

## PENNSYLVANIA AND THE POLITICS OF THE TARIFF, 1880-1888

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**D**URING the decade of the 'eighties the tariff question was a vital political issue. The Republican party learned to use it both to cement Republican unity and to place the Democrats on the defensive by opening wider the rifts within that party that showed so markedly when economic problems were discussed. To the Republicans, stressing the tariff question became a prime campaign tactic, used especially in areas where the doctrine of protection had meaning for the mass of the electorate.

The tariff question had been present in American politics during the period from 1865 to 1880, but it had not been a central question. The complexities of the issue were obscured by the inability of political parties to adjust their strategy and their thinking in terms other than those of the "Southern question."

However, the period from the 1870's through the 1890's, and especially the years from 1880 to 1888, were years of re-appraisal and development for both the Republican and Democratic parties. The great object was to find or make political issues which could bind the parties into cohesive organizations with bases sufficiently diversified so as to produce national party structures. The chief political problem of the era was to develop national parties out of the sectionalized and divided parties which had emerged from the Civil War. The Republicans at first believed they could achieve this with the use of political issues raised by war and their Radical Reconstruction, but they found that as the hatreds and antagonisms of the war and its aftermath waned, the economic and social issues produced by the American industrial revolution superseded those of war and reconstruction. The American people, wearied of the tensions created by Reconstruction, turned their minds and emo-

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tions toward other channels of political agitation. By 1880 the "Southern question" was dead as a national issue. The Republican leadership realized that if a new set of issues were not found, the party might also be politically dead.

The Democratic leadership, on the other hand, felt that their party could patiently await the demise of Reconstruction and then once more assume the pre-war role of majority party. But they underestimated the political sagacity and dynamism of the Republican party during the 'eighties. In the previous decade the Republicans had laid the foundations for the unification of their party around an issue which moved them directly away from the problems of political Reconstruction. The issue which revitalized the Republican party, and indirectly the Democratic party as well, was the tariff.<sup>1</sup>

Between the Civil War and 1880 the tariff was not a political issue around which parties could organize and expect to win political power. Although there was division concerning the efficacy of high tariffs and protection for American industries and raw materials, the division cut across party lines. Also there was no solidification of tariff opinion in the country to produce a concrete voting effect, except in the state of Pennsylvania, which had been agitating for protective tariffs since the war years.<sup>2</sup> In this state, however, both parties recognized what they termed the advantages of protection. The result was that the tariff as a political issue in Pennsylvania was weakened because protection was embraced by both parties. However, as the national party organizations became more and more identified, after 1880, as standing on one side or the other in the tariff controversy, the practical political value of the issue became more meaningful in Pennsylvania.

By 1880, the formerly recalcitrant tariff reformers within the Republican fold had adhered to the party line favoring protection. But the Democrats remained fundamentally split between the agrarian-based elements within the party and those from industrialized areas. The latter, led by Samuel J. Randall of Pennsyl-

<sup>1</sup> S. Walter Poulshock, "The Politics of the Tariff, 1880-1888," unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 1962.

<sup>2</sup> See the files of the Philadelphia *North American*, the Republican protectionist newspaper, and the Philadelphia *Press*, the Democratic protectionist paper. Almost every edition from the war years onward made some allusion to the utility of the protective system.

vania, served as a powerful minority within the party to destroy again and again, in combination with the Republicans, any hope of achieving Democratic reform of the tariff system within Congress.

It was in the election of 1880 that the tariff first came into its own as a key political issue. In both the election and the use of the tariff issue Pennsylvania and Pennsylvanians played important roles. In the beginning of the campaign, the Republicans reverted to the use of their favorite campaign device, the waving of the "bloody shirt."<sup>3</sup> The Democrats possessed few usable issues. The economy was back to normal after six years of depression; the issue of corruption was moribund with Grant out of the way; their internal divisions on most of the economic issues of the day denuded them of relevant political ammunition.

The running of the campaign on the issues of the past came to an abrupt end when the Republicans lost the previously solid state of Maine in the September election of 1880.<sup>4</sup> The Republicans had been supremely confident that Blaine and the "Southern question" could take Maine. Garfield in analyzing the causes of the defeat blamed the over-emphasis on the "bloody shirt" campaign as the key factor.<sup>5</sup> It was at this point that the tariff was interjected into the campaign by Republican policymakers as the central issue to replace the "Southern question." The greatest pressure for doing so came from certain Republican leaders in Pennsylvania.

