliss, co-editors of the Mineral Point Tribune stated that the teachings of the copperhead leaders was responsible for the riots in New York. The Tribune claimed that the copperheads had used the draft as an excuse to get "thousands of the most ignorant portion of the inhabitants to murder, plunder and steal."⁵⁰ Edward Beeson of the Fond du Lac Saturday Reporter an independent paper said the southern papers rejoiced over the New York riots and classed

⁴⁹Manitowoc Pilot, April 3, 1863.

⁵⁰Mineral Point Tribune, July 22, 1863.

them as a "great aid from our northern allies the Democrats."⁵¹ The Wisconsin State Journal blamed the Democratic governor of New York for not taking proper action to stop the riots. The Journal said of Governor Seymour, "Governor Seymour through tenderness to 'his friends' fail(ed) to restore order...."⁵²

After the riots had been quelled, Governor Seymour requested the President to declare the draft law suspended in New York until its constitutionality could be tested in the courts. President Lincoln refused Seymour's request but did reduce New York quotas and set up a commission to make a study of the draft in New York, to see if the draft had been fraudulent and disproportionate as Governor Seymour contended.⁵³ The Wisconsin State Journal in commenting on Seymour's request stated, "The President denies the demand of the demagogue Governor of New York. The draft will be enforced." The State Journal did not mention the fact that Lincoln had compromised on Seymour's request.

The Democratic papers of Wisconsin, while not upholding the riots did hold the opinion that the draft in New York had been unfair. S. A. Pease of the Marquette Express stated, "From the secret manner of conducting the draft, and making the opportunity to New York, it was believed

⁵¹The Saturday Reporter, August 8, 1863.

⁵²Wisconsin State Journal, July 16, 1863.

⁵³Randall, J. G., Civil War and Reconstruction, p. 416.

by the people of the city of New York, to be unfair and partial." But the Express was in favor of obeying the law at all times, and felt only peaceful and constitutional means should be used in opposing a law.⁵⁴ Mark Pomeroy of the La Crosse Democrat felt that resistance to the draft as shown in the New York riots was neither "a right or an effective method of escaping the draft." The Democrat felt the constitutionality of the Conscription Act should be tested in the courts and if found "strictly lawful" ought to be obeyed until the people can elect new representatives and procure its modification or repeal in a constitutional way.⁵⁵ The Democrat looked on the New York draft cases as test cases for the nation. The Democrat stated, "...as New York comes out so will the North follow."

"If the draft cannot be enforced there it cannot be enforced anywhere."⁵⁶

The furor in the Wisconsin newspapers over the draft riot in New York died down rapidly so that by the end of July, 1863, no mention of it appears in the Wisconsin papers. From this time to the end of the war there was only intermittent reference to the draft itself. The Democratic papers sporadically denounced it and the Republican papers tried

⁵⁴Marquette Express, July 24, 1863.

⁵⁵La Crosse Democrat, July 15, 1863.

⁵⁶Ibid., July 16, 1863.

to meet their attacks by upholding it.

One attempt by the Democrats to denounce the draft was made in the fall of 1863. The Democrats tried to show that the draft had been a failure. J. C. Bunner of the Beaver Dam Argus said it was "a specimen of all Republican legislation since that party came into power." The Argus felt that everything the Republicans had undertaken had been a failure and that it was time that some other party took its place. To show definite proof that the draft was a failure the Argus cited the rabid Republican paper the Chicago Tribune as saying it was a failure.⁵⁷ George Read of the Oshkosh Courier reprinted an editorial from the Albany, New York Argus which also declared the draft a failure. This article said that distrust of the people had led President Lincoln to abandon "the free system of volunteering for the slave system of a draft. But in spite of the President's arbitrary acts the draft was a failure."⁵⁸

Whenever the President made calls for more troops there was a flurry of excitement in the Democratic papers of the Wisconsin newspapers. The Republican papers came to the defense of the President immediately. Lincoln's call for troops in March, 1864 was misunderstood either consciously or unconsciously by the Democrats. Lincoln had asked for an

⁵⁷Beaver Dam Argus, September 30, 1863.

