9

Andrew Jackson and His Age

Dressed in deepest mourning black, Andrew Jackson presented a somber figure at his presidential inauguration on March 4, 1829. His beloved wife, Rachel, had suffered a heart attack on December 17 and died five days later at the age of sixty-one. She had been much upset when the propriety of her relationship with Andrew had been made an issue in the campaign. Her husband blamed her death on his political enemies, who had "maligned that blessed one who is now safe from suffering and sorrow, whom they tried to put to shame for my sake!"[1] His resentment may well have been exacerbated by guilt, since Rachel had begged him to retire to private life. Unfashionably stout and self-conscious about her provincial manners, she had been dreading the role of White House first lady. Now she would not have to perform it. A depressed and bitter president-elect managed to avoid the celebration that had been planned to welcome him to Washington at the end of his three-week trip from Nashville. He refused to pay the customary courtesy call on the outgoing president, who reciprocated by not attending the inaugural. Public speaking had always been an ordeal for Jackson even in the best of times. Under the circumstances, the incoming president kept his inaugural address brief and almost entirely ambiguous. Few could hear his words, but thousands watched with pleasure when he bowed to the crowd in a sign of respect for popular sovereignty.[2]

The symbolic gesture expressed an irony at the very heart of Jackson's presidency. Despite the bow, Jackson brought to his task a temperament suited to leadership rather than deference. Although he invoked a democratic ideology, the new president had profoundly authoritarian instincts. Tall, ramrod straight, with piercing eyes and an air of command, the hero of New Orleans was not a man to be crossed. He had come up the hard way, born in a remote area on the border between North and South Carolina to the log-cabin poverty of a migrant Scots-Irish family and tragically orphaned at an early age. Jackson had sought and made his fortune in frontier Tennessee, with an eye on the main chance and just enough

1. Andrew Jackson, Dec. 24, 1828, quoted in Remini, *Jackson*, II, 154.
2. Donald Cole, *The Presidency of Andrew Jackson* (Lawrence, Kans., 1993), 33.

book learning to practice law. A man's man, he fought Indians, gambled, and dealt successfully in lands and cotton. Even by frontier standards, Jackson possessed a particularly touchy sense of honor. He participated in several duels and fights, killing a man during one in 1806. The chronic pain of the wound he sustained then, and other bullet wounds from a barroom brawl in 1813, did nothing to help his disposition. Quick to sense a criticism or slight, he never apologized, never forgave, and never shrank from violence. His towering rages became notorious.[3]

Slaves Jackson bought and sold in substantial numbers; in 1817, he disposed of forty at one time for $24,000 (an economy of scale for the purchaser, his friend Edward Livingston). Jackson is said to have wagered his slaves on horse races. However, he indignantly denied ever having been a professional slave trader.[4] Old Hickory was capable of patriarchal generosity to dependents; he even adopted a Creek Indian boy whose parents Jackson's soldiers had massacred. "He is a savage, but one that fortune has thrown in my hands," Jackson explained to his wife. (Adoption of captives was common in frontier warfare. The boy, who never renounced his tribal heritage, died of tuberculosis at sixteen.)[5] But if someone challenged Jackson's authority or he felt his honor questioned, he became implacable. After one of his slaves dared run away, Jackson offered a fifty-dollar reward for his recapture, "and ten dollars extra for every hundred lashes a person will give to the amount of three hundred."[6] Three hundred lashes risked beating the man to death, but perhaps revenge outweighed financial interest.

Jackson's religion was a stern Scots-Irish Presbyterianism. His wife turned increasingly pious in middle age, and although Andrew was never as devout as she became, he took some aspects of the faith seriously. During his short term as governor of Florida Territory, he imposed (at Rachel's urging) strict Protestant sabbatarian regulations on the Catholic population.[7] Once, when a young lawyer in Tennessee tried to argue in his presence

3. See Bertram Wyatt-Brown, "Andrew Jackson's Honor," *JER* 17 (1997): 1–36. Psychological interpretations of Jackson's irascible temperament are offered in Andrew Burstein, *The Passions of Andrew Jackson* (New York, 2003) and James C. Curtis, *Andrew Jackson and the Search for Vindication* (Boston, 1976).
4. Curtis, *Andrew Jackson and the Search for Vindication*, 136; Robert Gudmestad, *A Troublesome Commerce* (Baton Rouge, 2003), 147–52.
5. Andrew Jackson to Rachel Jackson, Dec. 29, 1813, *Papers of Andrew Jackson*, ed. Harold Moser et al. (Nashville, Tenn., 1984), II, 516. The boy was named Lyncoya.
6. Nashville *Tennessee Gazette*, Sept. 26, 1804, rpt. in *Plantation and Frontier*, ed. Ulrich Phillips (New York, 1910), II, 86–87.
7. Remini, *Jackson*, I, 408.

against the existence of hell, Jackson roared, "I thank God that there is such a place of torment as hell." Asked why, the general responded: "To put such d— —d rascals as you are in!" The young man fled the room.[8]

Politically influential in Tennessee even before the Battles of Horseshoe Bend and New Orleans made him a national hero, Jackson had served in the state constitutional convention of 1796, in the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate (briefly), and on the state supreme court. His career as frontier warrior and self-made plantation magnate exemplified aspirations that were widely shared by American men of his time. He was the first president with whom many ordinary Americans could identify and the first to have a nickname. That nickname, "Old Hickory," invoked his stature as a tough leader of men in an age when only men could vote. Jackson's success in life personified the wresting of the continent from alien enemies, both Native and European, white supremacy over other races, and equal opportunity for all white males, without preference for birth or education, to enjoy the spoils of conquest. A visitor to his plantation house, the Hermitage outside Nashville, would find the log cabins of his youth standing alongside the stately mansion with its Greek columns and imported French wallpaper. Like many another plantation owner, Jackson enjoyed an expensive lifestyle; he entertained lavishly both at the Hermitage and the White House.[9]

Although ironic, Jackson's combination of authoritarianism with a democratic ideology, his identification of his own will with the voice of the people, worked well for him politically. He defined himself as defender of the people against special interests and advocated—unsuccessfully—a constitutional amendment to abolish the electoral college and choose the president by direct popular vote. The populist rhetoric of Jackson and his political associates combined ceaseless condemnation of elite corruption with the antigovernment political ideology they had taken over from Randolph, Taylor, and the Old Republicans. A large segment of the American electorate shared Jackson's belief in the legitimacy of private violence and the assertion of male honor, his trust in natural rather than acquired abilities, and his impatience with limitations on one's own will.[10]

8. Related in Peter Cartwright, *Autobiography*, ed. Charles Wallis (1856; New York, 1956), 134.
9. Remini, *Jackson*, II, 7, 346.
10. Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution* (New York, 1991), 174–81, provides a sympathetic statement of how and why Jackson's life appealed to many rural Americans. But see also Michael O'Brien, *Conjectures of Order: Intellectual Life and the American South, 1810–1860* (Chapel Hill, 2004), II, 836–49.

But Jackson's values and suspicion of government were far from commanding universal assent, and they were to prove exceptionally divisive in the years ahead. The "age of Jackson" was not a time of consensus. It is unfortunate that the adjective "Jacksonian" is often applied not only to Jackson's followers but to all Americans of the period.

The one unambiguous commitment in Jackson's inaugural address was to what he called *"reform"*: the purging of federal offices.[11] Duff Green, the editor of the Jacksonian *United States Telegraph*, had announced this goal during the campaign itself. Jackson would "REWARD HIS FRIENDS AND PUNISH HIS ENEMIES" through patronage, Green's newspaper trumpeted. This was not just a prediction; it was a threat. Green was deliberately prodding officeholders (customs and land officers, U.S. attorneys and marshals, postmasters and others) to declare for Jackson, on the premise that if Adams won, it would not matter whom they had supported, but if Jackson won, they faced dismissal unless they had endorsed him.[12] Adams had tried to put the federal patronage on a meritocratic basis. For his pains, the opposition press had vilified him as dealing in special privilege. Now, the pro-Jackson journalist Amos Kendall could not help observing that what the Old Hero's supporters really wanted was "the privilege of availing themselves of the very abuses with which we charge our adversaries."[13]

A horde of office-seekers attended Jackson's inauguration. It was they who turned the inaugural reception into a near-riot, damaging White House furnishings until they were diverted outside onto the lawn. Later historians have cast this event in an aura of democratic exuberance; contemporary observers of every political stripe expressed embarrassment at it. "The throng that pressed on the president before he was fairly in office, soliciting rewards in a manner so destitute of decency, and of respect for his character and office," observed a New England Jacksonian, was "a disgraceful reproach to the character of our countrymen."[14]

The largest part of the federal government's patronage lay in the Post Office. Since Postmaster General John McLean remained committed to nonpartisanship and meritocracy, Duff Green insisted that the president replace him. This proved a delicate matter, for both Green and McLean

11. *Presidential Messages*, II, 438. Italics in the original.
12. Green's slogan is quoted and analyzed in Richard R. John, *Spreading the News: The American Postal System from Franklin to Morse* (Cambridge, Mass., 1995), 210–11.
13. Kendall to Francis P. Blair, Feb. 14, 1829, quoted ibid., 212.
14. Henry Orne (1829), quoted in Robert Forbes, "Slavery and the Meaning of America" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1994), 522.

had close ties to Vice President Calhoun. As a solution, Jackson elevated a reluctant McLean to the U.S. Supreme Court and turned over the patronage-rich Post Office to William Barry. Barry allowed the quality of the postal service to deteriorate while a clique of Jacksonian journalists led by Amos Kendall divvied up the spoils in his department. This informal but powerful group of patronage dispensers evolved into what became known as Jackson's "kitchen cabinet." The central role of journalists testifies to the importance the administration attached to the communications revolution and public opinion. While political factions controlled key newspapers, in return newspapermen played key roles in politics and patronage.[15]

The kitchen cabinet had no institutional identity or even permanent membership; it was simply a term (originally derogatory) for a group of presidential favorites operating outside the formal cabinet. Martin Van Buren belonged to both cabinets for a time. No previous president had had such a group of advisors, and they were naturally the objects of suspicion. The kitchen cabinet has sometimes been described as the precursor of the modern presidential White House staff, or alternatively as the precursor of the national party organization, but both these models are anachronistic. The kitchen cabinet had no table of organization, and its members performed only such functions as the president directed. During his military career, Jackson had heard advice from his aides but did not convene councils of war; as president he did not want to be bound by the official cabinet, even after appointing an all-new one in 1831. An informal, flexible group of advisors with no power base other than his favor suited his executive style, allowing him to keep power in his own hands, and, as the historian Richard Latner has pointed out, "to dominate his surroundings."[16]

With the partial exception of John Quincy Adams, every president beginning with Washington had made appointments to office from among his supporters. The early republic had no civil service system, and federal employees enjoyed no legal security of employment. Nevertheless the

15. See Richard John, "Affairs of Office: The Executive Departments, the Election of 1828, and the Making of the Democratic Party," in *Democracy in America: New Directions in American Political History*, ed. Julian Zelizer et al. (Princeton, 2003), 51–84. Jeffrey Pasley, *Printers, Editors, and Publishers of Political Journals Elected to the U.S. Congress*, 1789–1861, found at http://www.pasleybrothers.com/newspols/images/Editors_in_Congress.pdf (viewed May 2, 2007), shows how often journalists went into electoral politics themselves.