By 1880 a fundamental cleavage was visible within the ranks of the Republican party of Pennsylvania. The Stalwart-led faction of Donald Cameron, chained to the past, with its emphasis on the issues of Reconstruction, was not keen for either Garfield or a campaign based on the tariff issue.<sup>6</sup> Cameron had, with the rest of the Stalwarts, gone down the line for Grant at the Republican National Convention. But another element of the Pennsylvania Republican party had declared for Garfield long before he was generally recognized as a possible compromise candidate. This group was led by the business-oriented Union League of Phila-

<sup>3</sup> David H. Gildersleeve, *The Republican Campaign Textbook for 1880* (Washington, 1880), 195.

<sup>4</sup> Louis C. Hatch, *Maine: A History* (3 vols., New York, 1919), II, 625-626.

<sup>5</sup> James A. Garfield to Marshall Jewell, September 29, 1880, Garfield Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>6</sup> Philadelphia *North American*, August 24, 1880; *ibid.*, September 1, 1880.

delphia, headed by Wharton Barker, official of the Iron and Steel Association and a sharp political analyst, and by Henry C. Lea, Professor of Medieval Studies at the University of Pennsylvania, former Liberal Republican, and fundamentally opposed to Stalwart domination of the Republican party in Pennsylvania.<sup>7</sup> It was both Barker and Lea who, working through William C. Chandler, a Garfield confidant, proposed to Garfield a shift from a "bloody shirt" to a tariff-oriented campaign.<sup>8</sup> Their arguments prevailed. They hammered away at the idea that a tariff campaign would draw labor and the manufacturing groups closer to the Republican party. The Industrial League of Pennsylvania, immediately after receiving the word from Republican National Committee headquarters to move ahead with a tariff campaign, began to flood the industrial states with placards which showed up in thousands of store windows proclaiming the simple story of the "real antagonisms of the Democratic leaders to the artisan, the mechanic and the laborer."<sup>9</sup> They worked away at the theme that the Republican tariff, by protecting American manufacturing interests, was in reality insuring high wages to the American workingman.

If the reaction of the labor journals in Pennsylvania was any indication of the way in which labor voted, then the Republicans did indeed gain a tremendous labor victory with their tariff campaign. The *Journal* of the Association of Charcoal Iron Workers, with headquarters in Harrisburg, stated that "a vote for the Republican party is a vote for the iron workers of America . . . tariff protection is needed in order to keep out the products of the pauper labor of Europe."<sup>10</sup> The *Journal of United Labor*, published in Pittsburgh, spokesman for the Amalgamated Iron and Steel Workers of America, with a purported membership of 20,000, called for "continued protection to insure the jobs of our

<sup>7</sup> Lea to Carl Schurz, December 8, 1879, Schurz Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>8</sup> Barker to W. E. Chandler, September 20, 1880, Chandler Papers, Library of Congress; Lea to Chandler, September 22, 1880, *ibid.*; Barker to Garfield, September 29, 1880, Garfield Papers; Lea to Garfield, September 30, 1880, *ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Documents Issued by the Union Republican Congressional Committee for the Presidential Campaign of 1880*, n.p. (Washington, 1880), 153; Marshall Jewell to Joseph Wharton, October 2, 1880, Wharton Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>10</sup> October 1, 1880. After the Republican tariff campaign got under way practically every edition of this labor journal carried editorials imploring the workers to vote Republican and thereby save the protective system.

workers."<sup>11</sup> The *Textile Worker* of Philadelphia asked its readers to vote for the Republican party as the party of protection, "especially now when the industry finds itself in a depressed state because of insufficient tariff protection."<sup>12</sup>

While the various factions of the Republican party rallied behind the tariff issue,<sup>13</sup> the Democrats, vacillating as to how to meet this political issue, broke apart on the rocks of Pennsylvania-led Democratic protectionism. Pennsylvania Democrats led the movement within the party against taking any stand for tariff reform. Randall, with the rest of the Democrats in the state, together with many of those from the other Eastern industrial states, violently opposed any compromise with the low-tariff sentiment in the party.<sup>14</sup> They especially feared that a low-tariff posture would further alienate labor from the Democratic party. The result was that the Democratic Presidential candidate, Winfield Scott Hancock, remained silent on the issue for as long as he could. But the pressure of Democratic losses in Ohio and Indiana in the October elections in those states brought him out of his political shell, and he gave out an interview encompassing his views on the tariff.<sup>15</sup>

