

## DIVERGING TENDENCIES IN NEW YORK DEMOCRACY IN THE PERIOD OF THE LOCOFOCOS<sup>1</sup>

DIFFERING conceptions of democracy were expressed in two speeches which were made in the Congress of the United States in 1836 by Democratic members of the delegation from New York. The one was by Mr. Ely Moore, Tammany representative of the labor element in the city of New York.<sup>2</sup> The occasion of his speech arose in a debate over a "preparedness" measure for governmental manufacture of munitions, in the course of which Mr. Thompson of South Carolina asserted that working-men of the North might "rob by lawless insurrection, or by the equally terrible process of the ballot box". Moore, replying, observed that Thompson's assertion was based finally upon the theory of government by a minority. He deprecated raising the caste question, yet thought that raising it might "serve to establish more distinctly, and more permanently, the landmarks which distinguish the two great political parties of this country—the democracy and the aristocracy". "The line which separates the friends and enemies of equal rights", he continued, "is broad and distinct", and these classes are "utterly and eternally incompatible and antagonistical".

The people [whom he identified with the laboring classes] are neither so unwise nor so unreasonable as to either expect or desire a perfect equality of wealth. . . . The people, the democracy, contend for no measure that does not hold out to individual enterprise proper motives for exertion. All they ask is that the great principle upon which the Government is founded, the principle of equal rights, should be faithfully observed and carried out, to the exclusion of all exclusive privileges.

<sup>1</sup> This article is collated from a more extensive study, now in manuscript, on the history of the Locofoco party. The latter had its inception a number of years ago in a seminar of Professor Frederick J. Turner, who has continued to evince helpful interest.

<sup>2</sup> Moore, a native of New Jersey and a printer by trade, had been the first president of the New York General Trades' Union and also of the National Trades' Union. *Biographical Congressional Directory*, p. 701; Commons *et al.*, *Documentary History of American Industrial Society* (1910), V. 204. He was impressive in person and had oratorical power. John Quincy Adams in a vivid, though not wholly favorable description, styles him "the prince of working-men". *Memoirs*, IX. 405. See also "Glances at Congress", *Democratic Review* (1837), I. 68-81.

He defended also the formation of labor unions (a cause of alarm to many people) as "counterpoises against capital, whenever it shall attempt to exert an unlawful or undue influence".<sup>3</sup> This speech made an unusual impression, especially upon members from the South.<sup>4</sup>

Another set of interests appears in the speech of Senator Nathaniel P. Tallmadge, which was delivered in the Senate on June 17, 1836. In explaining a variance with his colleague, Silas Wright, concerning a Bill to Regulate the Deposits of the Public Money, Mr. Tallmadge took occasion to set forth his views upon current conceptions of capitalism as embodied in the phrase, "the credit system"; though he did not specify precisely what was meant by the phrase. Prosperity, he first asserted, was the criterion of the system. He then proceeded to a justification of it as vitally related to liberty—but to a defined liberty:

The credit system [he declared] is the distinguishing feature between despotism and liberty; it is the offspring of free institutions; it is found to exist, and its influence is felt, in proportion to the freedom enjoyed by any people. By freedom I do not mean unregulated, unrestrained, natural liberty, but that freedom which is founded on just and equitable laws, where the rights of personal security, of private property, and religious toleration, are guaranteed to every individual; where there is a general diffusion of knowledge and the existence of public and private morality.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> *Reg. of Debates in Congress*, 24 Cong., 1 sess., pp. 3428-3439.

<sup>4</sup> "A thundering Jack Cade or Wat Tyler speech", J. Q. Adams, *op. cit.* "The whole House was excited at the novelty and boldness of his democratic doctrines, not less [than] at the extraordinary manner in which he had turned aside from the current of debate, and struck fearlessly forward into a field to which few orators had before ventured to lead the attention of that body. I overheard some gentlemen from the south say, that they thought they heard the high priest of revolution singing his war song." *Democratic Review*, I. 74-76. The last sentence gains significance in the light of the great change in political theory which was at this time taking place in the South; see W. E. Dodd, "The Social Philosophy of the Old South", *American Journal of Sociology*, XXIII. 735-746.

<sup>5</sup> *Cong. Globe*, 24 Cong., 1 sess., app., pp. 469-470. The relations between Tallmadge and Wright ceased to be amicable in the following winter. The latter confidentially wrote to Flagg that Tallmadge on the basis of growing differences in political matters had both affronted him publicly and had sought advantage in underhanded ways. Wright to Flagg, January 9, 1837, Flagg Correspondence, New York Public Library. In February the re-election of Wright as senator was openly or secretly opposed at Albany by individuals who sympathized with Tallmadge's views. William L. Marcy to Gen. Prosper M. Wetmore, July 20, 1837, Marcy Papers, vol. XXVIII, Library of Congress. Wright, it will be recalled, was one of the leading members of the Regency. His re-election, according to Greeley, was acceptable to the Locofocos. *The New Yorker*, February 11, 1837, p. 332.

Moore and Tallmadge were representative of two groups within the Democratic-Republican party of New York which were revealing divergent tendencies. While both groups had affiliations over the state and their antagonisms finally forced the prevailing agrarian Democracy of the state to a choice of sides, yet it was in the city that they most spontaneously developed. They reflected in fact new conditions of urbanization and industrialism which were obtaining in the rapidly growing city at the mouth of the Hudson, where massing of population, a new capitalistic domination of industry, and the emergence of a proletariat were raising imperative questions as to modes of artificial subsistence, methods of gratifying the aspirations and meeting the responsibilities of entrepreneurs, and measures of defense on the part of working-men.<sup>6</sup> These problems were rendered the more pressing because of the crude and inordinate expansion of credit which was a marked feature of the finance of the period, and they were manifested concretely in conflicts over currency and banking. Abstract discussion, moreover, proceeded further to inquire into the nature of democratic society, and deep-lying antagonisms relative to the control of government were being generated. New York City, therefore, was becoming an important centre for the initiation and promulgation of political opinion.

For a decade prior to 1837 the formulation of a body of radical belief had been going on. The incitements of manhood suffrage, economic pressure upon fixed-income classes, preachments of agitators and social theorists, and the general democratic movement of the age were factors in the process of declaring afresh the principles of idealistic democracy and of applying these in concrete statements to new conditions. Working-men in particular had been in constant ferment. Burdened by rapid rise in the cost of living, remote from refuge in the public lands, and under pressure from the new "merchant-capitalism", they had plunged in 1828-1830 into a short-lived, but intense, political movement and were now in the middle thirties devoting themselves to the organization of labor unions.<sup>7</sup> The working-men's activities had direct bearings upon

<sup>6</sup> The population in 1835 according to a special census was 269,873. There were 5 cotton factories, 11 iron works, 9 tanneries, and 19 breweries and distilleries. *New York Times*, November 2, 1835. Organized trades alone in 1834 had in New York and Brooklyn a membership of 11,500 working-men. *Doc. Hist. of Amer. Industrial Soc.*, VI. 191. There were in the former city 43,091 voters in 1835. J. J. Lalor, *Cyclopedia of Political Science*, III. 853. This massing of voters, unequalled elsewhere in the United States, was politically potential.

<sup>7</sup> J. R. Commons *et al.*, *History of Labour in the United States*, I. 231-284, 335-469.

two groups which at this time represented political radicalism in the city. These were a progressive minority within Tammany and the Locofoco party.<sup>8</sup>

A large portion of the progressives refused to leave the regular organization when the Locofoco mutiny occurred in the fall of 1835, and this element repeatedly showed its influence in the Young Men's General Committee of Tammany.<sup>9</sup> Prominent among the progressives were Ely Moore, mentioned above, the first representative of labor in the Congress of the United States; Churchill C. Cambreleng, veteran congressman and "chancellor" of Van Buren;<sup>10</sup> and William Leggett, associate editor of the *Evening Post*, later, editor of the *Plain Dealer*. William Cullen Bryant, the editor of the *Post*, was judiciously sympathetic with the progressive movement and gave it consistent support, and this journal was its recognized organ.