⁵⁸Oshkosh Courier, October 9, 1863.

additional 200,000 men but had stated he wanted an army of 500,000 men and the Democratic papers construed this as the number of men the President wanted in the new draft. Rufus Crosby editor of the Dodgeville Chronicle defended the President's position. The Chronicle stated "there was considerable misunderstanding in regard to the latest call for 500,000 men. It did not mean 500,000 additional men but only 200,000."⁵⁹ Wheeler and Sibree of the Manitowoc Tribune quoted from an article in the New York Tribune which according to these editors stated that the call was only to keep the armies up to standard.⁶⁰

The two major parties as represented in the Wisconsin press did not show any unanimity of opinion in regard to the draft at any time. The Democratic papers called it unconstitutional from the first time it was suggested, although they did caution the people that it was a law and so must be obeyed. The Republican papers followed the Republican party line and defended the administration for using the draft to get men for the army. If any unanimity can be detected over this question it is that both parties opposed the riots in Wisconsin and New York.

The Wisconsin newspapers did agree on some of the military issues. General Fremont was supported by papers of both parties. The action taken by the administration in

⁵⁹Dodgeville Chronicle, March 17, 1864.

⁶⁰Manitowoc Tribune, July 27, 1864.

regard to Fremont met with more support in the Democratic paper than in the Republican paper. The Democratic papers supported the Administration because they felt that Fremont did not have any right to declare the slaves of southerners free. The Republican papers supported Fremont on this question feeling Fremont was the only man who could win the war. When McClellan first was made commander of the Eastern department of the Union army all of the Wisconsin papers supported him. They felt that McClellan was the leader that was needed to win the war quickly. After McClellan remained inactive for several months many of the papers became dissatisfied with him. By the time that McClellan was removed in November 1862 a definite split became apparent in the Wisconsin papers. The Republican papers were elated at his removal but the Democratic papers regarded it as only a political move. Conscription was attacked by the Democratic papers from the very first, they regarded it as unconstitutional, but they felt that it was a law so they must obey it. The Republican papers felt that the draft was fair and it met the needs of the army far better than volunteering did.

CHAPTER VI

Foreign Policy

The Wisconsin newspapers reacted violently to the threat of European intervention into American affairs. Many times during the period of the Civil War, the fear of European intervention in American affairs caused the newspapers of Wisconsin to concern itself with the attitude foreign nations would take in regard to the secession movement of the south. The northerners were afraid that the European powers would recognize the south.

Editorials in the Wisconsin newspapers referred to the possibility of European intervention before the war actually began, but after the secession movement was underway. The press tried to reassure its readers that the European nations would not interfere in American affairs. The Milwaukee Wisconsin edited by William Cramer printed a report from an American who had been travelling in Canada. The American commented on the attitude that Canada would take in regard to secession. The report said, financially Canada feels the effects of secession as much as it is felt in the states, but "they feel no jealousy or desires for a

disruption of our Confederacy, but are very anxious for a settlement of our domestic troubles."¹ Again on April 1, 1861 in another editorial the Wisconsin in referring to the possibility of England and France intervening in American troubles stated "the secession panic-makers are making a great ado over the report that England and France are about sending a powerful fleet to the Gulf of Mexico, and some croakers see in this simple fact the immediate recognition of the Confederacy." The Wisconsin said England would not recognize the Confederacy unless they first notified the United States of their intention.² Many attempts similar to the one here made by the Wisconsin were made by the Wisconsin newspapers to reassure their readers that England would not intervene in American affairs.

On April 19, 1861, President Lincoln issued a proclamation which laid a blockade on the ports of the Confederate States. This proclamation also declared that if any person under the pretended authority of the Confederate States molested a ship of the United States, thus making any Confederate privateer sailing under a Confederate letter of Marque a pirate as far as the United States was concerned. David Atwood and Horace Rublee editors of the Wisconsin State Journal were skeptical of the ability of the United States to

¹The Daily Wisconsin, February 26, 1861.

