

## CHAPTER I

### Beyond Politics: How the North Won the Civil War

In 1967 historian Eric McKittrick, in a clever feat of counterintuitive historical argument, maintained that the two-party system was an important advantage that the North held over the Confederacy. For a time, the idea swept some historians off their feet, and it was routinely invoked at historical conferences as an explanation of the politics of the Civil War.<sup>1</sup> The survival of the two-party system through the war was definitely something to celebrate, but it is quite another thing to say that the system aided the Northern war effort or, conversely, that the Confederacy suffered for want of a two-party system. Soberly considered, the direct influence of the two-party system on the war effort of the North was nothing to brag about. It did not aid careful military analysis to have Republicans accuse Democratic generals like George B. McClellan of treason because they did not win battles, or to have the Democratic governor of mighty

<sup>1</sup> Eric L. McKittrick, "Party Development and the Union and Confederate War Efforts," in William Nisbet Chambers and Walter Dean Burnham, eds., *The American Party Systems: Stages of Political Development* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 117–151. See also Michael F. Holt, "Abraham Lincoln and the Politics of Union," in Holt, *Political Parties and American Political Development from the Age of Jackson to the Age of Lincoln* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992), 323–324, and "An Elusive Synthesis: Northern Politics during the Civil War," in James M. McPherson and William J. Cooper, Jr., eds., *Writing the Civil War: The Quest to Understand* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), 117–118 (which expresses disappointment that McKittrick's lead was not often enough followed out to systematic analysis in detail of both political parties in the conflict). Even in McKittrick's even-handed and social-science-inspired article, the Democrats are not much featured and little attempt is made to understand them. Those that are mentioned were the three famously controversial gubernatorial candidates of 1863 – Clement L. Vallandigham, George W. Woodward, and Thomas Seymour. The presidential nominee in 1864, George B. McClellan, is mentioned only once and dismissed simply as "a general . . . who had been dismissed for the failure of the operations of 1862 in the Eastern theater" (p. 149).

New York urge the president to suspend the draft pending a decision of the United States Supreme Court on its constitutionality (which never came). Intuition in this case was sound. The two-party system did not aid the Northern war effort.<sup>2</sup>

Even saying that much still leaves the impression that the political parties shaped the Northern war effort. In fact, they did not, very much. The United States Constitution played an enormous configurative role in designating powers that were uncontested in the partisan debates of the Civil War. The Constitution, for example, determined that the president would be the commander-in-chief for at least the length of a four-year term, and temporary battlefield setbacks could be weathered by the administration. But there was only so much the Constitution itself could do. It could not raise money and troops or care for the sick and wounded. These critical tasks, as it turned out, were taken care of not so much by politicians as by civil society at large.

In other words, the most important factors in Union victory off the battlefield were not political at all. The two-party system had its boundaries in peace and war, and most matters crucial for the war effort fell outside party competition or, more rarely, were facilitated by the parties' cooperating rather than competing. We owe a debt to Glenn C. Altschuler and Stuart M. Blumin's highly original book, *Rude Republic: Americans and Their Politics in the Nineteenth Century*, for proving that politics did not enter into all aspects of life in mid-nineteenth-century America and that there were important areas customarily off limits to political competition. However, they thought the wall separating private and public was breached by the Civil War.<sup>3</sup> It was not. The areas vital to the life of the nation did not become the playthings of partisan competition but remained in the hands of volunteers, civic boosters, and notable locals.

Truth to tell, the parts of the war effort behind the lines that worked *best* were those that were unimpeded by the two-party system and the bickering habits of politicians. The nonpartisan realm took care of the important matters: the mobilization for the war, the financing of the war effort through loans, and much of the support essential to soldiers' families left at home.<sup>4</sup> Taxes, public debt, and military recruitment at the local level worked to save the country *despite* politics.

<sup>2</sup> For a fuller argument on this point see Mark E. Neely, Jr., *The Union Divided: Party Conflict in the Civil War North* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002).

<sup>3</sup> Glenn C. Altschuler and Stuart M. Blumin, *Rude Republic: Americans and Their Politics in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 152–170.

<sup>4</sup> For deep statistical proof from one large community that the war did not radically alter the institutions and habits of antebellum America, see J. Matthew Gallman, *Mastering*

The politicians continued to indulge their habits of noisy and confrontational rhetoric without interruption during the war, but on key practical questions they relaxed competition and turned energies customarily devoted to fault-finding into boosterism. Now historians can say with confidence that politics did not enter into everything during the Civil War – *and it was a good thing*.<sup>5</sup>

#### FINANCING THE WAR

Let us begin with the least obvious realm of triumph of the local and civic over the national and political: funding the war. On the surface, that would seem to be a matter of congressional appropriations, of the Legal Tender Act, and of taxation, including the first income tax – all perennially partisan issues. But when we examine the vast transfer of wealth from the pockets of private individuals to the coffers of the national treasury, we find that the largest part of the funding was nonpartisan and non-coercive.

According to Richard N. Current, 62% of the “Union’s income” during the war came from the sale of government bonds.<sup>6</sup> In other words, the marketing of government loans was essential to the war effort. The government sold 6% bonds, which had to be held for 5 years and redeemed in 20 years (called the 5–20s). Philadelphia’s Jay Cooke sold this loan at first. Later, he also sold 7.30% bonds that had to be held for three years (called the 7–30s). James McPherson accurately and succinctly termed the bond drives a “policy of financing a democratic war by democratic means.”<sup>7</sup> Even so, that view has been challenged and itself overlooks the essential quality of all the war bond drives: nonpartisanship. The bonds proved a hard sell initially until Jay Cooke became the exclusive broker

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*Wartime: A Social History of Philadelphia During the Civil War* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990).

<sup>5</sup> It should be noted that the terminal date for William E. Gienapp’s assertion that politics entered into everything was 1860. Had he gone on to look at the war, he should surely have argued otherwise (“‘Politics Seems to Enter into Everything’: Political Culture in the North, 1840–1860,” in Stephen E. Maizlish and John J. Kushma, eds., *Essays in Antebellum American Politics, 1840–1860* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 1982), 15–69). The idea that politics were responsible for the successful Union war effort was Eric R. McKittrick’s.

<sup>6</sup> Richard N. Current, “God and the Strongest Battalions,” in David Donald, ed., *Why the North Won the Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1960), 10.

<sup>7</sup> James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 443. See also Ellis Paxson Oberholtzer, *Jay Cooke: Financier of the Civil War*, 2 vols., orig. pub. 1907 (New York: Burt Franklin, 1970), 1:212–326, 478–538.

for the United States Treasury program on October 23, 1862.<sup>8</sup> Even for the financial genius Cooke the government loans posed a problem at first, as he launched his effort at a low point in Northern military fortunes. The sales campaign began to get into gear after the defeat of the Army of the Potomac at the Battle of Fredericksburg, December 13, 1862.

To Cooke, the point of the bond drive was simple: “my plan would give individual enterprise the care of distributing” the government loan. The congruence of private gain (Cooke’s) with public treasury purpose has been the most noticed feature of the program.<sup>9</sup> His firm took charge of the 5–20 loans in denominations large and small. It was a good deal for the investor, and for the first time Americans of modest means – who could scrape together \$50 to purchase a bond – could make a profitable investment that lay outside the dangerous speculative games played by brokers attempting to corner the market on Wall Street.<sup>10</sup> It was a capitalist scheme, to be sure. Melinda Lawson, who has brilliantly recovered the importance of the Cooke bond drives, calls it “the privatization of government finance,” and Cooke himself earned a fortune. But more important forces were at work in these bond drives than anyone’s private gain, great or small. Thinking about the loans in the way Lawson has suggested obscures a very important quality of them unmentioned in the modern literature: they were nonpartisan. And though they benefited a great capitalist and pooled capital for the nation, they were suffused with democracy, opportunity, and community effort.

The appeals for the government’s bonds usually mixed patriotism with economic gain. An early printed appeal to investors pointed to the small denominations in which the bonds could be purchased and said that “every Capitalist, be he large or small, or Merchant, Mechanic, Farmer . . . should invest at once his spare funds.”<sup>11</sup> The advertisements that appeared in newspapers across the country, beginning November 10, 1862, put the other classes before the capitalist: “Farmers, Merchants, Mechanics, Capitalists, and all who have any money to invest.”<sup>12</sup> Both Cooke and Secretary of the Treasury Salmon P. Chase thought of the loan

<sup>8</sup> Melinda Lawson, *Patriot Fires: Forging a New American Nationalism in the Civil War North* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002), 47.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 46–47.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 41–47.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>12</sup> See the advertisement from the “Office of Jay Cooke, Subscription Agent,” appearing in many newspapers in the country. I first saw it in the *Gettysburg Compiler*, November 10, 1862.

drive as the democratization of war finance rather than its “privatization,” and Cooke’s and the government’s advertisements self-consciously appealed to all classes of people. Cooke, who quickly learned that flattery was essential in dealing with the vain and ambitious secretary of the treasury, told Chase on November 1, 1863, after the success of the bond drive was clear, “There is nothing in History to compare with the triumph of the appeal of yours to the people of our land. The success attending your former efforts to popularize the 7.30 Loan together with motives of economy and a desire that the *people* should participate in the advantages of the loans to government led you to adopt a similar course in disposing of the 5.20 Loan.” Of course, Cooke was a salesman and did not fail to promote himself at every opportunity in dealing with the treasury secretary. In the same letter Cooke went on to say that the program did not rely on “Banks and Capitalists” but employed “a direct appeal to the people & the distribution of the loan through the medium of this agency into every nook & corner of the loyal States & *rightly* relied upon the patriotism of the people to substantiate the Treasury of the nation.” Cooke’s estimate at this point was that 536,000 people subscribed to the loan, and he used sweepingly broad democratic language in describing them – “of all classes, high & low, rich & poor white & black & of all nations & tongues, trades occupations & professions.”<sup>13</sup> The actual distribution of the loans by social class is unknown and likely unknowable.