Leggett, however, was the chief inspirer of the movement. He was a prophet of idealistic democracy, who, *inter alia*, believed in extending women's rights, advocated freedom of speech for abolitionists, and championed passionately the doctrines of liberty and equality. During an absence of Bryant in Europe in 1835, Leggett was in charge of the *Post*, and his editorials were eagerly read and had a powerful influence. A writer in the *Democratic Review* in 1840 asserted that they tended to divide the party which in 1835 bore the name of Democratic into two camps: in the one were the Democrats who were interested in banking, the timid, and "the friends of whatever is established"; in the other were "the Demo-

<sup>8</sup> The precise connection between Locofocoism and the labor movement is difficult to determine. That there was agreement in body of doctrine is evident, and it is likewise apparent that a number of labor union men were earnest Locofoco partizans. But, on the other hand, the fact that there were in the state certainly upwards of eleven thousand union men, while the Locofoco vote never equalled half that number, shows that a majority of the labor men did not support the party. A comparison of leaders is even more decisive. A somewhat careful enumeration of the persons mentioned by the Locofoco secretary, Byrdsall, as connected with the movement totals 145 names. This list includes all of the leaders and important men, and also most of the ward committeemen. Now, of the 145 only twenty-three are found in the searching index to the *Documentary History of American Industrial Society*, and not more than half of these are of more than incidental importance. In fact, only three of the leaders in the labor union movement were clearly important in the Locofoco party; these were Comerford, Slamm, and Townsend.

<sup>9</sup> Notice actions of the committee, *post*, pp. 407 and 412.

<sup>10</sup> Thus the *Times* (July 3, 1837), phrased its estimate of Cambreleng's relation to Van Buren. Cambreleng served in every Congress from the seventeenth to the twenty-fifth, inclusive. In the latter he was chairman of the Ways and Means Committee. For a sketch of him see the *Democratic Rev.* (1839), VI. 144-158.

crats of stricter notions, the friends of reform, and the mass of the young men".<sup>11</sup> There was an incisiveness in this young editor's thought, a penetrating quality to his utterances which aroused and urged on his disciples and brought upon him vehement hatred of opponents. Even so cool-headed a statesman as Marcy called him crack-brained and knavish, the Peter the Hermit of a new crusade;<sup>12</sup> and the banking element was furious when he advocated that the Democratic party should advance beyond its warfare upon the United States bank to attack the special privileges of the state banks. On the other hand, Leggett's friends and followers gave to him an almost adoring admiration—a feeling reflected, on his death in 1839, in the well-known tribute which Bryant wrote,

... when the death-frost came to lie,  
On Leggett's warm and mighty heart.

A more measured estimate of his character, which was made by Bryant after the lapse of many years, may be taken as fairly accurate:

He was fond of study, and delighted to trace principles to their remotest consequences, whither he was always ready to follow them. The quality of courage existed in him almost to excess, and he took a sort of pleasure in bearding public opinion. He wrote with surprising fluency, and often with eloquence, took broad views of the questions that came before him, and possessed the faculty of rapidly arranging the arguments which occurred to him, in clear order, and stating them persuasively.<sup>13</sup>

Though the more militant portion of the radicals acknowledged the inspiration which they received from Leggett, they nevertheless refused to heed his counsel to seek betterment of conditions from within the party, and turned resolutely to the formation of a thorough-going party of reform. The Equal Rights or Locofoco party which this faction organized, though it proved insignificant in number of adherents and in duration of existence, nevertheless has a distinct place in American political history. More uncompromisingly, perhaps, than any other of our third-party movements of protest, this represented the humanitarian view of democracy. The dominating and ever-present idea in the creed of the Locofocos was

<sup>11</sup> *Democratic Rev.*, VI. 23.

<sup>12</sup> Marcy to Wetmore, July 12, 1837, and January 16, 1837. Marcy Papers, vol. III.

<sup>13</sup> "Reminiscences of the Evening Post", in John Bigelow's *William Cullen Bryant* (1890), app., p. 327. For an appreciative biographical notice of Leggett, see the *Democratic Rev.*, VI. 17-28.

the equality of human beings in their political relations. This equality, the Locofocos felt, was in peril from the "credit system" and its sponsors, and therefore they vehemently fought banks and "paper capitalism" as the money monopoly of their time. Monopoly of any sort, in fact, was abhorrent in their eyes. They looked upon special privileges as incompatible with democracy and claimed that constitutional government in its very essence forbade the vesting of rights in perpetuity. They were tremendously in earnest, and their utterances had carrying power. Even at the time there were observers who thought that they saw in the diminutive party potentialities for the future.<sup>14</sup> It was in reality a nascent proletarian party, while the Democratic party of the time was essentially agrarian and the Whig commercial and capitalistic. It gathered up in a series of declarations and constitutions the formulations of the radical democracy which had been worked out in the previous decade and disseminated them.<sup>15</sup> At a time when the South, turning its back upon Jeffersonian philosophy, was committing itself to the doctrines of social articulation and class dominance,<sup>16</sup> and sympathizers with aristocracy were not wanting in the North,<sup>17</sup> the Locofoco party boldly reasserted the principles of the social compact and of the Declaration of Independence, and zealously proclaimed anew the tenets of ultra-idealistic democracy.

The perception by the Locofocos of the social and political divergences of the time was expressed in one of their statements as follows:

There are two opinions abroad in the world, on the subject of social relations and the government of man. . . .

The theory of the one party is, that man, by reason of his ignorance, and of his corrupt nature, is not capable of self-government. . . . They assert that the Creator in his providence has produced a different order of intelligence among men, and intended that the most intelligent should be the governors and rulers, as well as the owners, and live by the labor of the other portions of the human family. . . .

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Theodore Sedgwick, jr., in the *Plain Dealer*, June 10, 1837: "that most valuable vanguard of the Democratic host, the Equal Rights Party". "The workingmen's party and the equal rights party have operated as causes producing effects that will shape the course of the two great parties of the United States and consequently the destinies of this great republic." Quoted by J. D. Hammond in *A History of Political Parties in the State of New-York* (Albany, 1842), II. 503.

<sup>15</sup> "Resolutions" of October 29, 1835; "Declaration of Principles" by the County Convention, February 9, 1836; "Declaration of Rights", September 15, 1836; "Proposed Constitution", September 11, 1837. F. Byrdsall, *History of the Loco-Foco or Equal Rights Party* (New York, 1842), pp. 27, 39, 68, 163-167.

<sup>16</sup> W. E. Dodd in the *Am. Jour. of Sociology*, XXIII. 735-746.

<sup>17</sup> A. de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (1904), I. 182-184.

The other theory referred to, is that man is a rational and moral being, "that all men are created equal, and endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights." That by nature he is also a social being, and that on entering into society he does not give up any of his natural rights, but to secure those rights in their fullest enjoyment, "governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed." . . .

The governments of these United States were founded on the latter theory, and it is now to be proved by after experience, whether it is capable of being carried out in practice.<sup>18</sup>

In contrast to the idealism of the Locofocos and their sympathizers were the maxims of practical, sensible, efficient democracy which were adhered to by the conservative Republicans. A general view of the ideas of the latter may be had from excerpts from the *New York Times*, which was the organ of the group. Democracy was held by the *Times* to be "something more than a crusade against this or that evil".<sup>19</sup> Genuine democracy is not for one class alone, but "looks to the situation and happiness of all, rich and poor alike". It is not visionary, aiming at unattainable perfection; but "has regard for the expedient and the useful, and binds the country together by ties of interest".<sup>20</sup> An orderly social life must obtain in a democracy, and landmarks of property and of interest must be established and maintained in accordance with the experience and good sense of the people.<sup>21</sup> There must be, moreover, certain principles and usages by the observance of which democracy becomes disciplined,<sup>22</sup> and these are to be administered by the wise, the intelligent, and the virtuous, in order to overcome the levelling tendencies of anarchists. The credit system is intimately connected with democracy, because the former is founded finally "upon moral capital—made up of skill, capacity, perseverance, integrity and enterprise".<sup>23</sup>

He who would seek to understand the political struggles of the thirties needs some comprehension of the credit system, since it was regarded as central to the strategy of both of the contending divi-

<sup>18</sup> Byrdsall, *Loco-Foco Party*, p. 72.