16. Richard Latner, "The Kitchen Cabinet and Andrew Jackson's Advisory System," *JAH* 65 (1978): 267–88.

prevailing custom was to leave one's predecessor's appointees in office (except for the top tier of policymaking posts), replacing them gradually through attrition. Even Jefferson, eager as he was to replace Federalists with Republicans, had generally followed this practice. The novelty in the Jacksonian patronage policy lay not in appointments but in removals. According to one set of statistics, Jackson removed 919 federal officials during his first year; this represented about 10 percent of all government employees. The precise number removed is subject to confusion, but it was more than all his predecessors had done in the previous forty years. By the time Congress assembled in December 1829, Jackson had already removed thirteen district attorneys, nine marshals, twenty-three registers and receivers, and twenty-five customs collectors, replacing them all with recess appointments. The removal policy hit the Post Office hard. Within the first year, the new administration dismissed 423 postmasters, many with long and creditable records of service.[17]

At first these removals were routinely justified with accusations of malfeasance. In this way the Jackson leaders dressed up their patronage policy as "reform" of the corruption they alleged had prevailed under Monroe and Adams. In a few cases, those removed were indeed crooks: Tobias Watkins, army surgeon, literary magazine editor, and friend of John Quincy Adams, went to prison for four years for misappropriating three thousand dollars while a Treasury auditor. Others were superannuated and deserved to be retired. But in most cases, straightforward politics dictated the removals. Those in the Post Office were concentrated in the Northeast, where the Jacksonians needed help in building their political party. In fact, however, the mail service there was most efficient and least in need of a managerial shake-up.

After several months, it became obvious that the charges against incumbent officeholders were all too often fabricated. To preserve credibility the administration fell back upon its other rationale, the principle of "rotation in office" as good in itself. Jackson explained this policy in his Message to Congress of December 1829: "The duties of all public officers are, or at least admit of being made, so plain and simple that men of intelligence may readily qualify themselves for their performance." Having thus rejected any need to recruit a meritocracy in public service, he went on to examine the issue purely as the distribution of favors among the citizenry. "In a country where offices are created solely for the benefit of the

17. I owe some of these figures to Daniel Feller, who generously shared his research with me; others come from Cole, *Presidency of Jackson*, 41–42, and John, *Spreading the News*, 223–33.

people no one man has any more intrinsic right to official station than another." Qualifications and experience were just excuses invoked to justify the perpetuation of privilege.[18]

The issues involved in allocating public office and employment have been repeatedly debated ever since, first with civil service reform and more recently in connection with affirmative action and term limits. The arguments were no less contested in Jackson's time than now. But the spoils system, as it was soon named, had come to stay. Once the Jacksonian Democrats had established the new pattern of partisan removals, it remained whichever party won office, until gradually mitigated by civil service reform after the Civil War. Those whom the Jackson administration appointed to office did not differ in their economic class from previous appointees, though they were more often self-made men or born into provincial rather than cosmopolitan elites.[19] Jackson showed no reluctance to appoint former Federalists to office once they had become his supporters; indeed, he appointed more of them than all his Republican predecessors put together. Nor, despite the rhetoric of "reform," did Jackson's appointees represent any improvement in probity; corruption that came to light in the Land Office, the Post Office, and Indian affairs under his administration dwarfed that under his predecessors. Samuel Swartwout, a crony whom the president personally selected for the lucrative post of collector of the port of New York, absconded in 1839 with his accounts over a million dollars in arrears. More rapid turnover in the bureaucracy led to officeholders who were less experienced and less motivated. Over the long term the spoils system diminished both the competence and the prestige of public service.[20]

Under the Federalists and Jeffersonian Republicans, the American administrative system had served as an example of honesty and efficiency to would-be administrative reformers in Britain. However, in the years after 1829, the quality of British administration gradually improved while that of the U.S. federal government declined, until by the 1880s, American civil service reformers opposing the spoils system took Britain as their model.

18. "First Annual Message to Congress" (Dec. 8, 1829), *Presidential Messages*, II, 448–49.
19. Sidney Aronson, *Status and Kinship in the Higher Civil Service* (Cambridge, Mass., 1964), 82, 90.
20. Shaw Livermore, *The Twilight of Federalism* (Princeton, 1962), 241; Cole, *Presidency of Jackson*, 46; Leonard D. White, *The Jacksonians: A Study in Administrative History* (New York, 1954), 327–32.

II

Once John McLean left, only one cabinet member remained with significant political stature: Secretary of State Martin Van Buren. Van Buren had just been elected governor of New York, but having run for the office to ward off the Antimasonic threat to his state power base, the Little Magician felt little interest in the job itself. When offered the State Department, he jumped at the chance to get back to Washington, where his presence would counterbalance that of Vice President Calhoun. With Jackson's ill health and avowed intention to serve but a single term, the Calhoun–Van Buren competition for the succession got under way quickly.[21]

The other cabinet secretaries were little-known figures who appealed to Jackson in large part because they all hated Henry Clay.[22] The worst choice proved to be John Henry Eaton, senator from Tennessee, an old friend who had been Jackson's campaign manager. As secretary of war he would be in charge of Indian Removal, a subject on which he and the president saw eye to eye.[23] But the most significant thing about Eaton turned out to be his recent marriage to Margaret O'Neale Timberlake.

The daughter of a Scots-Irish innkeeper in Washington, young Peggy O'Neale tended bar and had already attracted many suitors before marrying at the age of sixteen. Her husband, John Timberlake, was a purser in the navy and away at sea for long periods, during which Peggy seldom seems to have been lonely. She bestowed her favors widely, becoming in due course good friends with John Eaton and probably his mistress. Eaton gave money to Peggy's father and managed the Timberlake family finances so as to facilitate her husband's absences. People questioned the paternity of her two children. In April 1828 John Timberlake died suddenly on board ship, apparently by suicide. It is still unclear whether his despair was caused by his wife's infidelities, financial difficulties, or bad asthma. On New Year's Day 1829, twenty-nine-year-old Margaret (she preferred that name to the more commonly used Peggy) married the middle-aged widower John Eaton. Remarriage within a year of a spouse's death was considered poor taste, but the couple responded to the wishes of their friend and patron, Andrew Jackson. Jackson told them to marry "forthwith,"

21. Six weeks before the inauguration, a young Democrat noticed that "the friends of Van Buren and those of Calhoun are becoming very jealous of each other." James Buchanan to Benjamin Porter, Jan. 22, 1829, quoted in Richard Latner, "The Eaton Affair Reconsidered," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 36 (1977): 333–34.
22. Cole, *Presidency of Jackson*, 31.
23. Harry Watson, *Liberty and Power* (New York, 1990), 100.

in order to forestall gossip. It didn't. The typical reaction of Washington insiders was that "Eaton has just married his mistress, and the mistress of eleven doz. others!"[24]

When the president named John Eaton secretary of war, most of the women in the capital refused to associate with his wife. Led during the past generation by such powerful matrons as Dolley Madison and Margaret Bayard Smith, the women of official Washington had developed a strong collective identity and sense of purpose in transforming their raw young city into a capital worthy of a great nation.[25] A woman who was sexually notorious had no place in their vision. At the inaugural ball, no woman spoke to the new Mrs. Eaton. Floride Calhoun, the aristocratic wife of the vice president, received her when she came calling, but refused to return the call. Soon thereafter the Calhouns departed for South Carolina so Floride could give birth at home, a move that also tactfully avoided further contact with the Eatons.

The newly arrived women who had accompanied Jackson's other appointees proved no more willing to tolerate the presence of Peggy O'Neale Eaton than were the long-established women. (There is reason to believe that Rachel Jackson, during her lifetime, had been unwilling to acknowledge her.)[26] Brash, demanding, and voluptuous in appearance, Margaret Eaton did nothing to reassure those who met her. None of the wives of Jackson's other cabinet members would associate with her except Catherine Barry, wife of the postmaster general who had replaced McLean. Most awkward of all for the president, his own official White House hostess supported the boycott. Years before, First Lady Elizabeth Kortright Monroe had closed the White House to Margaret Timberlake, and now Emily Donelson decided to continue that policy. Her husband, Andrew Jackson Donelson, was the president's private secretary and nephew of his late wife. The Eaton Affair (as it came to be called) put the Donelsons into an excruciating bind, and eventually Jackson sent them back to Tennessee to think about where their loyalties should lie. Although he later recalled them, the Donelsons never regained their former standing in the eyes of their great patron. Some of the foreign diplomats' wives were willing to socialize with Margaret Eaton because they took for granted the behavior of European courts and the need to set aside morality in the interest of politics. American women were not so trained.

24. Louis McLane to James A. Bayard, Feb. 19, 1829, quoted in Catherine Allgor, *Parlor Politics* (Charlottesville, Va., 2000), 200.
25. See ibid., 190–238.
26. John Marszalek, *The Petticoat Affair* (New York, 1997), 79, 81.

Andrew Jackson did not countenance defiance. How could his cabinet members work together when the wife of one was shunned by the wives of others? He insisted that Margaret Eaton must be an innocent victim of slander, the same position he had taken in response to the accusations against Rachel. His argument was deductive rather than based on evidence: John Eaton and John Timberlake were both Freemasons like Jackson, and it would be unthinkable for one Mason to cuckold another.[27] Two Presbyterian ministers close to the president tried in vain to persuade him of Margaret Eaton's guilt. One of them was Ezra Stiles Ely, who had written the pamphlet supporting Jackson as the "Christian" candidate against the Unitarian Adams. On September 10, 1829, the president of the United States summoned his entire cabinet save Eaton, plus his two private secretaries (Donelson and William Lewis) and the two clergymen, to a dramatic meeting to evaluate the sexual morality of Margaret Eaton. Jackson was clearly not open to persuasion: "She is as chaste as a virgin!" he exclaimed, a memorable phrase that became common knowledge. The meeting changed no minds.[28]

The Eaton Affair continued to preoccupy Washington and took up more of the president's time in his first year than any other issue. John Eaton issued dueling challenges to both the secretary of the Treasury and the pastor of the Presbyterian church in Washington (neither accepted). It is difficult for a twenty-first-century person to understand the meaning of the Eaton Affair in nineteenth-century terms. If Margaret Eaton seems appealing in her defiance of prudish convention, one may be disposed to see Jackson's defense of her as an endorsement of women's liberation. In its historical context, however, nothing could be further from the truth.

Jackson was not trying to revise the prevailing code of sexual morality but defending his honor as a patriarch. He expected to be able to control his cabinet members and thought they in turn should be able to control their wives. When the cabinet secretaries expostulated that there was a social sphere within which women enjoyed autonomy, Jackson showed no sympathy with women's rights. "I did not come here to make a cabinet for the Ladies of this place," he declared.[29] Women had no business meddling in politics. If the president vouched for her, Mrs. Eaton should be accepted and normal social life resumed.

27. Andrew Jackson to Ezra Stiles Ely, March 23, 1829, in James Parton, *The Life of Andrew Jackson* (New York, 1861), III, 188.
28. Parton, *Life of Jackson*, III, 204.
29. Quoted in Kirsten Wood, "Gender and Power in the Eaton Affair," *JER* 17 (1997): 238.