His presumed strategy was to relieve some of the pressure building up in his own party over the tariff issue and, at the same time, to counter Republican tariff strategy. He denied the allegations of Republican propaganda that there would be a drastic change in the tariff system if he were elected. Then he shifted the emphasis to the theme that protection really aided only the manufacturers, and that it was not a great national symbol as the Republicans claimed, offering something for all Americans, but merely a local issue. And if it were essentially a local question, why all the furor if Indiana Democrats called for low tariffs, and Pennsylvania Democrats demanded protection? Hancock attempted to write the tariff off as not being a national political issue.

The Republicans picked up the phrase, "the tariff is a local issue," and ridiculed Hancock for the presumed absurdity of his

<sup>11</sup> October 3, 1880.

<sup>12</sup> October 7, 1880.

<sup>13</sup> New York *Times*, October 21, 1880.

<sup>14</sup> Philadelphia *Press*, October 12, 1880; Philadelphia *North American*, October 14, 1880.

<sup>15</sup> Interview given to a reporter of the Paterson *Daily Guardian*. Full text of interview reported in New York *Times*, October 17, 1880.

statement. The Republican press maintained constant editorial pressure lampooning Hancock and the Democrats after his interview became common knowledge.<sup>16</sup>

Why all this sound and fury over a seemingly innocent, and in economic terms apt statement concerning the tariff? Simply because Hancock had struck home, and the Republicans knew it. It had been the purpose of the protectionist Republicans, especially those from Pennsylvania, in the preceding fifteen years to instill in the minds of the American people the idea that the protective system was a national ideal, and the means of increasing the greatness and power of the United States. Indeed the popular appellation adopted to describe the Republican tariff system was the "American Way." When, for example, a Republican politician in Pennsylvania campaigned on the tariff issue, he did not appeal solely to the economic self interest of his constituents. He appealed to their patriotism. He emphasized that the ideal of a truly protective tariff system once realized would result in democracy's last hope, the United States, becoming the greatest nation on earth. The appeal also went out to the xenophobic instincts of Americans of that period, especially at the expense of the British. Our Pennsylvania politician would proclaim that the English used agents who infiltrated the Democratic party and spread the foul doctrine of free trade through the council halls of that organization. Now the Democratic party, he would continue, with their English allies, wished to inundate the American market with huge quantities of cheap British goods made by pauper labor. He would finish by claiming that if this free trade conspiracy were allowed to succeed, then American factories would shut down. American workers would no longer have jobs. American farmers would be forced to depend entirely on the vagaries of the foreign market, the prey of foreign investors and profiteers.<sup>17</sup> This was a compelling political approach.

<sup>16</sup> For examples of Republican newspaper reaction to Hancock's interview see *Philadelphia North American*, October 19, 1880; *New York Times*, October 18, 1880; *New York Tribune*, October 18, 1880.

<sup>17</sup> There are innumerable examples of this sort of tariff techniques used by Pennsylvania politicians and others as well. See Barker to Garfield, November 10, 1879, Garfield Papers; *Philadelphia North American*, November 9, 1870, October 20, 1875, September 10, 1880; *Philadelphia Press*, September 22, 1878, November 10, 1880; *New York Tribune*, October 5, 1878, September 14, 1880.

In the midst of a Republican campaign to capture the Presidency, based on the national implications of the tariff issue, Hancock emerged to proclaim to the nation that the tariff and the entire protective system could achieve nothing on a national level; that, indeed, it was but one of many local issues that had no importance in a Presidential election. The implication, of course, was that the well-planned Republican tariff campaign was nothing but hogwash. So Hancock's statement had to be ridiculed, and Hancock with it.<sup>18</sup>

Hancock's attempt to deflate the importance of the tariff as an issue failed. It failed because of Republican alertness and cleverness. Above all, it failed because the "American Way" had political appeal for Americans. The Republicans took every industrial state in the nation except New Jersey, and that state actually endorsed protection, since labor split its vote between the protectionist Republicans and the protectionist Greenback-Labor party.<sup>19</sup> Most of the effective symbols which appealed to Americans of that era were embodied in the national ideal of the "American Way." It symbolized material affluence; it symbolized American greatness; it symbolized the millennial dream of a better tomorrow for all Americans. The Democrats learned in 1880 that they could not ignore protection as a national issue, nor could they successfully deflate its importance as a political issue on any level.