<sup>19</sup> *N. Y. Times*, November 18, 1837.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, October 7, 1837.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*; also quotation from the *Washington Globe*, in Byrdsall, pp. 18, 19.

<sup>22</sup> *N. Y. Times*, November 3, 1835.

<sup>23</sup> Letter from Hugh S. Legaré of South Carolina, *ibid.*, August 22, 1838. Letters from Legaré appeared occasionally in the *Times*, and these were in accord with its political and social principles. It is interesting to note the affiliations of the New York conservatives with some of the statesmen of the South. These affiliations are especially clear with Virginia leaders; Rives, one of the latter, was working closely with Tallmadge.



sions of the Democracy. This system may be defined as the means by which capital is brought under the control of entrepreneurs.<sup>24</sup> Men of the entrepreneur type, it may be said, dominated the democratic organization of New York City in the early thirties. They were men who somehow had to procure means for financing enterprises and for developing resources over a constantly widening area; for this was a time of rapidly enlarging markets and of increasing diversification of wants.<sup>25</sup> There was urgent need of greater facilities for exchange transactions<sup>26</sup>—a need which could be met only through credit operations since the scarcity of specie practically restricted the use of gold and silver to the function of a standard of values.<sup>27</sup> Increased banking facilities were therefore requisite for expansion of currency, and banks were indispensable instrumentalities of the system. Confidence and prosperity were always concomitants of its right working.<sup>28</sup> The *raison d'être* of the system was the production of wealth, the acquisition of property, and the investiture of property with legal title. If its advocates might have disclaimed a belief that government exists primarily for human beings with property, they nevertheless insisted that business operations and the validation of property rights are a main concern of government.<sup>29</sup>

The upholders of the credit system and of the traditions of conservative democracy, "the old Patriarchs and firm Friends of the ancient organization and tried usages of the Democratic-Republican party", as they described themselves,<sup>30</sup> formed a very numerous and very influential element in New York City in 1837.<sup>31</sup> Among

<sup>24</sup> E. D. Howard, *Cause and Extent of the Recent Industrial Progress of Germany* (1907), pp. 25-26; quoted in F. A. Ogg's *Economic Development of Modern Europe*, p. 220.

<sup>25</sup> There is a suggestive comment on the far-ramifying changes which were taking place in industry, in a report by Levi Woodbury, secretary of the treasury. *Cong. Globe*, 26 Cong., 2 sess., p. 7. See also discussion by Professor Commons and Helen L. Sumner, *Doc. Hist.*, V. 19-37.

<sup>26</sup> This matter was ably treated in a speech of Webster, *Cong. Globe*, 25 Cong., 2 sess., app., pp. 632-641.

<sup>27</sup> Legaré, *ubi supra*, note 23.

<sup>28</sup> *N. Y. Times*, June 22, 1836.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, August 17, 1837. The *Times* even asserted that if titles to the public lands were alienated for considerations other than property, then "the covetous will attack all property".

<sup>30</sup> Thus in an address to Van Buren, September 27, 1837. Van Buren Papers, vol. XXIX., Library of Congress.

<sup>31</sup> There were nearly seven hundred signers of a letter to Tallmadge endorsing his stand, "including a majority of the Old Men's General Committee (over two-thirds), and seventy-odd Democrats, directors in banks, insurance and railroad companies". Byrdsall, *Loco-Foco Party*, p. 158. Practically the same number later signed the address to Van Buren.



the foremost in zeal and masterfulness was Gideon Lee, a typical "merchant-capitalist" and an ex-mayor, who was now a member of Congress and reputed to be part owner of the *Times*.<sup>32</sup> No one was so hated by the Locofocos as was he. Others of the leaders were Samuel Swartwout (of subsequent unsavory fame), Daniel Jackson, Benjamin Birdsall, and Prosper M. Wetmore. It is worth while remarking, in passing, that Governor Marcy was in constant and intimate correspondence with the last-named gentleman during the summer of 1837. The members of this group had grown up within the Democratic organization, many of them doubtless like Lee from obscurity and poverty. Their democracy and their interests had coincided in enthusiastic support of the Jacksonian assault upon the "monster monopoly" whose headquarters were at Philadelphia; but to their minds an attack upon banking in general and the state system in particular was a menace to their own welfare, the rights of property, and the good order of society. Their views were shared by a large portion of the Democratic-Republicans of the state,<sup>33</sup> and it was this wing of the party which Senator Tallmadge essayed to lead.<sup>34</sup>

Between the two extremes represented on the one hand by Tallmadge and the old patriarchs of Tammany and on the other by the Locofocos was the body of the Democratic-Republican party of the state under the able leadership of Marcy and the other members of the Regency.<sup>35</sup> It is a mistake to conceive of the men of the

<sup>32</sup> Lee was a native of Amherst, Mass., who came to New York in 1808. Engaging in the wholesale leather trade, he became one of the leading business men of the city. He and his associates were closely identified with banks and insurance companies. Biographical accounts may be found in Hunt's *Merchants' Magazine*, VIII. 57-64, and in F. W. Norcross, *A History of the New York Swamp*, pp. 51-57. See also *Cong. Globe*, 24 Cong., 1 sess., app., pp. 19-20.

<sup>33</sup> Conservative leanings were particularly noticeable at Albany in the activities of Beardsley, the attorney general, and of Dr. Wendell, chairman of the Albany General Committee.

<sup>34</sup> Tallmadge himself was interested in the Dutchess County Bank. He wrote to Flagg urging the support of "our friends" to make it a deposit bank. Tallmadge to Flagg, September 26, 1836. Flagg Correspondence, New York Public Library.

<sup>35</sup> The Regency group included at this time (besides Van Buren, Marcy, and Wright) Butler, attorney general of the United States; Dix, secretary of the state; Flagg, comptroller (a very important officer); Knowler, a banker and father-in-law of Marcy; and Crosswell, the veteran editor of the *Albany Argus*. An interesting suggestion of the inner relations of the group is afforded by a letter from Wright to Flagg, January 9, 1837, Flagg Correspondence. Wright wrote, "You as the senior member of the Regency, have the prior right to all public and important communications to that body, which, of course, are private and confidential as to all the rest of the world."

Regency as mere machine politicians. They were consummate politicians; but they were also men of integrity and broad-minded patriotism, and some of the group showed statesmanship of unusual merit.<sup>36</sup> These keen-sighted and experienced leaders perceived as clearly as any Locofoco the evils and dangers of the banking situation and in constructive fashion were trying to remedy them. The Safety Fund banking system of New York, which had been developed largely under the leadership of members of the Regency, though it needed the elimination of monopolistic features which had survived from an earlier period, contained the elements of a sound system, and these capable financiers were seeking to democratize it and at the same time to retain its elements of stability.<sup>37</sup>

The laborious and well-controlled processes of progressive democratic evolution were cut short, however, by the financial cataclysm of the spring of 1837. Under stress of calamity the views of men who were seeking escape grew more intense and distinct, and the financial crisis urged on decisive political alignment.

One of the first steps was taken by a meeting of New York merchants who prepared an address to President Van Buren and appointed a committee to confer with him at Washington. This committee returned unsatisfied and displeased and proceeded to

<sup>36</sup> Notably, Van Buren, Wright, Dix, and Marcy. For an estimate of the last, see "A Great Secretary of State", by J. B. Moore, *Political Science Quarterly*, September, 1915, pp. 377-396.