²Ibid., April 1, 1861.

enforce the blockade. The Journal asked, "whether our naval force is sufficient to maintain it (the blockade)," but they tried to answer their own question and reassure their readers by saying a certain Captain McDonough of the United States Navy declared that "the naval force at the command of the government is ample for an effective blockade such as might be respected by foreign powers."³ A. C. Sandford of the Racine Advocate, felt that the proclamation of the blockade would "meet with a hearty response from the free-men of the North."⁴

When the war actually began the people of the southern states confidently believed that the demand for cotton by the English textile mills would compel England to recognize the independence of the Confederacy. The Confederate leaders felt sure that England did not have a choice in the matter. The textile factories in England were so dependent on the southern product that the textile workers of Great Britain would revolt if the factories did not obtain southern cotton.⁵ The north worried that cotton might force England if not France into the war.⁶ The Wisconsin papers reflected

³Wisconsin State Journal, April 30, 1861.

⁴Racine Advocate, April 24, 1861.

⁵Rhodes, James F., History of the United States, (New York, 1928), Vol. III, pp. 303-305.

⁶McMaster, John B., A History of the People of the United States during Lincoln's Administration, (New York, 1939), p. 95.

the worries of the north over cotton. C. D. Robinson of the Green Bay Advocate on getting a report that a large fleet of English and French war vessels were being sent to American waters surmised, "with so many million of their (England) population depending on their products they will not submit to the blockade of the Southern ports, and the ruin of their own commerce...without making an effort to say the disaster."⁷ William Cramer of the Milwaukee Wisconsin in a more practical note said, "They (England) can live without Southern cotton by economy in the use of what they have on hand and by obtaining cotton from other countries." The Wisconsin stated that the United States forces would soon take over New Orleans and then the cotton trade could go on as before and the Southern States had made a serious mistake in counting on the active intervention of England and France in behalf of their rebellion.⁸

On May 13, 1861, Queen Victoria issued her Proclamation of Neutrality. The proclamation warned all English subjects not to enlist for service in either the army or navy of either belligerent, nor to fit out ships for privateering, supply munitions of war, or do any other act intended to give assistance of any kind to either belligerent.⁹ When the news of the English Queen's proclamation reached Wisconsin

⁷Green Bay Advocate, April 4, 1861.

⁸The Daily Wisconsin, May 15, 1861.

⁹McMaster, J. B., A History of the People of the United States, pp. 102-103.

it alleviated many of the anxieties of the Wisconsin newspapers. The Green Bay Advocate said, "the apprehensions that have existed...as to the course England would pursue...have been finally and satisfactorily put at rest by the receipt of Queen Victoria's Proclamation...."¹⁰

The Proclamation of the Queen by referring to the Confederacy as a belligerent power, placed any vessels that accepted letters of marque from the Confederate government on the level of privateers. The Lincoln administration insisted that they should be regarded as pirates because the Confederacy was not a legal government.¹¹ S. W. Smith editor of the Manitowoc Tribune could see that many "deplorable consequences...must arise from the revival of buccaneering, and the employment of desperadoes in a quarrel to which they are drawn by the hope of plunder."¹² When a report reached Wisconsin that the British and French Governments would not open their ports to Southern privateers the Monroe Sentinel said, "this action on the part of England and France will be hailed with pleasure by the American people as an evidence that England [will not allow] her friendly relations with this country to be disturbed."¹³

¹⁰Green Bay Advocate, June 6, 1861.

¹¹Rhodes, J. F., History of the United States from the Compromise of 1850, Vol. III, pp. 100-102.

¹²Manitowoc Tribune, July 5, 1861.

¹³Monroe Sentinel, June 19, 1861.