A quantified assessment of the distribution of the loans would be informative, but it would be a mistake to dwell exclusively on the quality of privatization, profit, and social class in the Cooke–Chase scheme to sell the government loans. Preoccupation with such questions may have blinded us to *the most important feature of the appeals for the government loans: they were nonpartisan.*

Cooke and the Treasury Department advertised in Democratic and Republican newspapers alike. Cooke and Chase likely had some conscious recognition of the nonpartisan nature of the appeal to fund the war. We know that because it was not customary in the nineteenth century to separate the editorial and commercial departments of the press, and newspapers were the primary advertising medium for the government loan.<sup>14</sup> They knew from whom they were buying the ad space; the newspapers of the day were notorious for their partisan identification.

<sup>13</sup> Jay Cooke to Salmon P. Chase, November 1, 1863, Papers of Jay Cooke, Library of Congress, microfilm edition, reel 12.

<sup>14</sup> Cooke’s agents who travelled the country also distributed newsletters and put posters up.

The average country weekly could hardly have “departments” because they employed no local reporters, and the staff of the paper consisted of an editor who clipped the national news from other newspapers, poured out editorials, and hired and supervised pressmen. The editor likely also saw to the advertising revenue.<sup>15</sup> The editors, though fierce partisans, regularly promoted in the non-commercial pages the traveling circuses and theater shows that advertised in their commercial pages when they came to town, and sometimes presented as news the arrival of new goods at local stores that advertised in their pages. It was irksome, at the least, and degrading, at the worst, to indulge in the practice, but the editors had to. The editor of the *Waynesburg* (Pennsylvania) *Messenger*, describing the indignities of “Editing a Country Newspaper” in 1862, pointed to the necessity to “puff every little contemptible concern that orders a fifty cent job.”<sup>16</sup>

Jay Cooke knew how the press worked. He created publicity through advertisements for the bonds, for which he paid, and also through endorsements in editorials from the editors, many of which he and his brother actually wrote, and some of which were written by newspaper employees who were paid for their editorial work by Cooke. In other words, Cooke and his agents wrote or oversaw and approved the writing of *editorials* supporting the administration’s financial program in *Democratic* newspapers as well as Republican ones. “My advertising shall not discriminate, but give to all parties who will speak a good word for the government and finances – the same patronage,” Cooke told Chase.<sup>17</sup>

Naturally, the Republican newspapers were quicker to endorse the schemes of the Treasury Department of the Lincoln administration in

<sup>15</sup> J. Cutler Andrews, *The North Reports the Civil War* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1955), focuses on the newspapers in major cities. There is no real substitute for reading the newspapers themselves – in series and from different places – to understand the way the papers worked. I benefited greatly from conversations with Matthew Isham on the nature of the partisan press of the mid-nineteenth century. To understand the differences between the national political goals and the local community goals of the press see Isham, “‘Breaking over the Bounds of the Party’: The Role of the Party Newspaper in Democratic Factionalism in the Antebellum North, 1845–1852,” Ph.D. Diss., Pennsylvania State University, 2010. See also Andrews, *The South Reports the Civil War*, orig. pub. 1970 (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1985), 24–26. Non-metropolitan newspapers looked the same, north and south.

<sup>16</sup> *Waynesburg Messenger*, October 22, 1862.

<sup>17</sup> Jay Cooke to Salmon P. Chase, October 25, 1862, quoted in Melinda Lawson, *Patriot Fires: Forging a New American Nationalism in the Civil War North*, 49–50. Lawson describes the manipulations of the press but does not note the crucial nonpartisan nature of the sales campaign

their editorial pages than were the Democrats. In Pennsylvania, the Republican newspaper in Harrisburg, the state capital, was a daily, and managed to devote some words of endorsement for the 5–20s only three days after the first advertising of them in its pages in the late autumn of 1862. Unlike the finance capitalist Cooke, the newspaper editor preferred to stress patriotic motives over those of individual financial gain:

To Farmers, Mechanics and Capitalists.

Upon these three classes, divided only so far as labor and industrial pursuits are concerned, but united where real interest, patriotism and honor are involved – now depend the success, the prosperity and the perpetuity of the nation.

Our gallant army and navy must be supported by every man and woman who has any means, large or small, at their control. The United States government, to which we owe our prosperity as a nation, security of persons and property of every sort, calls on each individual to rally to its support – not with donations or gifts – BUT WITH SUBSCRIPTIONS TO HER LOANS, based on the best security in the world, the untold and scarcely yet tried resources of this mighty Continent, which were developing rapidly when this rebellion broke out, and to maintain which, AS A PRICELESS HERITAGE TO POSTERITY, this defense against rebellion is made.

. . . What our Revolutionary Fathers are to us, we will be to coming generations, if we fail not in our plain and simple duty.

The owner of every foot of ground, of every house and workshop, owes a debt of service in the field, or of his means to this noble work.<sup>18</sup>

Although visions of national prosperity were invoked, there was no direct appeal to individual gain – to the interest rate – in this editorial in the *Harrisburg Telegraph*. The overall plea was for selfless patriotism, honor, duty, service, and historical traditions of the American Revolution.

Editorials promoting the loan appeared in the Democratic press too. In the case of the later 7–30s, the Treasury Department for a time decided to work without Cooke and sell their bonds on their own, and thus the Lincoln administration's Treasury Department *dealt directly with the Democratic press to advertise the administration's financial program*. A good example was an appeal that appeared on September 7, 1864, in the *Lebanon Advertiser*, a Pennsylvania Democratic weekly. It was entitled "Poor Richard's Reasons for Buying United States Securities." "The other day," the article began, "we heard a rich neighbor say he had rather have railroad stocks than the U.S. stocks, for they paid higher interest. Just then Poor Richard came up, and said that he just bought some of Uncle Sam's three years notes, paying seven and three-tenths per cent. interest."

<sup>18</sup> *Harrisburg Telegraph*, November 14, 1862.

Poor Richard pointed out that what an investor desires is a “perfectly secure income,” one that is “uniform and permanent,” and an instrument that was “marketable” when he needed the money. No corporate stock met such criteria. On the point of the security of the investment, Poor Richard said, “I have been looking into that great book you call the Census Statistics . . . I found out, by looking at the crops, and the factories and shipping, &c., that we (I don’t mean the Rebel States) are making a thousand million of dollars a year more than we spend. So you see that (since the increase of debt isn’t half that) we are growing *rich* instead of poorer, as John Bull and the croakers would have us think.” In addition to confidence in the productiveness of the American economy, Poor Richard said he was moved by patriotic feeling. “I confess, too, that I wanted to help that dear old country, which is *my* home and *my* country.”<sup>19</sup>

“Poor Richard” was likely an editorial furnished by the Treasury Department. It appeared in the same issue of the paper with an advertisement for the 7–30s. Five days later, “Poor Richard” appeared in the *Gettysburg Compiler*, a Democratic newspaper, which was also carrying advertisements for the government bonds.<sup>20</sup> Whatever we may think of the direction of the Treasury under Salmon P. Chase, it must be said that this editorial – with its invocation of the legendary patriot and champion of bourgeois virtues, the author of *Poor Richard’s Almanac*, Benjamin Franklin – was inspiring on target. Patriotism, frugality, and plain-speaking were rolled into one in that revered image, and the appeal crossed party lines. Neither Democrats nor Republicans held a monopoly on Franklin’s image.

The Democratic *Erie Observer* exemplified the schizoid view of economics given to readers by virtue of the acceptance of informational advertisements that conflicted with the message on the editorial page of the paper. In the week preceding the meeting of the Democratic national nominating convention in Chicago in 1864, the *Observer* copied an article from the Democratic *New York World* on “The Public Debt of the United States.” It pointed out the great financial difficulties that loomed in the country’s mounting war debt (that would mean problems in paying the interest on government bonds).<sup>21</sup> The same issue of the Erie newspaper reprinted “Poor Richard’s Reasons for Buying United States Securities.” It appeared on the front page and was labeled “[advertisement].” Poor

<sup>19</sup> *Lebanon Advertiser*, September 7, 1864.

<sup>20</sup> *Gettysburg Compiler*, September 12, 1864; the ads appeared in the issues of September 5 and 19.

<sup>21</sup> *Erie Observer*, August 25, 1864.



Richard, of course, in arguing from the census returns the ability of the government to meet its debt obligations, contradicted the Democratic editorial appearing on another page.

The *Erie Observer* continued to send out mixed signals on the debt question. In the heat of the political campaign in 1864, with only two issues of the paper scheduled to appear before voting in the state's elections in October, the *Observer* printed the most detailed of the appeals for the 1864 loan. This long article was labeled as an advertisement also and was copied from *Harper's Magazine*. It made the essential sales points we have seen already: This investment was secure, did not fluctuate in value, and was liquid. The article employed more extensive statistics from the census to make essentially the same point we have already seen, and touted the interest rate as the highest available on a safe investment. "It is in every way the best Savings' Bank," the appeal concluded. In general this appeal focused most directly on the personal gain to the investor. But it betrayed its origins by its confrontational Republican tone on "patriotism" and "duty": "The loan is wanted for a great national purpose, to effect which every man, unless he be a traitor at heart if not in act, is solemnly pledged."<sup>22</sup> It is striking that this Democratic newspaper would dedicate a long column on its front page only a little over a week before a critical election day in a presidential election year to an editorial endorsing the administration's war-funding scheme and suggesting that any opponent was "a traitor at heart." The newspaper was otherwise fiercely partisan, as was most of the press of the day, but funding the war as a practical matter was nonpartisan.<sup>23</sup>

The Treasury Department and Jay Cooke & Co. provided a variety of articles in support of government bond drives. We have seen the more patriotic appeals already. On the more materialistic end of the scale came "Our Debt." It relied on circular letters issued by Samuel Hallet & Co. to European countries. These assured possible foreign investors of the bright economic future of the United States and therefore the certainty of the government's ability to repay its loans. Not much was said to the Europeans about the patriotic ends to which the loan would be applied.