Garfield's assassination, worsening economic conditions, and the surplus revenue in the federal Treasury all combined to produce an uncertain political atmosphere after the election. The Republicans, convinced of the utility of their tariff theme, were appalled at the rising tide of agitation for tariff reform. This agitation reached a peak during the congressional campaigns of 1882. The result of that election was an astounding victory for the Democrats in the previously Republican-dominated regions of the Midwest and East.<sup>20</sup> During the campaigns the Democratic party in the

<sup>18</sup> A conscious effort to accomplish this was undertaken by the Republican leadership almost immediately after Hancock's interview became known. See Garfield's Diary, October 22, 1880; Chandler to Garfield, October 24, 1880, Garfield Papers.

<sup>19</sup> Statistical results of the election of 1880 can be found in W. Dean Burnham, *Presidential Ballots, 1836-1892* (Baltimore, 1955), 130-134.

<sup>20</sup> Edward McPherson, *A Handbook of Politics for 1882* (Washington, 1882), 129-131.

East had taken a protectionist tack.<sup>21</sup> But in the Midwest, the Democrats had hit hard at the protective system, and, whether correctly or not, they felt that their victory was due to agitation of that issue.<sup>22</sup> A number of influential Republicans in that section of the country agreed with them.<sup>23</sup> Thus an increasing clan arose from Democrats in the Midwest who desired a tariff for revenue only, and from a number of Republicans from that region who called for revision within the protective framework.

Even a number of Republicans and Democrats from the industrial states felt that some sort of tariff reform might be necessary. From Pennsylvania came a solution for the protectionists. Joseph Wharton of Philadelphia, official of the Industrial League, highly successful manufacturer, and a Republican of note, proposed a tariff commission plan, which, he claimed, would take the tariff out of politics and place reform in the hands of an impartial body of experts.<sup>24</sup> The Republican leadership was not enthralled by the idea of taking the tariff out of politics, but they did see in the Wharton plan a means of delaying real tariff revision. According to Wharton's scheme, the commission would be appointed by the President with the approval of the Senate, and the Republicans controlled both the Presidency and the Senate.

The make-up of the commission surprised no one. A Republican Congress had approved the idea, and a Republican President had appointed the commissioners. The commission was obviously pro-

<sup>21</sup> See New York *World*, November 10, 1882; New York *Sun*, November 10, 1882; Philadelphia *Record*, November 12, 1882.

<sup>22</sup> James P. Doolittle to S. J. Randall, December 10, 1882, Randall Papers, Library of the University of Pennsylvania; William Vilas to Thomas Bayard, January 14, 1883, Bayard Papers, Library of Congress; Oliver P. Morton to Bayard, December 22, 1882, *ibid*.

<sup>23</sup> Shelby Cullom to W. E. Chandler, December 8, 1882, Chandler Papers. Cullom reviewed the election results in the Midwest and analyzed the campaign and its results on the basis of extensive correspondence he had with Republican leaders in the states of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, and Wisconsin. The tariff, he concluded, was a key issue, used extensively by the Democrats. See also Omar D. Conger to John Sherman, November 29, 1882, Sherman Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>24</sup> Philadelphia *North American*, November 8, 1881. Even though the adverse election results in 1882, so far as the Republicans were concerned, heightened the feeling among leading Republicans that tariff reform might be necessary, the Wharton scheme which had been proposed before the elections, and adopted by the Republican-controlled Congress before the 48th Congress was seated, attested to the fact that the Republicans had felt the pressures for tariff revision even before the disastrous results of the 1882 elections.



tectionist in its sympathies.<sup>25</sup> Yet its report, when completed in December 1882, called for tariff reductions of 20 per cent on the average.<sup>26</sup> The great pressure for tariff reform had effected even the protectionist tariff commission. However, the report created more political problems than it solved. It did not call for drastic reductions, but it was upon-whom-the-reductions-fell that caused the controversies. The hardest hit by the recommendations of the commission were the producers of raw materials. The Tariff Commission's report was an ill-disguised revision of the tariff system in favor of the manufacturers at the expense of the producers.<sup>27</sup> The manufacturers had been agitating for years to obtain cheaper raw materials by lowering tariff duties on raw materials. But this proposed sacrificing of the producers for the benefit of the manufacturers was political dynamite for the Republicans. They had built up a finely balanced political coalition based on protection for manufacturers and producers, whereby both were compensated by the high tariffs. Now their commission report recommended that this balance be destroyed. Joseph Wharton and the Industrial League were ecstatic over the commission report, but the politicians of the Republican party were angered and dismayed over the turn of events.