To understand the women's viewpoint may require even more historical imagination than to understand Jackson's. The women who ostracized Margaret Eaton did not act out of mere snobbish rejection of a tavern-keeper's daughter; social mobility was not despised in the Jackson administration. The women saw themselves defending the interests and honor of the female half of humanity. They believed that no responsible woman should accord a man sexual favors without the assurance of support that went with marriage. A woman who broke ranks on this issue they considered a threat to all women. She encouraged men to make unwelcome advances. Therefore she must be condemned severely even if it meant applying a double standard of morality, stricter for women than for men. This conviction was widespread among women, not only in the middle class and regardless of political party. The women who had the courage to act upon it, standing up to Andrew Jackson and risking their husbands' careers, insisted that expedient politics must not control moral principle. They believed that women acting collectively could advance the moral state of society. Theirs was the attitude that justified women's role in contemporary moral reform causes like temperance and antislavery. And although most or all of them would have been shocked if had been pointed out, theirs was the attitude that would lead in a few more years to an organized movement on behalf of women's rights.[30]

Whether the president really believed in Margaret Eaton's sexual fidelity is doubtful and not even altogether relevant. He insisted that her case paralleled that of his late wife. Yet he would have known his protestations of Rachel's innocence of adultery to be untrue. For Jackson, such matters were issues not of fact but of his authority. Jackson demanded loyalty, and to him this meant acceptance of his assertions, whether he was insisting on Peggy Eaton's chastity or (as he did in the course of another tirade) that Alexander Hamilton *"was not in favor of the Bank of the United States."*[31] In the same spirit of privileging his will over truth, Jackson claimed in 1831 that he had received a message from President Monroe through John Rhea (pronounced "Ray") authorizing his conduct in the invasion of Florida. Historians working over a period of half a century have carefully proved the story a complete fabrication. Nevertheless, Old Hickory persuaded John Rhea to vouch for its truth![32] After all, Jackson had prevailed upon his friends to endorse the story of his 1791 marriage to Rachel in Natchez. And in 1829–30, with no issue save Indian Removal yet defining the administration's position, personal loyalty to the president meant everything.

One big winner emerged from the Eaton Affair: Martin Van Buren. He understood perfectly Jackson's conception of loyalty as well as how to exploit the Old Hero's vanity. A widower like Jackson, Van Buren had no wife to interfere with his pursuit of political advantage. Accordingly, the secretary of state made a point of cultivating the secretary of war and calling upon his wife, thereby scoring many points with the president. Van Buren secured for himself Jackson's favor as his successor. On the eve of the Civil War, James Parton could write that "the political history of the United States, for the last thirty years, dates from the moment when the soft hand of Mr. Van Buren touched Mrs. Eaton's knocker."[33]

Eventually Van Buren even figured a way out of the seemingly intractable social deadlock. Eaton and his wife would have to go, in order for the administration to get on with the business of government. But the only way the president could save face would be for *all* the cabinet to resign, including the husbands of Mrs. Eaton's detractors. Van Buren was willing to lead the way, confident that he had secured his place in the president's esteem. The other cabinet members were harder to persuade (Margaret Eaton urged her husband not to cooperate), but of course they had no real choice. The *Washington Globe*, the administration's organ, announced the resignations on April 20, 1831, though they were not all consummated until June. The *New York Courier* commented: "Well indeed may Mr. Van Buren be called 'The Great Magician' for *he raises his wand, and the whole Cabinet disappears.*"[34]

William Barry was exempted from the purge, officially on the grounds that the postmaster general was not then technically part of the cabinet, unofficially as a reward for keeping his wife in line. (He would serve until 1835, when, following congressional investigations into malfeasance in the Post Office, he would resign under a cloud.) The Donelsons resumed their previous positions with the president's blessing. Mass resignation of a presidential cabinet was unprecedented but came as something of a relief. The opposition had watched the whole fracas with a mixture of disgust and amusement. Upon Margaret Eaton's departure from Washington, Henry Clay quipped, "Age cannot wither nor time stale her infinite virginity."[35]

30. See ibid., 237–75.
31. James Hamilton, Alexander's son, reported the latter statement and said it was made to him. Quoted in Robert Remini, *Andrew Jackson and the Bank War* (New York, 1967), 49, italics in original.
32. James Schouler, "Monroe and the Rhea Letter," *Magazine of American History* (1884): 308–22; Richard Sternberg, "Jackson's 'Rhea Letter' Hoax," *Journal of Southern History* (1936): 480–96.
33. Parton, *Life of Jackson*, III, 287.
34. Quoted in Allgor, *Parlor Politics*, 208.
35. Quoted in Clement Eaton, *Henry Clay and the Art of American Politics* (Boston, 1957), 167. Clay was parodying Shakespeare's description of Cleopatra.

Not until the 1990s would another national administration be so absorbed by a sex scandal.

Jackson at first charged that the opposition to Margaret Eaton came from Henry Clay and his "hired slanderers."[36] In reality, of course, the president's problem lay not so much with National Republicans as with Democratic Republicans—specifically, Democratic women—but this he could not admit. Opposition to his will could only derive from a conspiracy against him. Before the end of 1829, Jackson had decided that Vice President Calhoun must mastermind the anti-Eaton conspiracy.[37] True, Calhoun had hoped that the War Department would go to a South Carolinian and so might have taken satisfaction if John Eaton had to resign. But he could only lose by a confrontation with the president over the matter. Floride Calhoun, a forceful leader in Washington society, probably made her own decision not to associate with Peggy Eaton, and the other women involved certainly did. The most that can be said is that once Van Buren aligned himself with the Eatons, free-traders who detested Van Buren's Tariff of Abominations tended to gravitate to the opposite camp, whether they were Calhoun partisans or not.[38] Active opposition to the Eatons always remained with women, supported by some clergymen, and not with any male politicians or journalists. (The press, in fact, did its best to hush the story up; not until the mass resignation of the cabinet did the rest of the country learn what had long been the talk of Washington.) By late 1829, however, Van Buren and his agents had poisoned Jackson's mind against the absent Calhoun.

While the Donelsons were out of favor, William Lewis emerged as the president's most trusted private secretary, and his wife took over as White House hostess. Lewis was John Eaton's brother-in-law and became a confidante of Martin Van Buren. Knowing how much importance the Old Hero still attached to vindicating his actions in the Florida War, the crafty Lewis obtained from William H. Crawford a letter confirming what had gone on in Monroe's top-secret cabinet meetings: Calhoun had criticized Jackson's conduct. Crawford had recuperated from the illness that wrecked his presidential ambitions and seized the chance to play the role of high-level insider once again. The Georgian found it gratifying to frustrate the presidential hopes of his old rival Calhoun while helping those

36. AJ to Robert Call, July 5, 1829, *Correspondence of AJ*, IV, 51.
37. AJ to John C. McLemore, Nov. 24, 1829, *Correspondence*, IV, 88–89.
38. Michael Holt, *Political Parties and American Political Development* (Baton Rouge, 1992), 45; John Niven, *John C. Calhoun and the Price of Union* (Baton Rouge, 1988), 167–68; Latner, "Eaton Affair," 330–51.

of Martin Van Buren, a longtime ally. Upon receiving Crawford's message, Jackson declared, "I have this moment" seen that which "proves Calhoun *a villain*." Jackson never attributed his discovery to the machinations of his secretary of state. "Van Buren glides along as smoothly as oil and as silently as a cat," observed one insider with a nose for intrigue.[39]

As vice president, John C. Calhoun served under two different presidents, and he suffered the peculiar fate of falling out with both of them quickly and irrevocably. His good relations with Jackson lasted only a little longer than had those with John Quincy Adams. Eventually he found himself waging a public pamphlet war against the dominant element in the administration, just as he had done under Adams. This time he was defending his role as Monroe's secretary of war more than a decade earlier. Crawford had been as critical of Jackson as anyone at the time of the Florida invasion, so it was bizarre for the president now to rely on Crawford's testimony to discredit Calhoun's role. Even at this late date Calhoun refrained from attacking the president personally; instead he blamed a sinister cabal for turning Jackson against him.[40] Calhoun's accusations were better founded than Jackson's; it was the vice president, not the president, who was the victim of a conspiracy.

Van Buren's victory in the competition for Jackson's favor could not have been more complete. The president laid it out in a letter to an old friend while reorganizing his cabinet. "I *now know* both Van Buren and Calhoun: the first I know to be a pure republican who has laboured with an eye single to promote the best interests of his country, whilst the other, actuated alone by selfish ambition, has secretly employed all his talents in intrigue and deception, to destroy them, and to disgrace my administration. The plot is unmasked."[41] As a result of Jackson's decision that Van Buren should succeed him, the administration cut loose from Duff Green's *United States Telegraph*, which had sided with Calhoun in the intraparty conflict, and in December 1830 established the *Washington Globe*, edited by Francis Blair, as its official organ. Green took his newspaper into opposition.

Besides its political fallout, the designation of Van Buren as heir apparent to Jackson, the Eaton Affair had other, more subtle resonances. It took place at a time when sexual behavior was undergoing reexamination by

39. Remini, *Jackson*, II, 240–46. AJ to Andrew J. Donelson, Dec. 25, 1830, quoted ibid., 246. Amos Kendall to Francis Blair, April 25, 1830, quoted in Charles Sellers, *James K. Polk, Jacksonian* (Princeton, 1957), 148. On Crawford, see Sellers, *Market Revolution*, 295.
40. Niven, *John C. Calhoun*, 175.
41. AJ to John Coffee, April 24, 1831, *Correspondence of AJ*, IV, 269.

standards we now term "Victorian," which laid increased emphasis on impulse control and strict personal accountability. Jackson did not directly challenge conventional sexual morality; he cast himself as a defender of female purity. Nevertheless, his stand on behalf of Margaret Eaton, coming after his own relationship with Rachel Robards had come under questioning, tended to align the Democratic Party with those (mostly men) who resisted the demands being made in the nineteenth century (mostly by women) for a stricter code of sexual morality. Only occasionally did issues directly involving sex come into the political arena, but even so the associations were not lost on contemporaries. They may help explain why Jackson's opposition, in the years to come, could count on more support from women's groups than the Democrats could. Women, although legally disfranchised, were not necessarily politically apathetic or inert.

III

Indian Removal constituted the major substantive issue the Jackson administration addressed in a first year otherwise largely preoccupied with patronage and personalities. Although Jackson had avoided committing himself on the tariff or internal improvements, his strong stand in favor of rapid Removal was well known and accounted for much of his popularity in Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi. The issue involved Indian tribes all over the country, but the ones with the most at stake were the Five Civilized Tribes of Cherokee, Creek, Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Seminole. These peoples practiced agriculture and animal husbandry much as their white neighbors did and still possessed substantial domains in the Deep South states plus Tennessee, North Carolina, and Florida Territory. The eminent geographer Jedidiah Morse had been commissioned by the federal government to prepare a comprehensive report on the nation's Indian tribes. His report, issued in 1822, waxed eloquent about the economic and educational progress of the five tribes and advised that they be left in peace to continue it. Morse's advice was not taken. White settlers bitterly resented the Natives' presence; besides occupying good cotton land, they traded with free blacks and sometimes provided a haven for runaway slaves.[42] State and federal governments responded to the wishes of the settlers, not to the advice of experts. Among the numerous racial conflicts that ensued, the one between Georgia and the Cherokee Nation attracted the most national attention and led to a dramatic confrontation with serious constitutional implications.