After these early editorial on European intervention the Wisconsin editors paid very little attention to Europe until the news of the capture of James Mason and John Slidell, the newly appointed commissioners from the Southern Confederacy who were to represent the Confederacy in Great Britain and France. The news undoubtedly caused more comment in the Wisconsin newspapers than any other foreign new story during the entire war. When the story of the capture reached the pages of the Wisconsin newspapers, both Republican and Democratic papers greeted the news with great enthusiasm. The Wisconsin State Journal said, "nothing has occurred since the beginning of the war more gratifying than the capture of the traitors Mason and Slidell."¹⁴ C. L. Sholes of the Milwaukee Sentinel stated, "No fact since the beginning of this unholy rebellion, has given the popular heart such sincere joy as the arrest of these men."¹⁵ Several other papers in the state voiced the same sentiments in regard to the affair. One of the Wisconsin newspapers recognized that the seizure of the two representatives of the Confederacy might have been wrong. The Green Bay Advocate under the editorship of Charles Robinson stated, "The despatches are paraded under the heading of 'Glorious News' but we do not

¹⁴Wisconsin State Journal, November 18, 1861.

¹⁵Milwaukee Sentinel, November 19 and 20, 1861.

know whether to rejoice or to wish them back on the steamer from whence they were taken...we would that they were taken in some other way."¹⁶

After commending the action of Commodore Wilkes, the Wisconsin newspapers began to look into the rights of the Commodore to take the commissioners from the British ship Trent. They also began to wonder about the consequences of the act. The Milwaukee Sentinel asked, "...did Commodore Wilkes violate the British flag...." The Sentinel thought "Commodore Wilkes...had a lawful right to search this British steamer unless she is to be regarded as one of the public vessels of war of Great Britain. This will not be claimed."¹⁷ Since the Trent had not run the blockade, the Green Bay Advocate doubted that there was any international law which would "uphold us in stopping an inoffensive vessel in mid-ocean for any such purpose."¹⁸

When England demanded an apology for the seizure of the commissioners and their immediate surrender, the Wisconsin newspapers, showed their dislike of England. The Manitowoc Tribune was sure that "our Government will adhere to its policy of retaining the traitors in spite of the howling of the British Lion."¹⁹ The Wisconsin State Journal said the

¹⁶Green Bay Advocate, November 21, 1861.

¹⁷Milwaukee Sentinel, November 21, 1861.

¹⁸Green Bay Advocate, November 21, 1861.

¹⁹Manitowoc Tribune, December 17, 1861.

English were trying to bully and insult the United States. The Journal stated England imagined that "she could trample upon the Union government with impunity."²⁰ The Racine Advocate had grave doubts that England had made any demands in regard to the surrender of Mason and Slidell. The Advocates said, they had nothing more than reports of these demands and did not believe that the English cabinet would make such a demand since England "Had always contended for the right of search."²¹ In another editorial the Wisconsin State Journal was of the opinion that the English papers had greatly exaggerated the demands of their government in regard to the affair. They were also among those who felt sure that England would not demand either an apology for taking Mason and Slidell or the surrender of the two Confederate Emis-saries because England for many years demanded the right of her navy to search the vessels of neutral nations when she was at war.²²

Carpenter and Hyer of the Wisconsin Patriot took a stand opposite that of the State Journal. The Patriot said, "If Wilkes did violate international law the government should promptly 'put itself into the right' by giving up Mason and Slidell." Yet the Patriot stated, it was useless to back

²⁰Wisconsin State Journal, December 16, 1861.

²¹Racine Advocate, December 18, 1861.