Although the Senate succumbed to manufacturer pressure and more or less endorsed the commission report in a bill which revised the tariff system to the detriment of the producers,<sup>28</sup> the bastion of protectionism, the Republican House, would not acquiesce in what it considered the ultimate destruction of protection as a political issue for the Republican party. And the movement in the lower chamber to save the political efficacy of the protective system was led by the high priest of the protective philosophy, William D. "Pig Iron" Kelley of Pennsylvania, Speaker of the House.

<sup>25</sup> Edward Stanwood, *American Tariff Controversies in the Nineteenth Century* (2 vols., Boston and New York, 1903), II, 204. Neither Stanwood nor Taussig (F. W. Taussig, *The Tariff History of the United States*, New York and London, 1888, 231-237), the two historians of the tariff, caught the significance of the commission report as an attempt to aid the manufacturers at the expense of the producers of raw materials.

<sup>26</sup> 47th Congress, 2nd Session, House Miscellaneous Documents, 6, part I, 27-29.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 15-21.

<sup>28</sup> *Congressional Record*, 47th Congress, 2nd Session, 2992. Hereafter cited as *Cong. Rec.* 47:2:2992.

Much has been made of the alleged fact that Pennsylvania politicians followed the lead of the great industrial organizations of the state, particularly in tariff matters. But the Pennsylvania Republican protectionists were first of all party men, and secondly protectionists. Although the Iron and Steel Association, the Industrial League, the National Association of Wool Manufacturers, and the rest,<sup>29</sup> endorsed the Senate bill, Kelley and the Republican protectionist politicians of Pennsylvania would have none of it. By shrewd parliamentary maneuvering Kelley and his aides were able to smother the Senate bill, and in the Conference Committee substitute their own version of tariff revision, which, when finally embodied in the tariff act of 1883, was no revision at all.<sup>30</sup> Kelley and his supporters in the House had kept the protective system intact and had saved the political balance of the Republican party among producers and manufacturers.

The House vote on the Kelley bill was typical of the pattern which had emerged after the war in regard to tariff legislation. The Republicans were strictly controlled by their protectionist leadership, while the Democrats had to contend with a protectionist wing which would not subordinate itself to party needs. Twenty-three Randallite Democrats, out of a total of 109 Democratic House members, joined all but five Republicans to pass the Kelley bill.<sup>31</sup> However, in the Senate, all but one Democrat voted against the tariff bill of 1883.<sup>32</sup> The Senate vote gave the Democratic tariff reformers hope that better days were ahead for their cause. With the conclusion of the tariff battle of 1883, protection became a fixed part of the Republican party philosophy. The Republicans came to feel more and more that the tariff issue was their great strength, their key issue. There was no question among Pennsylvania Republicans as to the utility of the tariff as a political issue, so that as far as the tariff issue was concerned, peace reigned among Pennsylvania Republicans, and indeed throughout the rest of the party as well.

The Republicans had passed a severe crisis over the tariff issue

<sup>29</sup> *Bulletin*, Iron and Steel Association, XVI, February 24, 1883; *Bulletin*, National Association of Wool Manufacturers, XII, March 4, 1883; Joseph Wharton to W. E. Chandler, February 25, 1883, Chandler Papers.

<sup>30</sup> *Cong. Rec.*, 47:2:2410, 2470, 3575.

<sup>31</sup> *Cong. Rec.*, 47:2:3742.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 47:2:3575.

in 1883. The Democrats had yet to meet theirs. The Democrats still lacked unity on this question, principally because of the Pennsylvania Democrats' reluctance to surrender their protectionist orientation. However, in terms of the tariff issue and the reorganization of the Democratic party in the 1880's, the majority of Democrats under the whip of the Midwest Democracy found the will to oppose the Republicans on the protective system. When the time arrived that this opposition was translated into party strategy, the days of the protectionist Democrats were numbered. Randall and the Pennsylvania Democratic protectionists were, after all, outsiders. There was no future for the protectionist ideal within the Democratic party. As long as Pennsylvania Democrats clung to that ideal, so long would they possess little power within the national councils of the party.