<sup>22</sup> *Erie Observer*, September 29, 1864.

<sup>23</sup> The *Observer* ran another article from the *World* calling into question the ability of the United States to pay its debt, but that appeared only on October 13, 1864, days after the polls closed in Pennsylvania. The October state elections in Pennsylvania were all but universally regarded as bellwethers for the presidential election day to come a month later, and were deemed of crucial importance in the presidential contest. For the editorial see the *Erie Observer*, September 29, 1864.

After quoting Hallet's circular at length, the article concluded: "The new Five-Twenty year six per cent loan, is the only one the government is now issuing at par, and large subscriptions are daily making in all the principal cities. Messrs. Jay Cooke & Co. . . . are the agents in Philadelphia . . . See advertisement in another column."<sup>24</sup>

A similar approach was taken in the article entitled "Are the Germans Wrong in Wanting Our Bonds?" The answer, of course, was "Not a bit of it!" The article pointed out that the Germans were shrewd and thrifty, better at saving even than our own "frugal and industrious people," "our Jersey and New England people." Poor Richard put in an appearance in this article too, reminding skeptics that he had invested his "little saving in Government six per cents" over a year ago and, taking into account fluctuating monetary values, had earned a hefty 22 percent. "Now, see what I got by it; just count it up," he said enthusiastically. There was no stopping "the progress of such a country."<sup>25</sup> The principal patriotic element in such appeals was the materialistic vision of inevitable economic progress in the American nation. Doubtless, Americans relished contradicting the disparaging views of the position taken by the hostile *London Times*, which (according to one article) had said that it was "all wrong" to think the United States could fund its debt because "the Republicans are all bankrupt."<sup>26</sup>

The advertising campaigns for the government bonds were wonders to behold; indeed, Melinda Lawson declares that Cooke's "exhaustive use of the press to promote the government loan was unprecedented."<sup>27</sup> We must always recall, given the extreme partisan nature of the press in the mid-nineteenth century, that any "exhaustive" press campaign was of necessity nonpartisan. At that, there were limits to the media reach of Cooke and Chase. If we take Pennsylvania Democratic newspapers, a sample of half a dozen comes up with three papers – Gettysburg, Erie, and Lebanon – that ran the ads and editorials, and three that did not – Clearfield, Waynesburg, and Bellefonte. The Clearfield and Bellefonte newspapers, published in the mountainous and isolated central part of the state, were notably conservative and peace-oriented, but it is difficult

<sup>24</sup> This is how it appeared in the Republican *Altoona Tribune*, November 15, 1862.

<sup>25</sup> *Altoona Tribune*, October 15, 1864.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* For another argument see August 24, 1864. For eager uses by other Republican newspapers in Pennsylvania see especially the *Mariettan*, August 13 and 27, and September 10, 1864, and the *Franklin Repository*, September 14 and 28, 1864.

<sup>27</sup> Melinda Lawson, *Patriot Fires: Forging a New American Nationalism in the Civil War North*, 49.

to be certain that ideology always trumped the lure of money from advertising. The *Lancaster Intelligencer*, one of the more conservative Democratic newspapers in the state, finally accepted advertisements for the 5–20s in 1862, and in 1864 ran advertisements for the 7–30s – and printed three of the planted articles explaining the appeal of the government loans as investments for ordinary people.<sup>28</sup> The advertising campaign did not consistently exploit Republican newspapers, either, as neither the *Pittsburgh Gazette* nor the *Huntingdon Globe* carried the advertisements for the 1864 bond drive.<sup>29</sup>

The advertising campaign met resistance from the extremist Democratic press, as the cases of the Bellefonte and Clearfield papers show. We also have testimony to that effect from Jay Cooke’s travelling agents. A man named Robert Clarkson, for example, whose territory included the states of the Old Northwest in 1862, had trouble in Dayton, Ohio. That was the hometown of Clement L. Vallandigham and part of his congressional district, and Clarkson reported, “the papers here are all right except the Empire which is in Vallandigham’s interest.”<sup>30</sup> Republican newspapers were eagerly cooperative, but Clarkson met some resistance from a surprising quarter, the commercial press. In Cincinnati, Clarkson “found the *Gazette* hard to manage,” not because it was part of the “locofoco” interest, as he described Democratic affiliation, but because the *Gazette* was the city’s commercial paper and the editors fancied they knew about finance and did not need instruction from Jay Cooke’s agent.<sup>31</sup>

To be sure, in that heavily partisan age, in which newspapers were a branch of politics and not of journalism, firm identification with party put a strain on any truly national appeal.<sup>32</sup> Neither the people who sold and promoted the bonds nor the people who accepted advertisements and printed editorials were, most of them, independent in politics. The men who pushed the government’s bonds were Republicans, whether they came from Cooke’s firm or from Lincoln’s Treasury Department.

<sup>28</sup> *Lancaster Intelligencer*, December 23, 1862, February 24, 1863, and August 4, 11, and 25, 1864.

<sup>29</sup> The placement of the ads may have been complicated in these and other communities that had more than one Republican newspaper. Runs of the papers do not survive in the archive to prove the point.

<sup>30</sup> Robert Clarkson to Jay Cooke, December 11, 1862, Papers of Jay Cooke, Library of Congress, microfilm edition, reel 10.

<sup>31</sup> Robert Clarkson to Jay Cooke, December 9, 1862, *ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> On that point, absolutely essential to understanding nineteenth-century politics, see Michael Schudson, *The Good Citizen: A History of American Civil Life* (New York: Free Press, 1998), esp. 121.

They were generally suspicious of Democrats, and Democrats were suspicious of them.

Some of the methods employed by Jay Cooke & Co. might not stand close scrutiny. Jay's brother Henry D, or "Harry," Cooke, for example, invited newspaper correspondents and editors in Washington to his house for dinner in March 1863 (Jay Cooke opened an office in Washington to help take care of the government loan business, and his brother managed it). Harry told his brother not to come to Washington for the dinner for fear "it would look too pointed – and the object of the dinner might be suspected."<sup>33</sup> Afterward he reported to his brother that he "had a splendid time last night with the Editors and correspondents and filled them full to the brim not only with 'edibles and bibibles,' but with the glorious financial prospects of the future." He assured Jay that they "were all thoroughly, (though unconsciously) indoctrinated with our ideas."<sup>34</sup>

The two Cooke brothers did much of the writing of planted editorials, but sometimes they paid others.<sup>35</sup> Frederick W. Grayson, for example, who worked for the *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, an independent financial newspaper, asked for a conference with Jay Cooke in December 1863 before "writing the article in which we propose to show the ample resource of the Government to meet its present and prospective indebtedness." Grayson had already written one financial article favorable to the Cooke interests. "In the meanwhile," he added, "put your own price on the article already published and send me the money as there are some *little people at home* whom I wish to make happy on Christmas, if I can find the means to do so." Cooke endorsed the letter on the back, "Send Grayson, Editorials \$250 *on account* & take voucher – as usual[.] [T]ell him I would be glad to see him – before Christmas & wish him & his little ones a happy time &C."<sup>36</sup>

The methods may have looked somewhat devious, but they were not partisan. Cooke and his agents were firmly identified with party, but they knew the loan needed support of Democrats and Republicans alike. They dealt with the men who proved willing to deal with them. Thus two German-American agents of Cooke's brokerage house working in

<sup>33</sup> Henry D. Cooke to Jay Cooke, March 9, 1863, Papers of Jay Cooke, Library of Congress, microfilm edition, reel 10.

<sup>34</sup> Henry D. Cooke to Jay Cooke, March 10, 1863, *ibid.* The specific topic of discussion seems to have been a finance law then pending in Congress.

<sup>35</sup> See, for example, Jay Cooke's printed letter of June 8, 1863, to "Dear Sir," *ibid.*, reel 11.

<sup>36</sup> Frederick W. Grayson to Jay Cooke, December 17, 1863, with endorsement, *ibid.*, reel 12.

Milwaukee reported that they had “advertised the Loan in the mildly Copperhead daily German organ of this city & operated on the Editor of that paper so successfully that in next days issue appeared a very favorable notice of the Loan, which although not enthusiastic gives the advantage of the Loan a very fair ventilation. The result was a most violent attack on the Loan by the fire eating Copperhead paper which appeared next day.”<sup>37</sup> Another agent working in Chicago reported on a favorable meeting with that city’s bankers and editors, but about one of them he said, “It is proper to state, however, that this gentleman though an honorable man standing high in this community – and a loyal supporter of the Government is a Democrat and chooses freely to express his opinions.”<sup>38</sup>

A brokerage house in New York City, Fisk and Hatch, worked with publications in that Democratic metropolis which was most important to the success of financial schemes. In 1863, *Appleton’s Annual Cyclopaedia*, published in the city, ran numerous articles on the war in its yearly publication. Someone at Fisk and Hatch apparently noticed that the entry on “Finances” for the previous annual, written in the autumn before the 5–20 campaign commenced, painted a gloomy picture of the economy and the government debt. Fisk and Hatch checked up on the author. “We have not been able to learn anything definitely as to Mr. Tenneys *political* character, but he is slightly Copperhead or intensely Conservative,” they reported. Still, there was hope for improvement next time, they thought. A “well and candidly written article, *which did not assail him*, but was based upon the changes which have taken place in the financial [illegible], during the last six months, could be got into the Encyclopedia, or at least be made the text for Mr. Tenney to preach a more acceptable discourse from.”<sup>39</sup>

At one point, Cooke decided to try using the firm of S. M. Pettingill & Company Newspaper Advertising Agents to place ads. As a trial, apparently, the Pettingill firm sent an article to some two hundred newspapers in the state of New York.<sup>40</sup> Shortly thereafter they sent Cooke a copy of the *Saratoga Republican*, “a Democratic newspaper of very limited circulation.” The editor of the *Republican* had written to the editor of the *New York World*, telling him the article sent to the *Republican* had

<sup>37</sup> Paul Jagode to Jay Cooke, October 21, 1863, *ibid.*, reel 12. Violent attacks on the government loans in the press were extremely rare.