42. See Kenneth Porter, *The Negro on the American Frontier* (New York, 1971), 182–327.

The earliest European intruders into what later became the southeastern United States had encountered a thriving people called the Cherokees living in a large area of the southern Appalachians. Like many other Native Americans, the Cherokees sided with the British at the time of the Revolutionary War, recognizing that while the imperial authorities wanted to trade, the white settlers wanted their land. Four years after their British allies surrendered at Yorktown, the Cherokees too conceded defeat in the Treaty of Hopewell, South Carolina (1785). By its terms, the Cherokees yielded the larger part of their accustomed territory. What remained acquired for the first time clear boundaries, which were further restricted by treaties after Tennessee became a state. For a decade there continued to be sporadic unauthorized raids and reprisals by both sides, but the Cherokee Nation never again made war against the United States. Indeed, the tribe allied with Andrew Jackson against their old enemies the Creeks and played a major part in his victory at Horseshoe Bend in 1814. Celebrated as a triumph at the time, in the long run this campaign against the Creeks may have been a mistake, since it foreclosed any possibility of intertribal collective resistance. Jackson's goodwill, which the Cherokees imagined they had earned, proved short-lived; at the Treaty of Fort Jackson, he extracted land cessions not only from the Creeks but also from his Cherokee allies. (The willingness of Crawford, then Madison's secretary of war, to compensate the Cherokees for these lands initially provoked the long-standing bitterness between him and Jackson.)[43]

The half century following 1785 might be called the golden age of the Cherokee Nation. As defined by 1819, the nation occupied the northwest corner of Georgia and adjacent portions of what are now Alabama, Tennessee, and North Carolina. The people had always practiced agriculture (as their Green Corn Dance testifies), and within their restricted boundaries they increasingly turned to farming as a substitute for hunting and gathering. Trade with the whites flourished, and permanent towns grew up. Decades of evolution in the direction of more centralized and formalized political institutions reached their climax with the adoption of a written constitution for the nation in 1827.[44] In these and other ways, the Cherokees showed an ability to synthesize elements borrowed from Western civilization with their Native culture. A prosperous elite emerged,

43. Grace Woodward, *The Cherokees* (Norman, Okla., 1963), 131–33; Thomas P. Abernathy, *From Frontier to Plantation in Tennessee* (Chapel Hill, 1932), 239.

44. See William McLoughlin, *Cherokee Renascence in the New Republic* (Princeton, 1986); Duane Champagne, *Social Order and Political Change: Constitutional Governments Among the Cherokee, the Choctaw, the Chickasaw, and the Creek* (Stanford, 1992).

among whom some had received a Western education at mission schools and converted to Christianity. There were Cherokees who intermarried with whites, took up cotton cultivation, and bought slaves. By 1835, about 8 percent of Cherokee families owned slaves. Most of the slaveowners were "mixed bloods," as those with some white ancestry were called.[45] A census taken in 1825 counted 13,563 Cherokees, plus 147 white men and 73 white women who had married into the nation, and 1,277 black slaves. While surely an undercount, the census indicated a growing and cohesive population.[46]

As remarkable as the economic and political history of the Cherokee golden age was its intellectual history. Far away from the mission schools, a disabled Cherokee veteran of the Creek War went off to live in Arkansas. Sequoyah knew no English, but he pondered deeply over bits of paper with little marks on them, called the white people's "talking leaves." How could one make leaves that spoke in the Cherokee language? The solution Sequoyah found workable came to him in a flash of insight in 1821. Within six weeks he devised a system of eighty-six characters, each representing a syllable in the Cherokee language. He rushed back to Georgia with the news. Sequoyah's syllabary could be mastered by an adult Cherokee-speaker within a week and caught on quickly. By 1828 special type had been cast so that a newspaper, the *Cherokee Phoenix*, could be published in the nation, with parallel columns in English and Cherokee using the new system. Sequoyah turned his attention to applying his system to the Choctaw language, but he never learned English. Sequoyah remains the only identifiable person in human history to have invented a system for writing his own language without first being literate in another.[47]

The national development of the Cherokees, undertaken at their own initiative, occurred along lines the federal government had approved and professed to encourage. In the Treaty of Holston (1791), the United States had undertaken to assist the Cherokee Nation to "be led to a greater degree of civilization, and to become herdsmen and cultivators, instead of remaining in a state of hunters." In 1806, President Jefferson had urged the Cherokees "to go on learning to cultivate the earth." Jefferson had

45. Theda Perdue, *Slavery and the Evolution of Cherokee Society* (Knoxville, Tenn., 1979), 60.
46. The census did not include those Cherokees who had migrated beyond the Mississippi with government encouragement. Ulrich B. Phillips, *Georgia and State Rights* (Washington, 1902), 71.
47. See Grant Foreman, *Sequoyah* (Norman, Okla., 1938).

welcomed intermarriage, hoping it would lead to the assimilation of the Natives into the dominant culture. ("In time you will be as we are," the third president had told a delegation of chiefs in 1809; "your blood will mix with ours: and will spread with ours over this great land.")[48] Others, seeing the havoc wrought in the New World by European diseases, predicted that the Indians would simply die out. Significantly, Jefferson's vision of absorption and the less benign expectation of extinction shared a common consequence: The lands of the Natives would become available for white settlement.[49] The government had promoted commerce to encourage the tribes to adopt a white way of life, operating its own Indian trading posts, called "factories," between 1796 and 1822. Beginning in 1815, it subsidized Christian missionaries to set up schools (with no one voicing a concern about church-state relations). The emergence of a commercially and politically viable Cherokee Nation with a growing Christian minority, borrowing Western technology as needed, forced the white majority to decide what they really wanted for and from the Native Americans. In the past, whites had justified taking aboriginal lands on the grounds that the Indians were not fully utilizing them. Now, Cherokee economic development was rapidly eliminating that excuse.

The problem—from a white point of view—was that the success of efforts to "civilize the Indians" had not yielded the expected dividend in land sales. On the contrary, the more literate, prosperous, and politically organized the Cherokees made themselves, the more resolved they became to keep what remained of their land and improve it for their own benefit. The council of chiefs, urged by federal commissioners in 1823 to sell out and migrate beyond the Mississippi, replied, "It is the fixed and unalterable determination of this nation never to cede *one foot* more of our land."[50] Where whites had contemplated such possibilities for them as assimilation, eviction, or extinction, the Cherokees envisioned a different future, built in what remained of their ancestral homeland. A delegation to Washington in 1824 presented the tribe's case with straightforward dignity. "The Cherokees are not foreigners, but original inhabitants of America; they now inhabit and stand on the soil of their own territory; and the limits of their territory are defined by the treaties which they have

48. "Address to the Chiefs of the Cherokee" (1806), *TJ: Writings*, 562; Jefferson (1809) quoted in Meinig, *Continental America*, 80.
49. See Anthony Wallace, *Jefferson and the Indians* (Cambridge, Mass., 1999). The Treaty of Holston is quoted in John West, *The Politics of Revelation and Reason: Religion and Civic Life in the New Nation* (Lawrence, Kans., 1980), 182.
50. Walter Lowrie and Walter Franklin, eds., *American State Papers: Indian Affairs* (Washington, 1834), class 2, vol. II, 469.

made with the Government of the United States."[51] The Monroe administration accorded the delegation diplomatic courtesy, provoking protest from racists.[52]

There was a third party to the debate over the Cherokee lands: the state of Georgia, which had both Creek and Cherokee territory within her boundaries. Georgia's political leaders had concentrated first on pushing out the Creeks; now, they turned against the Cherokees. Governor George Troup, who had been a Crawfordite in 1824, supported state internal improvements and public education. He could logically have rallied to support John Quincy Adams had that upright New Englander winked at defrauding the Creeks. But when President Adams resisted Georgia's high-handed methods of dispossession, Troup decided to capitalize on the Indian Removal issue, issuing inflammatory denunciations of Adams. Troup's demagogic tactics worked: He not only occupied all the Creek lands but also gained reelection as governor in 1825. In 1827, John Forsyth, equally committed to Indian Removal, succeeded Troup as governor and delivered a unanimous Georgia popular vote to Jackson for president in 1828.[53]

In December 1828, with Jackson safely elected, the Georgia state legislature proceeded against the Cherokees, confident that the incoming administration would not interfere. The legislature unilaterally declared that starting in June 1830, state laws would extend over the Cherokee Nation, notwithstanding the federal treaties of 1785 and subsequent years. To justify its presumptuous action, the legislature asserted that the United States could never have meant to accord autonomy to "barbarous and savage tribes," and that the Indians were only Georgia's "tenants at will."[54] When the Cherokees discovered gold on their lands in the spring of 1829 and outsiders found out about it, a horde of impatient whites, unwilling to wait even until June 1, 1830, rushed in and began prospecting. What should have been an economic advantage to the Cherokee Nation turned into a political liability, as violent clashes between Cherokees and intruders ensued. At the request of Governor Forsyth, Secretary of War Eaton

51. Ibid., 474.
52. Phillips, *Georgia and State Rights*, 70.
53. Anthony Carey, *Parties, Slavery, and the Union in Antebellum Georgia* (Athens, Ga., 1997), 20–23.
54. Phillips, *Georgia and State Rights*, 71–72. On the origins of this claim, see Stuart Banner, *How the Indians Lost Their Land* (Cambridge, Mass., 2005), 205–6; Lindsay Robertson, *Conquest by Law: How the Discovery of America Dispossessed Indigenous Peoples of Their Lands* (Oxford, 2005), 95–116.

withdrew federal troops from the area and after June 1829 allowed the Georgia Guard to assume responsibility for law and order. The aggressiveness of the Georgia political establishment, compounded by outside pressure on the Cherokee gold fields, lent urgency to the issue of Indian Removal when Jackson's first Congress assembled in December 1829.[55]

The Indian Removal Bill constituted the highest priority in the new president's legislative agenda. Both the passage of the law and its subsequent enforcement engaged Jackson's attention to the fullest. "There was no measure, in the whole course of his administration, of which he was more exclusively the author than this," commented Martin Van Buren (who would know).[56] Indian Removal held the place in Jackson's vision that internal improvements occupied in that of John Quincy Adams: the key to national development. Jackson's concerns were geopolitical as well as economic. In his eyes, the tribes not only occupied rich land, they threatened American sovereignty as the British and Spanish had done and, like the free black maroon communities of Florida, challenged white supremacy. Jackson shared the attitude of the Georgians toward the original inhabitants. To him, the practice of dealing with Indian tribes through treaties was "an absurdity"; the government should simply impose its will on them.[57] Nevertheless, the administration's Indian Removal Bill called for another round of treaty-making, intended to secure the complete removal of the Native Americans to west of the Mississippi River.