²²Wisconsin State Journal, December 12, 1861.

down because if the English government wanted an excuse to make war on the United States they would find one in some other event.²³

When the English government became insistent that Mason and Slidell should be surrendered and it began to appear that the United States would have to go to war with England if they did not give up the two Confederate Commissioners, the Wisconsin newspapers became very belligerent in their attitude toward England. The Racine Advocate felt that if England should keep insisting upon the surrender of Mason and Slidell no other proof of England's bad intentions would be needed. Such demands as this would be the same as declaring war upon the United States. The Advocate was sure that, "the people of the United States would not be afraid to defend the rights of the government of the United States in spite of the fact that it might cost them thousand of lives and millions of dollars but they would not hesitate to give all they have in defense of the nation."²⁴ Mark Pomeroy the editor of the La Crosse Democrat said, the telegraphic reports received by the Democrat stated that England threatened to declare war against the United States if they did not apologize for the seizure of Mason and Slidell and their aides. In commenting on these reports the Democrat stated, "we should

²³Wisconsin Patriot, December 18, 1861.

²⁴Racine Advocate, December 27, 1861.

be sorry to engage in a war with England now, but if we must fight or retract and back down from what is right, let the war come."²⁵

By late December of 1861 when it began to look as if the administration would be forced to give up Mason and Slidell in order to avoid war with England the Wisconsin newspapers aligned themselves with the position of the administration. The Wisconsin Patriot said, "...they would not complain about giving up Mason and Slidell to England, if England would concede the validity of the American doctrine in regard to the right of search."²⁶ The Wisconsin State Journal stated that "The possession of Mason and Slidell is of little real consequence if the rights of the United States are recognized." In another editorial the Journal stated that the difficulties of the United States would encourage other powers to encroach upon the rights of the United States.²⁷ The La Crosse Democrat thought that the case had been very badly handled. The Democrat stated, "there was a great diversity of opinion on the legality of the arrest. --Wilkes erred in not seizing the Trent and bringing her into port as a prize...." The Democrat was not sure that the administration was right in giving up Mason and Slidell and

²⁵La Crosse Democrat, December 27, 1861.

²⁶Wisconsin Patriot, December 27, 1861.

²⁷Wisconsin State Journal, December 27, 1861.

and stated, "If the arrest was illegal, we are satisfied with this release, but if it proves to have been all right, we belittle the administration...."²⁸

The Republican papers commended Secretary of State, William Seward, for his excellent management of the situation. The Wisconsin State Journal stated, "...the case is ably handled on the part of Mr. Seward."²⁹ The Milwaukee Sentinel also thought Seward had done an excellent job with a difficult problem. The Sentinel said, "The surrender of the Commissioners has involved no sacrifice but that of pride. The national honor remains intact--thanks to the wisdom and foresight of Mr. Seward."³⁰ S. A. Pease of the Oxford Express supported Seward by saying, "the matter had been well considered by the Department of State at Washington and the wisest course adopted." The Express was sure this decision would not discredit the government and would remove the cause of any war prospects with England.³¹ Smith of the Manitowoc Tribune stated, "the surrender of Mason and Slidell was undoubtedly hard for the Northern States to take but it was much worse to the rebels, who had been counting on England going to war with the Northern States."³²

²⁸La Crosse Democrat, December 30, 1861.

²⁹Wisconsin State Journal, December 21, 1861.

³⁰Milwaukee Sentinel, December 30, 1861.

³¹Marquette Weekly Express (Oxford), January 3, 1862.

³²Manitowoc Tribune, January 7, 1862.

After the two commissioners and their aides were finally given up to England, "Brick" Pomeroy of the La Crosse Democrat began to see the action as degrading to the United States. The Democrat stated that it was a humiliation for the government to take a position which it was not able to maintain. Such events as this, said the Democrat, cause the people to have less confidence in the administration which could not possibly exist without the confidence of the people. Giving up Mason and Slidell would be construed in Europe as evidence of the weakness and ignorance of the government.³³

Partisan politics did not enter into the Mason and Slidell affair until after the commissioners were given up to England, then the Republican papers went out of their way to uphold the actions of the administration. The Democratic papers although they made no sustained attack upon the administration over this issue, made it evident that they did not necessarily agree with the action of the administration. Both Republicans and Democrats aimed their attack at England so the administration did not get the amount of abuse it would on issues of similar import later on in the war. The newspapers of Wisconsin united to attack the common enemy, the foreigner.