<sup>37</sup> An editorial of the *Albany Argus*, the representative of the Regency (quoted in the *Plain Dealer*, March 4, 1837), discusses the banking situation in an able manner and reveals the earnest and sensible views taken by the responsible leaders of the Democracy: "This system was adopted, not as a measure of the banks, but for the protection of the people against the evils, abuses, and failures under a previous state of things. In its general and material provisions, *viz.*, protection to the bill holder and to the community generally through a thorough supervision and the creation of a fund, it has fully answered the expectations and justified the sagacity of its projectors. . . . We say this, however, with qualification, and with the belief that the defects which experience has developed, are susceptible of being removed. These, we conceive, consist:

- 1st. In the character of exclusiveness and monopoly which belongs in some degree to the legislative corporation of individual charters.
- 2nd. The combinations and corruptions attending the applications to the legislature for specific grants of banking privileges. And,
- 3d. The evils, as well in reference to the character and sound action of the legislature, as to the moral condition of the people, of a stock distribution by commissioners.

"The remedy which has been proposed, and which we regard as adequate to the purpose, is a General Safety Fund Law . . . so framed as to obviate the complaints arising from the nature of individual grants by the legislature, and at the same time diminish in no degree the stability of the currency."

Marcy's messages as governor also contain strong presentations of the subject.

issue a long report which was in reality a Whig manifesto. We are not so much concerned with the specific statements of this document as we are with its general views of society and of class relationships, for these were very much the same as those held by the conservative Democrats. It ran as follows:

The principle upon which Mr. Van Buren has uniformly acted, and uniformly succeeded, is this, that the poor naturally hate the rich. [The rightful view, on the contrary, was held to be that the interests of the capitalistic class and of the laboring class are interdependent.] . . . avow your belief that in a great majority of cases the possession of property is the proof of merit, because in a country of free laws and equal rights, property, as a general rule, cannot be acquired without industry, skill, and economy. . . . with a firm faith that the many will follow the wise and the good, call upon the men of sound morals, of intelligence and industry, throughout the nation, to forget all the distracting topics which have agitated it, and unite in defence of the institutions without which commercial society can not exist.

It is interesting to note also that an appeal "to our brethren of the South" was included, and the promise was extended "that those who believe that the possession of property is an evidence of merit, will be the last to interfere with the rights of property of any kind".<sup>38</sup>

Because of the panic two important courses were entered upon by the state administration. The first was embodied in a law suspending for one year the operation of the Safety Fund Act in laying liable to loss of charter any bank refusing to make specie payments. Though the law contained careful provisos looking to a speedy resumption of specie payments, it was bitterly denounced by the Locofocos as the sort of unconstitutional favoritism which was granted to banks, but never extended to poor men when they violated law.<sup>39</sup> Marcy's conduct in this respect was severely reprobated by them, and agitation against legalizing suspension was kept up for many years following. The second was the refusal of Marcy to call a special session of the legislature in order to repeal a law which forbade the issuance of bank-notes of more than five dollars.<sup>40</sup> This action was heartily endorsed by the Locofocos, but

<sup>38</sup> *Niles' Register*, LII. 165.

<sup>39</sup> Byrdsall, *op. cit.*, p. 152.

<sup>40</sup> *Niles*, LII. 355. There is a statement by J. J. Knox, *History of Banking in the United States* (New York, 1903), p. 408, that a law was passed, May 16, 1837, which allowed the use of small bills for a few years. Marcy's language in refusing to reopen the matter (June 12, 1837) clearly contradicts this statement and gives ground for supposing that Knox (or his editor) mistook the introduction of a bill to this effect for its passage. The law described by Knox was passed on February 28, 1838. *Journal of the Senate of the State of New York*, 60 sess., p. 527.

it made the governor chargeable with a law which, as Greeley said, "touched the people's pockets with daily distress" and gave poignancy to conservative arguments.<sup>41</sup>

On May 15, 1837, the President summoned Congress to meet on September 4. In the time intervening between the call and the assemblage, the divisions within the Democratic-Republican party in New York became clearly defined. Both elements claimed to represent the true democracy; both hoped for the adhesion to its views of the general body of the party in the state; and both aspired to the validation of the federal administration.<sup>42</sup>

On the side of the conservatives the campaign was opened by a significant pronouncement of Senator Tallmadge. The senator had signed a call for a meeting to secure the repeal of the five-dollar law, and for this had been severely upbraided by the *New York Evening Post*. He replied in a letter to the *Albany Argus* of June 6, 1837. In this letter he advocated the repeal of the law and repeated some of the ideas which, as indicated in his speech of June, 1836, he had earlier worked out. "I am in favor of a well regulated credit system", he wrote, "and opposed to the chimerical scheme of an exclusive metallic currency", and he reiterated his favorite formula that "the credit system is the distinguishing feature between despotism and liberty".<sup>43</sup>

The radical side found voice on June 13 through resolutions adopted by the Young Men's General Committee of Tammany Hall. These opposed the suspension law and attributed the pecuniary difficulties of the time to "the unwarranted increase of specially privileged institutions, which have sent swarms of bank notes among us". "All special banking incorporations", one of the resolutions ran, "are not only in opposition to the spirit of universal rights, but a hindrance to the accumulation of property by honest industry." The committee proposed to be on guard against any party which affirmed that "the possession of property is a proof of merit".<sup>44</sup>

<sup>41</sup> See Greeley's remarks on "The Crusade against the Small Bills", *The New Yorker*, February 18, 1837, p. 345.

<sup>42</sup> It is worth while remarking the strategic positions in the national councils which were occupied at this juncture by men from New York—the presidency, the office of attorney general, the chairmanships of the Finance Committee of the Senate (Wright) and of the Ways and Means Committee of the House (Carmeleng).

<sup>43</sup> A copy of this letter, together with comments thereon from the *Poughkeepsie Journal*, is in the Tallmadge material in the Library of the Wisconsin Historical Society. In this material is a statement by Tallmadge that Marcy promised to back him in opposing the independent treasury.

<sup>44</sup> *The Plain Dealer*, June 13, 1837.

In reply the conservative portion of Tammany publicly avowed concurrence in Tallmadge's course. In a letter to him (July 4) they expressed their "entire approbation of the sentiments so laudably put forth in your letter". Quoting Tallmadge's often-used phrases, they announced their hearty approval and assured the author that they believed them "to be the sentiments of a great majority of the Republican party".<sup>45</sup>

So simultaneously as almost to suggest concerted action there appeared an address of the Albany General Committee, which became famous as the "Albany Manifesto". In specific assertions the address formally attempted mediation; but it praised the credit system and asserted that "The Democratic party holds no spirit in common with the radical spirit which has sprung up in New York".<sup>46</sup> The address was written by the attorney general, Beardsley, at the instance of Dr. Wendell and others, "who have become uneasy at anti-bankism".<sup>47</sup> This group had worked against the re-election of Wright as senator<sup>48</sup> and was in alliance with Tallmadge.<sup>49</sup> The state of mind of Dr. Wendell is revealed in a letter which he wrote subsequently to President Van Buren. "Rest assured, my dear friend", he said, "nothing has ever so much alarmed and disturbed the peace and tranquility of the good people of this state, as the dread of loco-focoism. The cholera itself scarcely carried with it more terrors."<sup>50</sup>

It is in connection with this address that a rift begins to be revealed in the Regency. Emanating from Albany and published in the official organ, the address was hailed all over the country as an indication that the Van Buren organization was inclining toward the conservative position; but it was soon disavowed by the *Argus* to the extent of saying that it did not represent the Regency officially. Dix wrote to Van Buren disclaiming connection on behalf of himself, Flagg, and Crosswell;<sup>51</sup> the last, however, had conservative leanings which soon gave concern at Washington.<sup>52</sup> The attitude of Marcy was of very great importance. While he had nothing to do with getting up the address and held himself aloof from the movement which it represented, yet his confidential letters show that

<sup>45</sup> The letter is given in full in Byrdsall, *op. cit.*, p. 158.

<sup>46</sup> *The Plain Dealer*, July 8, 1837.

<sup>47</sup> Dix to Van Buren, July 8, 1837. Van Buren Papers, vol. XXVIII.

<sup>48</sup> Marcy to Wetmore, July 20, 1837. Marcy Pap., vol. III.

<sup>49</sup> Cambreleng to Abraham Van Buren, July 20, 1837. Van Buren Pap., vol. XXVIII.

<sup>50</sup> Wendell to Van Buren, November 13, 1837. Van Buren Pap., vol. XXX.