This grandiose program had been discussed ever since the early days of the Monroe administration. Jackson had commended it; the president had responded with characteristic ambiguity. Monroe seemed to endorse both emigration and assimilation but did not apply pressure on the Native Americans to adopt either. Instead, he allowed Secretary of War Calhoun to continue supporting education and economic progress within existing tribal domains.[58] In the succeeding administration, both President Adams and his secretary of war, James Barbour, were convinced that assimilation and U.S. citizenship represented the only just long-term policy toward the Indians. But having tried in vain to defend the legal rights of the

55. McLoughlin, *Cherokee Renascence*, 430–33; Tim Garrison, *The Legal Ideology of Removal* (Athens, Ga., 2002), 103–14, 120–21.
56. *Autobiography of Martin Van Buren*, ed. John Fitzpatrick (Washington, 1920), 295.
57. AJ to James Monroe, March 4, 1817, *Papers of Andrew Jackson*, IV, 93–98. Jackson relied on the legal concept of "eminent domain"; see Banner, *How the Indians Lost Their Land*, 202–4.
58. See Thomas Clark and John Guice, *Frontiers in Conflict* (Albuquerque, N.M., 1989), 238–40; James P. Ronda, "Race, Geography, and the Invention of Indian Territory," *JER* 19 (1999): 739–55.

Creeks against Georgia, the two left office gloomy about the prospects of the Native Americans. As Barbour put it in 1826, "They see that our professions are insincere, that our promises are broken, that the happiness of the Indian is a cheap sacrifice to the acquisition of new lands." By the end of his term, Adams had reluctantly concluded that removal probably constituted the only alternative to a lawless destruction of the tribes and the death or subjugation of their members at the hands of the states. He came to view the dispossession of the native inhabitants by the whites as an inevitable tragedy, one that constituted "a perpetual harrow upon my feelings." But he still wanted the process to respect law and order and federal supremacy.[59]

Jackson's State of the Union message claimed that Indian Removal would be "voluntary." In reality, everyone knew that no stone would be left unturned to extract such "voluntary" migrations. Jackson was personally well experienced in the techniques of bribery, intimidation, and fraud through which treaties were imposed on reluctant peoples, having been active in securing a series of land cessions by the Civilized Tribes since 1816. To make it clear what he really meant, the president stated that the federal government would not protect the Indians in their present locations whenever states extended jurisdiction over them. This announcement was a clear departure from policy under Adams. Jackson told the Native Americans "to emigrate beyond the Mississippi or submit to the laws of those States." Submission to the laws of Georgia for a Creek or Cherokee meant not being able to vote, sue, own property, testify against a white person, or obtain credit. For Sharp Knife (as the Indians called Jackson) to pretend that such submission represented a viable option offering the Natives the chance to "become merged in the mass of our population," was disingenuous, to say the least. ("I was satisfied that the Indians could not possibly live under the laws of the state," Jackson admitted privately.) In fact, when an earlier federal treaty (1819) for a Cherokee land cession had guaranteed citizenship and property rights to those Natives who chose to remain, Georgia had refused to accept the stipulations.[60]

The president's Indian Removal Bill provoked a fierce debate, producing alignments that proved remarkably durable in defining support and

59. Lynn Parsons, "'A perpetual Harrow upon my Feelings': John Quincy Adams and the American Indian," *New England Quarterly* 46 (Sept. 1973), 339–79; quotation from Barbour on p. 358.

60. Jackson, "First Annual Message," *Presidential Messages*, II, 458–59; AJ to John Pitchlynn, Aug. 5, 1830, *Correspondence of AJ*, IV, 169; Phillips, *Georgia and State Rights*, 69.

opposition to the Jackson administration. Since the Native Americans themselves were outside the political community, they had to rely on white sympathizers in Congress and society at large. Beyond the doors of Congress, the most conspicuous groups involved in the movement against Removal consisted of Protestant clergy and women. At the head of the movement stood Jeremiah Evarts, corresponding secretary of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), an interdenominational organization sponsoring most of the Christian missionaries to the Indians. The attitude of the missionaries must be characterized carefully if we are to understand their role. Passionately devoted to the propagation of Protestant Christianity and Western civilization, they took scarcely any interest in Native culture. Yet at the same time they believed implicitly in the rationality, moral responsibility, and equal human worth of their Indian hosts. Proud of the Cherokee Christian minority and supportive of the tribe's economic development, the missionaries welcomed Sequoyah's accomplishments. Dispossession and deportation of the Indians they condemned as a cruel betrayal. Evarts lobbied strenuously, organized protest meetings and petitions, and wrote powerful tracts defending aboriginal rights, using the pseudonym "William Penn." The Penn essays were reprinted in over a hundred newspapers and read, according to a contemporary estimate, by half a million people.[61]

Catharine Beecher, the redoubtable daughter of Lyman Beecher and sister of Harriet Beecher Stowe, led the women's opposition to Removal. Working anonymously, she organized a drive to deluge Congress with petitions from women opposing Removal. "Women are protected from the blinding influence of party spirit," argued her circular letter. Not being voters, but defenders of morality, charity, and family values, women were free to "*feel* for the distressed." A typical petition, the one from Hallowell, Maine, denounced Removal as undercutting efforts to "enlighten and christianize" the Indians. "We are unwilling that the church, the schools, and the domestic altar should be thrown down before the avaricious god of power."[62] Through language such as this, Beecher and her fellow petitioners shrewdly avoided a head-on challenge to male supremacy and sought to wrap their protest in the protective nineteenth-century doctrine

61. Jeremiah Evarts, *Cherokee Removal*, ed. Francis Prucha (Knoxville, Tenn., 1981); John Andrew, *Jeremiah Evarts* (Athens, Ga., 1992); Michael Coleman, *Presbyterian Missionary Attitudes Toward American Indians* (Jackson, Miss., 1985) 139–42, 177.

62. Beecher is quoted in Mary Hershberger, "Mobilizing Women, Anticipating Abolition: The Struggle Against Indian Removal in the 1830s," *JAH* 86 (1999): 26; the petition is quoted in John West, *The Politics of Revelation and Reason* (Lawrence, Kans., 1996), 185.

of "separate spheres" for women and men. Even so, Democratic politicians like Senator Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri mocked them and their male associates.[63] Unprecedented as a mobilization of women's opinion on a public issue, Catharine Beecher's petition drive against Removal set a pattern that would be followed by the antislavery movement in years to come.

Both female and male opponents of Removal made use of the network of evangelical colleges and organizations as well as the communications system to mobilize their followers. This time the moral reformers mounted a much bigger campaign than they had for sabbatarianism. Their activities and support were not confined to New England neo-Puritan strongholds; the largest of the women's petitions, bearing 670 signatures, came from Pittsburgh. Martin Van Buren felt startled when his own niece denounced Indian Removal to his face and told him she hoped he and Jackson would lose the election of 1832.[64] A popular play called *Metamora*, based on King Philip's War of 1675–76, opened in New York City to foster and exploit white sympathy for the Indians. America's leading actor, Edwin Forrest, played the title role of the Wampanoag sachem who fought courageously against encroaching settlers. When the play went on tour to Augusta, Georgia, a boycott forced its closure.[65] But even within the South courageous opponents of Removal spoke up, like the lawyer Robert Campbell of Savannah, who warned his fellow Georgians that they would bring "enduring shame" on their state. "In modern times in civilized countries there is no instance of expelling the members of a whole nation from their homes or driving an entire population from its native country," he declared.[66]

Within Congress, the most eloquent critic of Jackson's Removal Bill was Senator Theodore Frelinghuysen of New Jersey, a prominent supporter of the ABCFM and other benevolent associations like the American Temperance Union and the American Bible Society. Frelinghuysen proposed an amendment to the bill that would have reaffirmed the government's obligation to protect the tribes in their existing locations unless and until they signed new treaties; this would have continued the policy of Monroe and Adams. On behalf of this amendment he spoke for six hours over a period of three days. One after another, the senator demolished the arguments offered to justify unilateral expropriation, beginning with the claim that the needs of white society justified taking the Natives' lands. He condemned the "high-handed" conduct of Georgia in defying the Treaty of Hopewell. Frelinghuysen did not shrink from using the U.S. Army to protect the Cherokees against Georgia's intrusion if necessary. "Let such decided policy go forth in the majesty of our laws now, and sir, Georgia will yield. She will never encounter the responsibilities or the horrors of civil war. But if she should, no stains of blood will be on our skirts; on herself the guilt will abide forever." This unflinching high principle won Frelinghuysen the nickname he bore ever after: "the Christian statesman."[67]

The grassroots protest movement organized by Evarts and Beecher succeeded in defining Removal as a moral issue. It served to awaken anti-Jackson politicians less morally committed than Frelinghuysen to their opportunity to resist the president. Henry Clay, who had expressed precious little sympathy for the Indians earlier in his career, now decided to rally to their side.[68] With the opposition invoking moral principle, the administration felt impelled to find philanthropic arguments of its own. The Indians might be better off in the West, farther away from the alcohol and contagious diseases of the whites. There, the administration claimed, the Indians could become "civilized" in peace. One of the administration spokesmen espousing this argument was Isaac McCoy, a former Baptist missionary who was now a government surveyor of Indian lands. The Baptist missionary board and denominational organ repudiated McCoy's statements.[69] Many advocates of Removal, particularly southerners, scorned to employ the philanthropic argument. "I do not believe that this removal will accelerate the civilization of the tribes," Georgia's John Forsyth, now a senator, told his colleagues. "You might as reasonably expect that wild animals, incapable of being tamed in a park, would be domesticated by turning them loose in the forest." The administration's effort to arouse popular support for Removal on a philanthropic basis quickly fizzled.[70]

63. *Register of Debates*, 21st Cong., 1st sess. (Feb. 2, 1830), 108–9.
64. Randolph Roth, *The Democratic Dilemma: Religion, Reform, and the Social Order* (Cambridge, Eng., 1987), 164–68; Van Buren, *Autobiography*, 293.
65. Jill Lepore, *The Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity* (New York, 1998), 191–226.
66. Robert Campbell, "From *The Georgian*," *Niles' Weekly Register*, Aug. 30, 1828, 14.
67. Theodore Frelinghuysen, "The Cherokee Lands," *Register of Debates*, 21st Cong., 1st sess. (April 6, 1830), 309–20.
68. Henry Clay to Jeremiah Evarts, Aug. 23, 1830, *Papers of Henry Clay*, ed. Robert Seager (Lexington, Ky., 1984), VIII, 255.
69. Hershberger, "Mobilizing Women," 29–30.
70. *Register of Debates*, 21st Cong., 1st sess. (April 13, 1830), 327; Herman Viola, *Thomas L. McKenny* (Chicago, 1974), 221–22.