³³La Crosse Democrat, January 10, 1862.

On February 1, 1862, the Milwaukee Sentinel announced that after the settling of the Mason and Slidell case "The British mind...is now weighed down with the heavier stone blockade."³⁴ The stone blockade consisted of sinking old hulks filled with stone in the channels leading to Southern ports so ships could not enter or leave the port. England and France objected to this type of blockade very strenuously because they felt that it would ruin these ports forever, such an undertaking would not end with the end of the war.³⁵ The Manitowoc Tribune reported that, "The London Observer suggests the expediency of intervention by France and England into American matters," because of the sinking of the stone fleet in Charleston harbor.³⁶ The Milwaukee Sentinel stated that "The London Daily News is worried about the sinking of the stone fleet and asserts that the act is arousing the European Governments to a common sentiment."³⁷ "Jere" Crowley, editor of the Manitowoc Pilot stated, "England and France were ablaze with indignation because of the attempt of the federal government to permanently destroy Charleston harbor by sinking the stone fleet." The Pilot went on to say "...the stoppage of Charleston harbor and the inefficiency of the blockade are given as the prime

³⁴Milwaukee Sentinel, February 1, 1862.

³⁵Milwaukee Sentinel, February 1, 1862; Manitowoc Tribune, February 4, 1862, and Wisconsin State Journal, February 10, 1862.

³⁶Manitowoc Tribune, February 4, 1862.

³⁷Milwaukee Sentinel, February 1, 1862.

reasons for the proposed intervention."³⁸

Rumors of proposed mediation by the European powers were printed in the Wisconsin newspapers as early as May, 1862. The Milwaukee Wisconsin stated, "...the last European advices...confirm the impression that England and France intend to intervene...in American affairs...by offering themselves as mediators between the North and the South."³⁹ John Herron of the Mineral Point Home Intelligencer said, "The rumor that France and England are about to interfere in our national affairs is again renewed."⁴⁰ In July of that year the Milwaukee Sentinel took on a more menacing attitude in regard to mediation. The Sentinel stated, "Mediation in our situation will be intervention and intervention is war,...it is an interesting inquiry to make--is England or France prepared to wage war with the United States."⁴¹

By October 1862, Louis Napoleon of France had made up his mind to try to bring about conjoint mediation by England, France and Russia. But both England and Russia rejected the idea because they felt this was not the proper time to submit such a proposal to the United States. They saw no

³⁸Manitowoc Pilot, February 14, 1862.

³⁹TheDaily Wisconsin, May 16, 1862.

⁴⁰Home Intelligencer, May 24, 1862.

⁴¹Milwaukee Sentinel, July 9, 1862.

hope that the United States would accept such a proposition and a refusal then would prevent any speedy renewal of the offer. Napoleon, not discouraged by the refusal of England and Russia to go along with him, decided to make the offer to the belligerents in the name of France only. So on January 2, 1862, he made the offer, but it was promptly turned down by Secretary of State Seward.⁴² The La Crosse Democrat in commenting on this said, "Mediation means disunion. We look upon such a scheme as infamous and abhorrent...the government has no right by any act to consent to the disruption of the Union."⁴³

As late as July, 1864, rumors reached Wisconsin papers that the European nations were still considering mediation. The Milwaukee Sentinel asserted in that month, "France has again informed England that she is ready to join in an offer of mediation whenever England may think proper."⁴⁴

Although there were a few such reports as that given by the Milwaukee Sentinel after the early part of 1863 the Wisconsin editors paid very little attention to the European powers or intervention by these powers. This is especially true after the Union forces began to push the rebels back into the Confederate states. The anti-slavery sentiment of

⁴²Rhodes, J. F., History of the United States, Vol. IV, pp. 348-9.

⁴³La Crosse Democrat, February 3, 1862.