<sup>51</sup> Dix to Van Buren, July 5, 1837. Van Buren Pap., vol. XXVIII.

<sup>52</sup> Flagg to Van Buren, November 5, 1837. Van Buren Pap., vol. XXX.

he viewed the former at least with favor.<sup>53</sup> He felt deeply his responsibility as leader of the party in the state, and, perceiving more clearly than any of his associates the grave character of the divisive tendencies in the party, he viewed these with much anxiety.<sup>54</sup> In case of necessity of a choice between these tendencies, however, his correspondence reveals his inner inclination; he draws away from "the taint or rot of radicalism", consistently reprobates the Locofocos and sneers at their leaders, and even dares to suggest that "our old hero" himself [Jackson] shows indiscreet "mania" in some recent letters and is like to violate that law of the drama which requires that the hero die in the last act if not before.<sup>55</sup> The almost instinctive reactions of Marcy against radicalism in the summer of 1837, in contradistinction to those of most of the other members of the Regency, initiated a lasting disaffection in that body, and indicated a beginning of the extensive divergence of the wings of the Democratic party of New York into "Hunkers" and "Barn-burners".

There was immediately impending, however, an important defection. That keen observer and vigorous exponent of sheer democracy, William Leggett, predicted at this juncture that the "*in medio tutissimus ibis* democrats" [*i. e.*, Tallmadge and associates] were about to form a distinct party or at least to withdraw from the party with which they were affiliated. So long, Leggett said, as these could obtain all sorts of exclusive privileges from the government

by wearing the unmeaning name of the republican party, they were content; but now that the people insist on the practical enforcement of the doctrine of equal rights; now that they demand that legislation shall be general, not special, and for the common good of all, not the peculiar good of a few, and require that government shall be democratick in fact as well as in name, the monopoly gentry think the time has come for them to hoist their own flag.<sup>56</sup>

As we think over this interpretation, it is allowable to raise the question whether it was not about this time that the "Democratic-Republican" party, losing a conservative element, began to become (at least in the North) the modern Democratic party. If this be true, it may be suggested that modern industrialism in the United States and the Democratic party developed contemporaneously.

<sup>53</sup> Marcy to Wetmore, July 2, 12, 1837. Marcy Pap., vol. III.

<sup>54</sup> Marcy to Wetmore, July 20, 1837. *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> Marcy to Wetmore, January 16, August 18, 1837. *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> *The Plain Dealer*, July 15, 1837.

At any rate, the stand which was being taken by the conservatives aroused the radicals within Tammany to greater ardor for their type of democracy, and at various ward meetings they condemned the Tallmadge pronouncements and called for a reorganization of Tammany. Of special significance were the resolutions of the Eleventh, the "most powerful democratic ward" in the city. Banks, the resolutions averred, were "dangerous to the interests of the great body of the people, either as one great institution or as a number of small ones". The aim of Tallmadge as a representative of the aristocracy is "Bank, Bank, Bank, and the aim of the democracy is no longer Bank and State".

We find at this juncture evidence of direct influence upon Van Buren of the radical group in New York through Churchill C. Cambreleng. We have mentioned above the position of Cambreleng in the party councils at this time and the closeness of his association with Van Buren.<sup>57</sup> All through the summer of 1837 in particular, as the Van Buren Papers show, he was in frequent correspondence with the latter. He also was in sympathetic touch with the Locofocos, and many of them had voted for him in the election of 1836.<sup>58</sup> The above-mentioned radical resolutions (which contain more than there is space for quoting) were passed on July 19, probably at a meeting in the evening; the next day a copy in full was transmitted by Cambreleng to the President with a strong endorsement. "There never was a crisis", the former urged, "more admirably adapted to form a pure, sound, democratic party."<sup>59</sup>

The conservative members of Tammany continued actively to combat the radicals and just before the opening of the special session in September issued a formal address in which they heartily endorsed the principles of democracy which were set forth in *The Madisonian*, a paper recently established at Washington to represent the conservative movement.<sup>60</sup> These issues gave prominence to Tallmadge's letter, the Albany Manifesto, and a famous speech by Rives, of Virginia.

Such, then, was the distracted condition of the Democratic-Republican party of New York, when in the first days of September came the President's special message. The effect, Flagg wrote, was like that of an electric shock.<sup>61</sup> Comments of New York newspapers

<sup>57</sup> *Ante*, p. 399.

<sup>58</sup> Byrdsall, *op. cit.*, pp. 20, 94, 96.

<sup>59</sup> The resolutions and Cambreleng's comments are found in the Van Buren Papers under date of July 20, 1837. Another letter from Cambreleng of like tenor followed on August 8.

<sup>60</sup> *The Plain Dealer*, September 2, 1837.

<sup>61</sup> Flagg to Van Buren, November 5, 1837. Van Buren Pap., vol. XXX.



will give some idea of its trend. Greeley began his editorial in the *New Yorker* with, "The message toes the mark. There are no two ways about it." The *Courier*, a leading Whig paper, said that it "embodied in specious phrase and thin-veiled sophistry the most pernicious doctrines of Loco Focoism", and declared that the President "has gone the full length with the *Plain Dealer*, the *Evening Post*, the *Washington Globe*, Blair, Kendall and General Jackson". Of special interest is the opinion of the *Times*, the representative of the conservatives, which was as follows:

Our readers will have perceived, before this sheet reaches them, that the sentiments of Mr. Van Buren in relation to the establishment of Subtreasuries are in direct opposition to what we have conceived to be the views of a large majority of his political friends. While we admit that his arguments are ingenuous [ingenious] they have failed to remove the serious objections which have hitherto been urged against the system.<sup>62</sup>

Marcy judged that the message "made mighty men of the leaders of the locofoco faction".<sup>63</sup>

The message to the special session of the Twenty-fifth Congress, in truth, is a classical expression of the general democratic movement which so profoundly affected the political destinies of the United States in the decades prior to the Civil War. The fundamental postulate of the message was that the real duty of government—"that duty the performance of which makes a good government the most precious of human blessings—is to enact and enforce a system of general laws commensurate with, but not exceeding, the objects of its establishment, and to leave every citizen and every interest to reap under its benign protection the rewards of virtue, industry, and prudence". The main danger to fundamental equality of citizens arose from the activities of men intent on individual enterprises in manipulating public finance for the aggrandizement of their own projects—a danger to be apprehended both in the federal and the state governments. The danger centred in the control of currency by corporations whose powers were of doubtful constitutionality and whose propensities were to "stimulate extravagance of enterprise by improvidence of credit". To such improvidence the disasters of the time were traced. Distinct sympathy was shown for the "great laboring classes who are thrown suddenly out of employment, and by the failure of magnificent schemes never

<sup>62</sup> Quotations from a number of journals were given in the *Plain Dealer*, September 9, 1837.

<sup>63</sup> Marcy to Van Buren, December 8, 1837. Van Buren Pap., vol. XXX.

intended to enrich them are deprived in a moment of their only resource"; and reliance for recovery from disaster was placed upon the agricultural interest; but the commercial classes received more criticism than solace. The financial principle mainly to be relied upon for alleviation of the prevailing distress was to limit wherever possible the use of paper money and to foster the use of "legal" currency. At any rate, the credit of the federal government was no longer to be used as the basis of private issues of notes nor exposed to the vicissitudes of bank deposits, and a treasury system for the reception, safe-keeping, and disbursement of public funds was the leading specific recommendation. The message expressed in moderate but decided tone the main tenets of the Equal Rights party, though lacking some of their extravagances; and it may be looked upon as the primary manifesto of the larger Locofocoism to which the administration Democrats were henceforth committed.<sup>64</sup>

The decision of the President resulted, presently, in the ascendancy of the radicals in the Democratic organization of the city of New York. The Locofocos promptly approved the special message, saying that it "awakens the admiration, and deserves the applause of every friend of Equal Rights, and will elicit the approbation of the whole genuine Democracy of the Union".<sup>65</sup> On the other hand, the General Committee and its adherents fought resolutely against "the radical and revolutionary doctrines which have swept over the land like a pestilence".<sup>66</sup> But the older order was gradually set aside by the younger element in Tammany; a coalition of candidates for the fall election was made with the Locofocos; and the organization was at last "purified" of monopolists. Gideon Lee joined the Whigs, and it is to be presumed that many of his associates did likewise.<sup>67</sup> The Locofocos came back to the Wigwam. Within the limited sphere of their direct political activities they had effected a revolution, and their work marked the close of an era in the history of Tammany.