<sup>38</sup> Thomas F. Stowell to Jay Cooke, October 17, 1863, *ibid.*, reel 12.

<sup>39</sup> Fisk and Hatch to Jay Cooke, August 18, 1863, *ibid.*, reel 11.

<sup>40</sup> S.M. Pettingill to Jay Cooke, December 7, 1863, *ibid.*, reel 12. See also S.M. Pettingill & Co. to Jay Cooke, December 2, 1863, *ibid.*

come from Pettingill and Company. "There is no possibility that it can be traced beyond us," the agents assured Cooke.<sup>41</sup>

Democratic newspaper editors might tailor the sales pitch to their audience. The *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, a pro-war Democratic newspaper, called "the attention" of their readers "to the 7-30 Popular Loan." There were "two duties the people" owed in this financial matter. One was patriotic. The tone of explanation of that duty was definitely Democratic: "[T]he Treasury needs the money to carry on the war, which it must be confessed is being now prosecuted with most commendable and satisfactory activity." No Republican editor was likely to remind readers that the war had not always been conducted satisfactorily. Moreover, the Democratic editorial managed to fit investment in the bonds into the hard-money views of their wing of the party. The citizen's duty was to invest in government bonds and thus eliminate the necessity to print paper money to fund the war.<sup>42</sup>

Besides the ultimate success of the government bond drives in raising money for the war and their self-conscious desire to democratize investment in America, it is clear that there are important conclusions about politics to be drawn. First and foremost, the appeal was nonpartisan. The Lincoln administration and its financial agents ran advertisements for the loans in Republican and Democratic newspapers alike. Newspapers identified with both parties proved generally willing to accept the ads – and sometimes editorial endorsements of the financial program as well. There can be no better proof of that point than the article "Poor Richard's Reasons for Buying United States Securities." It ran in the Republican *Altoona Tribune* on August 10, 1864, and in the Democratic *Lebanon Advertiser* on September 7, 1864, then in the Democratic *Gettysburg Compiler* on September 12, 1864. It is remarkable to find the same editorials running in both Democratic and Republican newspapers in a presidential election year – and about a matter as important as government finances. Second, it should be noted that the appeals, though ultimately inspired and driven by the arch-capitalist Jay Cooke, were often as much to the heart as to the pocket-book.

To be sure, the bond drives served different interests besides the non-partisan one of providing adequate funding for the war to save the Union. Not only did the house of Cooke benefit richly, but so did the political fortunes of Salmon P. Chase. As early as March 1863 Chase's personal

<sup>41</sup> S.M. Pettingill to Jay Cooke, December 17, 1863, *ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, December 19, 1864.

political ambition began to rear its head in the financial correspondence. Henry Cooke wrote his brother about articles planted in the *Philadelphia Public Ledger*. In Washington he had seen the treasury secretary, who “was pleased with the *Ledger* money articles – and noticing the one in which these words occur – ‘it appears as if Sec’y Chase were equal to the crisis’ – he suggested that the money editors should put forward, and keep prominent this idea.”<sup>43</sup> Henry repeated the point again early in April, “The Govr is greatly pleased at the newspaper extracts. Keep his management of the Treasy in the foreground as much as possible.”<sup>44</sup> By early 1864 Cooke’s associates were managing biographical sketches of Chase.<sup>45</sup>

Political ambitions persisted, as did ardent identification with party on the part of the people. But some matters fell outside the boundaries of partisanship. The government loans that supported the Union war effort were not fundamentally matters of social class, partisanship, or presidential ambitions. They were matters of patriotism and nationalism.

#### MOBILIZATION

Nothing was more crucial to military victory than soldiers. During the Civil War most of them were volunteers, and the main mechanism employed to encourage men to enlist was bounty payments. Raising bounties to recruit soldiers proved also to be a nonpartisan effort. Democrats were as enthusiastic as Republicans in raising money to that purpose (Republicans sometimes dragged their feet, thinking a draft was fairer and fearing that reliance on volunteers alone allowed Democrats to stay home and vote while patriotic Republicans were away fighting the war). But after the attempt to impose a draft resulted in the destructive New York City draft riots of July 1863, both Democrats and Republicans alike sought ways of raising recruits without provoking violent resistance. Most of these crucial recruiting activities took place beyond the boundaries of political parties, at the local and civic level, and below the great storms of partisan rhetoric raised in Congress and on the stump. Bounties were matters of hard economic fact – loans voted by local governments to raise the necessary funds, and local insurance-devised schemes to raise money to replace reluctant draftees with men who could be lured into

<sup>43</sup> H. D. Cooke to Jay Cooke, March 25, 1863, Papers of Jay Cooke, Library of Congress, microfilm edition, reel 10.

<sup>44</sup> H. D. Cooke to Jay Cooke, April 9, 1863, *ibid.*, reel 10.

<sup>45</sup> H. Hosmer to Jay Cooke, January 2, 1864, *ibid.*, reel 13.

service with more money. They were hard facts of county budgets and local taxes to pay off the bounties – dollars and cents and not political rhetoric. The Democratic party often denounced the draft in rhetoric, but partisanship was largely ignored at the level where the men were actually recruited.

Historians have altogether overlooked the nonpartisan quality of funding recruitment. Take, for example, the work of political historian Michael F. Holt. He calls into question the idea that the Democratic party formed a loyal opposition by pointing to mobilization. The “case for loyal Democratic support of appropriations to pay troops and purchase supplies, troop requisitions, and the like – rests solely on studies of congressional votes,” he argues. Looking at the few states that have received some scrutiny on such matters, he says, “indicates that most Democrats consistently opposed the taxes and bond issues necessary to pay and supply volunteers raised in those states . . . [I]n addition, studies of localities [in New Hampshire, for example] indicate far lower levels of volunteering and much more resistance to raising taxes to fund volunteer bounties in towns controlled by Democrats than in those the Republicans dominated.”<sup>46</sup> We might term this the thesis of the hidden Copperheads.

The Copperheads, or Peace Democrats, notoriously did not hide their light under a bushel. As we shall see in a later chapter the blinding smokescreen of rhetoric they created far exceeded the real fires beneath. Nevertheless, the great cloud of smoke has proved difficult to penetrate. Recently, Jennifer L. Weber leveled even more serious charges against the Copperheads in the Democratic party: “the peace wing’s opposition to the administration damaged the army’s ability to prosecute the conflict efficiently. Dissidents’ resistance to conscription and their encouragement of less ideologically minded Americans to dodge the draft or desert the army forced the military to divide its attention and at times send troops home to keep order there.”<sup>47</sup>

Most of the soldiers in the Civil War were volunteers, not conscripts, and the process of mobilization was not straightforward and simple. After the initial response to news of Fort Sumter’s fall, men generally volunteered after being offered bounties and promises of relief for soldiers’ families. The process filled the ranks in time, though not without

<sup>46</sup> Michael F. Holt, “An Elusive Synthesis: Northern Politics during the Civil War,” in James M. McPherson and William J. Cooper, Jr., eds., *Writing the Civil War: The Quest to Understand* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), 122–123.

<sup>47</sup> Jennifer L. Weber, *Copperheads: The Rise and Fall of Lincoln’s Opponents in the North* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 2.



considerable anxiety and hard work. All in all, in the North only about 10 percent of those who served could directly be accounted for by drafting.<sup>48</sup>

In other words, the bounty system lay at the heart of mobilization in the North. Conscription, which Congress did not enact until March 3, 1863, served mainly to stimulate volunteers to enlist; men volunteered to avoid the draft (which carried quite a stigma) and to receive a bounty as well. The law also allowed conscripts to avoid service by paying a \$300 commutation fee or paying a substitute to serve in their place.<sup>49</sup> The government set a deadline for each district to fill its quota, and a draft took place in the district only if volunteering failed to meet the demand. Mobilization by bounty by no means worked only at the level of individual motivation – a matter of economic stimulus and self-interested response. *Communities were critically involved.* Cities, fearing resistance to conscription after the draft riots in New York City, hastened to raise funds for bounties and for guaranteed relief to volunteers' families. Villages and towns desired a patriotic reputation and worked strenuously not to be outstripped by neighboring communities. Such community involvement, as it turned out, meant not political conflict over conscription but rather communal efforts to meet quotas and avoid the shameful appearance of inadequate patriotism implied by imposition of the draft.

It was ironic perhaps that the New York City draft riots prompted the country to mobilize – in order to avoid such civil disorder. Democrats were as unnerved as anyone by the riots. Francis Hughes, former chairman of the Democratic party in Pennsylvania, was, as early as July 21, 1863, eager to hear of some judicial decision on the constitutionality of the draft. Writing from Philadelphia to Samuel Tilden, the prominent New York City Democrat, Hughes said that the “suspense” in Philadelphia was downright “painful.” Hoping for some decision on the question by a New York court, he assured Tilden that Pennsylvanians would go along with a declaration that conscription was unconstitutional, and, even if it was declared constitutional, “rather than resist law and invoke anarchy,

<sup>48</sup> The calculation is complicated because draftees could and often did pay \$300 commutation or hire a substitute instead of serving themselves. Arriving at a figure near 10 percent requires counting a commutation fee as a soldier in the ranks. For the actual numbers see James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era*, esp. 601. If one discounts the commutation fees, then the figure stands at around 6 percent. See James G. Randall and David Donald, *The Civil War and Reconstruction*, 2nd edn. (Boston: D. C. Heath, 1961), 315 and n.