⁴⁴Milwaukee Sentinel, July 9, 1864.

Europe, especially in England is cited as one of the principal reasons for removing the danger of European intervention into American affairs. The Milwaukee Sentinel claimed, "the anti-slavery sentiment of England is rapidly arraying a majority of her people on the side of our government."⁴⁵

Since the United States were busy with the problems of the Civil War England, France and Spain felt that this would be a good time to intervene in Latin American affairs. Mexico owed debts to England, France and Spain which they would not pay so these powers decided to use force to collect them. France and Spain also seemed to think it a good moment to try to reestablish their lost colonial empires. In 1861, these three nations, sent an expedition to Mexico to collect these debts. The United States with its own troubles could not possibly enforce the Monroe Doctrine. At first the Wisconsin newspapers could see nothing wrong with this intervention in American affairs. The Milwaukee Wisconsin, said, "The anarchy of Mexico has disgusted all nations which have relations with her government."⁴⁶ The Milwaukee Sentinel said, "The 'Monroe Doctrine'...was designed for the emergency of that day (Monroe's), and was

⁴⁵Milwaukee Sentinel, March 17, 1863.

⁴⁶The Daily Wisconsin, November 29, 1861.

not designed as a principle...."⁴⁷

By early 1862, the Wisconsin papers began to look at the situation quite differently. When the reports of the military operations of the allies reached the Wisconsin papers they saw it as a dangerous situation. The Wisconsin Patriot saw the situation as the "...beginning of a series of operations which is destined to environ us on the Southwest by the worst species of autocracy."⁴⁸ The Wisconsin State Journal worried that a monarchical government would be established in Mexico. The Journal said, "...a monarch will be the result of the present invasion of Mexico...."⁴⁹

The relations between the allied powers concerned in the intervention in Mexico became strained, especially on the part of England who did not want France colonizing in Latin America. The Milwaukee Wisconsin said, "The English people do not seem to relish the prospect of acting as cats-paw to secure the permanent dominion of France or Spain over Mexico...."⁵⁰

After France gained control of Mexico and set up Maximilian as Emperor the Wisconsin papers again gave consideration to European intervention in Mexico, after paying little

⁴⁷Milwaukee Sentinel, November 29, 1861.

⁴⁸Wisconsin Patriot, January 7, 1862.

⁴⁹Wisconsin State Journal, March 3, 1862.

⁵⁰The Daily Wisconsin, March 13, 1862.

attention to the affairs in Mexico for almost a year. The Milwaukee Sentinel which no longer held the position in regard to the Monroe Doctrine that it had earlier, stated, "The unanimity with which the House of Representative has today reaffirmed what is known the world over as 'the Monroe Doctrine' shows that if Louis Napoleon has undertaken to permanently control the destiny of Mexico, he must dismiss from his mind these visions of ambition, and content himself with the intrigues of European politics."⁵¹ The Wisconsin Patriot, which still wanted the Monroe Doctrine applied stated, "The overthrow of the long cherished Monroe Doctrine by France and the acquiescence of our 'government' in the outrage, without a protest left...a stain on our national honor."⁵² In July, 1864 the Patriot stated, "He (Lincoln) endorses the Monroe Doctrine and yet he sustains the position assumed by France, which overthrows it...he is in favor of the Monroe Doctrine, but against its enforcement."⁵³

The Wisconsin newspapers worried over European intervention in American affairs when such a possibility was imminent. When the danger passed they dropped reference to it almost immediately. On European issues partisanship be-

⁵¹Milwaukee Sentinel, April 9, 1864.

⁵²Wisconsin Patriot, June 7, 1864.

⁵³Wisconsin Patriot, July 5, 1864.

tween the Republicans and Democrats was not as great as on domestic issues. Both sides aimed their attack at the foreigner rather than the opposite party. The newspapers representing both parties agreed that the administration handled the Mason and Slidell affair properly and looked on intervention or mediation by European powers as meddling in American domestic affairs. Both parties deprecated the intervention in Mexico and regarded it as a violation of the Monroe Doctrine. On foreign affairs there was comparative unanimity amongst the editors of Wisconsin.