Logically, protection as an economic policy favored the manufacturers, and they were for the most part Republicans. The Republican politicians, of course, had found a use for the tariff which far transcended either the wants or the needs of the industrialists. But the Republicans had the manufacturer base upon which to build the politics of protection. The Democrats had no such base. The Randallites were a powerful minority for years, but they had little to work with in the party, and as a result they had no future within the party. The Randall-led group was powerful just so long as the Midwestern and Southern politicians remained quiescent under the yoke of Reconstruction and the stigma of treason. When all that was no longer relevant in national political terms, the Randallites had either to succumb to the low tariff strategy as it evolved or leave the party. The Randall group had fought a losing fight to re-orient the party in the image of the new America. And the obvious differences between them and the rest of the party flared up when the contest over the Speakership of the 48th Congress was fought out between the tariff reformer, John G. Carlisle, and Randall. With that contest a new chapter opened in the political history of the Democratic party on the national level as well as in Pennsylvania.

The Pennsylvania Democrats were certain of a Randall victory. But their confidence was predicated on false notions. Until 1883 Randall's strength in the party had been in the hold he seemed to retain over the Southern Democrats. Randall had obtained

Southern support in 1877 for the Speaker's post chiefly because he had been one of the few Northern voices raised consistently against Republican Reconstruction. As long as Reconstruction was the issue of the day Randall could depend on Southern support. But he and his supporters did not seem to realize that in 1883, in the South, the political issues of Reconstruction had been "solved" to the white Southerners' satisfaction, and therefore, the "Southern question" was no longer a live issue in the old sense. Southern gratitude for Randall's past services was now outweighed by the fact that, in their eyes, he was the purveyor of an alien economic philosophy.<sup>33</sup>

At approximately the same time that the Southerners deserted Randall, the New York Democrats also decided that he was expendable. There was a definite connection between the two decisions. A letter from Henry G. Davis, protectionist Senator from West Virginia, to Randall in October points up in general terms the situation as it had evolved up to that time.<sup>34</sup> Davis wrote Randall that three Midwesterners, Daniel Voorhees of Indiana, Jacob Rankin of Wisconsin, and Henry Watterson of Kentucky, had traveled extensively through the South during the past summer, contacting as many Southern leaders as possible, especially the Congressmen-elect of the 48th Congress, and attempting to convince them that protection was harmful to the South and that the tariff issue could be used as the lever by which to regain their lost power in the national party. Davis then noted significantly that Randall should beware "of the Tilden gang in New York," that "Tilden and Manning will sell their souls to enable them to name a New Yorker at the upcoming Democratic Convention. There is a deal in the making: your head and a tariff for revenue only in return for the next President of the United States." Davis's comments were borne out by Henry Watterson, who, in a letter to Thomas Bayard<sup>35</sup> stated that, "We had a highly successful sojourn through the South . . . our Southern brethren are convinced now that the future of the party lies in a firm low tariff attitude. . . . Also I saw Mr. Tilden, and he seems amenable,

<sup>33</sup> Clues as to the Southern shift away from Randall appeared in a number of influential Southern newspapers during the late summer and early fall of 1883. Reported in the *New York Times*, October 10, 1883.

<sup>34</sup> October 2, 1883, Randall Papers.

<sup>35</sup> September 20, 1883, Bayard Papers.

though reserved. However, with sufficient pre-convention pressures applied at the right places in New York, Mr. Randall will find himself with very little support from that quarter."

The result of the Democratic caucus of December 1, 1883, showed Carlisle the victor over Randall by an overwhelming margin.<sup>36</sup> Both New York and the South had indeed deserted the Pennsylvania Congressman. For the first time since the Civil War the protectionists had been unable to elect one of their members Speaker. This Speakership contest opened the way for the domination of the party by the low tariff advocates. Although Randall would still have sufficient numbers in the House to frustrate the desire of the tariff reformers to translate their reform ideas into actual legislation, the protectionist cause was weakened considerably by Randall's defeat in 1883. When President Cleveland finally took his tariff stand in 1887, the Randall forces were already so weakened that there was little fight left in them. The vote on the Morrison tariff bill in 1884, which the Randallites helped defeat, indicated that Randall and the remaining Democratic protectionists had been isolated from Midwestern or Southern support.<sup>37</sup> Indeed, of the 41 Democratic votes recorded against the Morrison reform bill, 26 were from just three states, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and California. Randall had lost his support both in the South and in New England. The Midwest had never given him much backing.