<sup>49</sup> For an example of the sense of stigma see Robert F. Engs and Corey M. Brooks, eds., *Their Patriotic Duty: The Civil War Letters of the Evans Family of Brown County, Ohio* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), 68.

I do not think there will be any other opposition than sporadic outbreaks and a general feeling to avoid the compulsory service.” “I write,” he concluded, “to ask you that for the sake of the public peace, and I may well add for the sake of republican liberty on this continent, you give your best efforts to obtain a *speedy* decision on this subject.”<sup>50</sup> Democrats opposed conscription because it was a Republican measure. They opposed it in Congress, in courts, in the press, and on the stump. But they did not really oppose mobilization where it counted, in the local districts where the law actually applied and where troops were raised. That practical level lay beyond the boundaries of politics, and, by and large, there, beyond politics, the republic was saved. The Democrats’ opposition, to put it bluntly, was mainly rhetorical and aimed at conscription, not mobilization.

Ironically, the extreme and fractious Democrats of New York City led the way in solving the problem of the imposition of conscription in an individualistic country with a traditionally weak national state. In the aftermath of the infamous draft riots of July 1863, Tammany Hall, one of the great Democratic political machines in the city, came up, not with a plan of resistance to federal authority, but with a characteristically American buyout plan. According to Iver Bernstein, the city’s Democratic-dominated government voted the eye-popping sum of \$2,500,000 to pay the \$300 commutation fee for any conscript from the city who needed it. The Republican mayor, George Opdyke (who had gained the office when the Democratic party split), repeatedly vetoed the appropriation, but it passed in modified form and was applied so that no one had to serve who did not want to. The draft operated thereafter, but reluctant or poor Democrats (or, presumably, Republicans as well), as a practical matter of fact, did not have to go if called. Republican politicians preferred a more selective buyout based on individual demonstration of need.<sup>51</sup> The overall pattern is clear and surprising and was repeated later in many other locales: The Republicans opposed an appropriation to raise a great deal of money to raise troops while Democrats supported it. In the all-important instance of New York City, Democrats did not oppose “the taxes and bonds necessary” to raise troops at the local level, and it was not true

<sup>50</sup> Mark E. Neely, Jr., “Justice Embattled: The Lincoln Administration and the Constitutional Controversy over Conscription in 1863,” in Jennifer M. Lowe, ed., *The Supreme Court and the Civil War* (Washington, D.C.: Supreme Court Historical Society, 1996) [a special edition of the *Journal of Supreme Court History*], 53.

<sup>51</sup> Iver Bernstein, *The New York City Draft Riots: Their Significance for American Society and Politics in the Age of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 52–53, 64–65, 69–70.

that “resistance to conscription” much “damaged” the military. Neither the “hidden Copperhead” thesis (Holt) nor the overt Copperhead thesis (Weber) explains what happened. Nonpartisan civic activism saw to mobilization for the war.

The issues involved were not transparent. Republicans sometimes objected to the payment of commutation instead of service because that raised money but not actually men. That was New York City Mayor Opdyke’s stated objection. However, commutation was part of the conscription system until 1864, and even President Lincoln was prepared to defend it. To raise money for commutation was not to resist the Conscription Act, but rather to participate in the mobilization process under the existing system. To be sure, the amount of money prescribed, \$300, was outstripped by the great war’s demand for men, which drove up the level of bounty necessary to lure men into service, and would not be equivalent in fact to recruiting another person for service. On the other hand, the amount of money raised from commutation and from substitution was apparently substantial enough to fund the entire operation of the draft bureau for the whole war. Provost Marshal General James B. Fry thus boasted after the end of the war that his bureau never had to ask for an appropriation from Congress to implement conscription. The bottom line was that Democratic efforts to raise money for commutation or substitution in order that the draft not work a hardship on some men who were called to service did not in fact impede mobilization under the Civil War system.<sup>52</sup>

The Democrats in New York City learned to exploit the vast financial advantages of the North to win the war. Northern communities, richer in capital by far than their Confederate equivalents, could buy their way out of any potentially serious social disorder incurred by the imposition of conscription. Communities all over the North imitated that basic solution to mobilization in an individualistic country with qualities equally American: ingenuity, enterprise, and energy expressed in community activism, a sort of patriotic boosterism. The following are examples of the actual working of these community energies beyond the boundaries

<sup>52</sup> *Final Report Made to the Secretary of War by the Provost Marshal General . . . , 1866, in The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 128 vols. (Washington, D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1880–1901), ser. 3, vol. 5, p. 684. For Lincoln’s rather lame defense, never made public, see Roy P. Basler, ed., *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, 6:447–448. I am indebted to William A. Blair who generously shared with me the information about funding of the government bureau. Fry reported that the bureau raised \$26,366,316.78 through its own legitimate operations.

of political party in York, Harrisburg, Pittsburgh, and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and in Dubuque, Iowa. This description is pieced together from sources on local mobilization that are cryptic, spotty, and derived from broken sets of newspapers.

York County was among Pennsylvania's steadier Democratic counties. In the 1860 presidential election, Lincoln gained 5,123 votes to the 6,633 won by the opposition candidates. Lincoln would lose York County 5,568 to 8,500 in 1864.<sup>53</sup> The county seat, the town of York, was more closely contested than the county at large. The local, or borough, government included a council, with one councilman elected from each of York's five wards plus a chief burgess elected at large. The elections for local government were held annually in March, and in 1862 the Democrats gained victory in the chief burgess race (for only the second time in forty-five years). They also won two ward council seats. The York town council was evenly divided, then, three to three, when the failure of General George B. McClellan's campaign on the Peninsula of Virginia at the beginning of July resulted in new calls for troops.

This renewed mobilization effort of mid-1862 preceded the imposition of conscription under the Act of March 3, 1863, but a stopgap militia draft imposed in July 1862 eventually loomed over York, and bounties were already deemed necessary to raise the requisite number of volunteers. On July 15, 1862, the borough resolved to appropriate \$2,500 to be used as \$25 bounty payments for local enlistees. At a public war rally held in York on July 21, 1862, speakers urged raising bounties, and the meeting chose a committee of ten citizens to call on the county commissioners. The citizen committee waited on the commissioners on Saturday, July 26, to recommend in person that the county also appropriate money for a substantial bounty. The citizens made the argument to the Democratic county government that all neighboring counties had already voted bounties and that York County, located in the southern part of the state, was one of the counties most exposed to invasion and ought to do so as well. If they failed, moreover, a draft, now possible after Congress passed the militia draft of July 17, would be the likely result and a draft would bear hardest on the poorest citizens. They felt confident that the state legislature would reimburse the county when it met later. The appropriation would therefore constitute a sort of loan only.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>53</sup> *The Tribune Almanac and Political Register for 1865* (New York: Tribune Association, 1865), 54.

<sup>54</sup> *York Gazette*, July 26, 1862.

Responding to the public demand, the county commissioners resolved to appropriate \$16,000 for a \$50 bounty for each recruit in the county. Other counties made similar moves, including the banner Democratic county in the state, Berks, which (also at the request of a citizen council) also appropriated funds for a \$50 bounty.<sup>55</sup> If not Democratic movements, these were at least nonpartisan. The decision for raising a bounty in York, for example, was of necessity nonpartisan because the borough government was split, three Democrats to three Republicans.

As further encouragement for enlistments, York citizens raised money for soldiers' relief, so that enlistment (or drafting) would not work too great a hardship on the poor. When the time came to fill the militia draft of 1862 in York, two wards had not met their quotas: the first was six men under, and the second, twenty-five. The fourth ward had exactly met its quota, but the third and fifth together were thirty-seven over. Because the militia draft was substantially still controlled by the state, Governor Andrew Gregg Curtin ruled that the whole borough of York be counted as one district for providing recruits. Thus the surplus in one ward could be applied against the shortfall in another; in that way the borough of York avoided the militia draft.<sup>56</sup>

Conscription in 1863 and 1864 met with few problems in York. There was never any significant practical opposition to the draft in the borough or the county of York. Elections for local government came annually, and the Democrats in March 1863 captured the borough decisively, electing the chief burgess and three of the five councilmen from the wards.<sup>57</sup> Provocations for party animosity had increased in York, as they had everywhere in the nation. Some local men had been arrested by military authorities for disloyalty, and this border county met the announcement of the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation with expressions of racist fears of a future influx of freed African-Americans. Nevertheless, when resort to conscription came in 1863, York's draftees, led by a marching band, paraded patriotically through town in December. The Democratic newspaper commented that the men "looked well," though they had as yet not received their weapons.<sup>58</sup> The atmosphere was festive, not tense, in this Democratic county.

In the presidential election year of 1864, the Democrats held onto the chief burgess position in York, but they lost a previously Democratic

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, July 29, 1862.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, September 30, 1862.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, March 24, 1863.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, December 2, 1863.

ward and the borough council stood at three–three once again. Succeeding draft calls posed greater threats to unity. A public meeting on July 18, 1864, urged the county commissioners to authorize a \$50 bounty. The commissioners balked this time – despite passage by the state legislature of a bill that gave them authority to impose taxes to raise bounties.<sup>59</sup> The borough of York acted to raise the bounty, for the legislature’s bounty bill had extended the taxing authority to a number of entities, including even school boards. The borough tested the people’s willingness to pay the tax by circulating a petition to each ward. All men subject to draft were to pay at least \$25, with more prosperous men being assessed higher amounts. The expectation was to fill the local quota by paying bounties to substitutes from the fund raised by the special tax assessment. The council would also borrow money and repay it by January 1, 1865 from the taxes paid.<sup>60</sup> The draft proceeded without incident in York. The borough went for McClellan in the presidential election that November by a vote of 977 to 792.<sup>61</sup>

Partisanship likely grew in overall intensity in York from 1861 to 1864, with the possible exception of the period surrounding the Confederate invasion of York in June 1863, which seemed to have the effect, briefly, of uniting the political parties. Through it all, York raised money to encourage volunteering. In the borough these were certainly nonpartisan measures, for Democrats controlled at least half the votes on the council throughout the period. To get any measure passed thus required some cooperation from Democrats.