CONCLUSION

The reaction of the Wisconsin editors to most issues of the Civil War followed the stand taken by the party which the particular editor represented. An attempt was made in the early months of the war to eliminate parties and unite the two parties in order to support the war effort, but it failed because the party leaders were not willing to compromise.

Most of the Democratic newspapers did not directly oppose the war, but they did object to many of the acts of the administration. The greatest trouble with the Democratic criticism was that it was not for the good of the country or to force better policies on the part of the Republican administration but it was generally a partisan attempt to further the Democratic cause.

On State issues the Wisconsin newspapers did not divide along party lines, except in the case of the soldiers vote. The editors reacted to these issues on principles they held rather than along party lines. On the right of the soldiers to vote the editors followed the stand of their party. The Republicans wanted the soldiers to vote because they knew they could control the elections through the officers of

the regiments. The Democrats knowing that the soldiers vote would be critical, used all their influence in opposing it. But the Democrats lost out because the Republicans controlled the Wisconsin legislature. The bill passed the legislature on a strict party vote.

On political issues the editors strictly followed party principles. The Democrats violently opposed any attempt by the Republicans to abolish slavery. The Democrats felt that the states had the right to control its own domestic concerns and slavery was a domestic institution. The federal government did not have any right to interfere with any state institution the Democrats said.

The suspension of the writ of habeas corpus created tremendous opposition on the part of the Democratic papers. They regarded the suspension as the abrogation of their constitutional right to have a trial by jury. The Republican editors defended the action of the administration by saying that it was a military necessity.

On reconstruction of the southern states the editors again disagreed. The Democrats stated they did not think the southern states had left the Union and only had to re-elect members of Congress and they would be back in the Union. The Republicans wanted to punish the rebels. They felt that the southern states had to be taught a lesson.

The military controversy which caused the most comment in the Wisconsin papers was conscription. Here again the

Democrats felt that the federal government was encroaching on the rights of the states. They felt the states were to raise the army by calling out the militia. The Republicans said it was necessary to draft men because volunteering did not meet the needs of the army.

On foreign affairs both Republicans and Democratic papers aimed their attack at the foreigner rather than at the opposite party. They united when they had to fight a common enemy.

In general the editors of Wisconsin were very individualistic. In their editorials the smaller papers often derived the basis of their arguments from the larger papers but they developed their own arguments around personal principles and interpretations. Often editors disagreed with their party on a particular issue and would take the opposite side. They followed the principles which they thought were right and not always what was advocated by the party.

A study of this type presents the opinions held by the Wisconsin editors. Their papers were the most influential medium for the dispersion of news, so they had considerable effect upon the people of Wisconsin. The papers presented many different points of view so that the people could get a good picture of what was going on in the United States and the rest of the world.

The information on which the Wisconsin newspapers based their editorials was usually factual, except in cases like

Fremont's removal when the charges against Fremont were not released. In this case the papers had to use what information they received which was not very reliable. The papers did print factual material but that did not stop them from using the truth to further their particular argument. By printing half-truths or distorting the news somewhat they were often able to get the result they desired. The Wisconsin papers often printed rumors, but usually they recognized them as rumors and let their readers know that they were. Although the editors did use rumors to give a false impression at times.

The telegraph system was in general use at this time and had reached many parts of Wisconsin. The newspapers were able to obtain news much more rapidly with the advent of the telegraph. The daily papers were especially benefitted by it because they were able to get news within a few hours after it happened. All of the papers had a column which they called the telegraphic column in which they printed the latest news obtainable.

The news papers of Wisconsin during the Civil War played a large role in molding public opinion. Most of the people had no other method of getting news and information except through the newspaper of their area. Without any competing mediums the newspapers of that day were able to wield a very great power.

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