To the watchful and apprehensive governor at Albany this change in the complexion of Tammany was very repugnant, and

<sup>64</sup> Richardson, *Messages and Papers of the Presidents*, III. 324-346.

<sup>65</sup> Byrdsall, *op. cit.*, pp. 161-162.

<sup>66</sup> The quotation is from an address which was sent to Van Buren by the Committee, September 27, 1837. Van Buren Pap., vol. XXIX.

<sup>67</sup> See Gustavus Myers, *History of Tammany Hall* (New York, 1917), pp. 112-116. Tallmadge also a little later became a Whig, or at least was re-elected to the Senate by Whigs. Hammond, *Hist. of Political Parties*, II. 523. In 1844 he was appointed governor of Wisconsin territory by President Tyler, serving two years.

his letters written while it was in progress are full of caustic remarks about the Locofocos. The "infusion of Slam-bangism" into the party ticket made it indeed a "precious morsel".<sup>68</sup> "The insolence of the locofocos who pretend they have (and for aught that appears they certainly have) a full endorsement of all their doctrines by the President is almost insufferable."<sup>69</sup> "We shall bye and bye have to ask these locofoco gentry where we shall go to church."<sup>70</sup> The banks, it would appear, are to be "surrendered to the Hideous Monster of locofocism".<sup>71</sup> It was unreasonable to expect, the governor thought, "that the democrats of the state will range themselves under the banners of Ming, Leggett, Slam, Jaques and others of better repute at Washington".<sup>72</sup>

Marcy's opinion of the message needs careful consideration. The statement in the *Calendar* of the Van Buren Papers that he approved it appears erroneous.<sup>73</sup> The best source for arriving at his real sentiments concerning it is a long letter which he wrote to Congressman Albert Gallup. "I have tried very hard", Marcy wrote to Gallup, "to like the measures of the Message but I must confess to you that I have not succeeded. My high personal regard for Mr. V. B. and my great admiration of his talents, wisdom, and discretion ought to induce me to defer to his better judgment—but still my mind will not submit." On the President's theory all of the financial transactions of the state would need to be made in specie, and "none but a mad locofoco would think of such folly". The sub-treasury project was dangerous; "the state banks have not had a fair trial and it savours of rashness to give them up". The party should not rely for success upon the destructive doctrines of the day. "Indeed the doctrines of the message", the governor sagaciously observes, "seemed to me on its first perusal to involve the reconstruction of the political parties of the country if an attempt

<sup>68</sup> Marcy to Wetmore, October 25, 1837. Marcy Pap., vol. III.

<sup>69</sup> Marcy to Gallup, September 23, 1837. *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> Marcy to Wetmore, September 26, 1837. *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> Marcy to Gallup, *doc. cit. supra*, note 69.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> Marcy to Van Buren, September 18, 1837. Van Buren Pap., vol. XXIX. The letter is really non-committal. The portion referring to the message is as follows: "I have this morning received a copy of the Message under your frank for which I tender you my thanks.

"No one can have admired more than myself the very great ability it displays. You were doubtless prepared for some diversity of opinion among your political friends as to the policy of the measures therein recommended and I sincerely hope it will not be greater than you have anticipated."

be made to carry them out. Every thing that has since taken place has confirmed that impression."<sup>74</sup>

The forebodings of the governor were confirmed by the startling success of the Whigs in the November elections in New York—a success precursory to subsequent victories in both the state and the nation which were the result in no small degree of the cleavages which were appearing in the Democratic party. At this time a Van Buren majority of eighty-two on joint ballot in the legislature was transformed into a Whig majority of sixty-four, a net gain of 144 members.<sup>75</sup> Van Buren's lieutenants attributed this reverse largely to the defection of conservative democrats to the Whigs.<sup>76</sup> Van Buren himself, though astounded by this political tornado, judged it but a temporary matter.<sup>77</sup> Not so the astute Marcy. "This blow", he wrote Wetmore, "will resound far and wide. I think it will startle the wise men at Washington. . . . You think next year will restore all. Don't be too sure of that. We have taken a mischievous partner into our concern. I mean the younger member, Locofocoism. The capital he brought in will not help us as much as his bad character will worsen our condition."<sup>78</sup>

When, a year later, a yet more bitter defeat retired Marcy from the governorship, the *Democratic Review* (which, it will be recalled, was the intimate organ of Van Buren) criticized the leadership of the former, on the one hand, for not meeting squarely the question of the divorce of government from banking and, on the other, for catering to the conservatives. And, subsequently, it complained that the state leaders had not boldly avowed democratic principles nor overcome "their ancient timid reverence for their banks, and their credit system, and their paper money".<sup>79</sup>

I have tried to make clear this gradual drawing apart of these two leaders of the Democratic party, based on fundamental predilections, because it seems to me to afford a clue to the right understanding of the course of New York politics for the next decade or more. Whether the question was concerning banks or canals or slavery, two groups habitually align themselves, according to their opposing

<sup>74</sup> Marcy to Gallup, September 23, 1837. Marcy Pap., vol. III. To any one who wishes to get at the deeper currents of the time in New York Democracy, this letter is important.

<sup>75</sup> Niles, LIII. 193.

<sup>76</sup> Flagg to Van Buren, November 9, 17, 1837; Cambreleng to Van Buren, November 9, 1837. Van Buren Pap., vol. XXX.

<sup>77</sup> Van Buren to Parker, November 16?, and to Jackson, November 18. Van Buren Pap., vol. XXX.

<sup>78</sup> Marcy to Wetmore, November 9, 1837. Marcy Pap., vol. III.

<sup>79</sup> *Democratic Rev.*, V. 6, 7; VI. 506.

views of fundamental democracy.<sup>80</sup> The one, inclining to the philosophy of enterprise, defended the state banks, championed the extension of the canal system, and affiliated itself with the expansionists of the South; the other, holding fast the principle of distributive justice, agitated the restriction of banks, tried to restrain canal promotion, and progressed toward "free soil, free speech, free labor and free men".<sup>81</sup> The one was the "Hunkers"; the other the "Barnburners".<sup>82</sup> Personal ambitions and resentments, to be sure, entered into the political manoeuvres of these factions, but there was nevertheless between them an abiding distinction. Marcy became the most prominent leader of the former, along with Crosswell, Beardsley, Horatio Seymour, and Dickinson; while Wright, Dix, Flagg, and Cambreleng continued under the captaincy of Van Buren.<sup>83</sup> The later political career of Van Buren gains in consistency if we consider it from the point of view of the course which he chose in 1837. At bottom a Jeffersonian Democrat before that time, he then naturally and decisively affiliated himself with the renewed Jeffersonism of the Locofocos, and to this type of democracy he subsequently gave faithful adherence.<sup>84</sup>

Moreover, during the period which lay between Van Buren's message of the autumn of 1837 and the Democratic convention of the summer of 1844 when the Democracy of expansion sprang into the saddle with the nomination of Polk—a period in which Van Buren, abetted by Wright and Benton and blessed by the old hero

<sup>80</sup> One catches recurring glimpses of this alignment in the engaging pages of Hammond's *Hist. of Political Parties*; and there is a succinct and suggestive statement concerning it by Alexander Johnston in Lalor's *Cyclopedia of Political Science*, II. 476.

<sup>81</sup> Contrast the address of the "regular" state convention of 1847 with the speech of John Van Buren at the Herkimer meeting. *Niles*, LXXIII. 390-392, 174-175.