Philadelphia enjoys having perhaps the best of the local studies of the Civil War devoted to it, J. Matthew Gallman’s *Mastering Wartime: A Social History of Philadelphia During the Civil War*. Gallman proved the importance of old-fashioned voluntarism in many aspects of the city’s response to the war, and thus showed that the response did not rest on the advent of forces that anticipated the more powerful central state of the twentieth century. That old-fashioned quality was nowhere more salient than in military mobilization in the city. Civic voluntarism and not party competition determined the healthy response to the nation’s calls for soldiers. This was as much a matter of community activism and voluntarism as of individual response on the part of enlistees. The city council was, as Gallman puts it, “heavily Democratic,” but it consistently voted great

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, April 5, 1864.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, July 26, 1864.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, November 15, 1864.

sums of money to raise volunteers and, later, to recruit volunteers for the sake of avoiding the imposition of a draft. It appropriated \$500,000 at a time, and by the middle of the war, as Gallman points out, “war-related items” accounted for half the city budget.<sup>62</sup>

To look closely at Philadelphia’s efforts in the difficult summer of 1864 is to realize that the Democratic party suppressed its own partisanship to get behind measures to raise money. One sees as well the spirit of ingenuity, the energy, and the competitive civic pride that suffused the whole grand war effort. Philadelphia had to respond to the president’s call of July 18, 1864, with their share of the 500,000 men needed overall. Failure to meet quotas would result in the imposition of a draft on September 5.

Despite the heated partisanship of a presidential election summer and the extreme conservatism of the city’s Democratic party leadership, the effort to raise Philadelphia’s quota for the draft call went forward without much partisan rancor.<sup>63</sup> Political parties were almost never mentioned in discussion of the measures needed to raise by volunteering the quotas that would allow the city’s wards to avoid the imposition of a draft. Newspapers, charitably and accurately, referred to the wards that were lagging behind as poor rather than disloyal. They did not say that they were Democratic rather than Republican, or Copperhead rather than Loyal, terms that otherwise constituted the common coin of political debate at the time. The Republican *Philadelphia Inquirer*, for example, described the laggard first ward as the residence of a large population of poor men, mostly mechanics, whose labor was badly needed in the city. The paper made a plea for wealthy men to look beyond their own wards and help this one out.<sup>64</sup>

Tacit cooperation between men of different political parties gave free rein to America’s nonpolitical genius for clever financial and charitable schemes. In Philadelphia the sovereign remedy seems to have been a self-insuring scheme in which all men in a district who were enrolled (that is, who were declared by Federal authorities eligible for the draft)

<sup>62</sup> J. Matthew Gallman, *Mastering Wartime: A Social History of Philadelphia During the Civil War*, Ch. II, esp. p. 30.

<sup>63</sup> Mark E. Neely, Jr., “Politics Purified: Religion and the Growth of Antislavery Idealism in Republican Ideology During the Civil War,” in Robert F. Engs and Randall M. Miller, eds., *The Birth of the Grand Old Party: The Republicans’ First Generation* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 120, and Neely, “Justice Embattled: The Lincoln Administration and the Constitutional Controversy over Conscription in 1863,” 49.

<sup>64</sup> *Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 27, 1864.

contributed \$25 each to a fund that would purchase a substitute for any contributor who was drafted and did not want to serve.<sup>65</sup> In some wards, apparently, the amount of the individual contribution was set at \$50. By September it could be reported that the “plan of giving certificates to citizens that for fifty dollars they will have a substitute furnished in case they are drafted, is working admirably.”<sup>66</sup>

Raising soldiers in Philadelphia in 1864 proved to be so nonpartisan that it was dealt with almost as a purely civic matter. The press treated the recruiting drives to escape the draft by raising volunteers not as a political question but as a project of civic boosterism and local pride. Recruitment was increasingly given a halo of sentimental patriotism. In one Philadelphia ward with its quota still unfilled as late as October 3, 1864, the bounty committee approached a lady to ask for a contribution. She said she had a son in the army and barely made ends meet by sewing. She had nothing to contribute, but “She said she lived only for her country and her son.” She had managed to save one gold dollar and offered it as a contribution. The committee refused to accept her last dollar, but when she insisted, they decided to auction the gold piece off as a “memento of patriotism.” The highest bid, \$118, came from the commissioner of city property. Stories also circulated about a contribution to the bounty fund made by a little boy, and another raised by a benefit concert given by public school girls.<sup>67</sup>

Although the figures constitute an imperfect measure of partisanship in relation to raising bounties, it can be said that of the six laggard wards in Philadelphia that were still unable to meet their quotas by mid-October, three were Republican and three were Democratic.<sup>68</sup> Partisanship offers little by way of explanation of mobilization. The Democratic newspaper in Cleveland explained the real motives rather well as early as 1862: “Then there is a State and County, and even a township pride in endeavoring to raise the regular quota without a resort to a draft.”<sup>69</sup>

Across the state, in Pittsburgh, which lay in a heavily Republican area, the pattern was similarly nonpartisan. Allegheny County, in which

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, August 26, 1864 (describing the plan in the tenth ward). If the fund fell short of the amount needed, it would be distributed evenly among draftees to ease the burdens on their families.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, September 5, 1864.

<sup>67</sup> *Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 23 and 27, 1864, and October 4, 1864.

<sup>68</sup> Democratic: 17, 19 (very close), and 25; Republican: 1, 7, 8. Compare election results and deficient wards in *Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 12 and 15, 1864.

<sup>69</sup> *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, August 28, 1862.



the city was located, was overwhelmingly Republican. Lincoln gained 16,725 votes as against only 7,878 for his opponents in 1860. His margin over McClellan four years later in the county was only a bit less, as Lincoln gained 21,519 votes and McClellan 12,414.<sup>70</sup> Pittsburgh gave the Republicans 4,396 votes for president in 1860, and only 2,244 to the rest of the field.<sup>71</sup> In 1864 Lincoln beat McClellan 5,016 to 3,234.<sup>72</sup>

Typically, the local newspapers reported Pittsburgh's efforts to reach their quota of soldiers in the "local intelligence" sections, not in the heavily partisan pages of the paper devoted to politics and national news. The *Pittsburgh Post*, the local Democratic newspaper, regularly listed by name and amount of contribution the participants in the Allegheny County Bounty Fund, making participation a way of getting one's name in the paper and assuring a reputation for public spiritedness. When the president called for another 500,000 men in the middle of the summer of 1864, the *Post* warned, "Our city had better rouse itself."<sup>73</sup> Thereafter the newspaper ran articles headlined "Bounty Meeting" and "Bounty Excitement."

Meetings, apparently, were held "almost every day."<sup>74</sup> High-pressure tactics were used. In nearby Allegheny City some wards made it a practice to make known the names of those who did not contribute to the bounty fund.<sup>75</sup> Enrolled men in most wards were as much as required to contribute to a fund that would pay for a substitute in case one were conscripted.<sup>76</sup>

When enlistments lagged and the deadline for the draft drew nigh, the *Post* reported that the bounty would be capped at \$300 so that potential volunteers would no longer hold out and wait for the amounts to rise. They rose anyway, in some wards to \$500.<sup>77</sup> Indulging in wishful thinking, the *Post* then described a "volunteering mania."<sup>78</sup> Political parties were never mentioned in the press as organizers of enlistment rallies or

<sup>70</sup> *The Tribune Almanac and Political Register for 1865*, 54.

<sup>71</sup> Michael Fitzgibbon Holt, *Forging a Majority: The Formation of the Republican Party in Pittsburgh, 1848-1860* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1969), 2, 299-301, 366.

<sup>72</sup> *Pittsburgh Gazette*, November 10, 1864. The paper gives the vote by wards, not for the city as a whole.

<sup>73</sup> *Pittsburgh Post*, July 23, 1864.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, July 29, 1864.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, August 9, 1864.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, August 26, 1864.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, August 23 and 30, 1864.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, August 30, 1864.

bounty fund-raisers. In fact, political parties were hardly mentioned at all in the reporting on the drive to reach the quota in this Democratic organ. But the press did not rely on sentimental patriotic appeals, either. Instead, the whole affair had a civic and businesslike tone, as though the people of Pittsburgh were watching attempts to reach the goal of a modern United Way drive. Civic pride was at stake, and failure would cast shame on the community.

Pennsylvania's capital, Harrisburg, located in the middle of the state between Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, was a sharply divided community. It was a Democratic town located in a Republican county, Dauphin County, and with Republicans controlling the resident governor's office and the state legislature (by an extremely narrow margin). The Harrisburg press was deeply partisan, and this town managed, no doubt because of its status as the capital, to sustain two daily newspapers. Dauphin County gave Lincoln 4,531 votes to a mere 2,756 for his opponents in 1860, and he beat McClellan four years later 5,544 to 3,220.<sup>79</sup> Harrisburg, by contrast, gave Lincoln only 1,191 votes to McClellan's 1,396 in 1864.<sup>80</sup>

By the late summer of 1864, when the draft pressed down heavily on the nation, the Dauphin County commissioners had not provided for bounty payments to meet the quotas. In other words, the Republicans, who controlled the county, had shown little eagerness to help the community to avoid the draft.<sup>81</sup> The situation was not simple, because the state legislature, which was narrowly controlled by Republicans, passed a measure in the spring that allowed cities, wards, election boards, or school boards to borrow money to raise bounties and to tax to pay the resulting debt.