The victory of the low tariff forces from the West and South in 1883 and 1884, with the collusion of the New York Democrats, opened the way to domination of the party by its agrarian-oriented elements. The New Yorkers by deserting the Pennsylvanians over the tariff issue divided the urban forces within the party so that the Eastern leadership of the national party was considerably weakened. This allowed the agrarian groups in the 1890's, under the leadership of Western Democrats, to capture control of the party. Finally, it led to the nomination of William J. Bryan in 1896.

Midwestern and Southern pressure on President Cleveland in 1887<sup>38</sup> resulted in his decision to take a firm low tariff position,

<sup>36</sup> *New York World*, December 2, 1883; *Philadelphia Times*, December 2, 1883.

<sup>37</sup> *Cong. Rec.*, 48:1:3908.

<sup>38</sup> See William Vilas to Cleveland, October 14, 1887, Cleveland Papers, Washington, Library of Congress; Oliver P. Morton to Cleveland, Septem-

and he therefore issued his famous tariff message in December of that year.<sup>39</sup> Now that the leader of the Democratic party had determined that the party was unalterably opposed to the protective system, there was much less room for the protectionists in that party. Their views would no longer be tolerated. The moment Cleveland began to apply the pressure and power of his office against Randall and the Pennsylvania Democratic protectionists through manipulation of federal patronage and other subtler devices, Randall and what he stood for were doomed.

Although Randall had continued as a powerful leader of the Democratic party in Pennsylvania after 1884, his loss of the Speakership to Carlisle had given his opponents within the Pennsylvania party new hope. Working under the leadership of William L. Scott, a wealthy coal operator and urbane socialite, who had become personally friendly with Cleveland, and of William R. Singerly, publisher of the Philadelphia *Record*, and Lewis Cassidy, influential Philadelphia attorney, the anti-Randall forces used the tariff issue to dethrone Randall.<sup>40</sup> The Pennsylvania Democracy of Samuel J. Randall was made a sacrificial offering on the altar of national Democratic unity. By 1888, Randall, fatally ill and openly discouraged, had lost effective control of the Democratic party in Pennsylvania. That party for the first time since the Civil War was dominated by tariff reformers. With the defeat of the Pennsylvania protectionists, the last obstacle to a firm Democratic stand on the tariff issue was overcome. And in the Presidential election of 1888 the Democrats met the Republicans squarely on the issue of the tariff.

The tariff as a political issue had served the Republican party well from 1880 to 1888. It had been a means of achieving unity within the party, and it had welded closer to the party than ever before the laboring and manufacturing elements in American society. The Pennsylvania branch of the Republican party, because of its pre-1880 pressure for tariff protection, and its urging of

ber 10, 1887, *ibid.*; John Carlisle to Cleveland, October 21, 1887, *ibid.*; Roger Q. Mills to Cleveland, October 12, 1887, *ibid.* Also see Cleveland to Bayard, December 1, 1887, Bayard Papers.

<sup>39</sup> James D. Richardson, ed., *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents* (20 vols., Washington, 1896-1927), VIII, 589.

<sup>40</sup> Philadelphia *Press*, April 18, 1887; *ibid.*, July 2, 1887; *ibid.*, January 5, 1888; Henry G. Davis to Randall, December 20, 1887, Randall Papers.

the tariff as a cogent political issue on a national level, had increased its prestige, and therefore its influence within the national party structure. The Democrats had finally, after years of neglect and vacillation, emerged as the party of tariff reform. The Pennsylvania division of the party had overcome its previous protectionist orientation and joined the rest of the party on the tariff issue. Once the Democrats found unity on the issue of protection, the distinctions between the two major parties became obvious. The tweedledee-tweedledum interpretation of American politics during the late 'eighties is not an accurate one. There were basic differences in the make-up of the parties, and the tariff issues made this clear. The Democratic party as a result of the tariff issue was to be dominated by the agrarian-based elements within the party—until the 1928 nomination of Al Smith indicated that the urban Democrats had at last won the day. At the same time the Republicans were the party that recognized the meaning of the industrial revolution and were willing to accept its consequences. The tariff as a political issue in the 1880's had helped in the re-organization of political parties so that they might enter the twentieth century better able to meet other more pressing issues than protection and tariff reform. In that sense, the tariff was a central and vital issue in the history of American politics.