<sup>82</sup> The term "Hunker" appears to have been used by radicals of Tammany as an opprobrious designation of conservatives at least as early as 1835. Byrd-sall, *op. cit.*, pp. 16, 17. Schouler, *History of the United States*, IV. 462, connects "Barnburner" with radicalism by a possible derivation from charges of incendiarism brought against the reformers in the Dorr Rebellion in Rhode Island.

<sup>83</sup> Lalor, *Cyclopedia*, II. 476; Schouler, V. 98.

<sup>84</sup> "He was the same Van Buren in 1848 that he had always been; not one of the distinctly 'Locofoco' doctrines had he abjured, except, perhaps, that of the unconstitutionality of internal improvements. He had not made a single concession." T. C. Smith, *Liberty and Free Soil Parties in the Northwest*, p. 146. An estimate of Van Buren which was made by Leggett is perhaps suggestive of his real character: "We consider Mr. Van Buren an exceedingly cautious man in forming his conclusions; but we look upon him as equally firm in adhering to them when once fully and carefully formed, after a careful consideration of a subject in all its aspects and bearings." *The Plain Dealer*, April 22, 1837.

of the Hermitage, was something more than titular leader of his party—Locofoco principles were in the ascendant in the Democracy of the nation. During this period, indeed, the Democratic party was quite generally called the Locofoco party by its opponents, and the appellation was no longer disavowed by faithful adherents. It was not without significance, as Professor Dodd has observed, that in the Democratic platform of 1840, "For the last time in the history of *ante-bellum* Democracy the Declaration of Independence was declared to be an item of the party faith".<sup>85</sup>

Leggett during this period became to the national progressive Democracy a sort of political saint, who was regarded as having been martyred to the cause now so generally espoused. Was it not he, exclaimed the *Democratic Review*, who had raised the flag inscribed with the "motto of hostility to chartered monopoly" to which the Democracy of the country was now rallying? Was not he "the leader and master-spirit of that gallant crusade of reform", now honored in all parts of the Union as Locofocoism? Truly, "the vast success of that purity and sternness of principle which he had espoused in advance was infusing new strength and power into the great army of American Democracy".<sup>86</sup>

Nor were the original Locofocos held ignoble in the eyes of the Van Buren Democracy. In truth it was considered fortunate for freedom that some ardent spirits dared to "carry their ideas to the verge of extravagance", for thus there was furnished a counterbalance to the drag of anti-liberalism. The Locofoco doctrines were generally sound, and their practice would make the world happier. Essentially, these doctrines were those of Jefferson, Taylor, and Madison—a simple emphasis on equal rights, "a clear field and no favors". The Locofocos, in fine, insisted upon "all the consequences which can fairly be educed from the principles which are at the foundation of democratic liberty".<sup>87</sup> They were to be honored, indeed, for having prepared "by a long process of deep agitation on fundamental principles . . . the incipient fermentation of the purifying leaven of 'Locofocoism' which is now fast leavening the whole lump".<sup>88</sup>

The national Locofocoism identified itself with its local prototype in New York, moreover, in regarding the banking interests as then constituted in this country as a bulwark of privilege similar to that of the feudal nobility in Europe. The pith of the progressive

<sup>85</sup> W. E. Dodd, *Expansion and Conflict*, p. 110.

<sup>86</sup> *Democratic Rev.*, VI. 17-28.

<sup>87</sup> Article on "Radicalism", *ibid.*, III. 99-111.

<sup>88</sup> "New York City vs. New York State", *ibid.*, VI. 499-517.

Democracy's opposition to the credit system was the issuance by the banks of a currency not strictly redeemable in specie. The great evil was the want of a fixed measure of value, and the prime remedy was the "separation of the two distinct functions of creating and lending the currency".<sup>89</sup>

The idealism, also, of the early protagonists of equal rights was not wanting in their national successors. Though this idealism may to some extent have been an affectation for party purposes of the hour, though its rhetoric may have been at times strained, there can be no denying its reality nor its deep-lying power of appeal to the American people. The Locofocos earnestly felt themselves charged with a mission for the future of democracy.

For Democracy is the cause of Humanity. It has faith in human nature. It believes in its essential equality and fundamental goodness. . . . Its object is to emancipate the mind of the mass of men from the degrading and disheartening fetters of social distinctions and advantages . . . by striking at their root to reform all the infinitely varied human misery which has grown out of the old and false ideas by which the world has been so long misgoverned; to dismiss the hireling soldier; to spike the cannon, and bury the bayonet; to burn the gibbet, and open the debtor's dungeon; to substitute harmony and mutual respect for the jealousies and discord now subsisting between different classes of society, as the consequence of their artificial classification. It is essentially involved in Christianity, of which it has been well said that its pervading spirit of democratic equality among men is its highest fact. . . .<sup>90</sup>

The idealistic democracy which the Locofocos represented and propagated was an important element in that crystallization of political sentiment and experience into constitutional forms, which was going on within the various states between 1830 and 1860, but which progressed with most rapidity after 1844. During these thirty years the constitutions of practically all of the older states were recast, and those of ten new ones were formed.<sup>91</sup> The progress of this development was surveyed from time to time by the *Democratic Review* in a series of thoughtful and optimistic articles, which

<sup>89</sup> *Democratic Rev.*, VI. 449-462; I. 260-262.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, I. 1-15.

<sup>91</sup> The movement has been sketched by McMaster in *History of the United States*, VII. 162-189, and by J. Q. Dealey under the caption of "The Period of Developing Democracy" in *The Growth of American State Constitutions*, pp. 47-55. There are informing articles by F. L. Paxson, "The Constitution of Texas, 1845", in the *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, XVIII. 386-398, and "A Constitution of Democracy—Wisconsin, 1847", in the *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, II. 3-24.



affords one of the best sources for its study.<sup>92</sup> In one of these the significance of the movement in general was sought to be interpreted. During the eighteenth century, it was asserted, some of the liberal statesmen of Europe had acknowledged that the people should have some influence in government; yet they were far from *trusting* the people with government. Likewise, in the beginnings of our own constitutional governments (notably in the Federal Convention of 1787) there had been on the part of many able men marked distrust of government by the people. Now, however, the great experiment in self-government was being moulded into abiding form by a new political science, and reform was receiving "a direction which will secure the enactment and administration of laws for the benefit of the whole people".<sup>93</sup> The reconstitution of popular government in this period, indeed, forms a chapter in the general history of democracy which perhaps has not been sufficiently appreciated by thoughtful Americans. Chevalier, surveying our democracy in the earlier part of the period and noting the significant *initiation* of our populace into the things which make for a full democratic civilization, burst out with, "This is the first time since the origin of society, that the people have fairly enjoyed the fruits of their labours, and have shown themselves worthy of the prerogatives of manhood."<sup>94</sup>

To attempt to delineate the extent to which the divergences in the New York Democracy, which we have been studying, were reproduced in the national politics of the time and, in particular, to trace the influence of the radical element through the Van Buren Democracy upon the great movement which has just been referred to, would take us far afield and necessitate a survey for which the author's studies are immature; but some clear indications of the "leavening" process may be set forth briefly.

The influence of Locofocoism is discernible upon the constitutional convention which was held in New York in 1846. The Locofocos had begun to agitate for a reform convention as

<sup>92</sup> "Constitutional Reform", XIII. 563-576; "The Progress of Constitutional Reform in the United States", XVIII. 243-256; "History of Constitutional Reform in the United States", *ibid.*, 403-420; "The New-York Constitutional Convention", XIX. 339-348; "Constitutional Governments: the Constitution of Wisconsin", XX. 195-204. The author of most, if not all, of these articles was John Bigelow. Bigelow, *Retrospections of an Active Life* (New York, 1909), I. 70; cited by Paxson, *Miss. Valley Hist. Rev.*, II. 13.

<sup>93</sup> *Democratic Rev.*, XX. 195.