Harrisburg struggled, and some wards filled their quotas while others did not. Raising funds for bounties voluntarily brought uneven results. The Republican newspaper generously attributed the differences to the relative wealth of the wards (and not to their loyalty or prevailing party affiliation). Early in August citizens held a public meeting to urge the city council to appropriate money for bounties in Harrisburg. The Republican newspaper pointed out that "Under the plan adopted of assessing respectively the citizens of each ward, several of the wards will be unable to fill their quotas, for the reason that the great majority of the citizens thereof

<sup>79</sup> *The Tribune Almanac and Political Register for 1865*, 54.

<sup>80</sup> *Harrisburg Telegraph*, November 15, 1864.

<sup>81</sup> *Harrisburg Patriot and Union*, July 28, 1864. But Republicans charged, hypocritically, that Democratic counties often did not levy taxes to raise bounties.

are working men, whose incomes prevent them from making extravagant subscriptions.”<sup>82</sup>

Public political solutions always ran the hazard of political party strife in this intensely political city. To a surprising degree, partisanship was avoided. When a public meeting urged the city council to deal with the problem, the council at first refused but agreed to meet the next evening to continue consideration of the matter. The problem was not necessarily political reluctance but rather legal limitations. It was clear that an appropriation to raise bounties adequate for all the wards would exceed the level of indebtedness permitted by the city charter. Nevertheless, the council agreed to appropriate \$120,000 for \$200 bounties for volunteers from the city. But the measure depended upon petitioning the state legislature for authorization to borrow an amount that exceeded the city’s chartered debt limit.<sup>83</sup>

The North could afford the expense, by comparison with the Confederacy, but the financial burden of raising soldiers by bounty was substantial. The Harrisburg city council’s proposal – against which not a protest was raised, from a fiscal standpoint – was to levy a 2 percent property tax on all citizens over 21 years of age in order to pay the 6 percent interest during the five-year life of the loan. A similar fund drive had already taken place to raise money for the people of nearby Chambersburg who had been burned out of their businesses and homes by a recent Confederate raid. Harrisburg as a precaution had emptied the state armory and packed up the state archives, and mustered the city’s able-bodied citizens, white and black, to repel Robert E. Lee’s invasion of the state in 1863. Despite many demands on their generosity and public spirit, Harrisburg citizens could still point with pride to their Union Relief Fund for the families of volunteers: The wife of a volunteer received \$1.50 per week plus fifty cents per week for each child.<sup>84</sup>

The state legislature failed to pass a measure enabling cities to exceed their debt limits before their session ended. On August 27, the Harrisburg City Council (controlled by Democrats) went ahead and passed an ordinance appropriating \$120,000 for bounties. The Democratic mayor signed it.<sup>85</sup> The money, however, never made its way into the hands of any volunteer because Republicans challenged the measure in court. The Republican minority of the city council maintained that the appropriation

<sup>82</sup> *Harrisburg Telegraph*, August 6, 1864.

<sup>83</sup> *Harrisburg Patriot and Union*, August 15, 1864; *Harrisburg Telegraph*, August 15, 1864.

<sup>84</sup> *Harrisburg Patriot and Union*, August 16 and 24, 1864.

<sup>85</sup> *Harrisburg Telegraph*, August 27, 1864.

was unlawful, and, seeking an injunction against payment, they gained a quick decision from the judge, a Republican named John J. Pearson. In a reasonable ruling, Pearson pointed out that the statute permitting local governments to raise money for bounties was written with cities in general in mind and thus was not in itself meant to abrogate the particular restriction in Harrisburg's charter limiting its indebtedness. He said that he hated to see volunteers go without bounty, but that the law did allow school boards and election boards in each ward to raise funds.<sup>86</sup> That did nothing to relieve the poorer wards in the city. It seemed clear that without the ability to raise money through council appropriation, the draft wheel was going to turn in wards 1, 4, 5, and 6, as indeed it did near the end of September.

Harrisburg failed, partly through the partisanship of the Republicans on the council, partly because the state legislature (also controlled by Republicans) failed the city, and partly because of fiscal sanity and caution about legality. Attempts to exploit the situation for partisan purposes proved irresistible, especially because Harrisburg had two daily newspapers, each hungry for political grist to fill its editorial mill every single day of the week. Even so, the partisanship did not reach the level of political spectacle. The Republican newspaper dwelt on "exposing" the city council and attempting thereby to let the Republican legislature and the Republican county government escape blame for failing to override the debt limit. The Republicans also charged that "nearly every ward and township in Dauphin County which gave a majority for union candidates at the Gubernatorial election, have filled their quota in the draft" and that in "the copperhead wards and townships, scarcely any troops had been raised."<sup>87</sup> The Democratic newspaper had focused defensively in July on problems throughout the state involving local funding for bounties, "It has become a rebuke with self-styled loyal persons and organs, to make the question of levying county tax for bounty purposes by Commissioners a political one. Some . . . consider the refusal or neglect of County Commissioners to levy tax as no less a crime than treason."<sup>88</sup> As Democrats eagerly pointed out, there was no such pattern in Dauphin County, home of Harrisburg, for there the county was Republican and yet bounty funds could not be raised there either.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, September 8, 1864.

<sup>87</sup> *Harrisburg Telegraph*, August 30 and September 8, 1864.

<sup>88</sup> *Harrisburg Patriot and Union*, July 28, 1864.

Thus in Harrisburg, at times, poor wards were labelled “Copperhead” wards, and the Democrats called their opponents “self-styled loyal persons,” pouring the heated rhetoric of national partisanship on complicated local conflicts over funding bounties. But such politicizing of mobilization even in 1864 was exceptional and, for the heavily politicized capital of Pennsylvania, rather restrained.

In Dubuque, Iowa, recruitment escaped the major impediments of partisanship, despite the extreme nature of the Democratic party in the area. Like York County in Pennsylvania, Dubuque County was Democratic. Lincoln received 2,092 votes there in 1860, in contrast to the 3,059 cast for his opponents. McClellan shellacked Lincoln in Dubuque County in 1864, 3,318 to 1,742.<sup>89</sup>

Comfortable majorities and administration oppression made the Democratic party extreme. When the war began, the editor of Dubuque’s Democratic newspaper, the *Herald*, was Dennis A. Mahony. Mahony will be treated in the next chapter, but in this one we can note that Federal officials arrested him for opposition to the war, and whatever his beliefs about the war before the arrest, he was ever after a tireless agitator for civil liberties and an implacable foe of the administration on every issue.

In the election summer of 1864 Dubuque’s wards staged rallies to raise money to purchase substitutes for poor men who might be drafted. The only Republican on the city’s board of supervisors opposed meeting the city’s quota for the draft call by paying bounties. He preferred conscription. Democrats on the board denounced the draft for driving away labor, disturbing the peace, and impairing prosperity. To avoid such ill effects, they voted \$125,000 to pay \$400 bounty to each volunteer. With the abolition of the \$300 commutation fee by Congress, the only escape for a draftee was buying a substitute, but there was no way for a government to budget realistically to purchase substitutes for men on whom conscription would work a hardship because there was no way to know what a substitute might cost. It seemed better to attack the problem up front and raise the bounty level.<sup>90</sup> The board of supervisors devised a funding scheme that proved controversial. The county issued short-term obligations called warrants. Citizens invested in them, and the money was used to pay bounties. The investors would be allowed to pay their taxes from the interest on the warrants (without using cash). If the citizen had no taxes to pay, then payment of interest would be in cash. Some

<sup>89</sup> *The Tribune Almanac and Political Register for 1865*, 62.

<sup>90</sup> *Dubuque Herald*, September 15, 1864; October 2, 4, and 6, 1864.

thought the system illegal, and the warrants immediately became the target of speculators (“sharpers,” the Democratic newspaper called them).<sup>91</sup> But even Dennis Mahony’s home town managed to get Democrats to raise bounty money.

#### THE UNITED STATES SANITARY COMMISSION

There is nothing straightforward about writing on the subject of Civil War charity. For a generation, it has been a mare’s nest of controversy among historians. The major innovative charitable organization to appear in the war, the United States Sanitary Commission, was rediscovered and described in a basic work in 1956.<sup>92</sup> Apparently the story of philanthropic work appeared too good to be true to George M. Fredrickson, and in 1965, in a brilliantly revisionist history of ideas in the Civil War, he attacked the Sanitary Commission as the creation of conservative and authoritarian elites who instituted a hard-boiled view of suffering in war as something to be managed rather than sympathized with. Fredrickson thus put the previously obscure Sanitary Commission on the map of Civil War historical controversy for good. Fredrickson characterized the Commission as emphasizing organization and leadership at the expense of compassion and democracy, and in many ways it was the model for Fredrickson’s view of the intellectual history of the war in the North, which held that it was a sort of triumph of conservatism.<sup>93</sup>

Fredrickson’s influential argument can be challenged on three points. First, at the very least, the United States Sanitary Commission deserved praise for confronting, as no other group or institution did, the central problem of war waged before the germ theory of disease: Deaths from disease exceeded deaths caused by enemy action by two to one. Casualties and suffering could be greatly reduced by speeding up the war to eliminate deaths caused by disease contracted while merely waiting in camps (which the generals would not do) or by improving military medicine and hygiene, which the Sanitary Commission worked on. Second, the Commission was not as hierarchical as it appeared. Matthew Gallman

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., October 7, 1864. Mahony himself, despite his extreme disaffection from the war, calmly explained the finance system in the pages of his newspaper.

<sup>92</sup> William Quentin Maxwell, *Lincoln’s Fifth Wheel: The Political History of the United States Sanitary Commission* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1956).