To mobilize support in Congress, the administration relied less on persuasive argument than on party loyalty, though this was still a novel concept in a country not long removed from the Era of Good Feelings. While complaining that their opponents were motivated primarily by partisanship, administration leaders made no secret of their own determination to make support for Removal a test of fealty to the president. Despite Frelinghuysen's oratory, the Jacksonian majority in the Senate passed the Removal Bill by a party-line vote, 28 to 19. In the House it proved a different story. Representatives elected as Jackson supporters from districts with many Quaker, Congregationalist, or New School Presbyterian voters found themselves in an awkward crossfire. The difficulty northern congressmen had in swallowing the betrayal of treaty obligations was compounded by their fear for the future of internal improvements. Indian Removal would be expensive, and Jackson said he wanted to retire the national debt. Even if the government avoided frontier wars, the money spent to buy out the tribes, round up their members, and transport them hundreds of miles would not be available for internal improvements. Beset by these concerns, northern Jacksonian congressmen defected in large numbers. The Indian Removal Bill only barely passed the House, 102 to 97, with 24 Jacksonians voting no and 12 others not voting. On some of the preliminary tests of strength the votes had been even closer, Speaker Andrew Stevenson having to break ties three times. At the last minute the administration managed to press three wavering Pennsylvania Democrats back into the party line, saving the bill. The vote had a pronounced sectional aspect: the slave states voted 61 to 15 for Removal; the free states opposed it, 41 to 82. Without the three-fifths clause jacking up the power of the slaveholding interest, Indian Removal would not have passed. Yet sectionalism did not determine positions so much as political loyalties and moral values. The trans-Appalachian West did not by any means display solid support for the bill; its congressmen voted 23 in favor, 17 opposed. Those opposed included a West Tennessee frontiersman named Davy Crockett, who characterized the bill as "oppression with a vengeance." Like most critics of Indian Removal, Crockett went on to become a permanent opponent of Jackson. The president signed Indian Removal into law on May 28, 1830.[71]

Jackson wasted no time implementing his favorite measure. While the nation's attention was focused on Georgia and Cherokees, he sent his

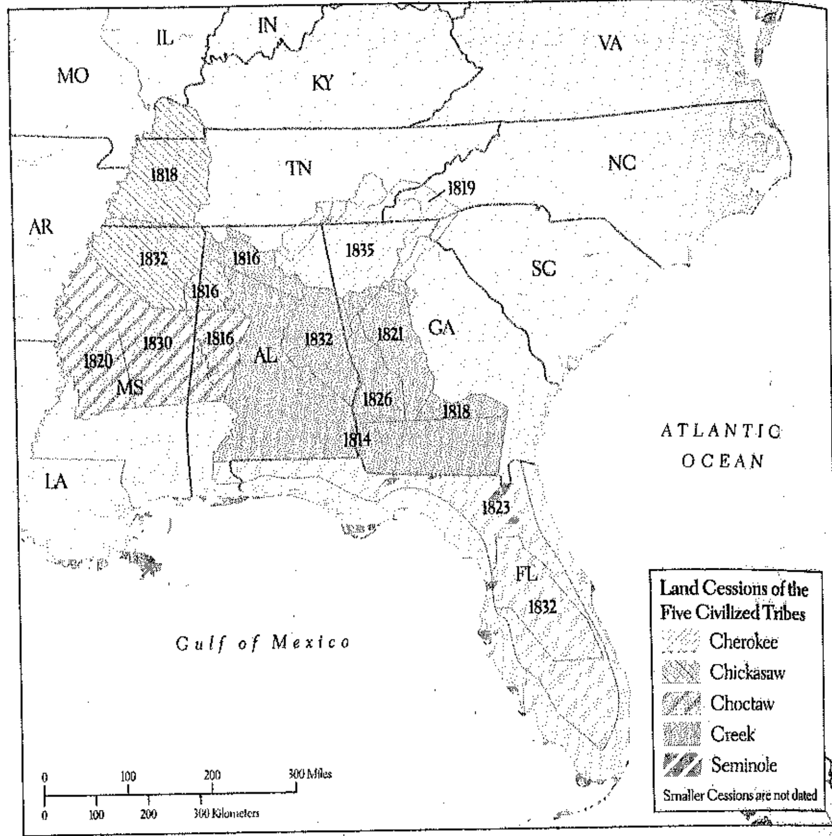
71. Tabulations of party voting on the bill vary slightly because party designations were not clear in every case. Crockett's statement against Indian Removal was printed in *Speeches on the Passage of the Bill for the Removal of the Indians*, ed. Jeremiah Evarts (Boston, 1830), 251–53.

trusted friend John Coffee and Secretary of War Eaton to Mississippi to obtain the removal of the Choctaws. The efforts they commenced secured the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek on September 27, 1830, against the wishes of the majority of the tribe, by excluding the Indians' white counselors from the negotiations and then bribing selected tribal leaders. While some Choctaws in the forests of eastern Mississippi contrived to elude the government's attention until 1918 (!), the majority were compelled to move to Oklahoma. The first large party of Choctaws crossed the Mississippi River during the severe winter of 1831–32, the French observer Tocqueville noting the hardships of their passage.[72]

While some of the whites placed in charge of the migration, particularly the career army officers, were honest and conscientious, others were political appointees out to get rich quick. The financial aspect of this first dispossession embarrassed the administration, for it cost over $5 million to expel the Choctaws—$2 million more than Jackson had claimed would suffice to deport *all* the tribes east of the Mississippi. The high cost reflected mismanagement and corruption, while the migrants themselves were frequently victims of parsimony.[73]

Meanwhile, Jackson had been applying pressure to the rest of the tribes. Recognizing the missionaries as key adversaries, he withdrew federal funding from mission schools. The administration stopped making the promised annuity payments to the Cherokee Nation and put the money into escrow until the tribe should remove.[74] Existing treaties should have remained in force unless and until tribes consented to alter them, and even the Indian Removal Act as passed did not state otherwise.[75] But the president, far from defending existing U.S. treaty obligations, proved only too willing to turn over federal authority in the tribal lands to the states whenever they claimed it. With his encouragement, Alabama and Mississippi followed Georgia's example and extended state jurisdiction over their own Native populations. And in February 1831, Jackson notified the Senate that he would no longer enforce the Indian Intercourse Act of 1802, a law protecting Indian lands against intruders. Thomas McKenney, the knowledgeable superintendent of Indian affairs,

72. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, ed. Phillips Bradley (New York, 1945), I, 340.
73. See Arthur DeRosier Jr., *The Removal of the Choctaw Indians* (Knoxville, Tenn., 1970), 100–147; Ronald Satz, *American Indian Policy in the Jacksonian Era* (Lincoln, Neb., 1975), 64–96; Cole, *Presidency of Andrew Jackson*, 109–12.
74. John Andrew, *Jeremiah Evarts*, 232–33; McLoughlin, *Cherokee Renascence*, 438.
75. "Indian Removal Act," *Documents of United States Indian Policy*, ed. Francis Prucha (Lincoln, Neb., 2000), 52–53.



Adapted from Thomas Dionysius Clark and John D.W. Guice, *Frontiers in Conflict: The Old Southwest, 1975–1830* (University of New Mexico Press, 1989).

was a Calhoun protégé and holdover from the Monroe and Adams administrations who had become convinced that Removal was in the tribes' best interests. But when he tried to carry out the policy with honesty and some consideration for Native rights, an impatient Jackson dismissed him in August, 1830.[76]

The Cherokees turned to the federal courts for protection. Georgia was clearly defying their rights as guaranteed by federal treaty, which according to the Constitution should be "the supreme law of the land." Hiring two of the best constitutional lawyers in the country, John Sergeant and

76. Richard Latner, *The Presidency of Andrew Jackson* (Athens, Ga., 1979), 91.

William Wirt (who had been attorney general under Monroe and Adams), the tribe brought a suit in the United States Supreme Court, *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia*, to restrain the state from extending its authority over them. In March 1831, the justices voted 4 to 2 to sidestep the issue. Speaking for the majority, Chief Justice Marshall made clear his sympathy for the Indians' case, but he held that the Cherokees constituted a "domestic dependent nation" and did not satisfy the definition of a sovereign "state" entitled to bring a suit over which the Supreme Court would have original jurisdiction.[77] The expression "domestic dependent nation" was destined to influence subsequent federal law on Indian tribes, but its first use enabled the Court to avoid an unwanted confrontation with state power and the executive branch. The Court may have been influenced by Jackson's announcement the month before that he would not protect the Choctaws against the state of Mississippi in an analogous situation. Georgia served notice that it had extended its jurisdiction by trying and convicting in state court an Indian named Corn Tassel of the murder of another Indian in the Cherokee Nation. When the Supreme Court called for arguments on appeal, the state ignored the writ and executed the prisoner. Meanwhile, extreme state-righters introduced into Congress a bill to repeal section 25 of the Judiciary Act of 1789, the law authorizing the Supreme Court to hear appeals from state courts. Although defeated, the bill seems to have intimidated the Court, for it took no action on the contumacious behavior of the Georgia authorities.[78]

A year later the Cherokee-Georgia crisis confronted the Supreme Court with another case, this time one the justices felt they had to address. Since Christian missionaries were among the most effective opponents of Removal, Governor George Gilmer of Georgia decided in January 1831 to expel them from the Cherokee lands.[79] Two of the missionaries, Samuel Worcester and Elizur Butler, refused to leave and were sentenced to four years at hard labor. Subjected to brutal treatment intended to crack their will to resist, while simultaneously offered pardons if they would acknowledge Georgia's legal authority, the men courageously refused and appealed their convictions to the U.S. Supreme Court. The same lawyers who had appeared for the Cherokee Nation took their case, and by now both were leading political adversaries of Jackson, for in 1832 John Sergeant was vice-presidential

77. *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia*, 30 U.S. (5 Peters) 1–80 (1831).
78. Cole, *Presidency of Jackson*, 111.
79. Annie Heloise Abel, *History of Events Resulting in Indian Consolidation West of the Mississippi River* (Washington, 1908), 397.

candidate of the National Republicans and William Wirt presidential candidate of the Antimasonic Party. Georgia refused to acknowledge that the U.S. Supreme Court had jurisdiction. The state sent surveyors into the Cherokee Nation to prepare its lands for expropriation and tried to intimidate the missionaries' wives and single white female schoolteachers into leaving. But these Christian women were made of stern stuff; they stuck to their posts and urged their men to continue defiance of the state.[80]

In March 1832, when the two missionaries had endured eight months' imprisonment, John Marshall delivered the opinion of the Court: The Cherokee Nation was protected by federal treaty within its own territory, "in which the law of Georgia can have no right to enter but with the assent of the Cherokees." Georgia's argument that the state possessed sovereignty over Indian lands by "right of discovery," inherited from the British Crown (which the state had not deigned to present in person), was rejected. The act of Georgia under which the missionaries had been convicted and imprisoned was declared "void, as being repugnant to the constitution, treaties, and laws of the United States." The decision represented the legal vindication of all the Cherokees had maintained.[81] Embarrassingly for Jackson, the nationalist former postmaster general John McLean, whom he had recently appointed to the Court, wrote a concurrence. The lone dissenter was Jackson's other appointee, Henry Baldwin, who filed no opinion. The new justice feared doing so would only encourage Georgia to defy the Court, whose authority he respected even when he disagreed with it.[82] Everyone knew that enforcing the decision would not be easy.

Seeking the fundamental impulse behind Jacksonian Democracy, historians have variously pointed to free enterprise, manhood suffrage, the labor movement, and resistance to the market economy. But in its origins, Jacksonian Democracy (which contemporaries understood as a synonym for Jackson's Democratic Party) was not primarily about any of these, though it came to intersect with all of them in due course. In the

80. Ann O. Worcester to David Greene, Dec. 7, 1831, and May 17, 1832, and other ms. correspondence in Houghton Library, Harvard Univ., reproduced on the website *Women and Social Movements in the United States*, ed. Kathryn Sklar and Thomas Dublin.