<sup>94</sup> Michel Chevalier, *Society, Manners and Politics in the United States* (Boston, 1839), pp. 428-437.

early as 1837 when they had framed an interesting model constitution.<sup>95</sup> "The career of the [Equal Rights] party was ephemeral", Dougherty remarks, "but its animosity against special legislation and special privileges had its influence upon the new constitution".<sup>96</sup> This effect was the more direct, perhaps, because ex-Congressman Churchill C. Cambreleng was chairman of the committee on banking. This committee recommended that there should be no special bank charters and no legal suspension of specie payments, and these recommendations were embodied in the new constitution.<sup>97</sup> The noteworthy reform of the judiciary, which was effected, was likewise a matter which had been very earnestly pressed by the early Locofocos.<sup>98</sup> In general, the convention of 1846, if we may accept the opinion of Alexander, ushered in a new era in New York in government by the people—an era when property no longer "measured a man's capacity and influence".<sup>99</sup>

The Wisconsin conventions of 1846 and 1847 show strong influences from New York. The factions and nomenclature of the New York Democracy were reproduced to a very considerable extent both within the convention halls and in political discussions in the state at large. The New York constitution of 1846 was taken as a model.<sup>100</sup> In the first convention forty-two out of 124 members were from that state; in the second, twenty-five out of sixty-nine.<sup>101</sup> Locofocoism was rampant in the former. Extremely radical provisions on banking were introduced and championed by Edward G. Ryan, chairman of the committee on banking, an Irishman by birth who had come to New York City in 1830 and had been admitted to the bar there in 1836.<sup>102</sup> Another New Yorker, a small merchant by the name of Gibson, tried to tone these down by offering a resolution allowing banks under restrictions. An old Locofoco doctrine

<sup>95</sup> Byrdsall, pp. 163-167.

<sup>96</sup> J. H. Dougherty, *Legal and Judicial History of New York*, ed. Alden Chester (New York, 1911), II. 152.

<sup>97</sup> Charles Z. Lincoln, *The Constitutional History of New York* (1906), II. 195-198.

<sup>98</sup> Byrdsall, *op. cit.*, pp. 164-165.

<sup>99</sup> DeA. S. Alexander, *A Political History of the State of New York* (1906), II. 105-107.

<sup>100</sup> Paxson in *Miss. Valley Hist. Rev.*, II. 9.

<sup>101</sup> Tenny and Atwood, *Memorial Record of the Fathers of Wisconsin* (Madison, 1880), pp. 20-22; *Milwaukee Volksfreund*, December 30, 1847.

<sup>102</sup> Ryan afterwards became a prominent jurist, and an honored chief justice of the state. It is worth while noticing that a number of young men, afterwards notable, were in touch at the outset of their careers with the radical movement in New York City. Among these may be mentioned John Bigelow, Theodore Sedgwick, jr., Horace Greeley, and Samuel J. Tilden.

appeared in a motion by Mr. Crawford (a native of Vermont who had long resided in St. Lawrence County, New York) that "all laws for the collection of debts shall forever be prohibited within this state".<sup>103</sup> This motion failed; but so radical in general were the features of the constitution as finally reported, that it was rejected by popular vote. It is interesting to notice that ex-Governor Nathaniel P. Tallmadge, erstwhile of New York, "was considered the commander-in-chief of the anti-constitutional forces".<sup>104</sup> The second convention was more of Hunker persuasion (re-enforced by Whig influence); and the constitution as finally adopted, especially in its comparatively moderate articles on banking and exemption, reflected in the main Locofocoism as modified by Hunker sentiment, a sentiment which was becoming more pronounced because wheat-raisers on the eastern shore were feeling the need of closer business relations with New York.<sup>105</sup>

The Iowa conventions of the same period showed no such predominance of men from any one state as was the case in Wisconsin, though there was a considerable sprinkling of natives of New York. Yet here also appears the usual threefold division of Whigs, moderate Democrats, and radical Democrats; here also, as usual, questions of banking and incorporation are foremost; and here also we find employed the shibboleths of the New York ultra-radicals.<sup>106</sup>

The assignment of definite origins to widely held opinions involves too much risk of error to let us infer with finality, from the above indications, that the frontier democracy of the upper Mississippi Valley in making its constitutions drew some of its major conceptions from the apostles of ultraism in New York City; but, on the other hand, we may at least raise the question whether the conceptions put forth in these instruments were to so great an extent indigenous as has been maintained.<sup>107</sup> The frontier truly was a

<sup>103</sup> The Locofocos had urged that debts should be only debts of honor and that credit should rest merely upon individual morality. Byrdsall, p. 149. This contention was later related to legal exemption, which was one of the subjects registering democratic advance in this period.

<sup>104</sup> Louise P. Kellogg, "The Admission of Wisconsin to Statehood", in vol. I. of a *Documentary Constitutional History of Wisconsin* [in press], edited by Milo M. Quaife and associates.

<sup>105</sup> The data for this paragraph have been derived for the most part from a large collection of materials for the history referred to in the preceding note. Superintendent Quaife kindly allowed me to consult this collection.

<sup>106</sup> Note the views and expressions of John C. Hall, an attorney, whose native state was New York. Benjamin F. Shambaugh, *Fragments of the Debates of the Iowa Constitutional Conventions*, pp. 72-73, 102, 188-191; also remarks of other members concerning banking, pp. 74-80.

<sup>107</sup> For example, by Professor Paxson in *Miss. Valley Hist. Rev.*, II. 3, 4.

nursery of lusty and creative democracy; but of a democracy too busy, too individualistic, to be so well fitted for the slow and subtle processes of the *formulation* of social and political creeds as were older foci of population and opinion where life was more complex and mental contacts and collisions more frequent. As Professor Shambaugh, of Iowa, expressed it recently in conversation with the author in comment upon the constitutional movement in Iowa: "The frontiersman preferred to take his formulas ready-made and to fight for them, rather than go to the trouble of making them himself."

It is certain, at any rate, that New York City in the early thirties was a centre where the impacts of transformations fundamental in modern life were being deeply felt; that these transformations were reflected in divergences which developed within the Democratic party in 1837 and thereafter, with wide-reaching effects; and that chief among these effects was the promulgation of the formulations and spirit of the Locofoco propagandists. These voiced the ultra-idealism of the age<sup>108</sup>—an idealism which, permeating the North with a renewed aggressive doctrine of the equality of mankind at the time when to a large degree the South was yielding to the theory of social stratification, helped to make the United States (and therefore perhaps the world) "safe for democracy".

WILLIAM TRIMBLE.

<sup>108</sup> The expression is akin to one quoted *ibid.*, p. 4.

## THE EDUCATION OF HENRY ADAMS<sup>1</sup>

IN 1771, Thomas Hutchinson wrote to one of his friends, "We have not been so quiet here these five years . . . if it were not for two or three Adamses, we should do well enough." From that day to this many people have agreed with the fastidious governor. But so far, an Adams or two we have always had with us; and on the whole, although they have sometimes been exasperating, they have always been salutary. During four generations the men of this family have loved and served America as much as they have scolded her. More cannot be said, except that they have commonly given, on both counts, more than they have received. Theirs is therefore the blessing, and ours the benefit.

Among other things, we have to thank them for some diaries and autobiographies which have been notable for frank self-revelation. Henry Adams would of course have stoutly denied that any such impertinence as self-revelation was either intended or achieved in the *Education*. There is no evidence that he ever kept a diary (all things considered, the burden of proof is not on us!); but it is not to be supposed that he would have published it in any case. A man who regarded himself as of no more significance than a chance deposit on the surface of the world might indeed write down an intimate record of his soul's doings as an exercise in cosmic irony; but the idea of publishing it could hardly have lived for a moment in the lambent flame of his own sardonic humor. He could be perverse, but perversity could not well go the length of perpetrating so pointless a joke as that would come to.

No, Henry Adams would not reveal himself to the curious inspection of an unsympathetic world; but he would write a book for the purpose of exposing a dynamic theory of history, than which nothing could well be more impersonal or unrevealing. With a philosophy of history the Puritan has always been preoccupied; and it was the major interest of Henry Adams throughout the better part of his life. He never gained more than a faint idea of any intelligible philosophy, as he would himself have readily admitted; but after a lifetime of hard study and close thinking, the matter struck him thus:

<sup>1</sup> *The Education of Henry Adams: an Autobiography* (Boston and New York, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1918, pp. 519).<sup>1</sup>