<sup>93</sup> George M. Fredrickson, *The Inner Civil War: Northern Intellectuals and the Crisis of the Union* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), esp. Ch. VII “The Sanitary Elite: The Organized Response to Suffering.”

has studied Philadelphia's Great Central Sanitary Fair of 1864, one of the two largest fund-raising extravaganzas organized for the Commission, as an important embodiment of the organization. He has identified the many ways in which the activities of the Commission belied the hostile characterizations of Fredrickson: Despite the "hierarchical structure" of the organization, committees did most of the work and "enjoyed a wide latitude" of authority, and "all segments of Philadelphia society combined to make it a success." In fact the Philadelphia fair, at least, "was essentially a grass-roots effort."<sup>94</sup>

Although Gallman states as well that "voluntary involvement did not necessarily imply support for the war or for the Lincoln administration," he does not address the problem of political parties or specifically identify the third crucial point for revising our understanding of the Sanitary Commission: it was nonpartisan in appeal. The organization obviously had to struggle to maintain such a stance. The leaders of the United States Sanitary Commission, though themselves mostly Republicans, knew that their organization must appeal to people of both political parties. The sanitary fairs turned out to be the public face of this workhorse organization, and there we can watch the struggle to maintain nonpartisanship.

The culture of the fairs was distinctly Republican, but they attempted to put on a nonpartisan face most of the time. It can safely be said of the Philadelphia Sanitary Fair that it was self-consciously nonpartisan. The stance was spectacularly and symbolically in evidence at the grand opening for the event on June 8, 1864. Because of the city's importance to neighboring New Jersey and Delaware, the governors of those states attended the opening, along with the governor of the host state, Andrew Gregg Curtin of Pennsylvania. The Delaware governor was a Republican, like Curtin, but New Jersey's Joel Parker was a Democrat. All were on their nonpartisan good behavior at the opening. The press's description of Parker's brief remarks noted that he referred "to the political topics of the day" and "urged forbearance and a toleration as to differences of opinion." Governor Curtin, in his statement, stressed the New Jersey governor's loyalty, saying, "I welcome your loyal heart as the representative of the loyal people of your State. And now, when the whole country is trembling under the rude shocks of armed rebellion, the greatest known in history, all difference should be forgotten, for the work is big enough for all."<sup>95</sup>

<sup>94</sup> J. Matthew Gallman, *Mastering Wartime: A Social History of Philadelphia During the Civil War*, 155, 159, 163.

<sup>95</sup> *Our Daily Fare*, June 8, 1864, p. 7. This newspaper, issued only for the duration of the fair, was continuously paginated, and future reference to it will be by page number only.

“Loyal” was a word of great significance in the election summer of 1864. The Loyal Publication Society was producing political pamphlets to use against the Democrats by the tens of thousands of copies. And Democrats grew alarmed at the organization of “loyal leagues” across the North. Fear of secret disloyal organizations like the Knights of the Golden Circle animated Republican activity, especially in the states of the Old Northwest. Shrill and generally baseless accusations of Democratic disloyalty lay at the heart of Republican campaign strategy for the presidential election of 1864. Curtin’s welcome, stressing Parker’s “loyal heart,” was quite a gesture in that overheated political climate.

The Philadelphia fair was vast enough in scale and of sufficient duration to generate the publication of a daily newspaper, called *Our Daily Fare*. The pun in the title perfectly epitomized the tone of the sanitary fairs. They were at bottom religiously inspired, although anything but solemn; they projected a light-hearted image of public amusement. Caring for the sick and wounded was serious work, all right, but raising money for that purpose could be fun.

*Our Daily Fare* balanced descriptions of the great work of medicine and relief or succor performed by the Commission with light-hearted poetry, and observations on fair-goers’ enjoyment in seeing elaborate exhibits and decorations, and their indulgence in good food and delicious delicacies. Like the speakers at the fair’s opening, the little newspaper skirted partisanship. But the culture of the Commission was decidedly Republican. The president of the national organization was Henry Whitney Bellows, a Unitarian minister who supported the Republicans and played a major role in devising the notion of loyalty as a distinctly Republican value. The treasurer was George Templeton Strong, another staunch Republican.<sup>96</sup> Board member Charles Janeway Stillé in 1862 wrote one of the most important defenses of the Republican administration’s war effort, *How a Free People Conduct a Long War: A Chapter from English History*, a tonic for Republicans at a point of low public morale in the North. Later he wrote a memorial of the Philadelphia fair and a history of the United States Sanitary Commission. He contributed heavily to *Our Daily Fare*.<sup>97</sup>

Such people naturally found it difficult to see the Democrats in an altogether impartial light. Since the tone of the fair itself and of its newspaper

<sup>96</sup> George M. Fredrickson, *The Inner Civil War: Northern Intellectuals and the Crisis of the Union*, 100–102.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 141–143; Frank Freidel, ed., *Union Pamphlets of the Civil War, 1861–1865*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967), 1:381–403.



was one of light amusement, the occasional disparagement of Democrats was never bitter and eschewed the acid criticism of the daily and weekly Republican press. But it was present. Here is an example, the most conspicuous one in the whole run of *Our Daily Fare*. One “Calliope Smith” wrote the editor about his efforts to compose a poem praising the greatest general of the war. He said that he began this way:

Oh! George B. McClellan,  
That great little man,  
Is marching on Richmond  
As far as he can!

Ensuing events, however, caused him to change it thus:

Oh! George B. McClellan,  
That great little man,  
He holds back from Richmond  
As hard as he can!<sup>98</sup>

McClellan was not yet the official Democratic nominee for president when that was written, and the tone was humorous.

Both Democratic and Republican newspapers promoted the sanitary fairs, but there was, once in a great while, some grumbling, and that all came from Democrats. More than one Democratic complaint was registered about the Pittsburgh Sanitary Fair in the spring of 1864. Although “all parties and sects have entered into this charity,” the *Pittsburgh Post* complained, administrators of the fair refused to take down an offensive caricature hung near an imperial-sized photograph of McClellan.<sup>99</sup> The *New York World* expressed their reservations about the administration of the United States Sanitary Commission this way: “The Sanitary Commission must purge itself of the taint of partisanship.”<sup>100</sup> They did not think it should be done away with, only scrubbed clean of partisanship.

Nonpartisan support was the norm. The Democratic *Erie Observer*, of Erie, Pennsylvania, made observations on the great Philadelphia fair only from a distance, of course. Erie itself had given up on the idea of holding its own fair because it was simply “too big a thing for Erie.”<sup>101</sup> As Philadelphia planned for their fair, the *Observer* printed a letter of almost

<sup>98</sup> *Our Daily Fare*, 16. For another humorous but slighting reference see p. 22.

<sup>99</sup> *Pittsburgh Post*, June 10, 11, and 13, 1864. Pennsylvania’s *Penn Argus and Westmoreland Democrat* reported complaints from people returning from the Pittsburgh fair that it was “nothing but an Abolition Show Shop.” See the issue of July 13, 1864.

<sup>100</sup> *New York World*, November 5, 1864.

<sup>101</sup> *Erie Observer*, February 20, 1864.

a full column's length from the organizers asking contributions of a single day's pay from laborers and a day's revenue from great employers.<sup>102</sup> Later, at the time of the fair's closing in Philadelphia in the summer, the *Observer* noted, with state pride, the commendation of Philadelphia's work that came from a newspaper in New York (the Republican *Evening Post*): "As a citizen of New York, I might wish that Philadelphia should be second to her in all good deeds; but in her Sanitary Fair she is first."<sup>103</sup>

The Democratic *Cleveland Plain Dealer* was typical for its nonpartisan reserve in regard to that city's fair. Well before the local fair opened in Cleveland, the *Plain Dealer* commended the work of the Sanitary Commission. "The Sanitary Movements," the editors wrote on January 9, 1864, "seem to have touched the right chord in the popular heart. No measures put in operation since the beginning of this war have met with such enthusiasm on the part of the people."<sup>104</sup> The editors treated the Great Sanitary Fair of Northern Ohio, which opened on February 22, 1864, as though it were the annual state fair, something to be promoted and reported on exhaustively and uncritically. Their unqualified support was the more remarkable because the Ladies' Soldiers' Aid Society of Northern Ohio, the branch of the Sanitary Commission that organized the fair, did very little to moderate the provokingly Republican tone of the event.

First off, they appointed as the editor of the fair's daily paper the editor of the local Republican newspaper, the *Leader*, which was engaged in running feuds with the *Plain Dealer*. The Democratic paper decided to deal with the choice with levity.<sup>105</sup> Finally, the organizers of the fair picked as the featured speaker near the end of the fair's run, Anna Dickinson, the abolitionist Quaker orator, who was anathema to Democrats. The *Plain Dealer* patiently and dutifully reported on her speech, characterizing it resignedly as "a strictly abolition affair."<sup>106</sup> Despite it all, the *Plain Dealer*, from the opening to the close of the fair, reported enthusiastically and in detail the events and the sights and the goods available. In fact, the editors started early, building enthusiasm and anticipation weeks before the opening by reporting on the construction of the temporary buildings for the fair and explaining how to contribute goods for exhibition and sale. When the fair opened, the newspaper devoted four and one-half

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, April 23, 1864.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, June 25, 1864.

<sup>104</sup> *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, January 9, 1864.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, February 20, 1864.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, March 8, 1864.

columns to coverage of it. Naturally, coverage shrank with the passage of time for the simple reason that all the exhibits eventually got described. Through it all, the *Plain Dealer* did not utter a partisan word about the event.

In the end, even tacit agreement to observe the boundaries of politics and to mobilize for the war, pay for it, and care for its victims without attention to political party left plenty of opportunity for the dogged partisans of the nineteenth-century party system to vent and threaten and roar. The noisy rhetoric, in fact, has all but deafened historians to the low murmur of steady nonpartisan work for victory. But that work was proof, as the next two chapters will show, that the Democratic party formed a loyal opposition in the Civil War.