81. *Worcester v. Georgia*, 31 U.S. (6 Peters) 515–97 (1832). Dealing with the "right of discovery" posed a serious problem for Marshall because of an earlier decision of his that accepted it, *Johnson v. M'Intosh* (1823). For legal analyses see Banner, *How the Indians Lost Their Land*, esp. 220–21; and Robertson, *Conquest by Law*, esp. 133–35.

82. Lindsay Robertson, "Justice Henry Baldwin's 'Lost Opinion' in *Worcester v. Georgia*," *Journal of Supreme Court History* 23 (1999): 50–75.

first place it was about the extension of white supremacy across the North American continent. By his policy of Indian Removal, Jackson confirmed his support in the cotton states outside South Carolina and fixed the character of his political party. Indian policy, not banking or the tariff, was the number one issue in the national press during the early years of Jackson's presidency. But in his enthusiasm for Indian Removal, Jackson raised up an angry reaction, not only among evangelical Christians but also from constitutional nationalists, provoking them into an alliance with his political opponents that would shape party alignments for a generation. Claiming to be the champion of democracy, Jackson provoked opposition from the strongest nationwide democratic protest movement the country had yet witnessed. And a statistical analysis of congressional behavior has found that, as the second party system took shape, voting on Indian affairs proved to be the most consistent predictor of partisan affiliation.[83]

IV

The Jacksonian leadership pushed Indian Removal through the House of Representatives with unseemly haste. On May 27, the day after the House voted, the president vetoed a major internal improvements measure, the Maysville Road Bill. The Maysville Road through Lexington, Kentucky, had been intended as a link in a nationwide transportation network, connecting the National Road to the north with the Natchez Trace to the south and the Ohio with the Tennessee river systems. Robert Hemphill of Pennsylvania, a Jackson supporter and proponent of internal improvements, having narrowly failed to win passage of a bill authorizing the entire road, had secured the Maysville segment as a more modest but promising start. Many such Jacksonian congressmen felt outraged that the president had pressured them to back Indian Removal, only to betray their interest in internal improvements. Some demanded a reconsideration of Indian Removal but found that the bill had reached the president's desk and was beyond their recall. Now the significance of the deadline for passing Indian Removal became clear: The president could hold back his veto of the Maysville Road only ten days, and the White House realized that Indian Removal would lose if the veto message arrived on Capitol Hill before the vote.[84]

83. Fred S. Rolater, "The American Indian and the Origin of the Second American Party System," *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 76 (1993): 180–201.

84. See Pamela Baker, "The Washington National Road Bill," *JER* 22 (2002): 438–64; Latner, *Presidency of Jackson*, 94, 102.

Van Buren had urged the veto on the president. The Sly Fox of Kinderhook figured out that a stand against federal internal improvements would play well with state-rights Radicals in the South, thereby preventing Crawford's old constituency from bolting to Calhoun. Furthermore, since New York already enjoyed the benefit of the Erie Canal, built with its own money, Van Buren's home state stood to gain little from federally funded internal improvements elsewhere. Not that Jackson needed much persuasion: He was only too happy to veto a road that would pass through Henry Clay's hometown. "I had the most amusing scenes in my endeavors to prevent him from avowing his intentions before the bill passed the two houses," Van Buren confided to Francis Blair.[85] Working in secrecy, Jackson and Van Buren composed a veto message with the aid of James Knox Polk, a Tennessee Democrat, one of the few western congressmen suspicious of federal internal improvements.

The Maysville Veto Message attracted wide attention and remains a key document for understanding the subtleties of the Jacksonian attitude toward the transportation revolution. The message admitted that federal funding for national schemes of internal improvement had long been practiced, but also pointed out that constitutional doubt had never been altogether overcome and concluded that it would be safer to authorize it by a constitutional amendment. Pending the adoption of such an amendment, however, the president claimed to apply the test of whether the proposal was "general, not local, national, not State," in character. Ignoring the fact that the Maysville Road would be a segment of an interstate highway system, Jackson declared that it failed this test. But while he criticized the Maysville Road for being insufficiently national, Jackson did not wish to be misunderstood as favoring federal funding for a more truly national transportation system. Instead, he warned that expenditures on internal improvements might jeopardize his goal of retiring the national debt—or, alternatively, require heavier taxes. Interestingly, Jackson did not set his face against economic development or the expansion of commerce in general. Far from decrying the effects of the transportation revolution, Jackson fully conceded the popularity and desirability of internal improvements. "I do not suppose there is an intelligent citizen who does not wish to see them flourish," he assured his countrymen. But he felt that these projects were better left to private enterprise and the states. Analysis of the Maysville Veto Message and the

85. Quoted in Edward Channing, *History of the United States* (New York, 1921), V, 397.

evidence of Jackson's economic policies in general do not sustain the claim made by some historians that he expressed resistance to market capitalism.[86]

Politically, the Maysville Message was a masterstroke. Sure enough, Old Republicans welcomed the veto. "It fell upon the ears like the music of other days," said John Randolph of Roanoke.[87] Yet it managed to avoid alienating the frontier. To their surprise, western Jacksonian congressmen who had voted in favor of the road, such as Thomas Hart Benton and Kentucky's Richard Mentor Johnson, found the Old Hero's popularity with their constituents undiminished. The Maysville Veto Message had been crafted to endorse what we would call the transportation revolution while condemning what we would call big government. Though the followers of Henry Clay declared this a contradiction in terms, there were plenty of westerners willing to take Old Hickory's word for it that they could have both economic opportunity and republican simplicity. The message tended to firm up Jackson's strength with his supporters while still further estranging his opponents. This comported well with Van Buren's long-term objective, which (as he had explained to Thomas Ritchie in 1827) was to harden party lines.[88]

Jackson vetoed several other internal improvements bills, in two cases exercising his "pocket veto" power over legislation passed in the last ten days of a congressional session. The pocket veto seemed high-handed to contemporaries; among Jackson's predecessors, only Madison had used it.[89] Yet the president signed many other bills for aid to transportation and ended up spending twice as much money on internal improvements as all his predecessors combined, even when adjusted for inflation. Some of the projects he approved were built in territories rather than states, which made them constitutionally safer. Jackson's administration showed more sympathy for improving natural waterways (used by cotton producers) than for canals (more often used by grain producers). Mixed public-private corporations in which the federal government owned some of the stock, a favorite method of subsidy during the Monroe and Adams administrations, found no favor under Jackson. On the other hand, the

86. "Veto Message" (May 27, 1830), *Presidential Messages*, II, 483–93. Jackson and his party are interpreted as a popular movement opposed to market capitalism in Sellers, *Market Revolution*. For an interpretation better grounded in evidence, see John Lauritz Larson, *Internal Improvement* (Chapel Hill, 2001).
87. Quoted in Sellers, *Market Revolution*, 316.
88. Martin Van Buren to Thomas Ritchie, Jan. 13, 1827, discussed above on 279–80.
89. U.S. Senate Library, *Presidential Vetoes* (Washington, 1979), 5.

National, or Cumberland, Road, which had received appropriations of $1,668,000 from previous administrations, received $3,728,000 under Jackson's—perhaps because it facilitated the settlement of the Old Northwest by Butternuts from the Upland South who voted Democratic. A Jacksonian Congress preserved state-rights principles by turning the completed sections of the National Road over to the states through which it passed.[90]

Jackson was fortunate that his time in office coincided with a wave of prosperity. Government revenues from tariffs and land sales soared, which made money available for both internal improvements and Indian Removal, even while retiring the national debt. The president and his party managed to reap the political benefits of a reputation for thrift and constitutional probity while at the same time passing "pork-barrel" legislation on a scale unprecedented. Both contemporaries and historians have noted the inconsistency (or, more charitably, the ambiguity) in Jackson's policy on internal improvements. Adams had signed all bills for internal improvements in order to affirm their constitutionality and build support for economic development. Jackson, however, contrived to leave himself free to approve whatever projects he decided were "national" and veto those he decided were "local," without any clear guidelines for distinguishing between them.[91] The one unambiguous consequence of the Maysville Road Veto was the doom of any comprehensive national transportation program. In the absence of such an overall plan, the Jackson administration felt free to distribute its favors where they would do the most political good. What Van Buren had learned fighting Clinton in New York, about how to posture as a friend of democracy while maintaining a tightly knit party machine and remaining completely flexible on economic issues, he put to use in Washington.

The internal improvements Jackson favored with federal appropriations included seacoast projects that might be called "external improvements": dredging harbors and building lighthouses. Far from being suspicious of markets, the president sought to facilitate international commerce and promote the overseas marketing of American crops. One of the early achievements of his administration was the restoration of trade with the British West Indies. Adams, with his New England Federalist background, had to avoid any appearance of softness in dealing with

90. Cole, *Presidency of Jackson*, 67; Carlton Jackson, "The Internal Improvement Vetoes of Andrew Jackson," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 25 (1966): 261–80, statistics on 266.
91. As explained in Daniel Feller, *The Public Lands in Jacksonian Politics* (Madison, Wisc., 1984), 136–42.

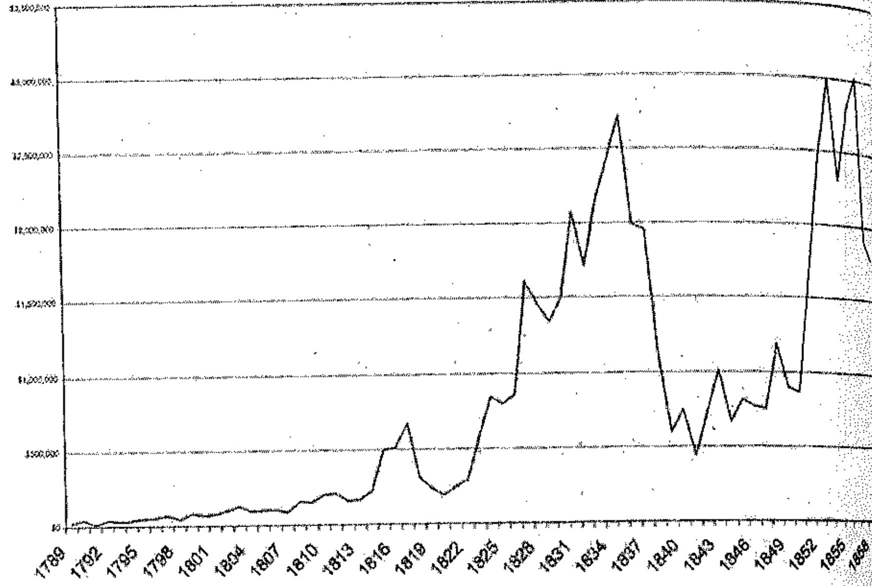
Britain. Jackson, by contrast, could afford to be conciliatory. In pursuit of commercial benefits, America's most famous Anglophobe courted British opinion: "Everything in the history of the two nations is calculated to inspire sentiments of mutual respect," he now declared, with some exaggeration.[92] Advised by Secretary of State Van Buren and the Baltimore merchant-senator, Samuel Smith, Jackson and his emissary in London, the former Federalist Louis McLane, worked out a compromise accommodation that opened Canada and the British West Indies to U.S. goods. Democratic Republicans, including Old Republicans like Thomas Ritchie and South Carolina nullifiers like Robert Hayne, rejoiced at the commercial opportunities opened to American exports. National Republicans complained that Jackson had given up on trying to gain access to the West Indian carrying trade and noted that Adams could have had the same agreement if he had been willing to accept it. Indeed, the agreement partially sacrificed the interests of Yankee shipowners to those of agricultural exporters. The administration also signed a treaty obtaining more commercial advantages in the British Isles themselves. Of course, by far the most important of American export staples was cotton, and Britain was by far the best customer for American cotton.[93] When Britain took over the Falkland Islands off the coast of Argentina in 1833, the Jackson administration winked and did not allow this violation of the Monroe Doctrine to disturb cordial commercial relations.

On aspects of Anglo-American relations touching slavery, however, Jackson remained implacable. He refused to discuss any international cooperation to suppress the Atlantic slave trade, though all other maritime powers approved of it. He made no effort to accommodate British protests against the treatment of black West Indian sailors in southern ports. Indeed, whereas Monroe's attorney general, William Wirt, had found the preventive detention of black seamen unconstitutional, Jackson's attorney general, Berrien, declared it a constitutionally permissible exercise of state police power.[94]

The Jackson administration sought out new markets in Russia, East Asia, and the Middle East for U.S. cotton, tobacco, and grain; it pursued

92. Jackson, "First Annual Message," 443. Although contained in a message to Congress, these words were written with an overseas audience in mind.
93. See John Belohlavek, *"Let the Eagle Soar": The Foreign Policy of Andrew Jackson* (Lincoln, Neb., 1985), 53–60.
94. Hugh Soulsby, *The Right of Search and the Slave Trade* (Baltimore, 1933), 41–46; Philip Hamer, "Great Britain, the United States, and the Negro Seamen Acts," *Journal of Southern History* 1 (1935): 3–28.

Federal Government Expenses for Internal Improvements, 1789–1858



This graph shows how much the federal government spent each year on transportation infrastructure, such as canals, roads, dredging of rivers and harbors, and lighthouses. It indicates a flurry of activity right after the War of 1812, then a marked increase during John Quincy Adams's administration, which soared even higher during the administrations of Jackson and Van Buren until the Panic of 1837 curtailed government revenues and consequently expenses.

Graph prepared by Julia Ott from U.S. Congress, *Statement of appropriations and Expenditures . . . Public works* (Washington, 1882), 47th Congress, 1st session, Senate Executive Documents, vol. 7, no. 196 (U.S. Serial Set number 1992). Data here tabulated do not include expenses for public buildings, forts, armories, arsenals, or mints.

the same objective with less success in Latin America. The navy was expanded, the better to protect American commerce. Responding to the killing of two American merchant sailors by a gang of thieves on Sumatra, Jackson dispatched the USS *Potomac* to the scene with 260 marines. In February 1832, Captain John Downes destroyed the Sumatran town of Quallah Batoo and killed over two hundred of its people, though he did not find the actual perpetrators of the crime. Many critics in the United States felt this an overreaction. In accordance with the wishes of the whaling industry, the administration also authorized the ambitious naval expedition commanded by Charles Wilkes that explored the South Pacific and Antarctic, although because of various delays the flotilla did not set sail until Jackson's successor, Van Buren, had come into office.[95]

Jackson did not hesitate to pursue belligerent foreign policies on behalf of American commercial interests, even against major powers. His envoys gained over $7 million for American merchants in settlements of spoliation claims, mostly against France, dating back to the Napoleonic Wars. When the French Chamber of Deputies in the young July Monarchy balked at paying such a large bill, Jackson raged and threatened to license privateers to prey upon French shipping. Ex-president John Quincy Adams patriotically backed military preparations, but most of Jackson's opponents were appalled. The French put their Caribbean fleet on a wartime basis and demanded that Jackson apologize, an unlikely occurrence. At the last minute (December 1835) the president's advisors found a face-saving formula in which Old Hickory stated that he had not intended "to menace or insult the Government of France." Satisfied, Louis Philippe's ministry authorized payment. Whether tough or gentle, Jackson's foreign policy was usually dictated by commercial interests, especially those of commercial agriculture—which Jackson the cotton planter understood at first hand. During the eight years of his nurturing administration, U.S. exports increased by 70 percent, imports by 250 percent.[96]

The ambiguity or contradictions in the Jacksonians' internal improvements record cannot be explained entirely by the hypocritical machinations of politicians. The mixed signals the administration sent apparently suited the mixed feelings of the American public toward the dramatic changes being wrought by the transportation and communications revolutions. On the one hand, the new economic opportunities were generally

95. William Weeks, *Building the Continental Empire* (Chicago, 1996), 74–77.
96. Belohlavek, *"Let the Eagle Soar,"* 101–25; William Weeks, "Economic Sources of American Foreign Policy in the Early Republic," paper presented to the Society of Historians of American Foreign Relations, June 1994.

welcomed and widely seized. On the other, there were those with reason to fear economic transformations. Artisans, small farmers, and small merchants might find their accustomed local markets disturbed by the sudden intrusion of cheap goods from faraway places. Even some of those benefiting from economic development might worry about threats to local communities and traditional values.[97] Jackson's mixture of appropriations and vetoes affirmed Old Republican principles of limited government while not requiring too much sacrifice of material advantages by his supporters in particular cases. Although unsympathetic to those who wanted the government to help create an integrated *national* market, his policies fostered *international* markets for American commerce. This distinction probably represented the clearest division in economic policy between Jackson and his opposition.

To judge by the views contemporaries expressed, misgivings about government involvement in the economy were much more widespread than misgivings about economic development itself. When Andrew Jackson visited Lowell, Massachusetts, he admired the technology of the textile mills and showed no concern over the social consequences of industrialization.[98] Perhaps his unconcern reflected the fact that the proletariat being created there was female. In any case, economic enterprise generally became controversial only when government became involved. Jackson's election campaigns in 1824 and 1828 had warned against corruption, favoritism, and the perversion of democratic institutions; in office he continued to play upon these fears to discourage federal involvement in economic policymaking. In practice, however, the withdrawal of the federal government from transportation planning did nothing to prevent corruption or inefficiency at the state and local level; indeed, it made them even more likely. Involvement of government—local, state, or federal—in transportation projects helped in a society where large-scale mobilization of capital could be a problem. Most of the debate actually focused not on government intervention as opposed to free enterprise, but on whether only state and local authorities should promote the economy or the federal government play a role too. Doubts over the constitutionality of federal aid to internal improvements persisted throughout the antebellum era, often voiced by slaveholders determined to keep the central government weak lest it interfere with their peculiar institution. Those slaveholders who produced cotton had an additional motive for opposing federal internal

97. The classic discussion of such ambivalent feelings is Marvin Meyers, *The Jacksonian Persuasion* (Stanford, 1957).
98. Watson, *Liberty and Power*, 135.

improvements: If its expenditures could be held down, the government would have less need for tariff revenue. "Destroy the tariff and you will leave no means of carrying on internal improvement," South Carolina's free-trade advocate Senator William Smith declared in 1830; "destroy internal improvement and you leave no motive for the tariff."[99]

The Jackson–Van Buren practice of generous ad hoc appropriations coupled with professions of Old Republican strict construction pleased the friends of particular projects while reassuring slaveholders and staple exporters that the federal government was not being strengthened in principle or undertaking long-term, expensive commitments. Meanwhile, those who continued to believe in the benefits of central economic planning rallied to the opposition. But unfortunately for Adams and Clay, the very popularity of internal improvements hampered federal planning for them. With each region vying with every other for economic advantage, it seldom proved possible to forge the kind of coalitions necessary to legislate in favor of transportation at the national level. Responding to geographical competitions, the expenditures of state and local government to subsidize internal improvements dwarfed those of the federal government, even under Jackson. For the entire period before the Civil War, state governments invested some $300 million in transportation infrastructure; local governments, over $125 million. Direct expenditures by the federal government on such projects came to less than $59 million, though this does not count the substantial indirect help the federal government gave to internal improvements through land grants, revenue distributions, and services rendered by the Army Engineers.[100]

In his first two years in office, President Jackson had already begun to lay the foundations for the future strength of the Democratic Party and to define its character and policies for a long time to come. The spoils system became a powerful instrument for motivating political participation at the grassroots level. The Eaton imbroglio established the pattern that the Democratic Party would resist those who tried to impose their moral standards on the public—whether these related to sexual conduct, Indian affairs, slavery, or war. Indian Removal set a pattern and precedent for geographical expansion and white supremacy that would be invoked in years to come by advocates of America's imperial "manifest destiny." Harder to pin down was Jackson's attitude toward economic development,

99. Quoted in Feller, *Public Lands*, 136.
100. Carter Goodrich, *Government Promotion of American Canals and Railroads* (New York, 1960), 268.

but it seemed that he supported the expansion of American commerce and markets, so long as this did not require partnership between the federal government and private enterprise in mixed corporations or long-term, large-scale economic planning. Jackson's hostility to mixed corporations would become much clearer shortly, in his dramatic conflict with the National Bank. His ambiguity on the issue of federal aid to economic development would remain characteristic of the Democratic Party and lead eventually to fierce internal squabbles that pitted the dominant southern wing, determined to keep the central government limited and inexpensive, against northern Democrats eager for internal improvements and tariff protection. But as long as Jackson himself was in the White House, he remained very firmly in charge of both his party and the executive branch.

10

Battles over Sovereignty

All the major political controversies of Andrew Jackson's two terms in the White House involved issues of authority. Jackson exercised presidential authority in new ways, removing competent officeholders and vetoing more bills than all his predecessors put together. (The contrast with his immediate predecessor was particularly striking, since Adams had vetoed no bills at all.) Jackson engaged in contests of authority with Congress and barely avoided one with the Supreme Court. The Eaton Affair showed that even social intercourse could be a matter for the assertion of presidential authority. Ultimate authority, that is, sovereignty, became the subject of explicit and bitter debate during Jackson's administrations. Rival claims of sovereignty for the states and the nation found expression in legal theory, rhetorical eloquence, and finally in political crisis. The president believed in the sovereignty of the American people and in himself as the embodiment of that sovereignty. The conflict between Jackson and the Second Bank of the United States escalated into a "war" waged in defense of both national and popular sovereignty. By the end of his presidency, Jackson had defended federal supremacy in the crisis with South Carolina even while encouraging neighboring Georgia to assert state sovereignty. In the last analysis, it was his personal authority, rather than that of the federal government or even the presidential office, which Jackson zealously maintained.

II

Jacksonians justified Indian Removal as a prerequisite to the westward extension of white settlement. But from the standpoint of Jackson's western supporters, cheap land seemed just as important as the expulsion of the Native population. Western settlers and land speculators wanted to buy cheap from the government and sell dear to later arrivals. Missouri's Thomas Hart Benton, spokesman for the frontier, proposed the price of unsold public lands drop automatically over time until they found a buyer. After four years on the market, their price would reach a mere twenty-five cents an acre. "The public lands belong to the People, and not to the federal government," he thundered.[1] Benton termed his policy "graduation." To achieve more rapid settlement of the West, his plan would severely

1. *Register of Debates*, 19th Cong., 1st sess. (May 16, 1826), 727.