The Origins of the Jeffersonian Party in Pennsylvania

I

Few aspects of the development of American political parties have aroused more sustained and heated debate among historians than the origin of Thomas Jefferson’s Democratic-Republican party. This interest grows out of the many questions raised by the subject. To name but two: When did political parties first appear under the federal government? Was the Democratic-Republican party which carried Jefferson to the presidency in 1801 identical with the group which opposed the adoption of the federal Constitution in 1787–1788?

In this connection, the evolution of the Jeffersonian party in Pennsylvania is of special interest. More than any of her sister states, Pennsylvania by the late eighteenth century had gained the distinction of being the province of the practical politician—the type of man who enjoys framing tickets and canvassing voters, often for his own advantage, but just as often simply because he regards it as an exciting game. As a Commonwealth in which commercial and agricultural interests were both strongly represented, in which persons of varied racial backgrounds and religious faiths lived peacefully side by side, Pennsylvania offered a preview of the United States of the future. Moreover, Philadelphia was the capital of the nation as well as of the state during this period. In consequence, developments in the political life of Pennsylvania had great influence upon the operations of the federal government; legislators and officials from other states were apt to carry back home some of the ideas about party organization they learned during their stay in the capital.

For an understanding of the development of political parties in

Pennsylvania and the nation, the seldom-noticed congressional and presidential campaign of 1792 is worthy of close study. As we shall see, this was the first time any political organization in Pennsylvania offered a serious challenge to the supremacy of the group of men under whose direction the federal government was being put into operation. More important, the campaign constituted, in a sense, the connecting link in the evolution of the Pennsylvania Constitutionalist or Antifederalist party into a group which formed an important part of the national Democratic-Republican party.

II

By 1791 there were two fairly well-organized political parties in Pennsylvania. Both were descendants of groups which had fought many a battle in the legislature and at the polls during the Revolutionary period. Both were concerned primarily with state affairs, but neither had hesitated to take positions on controversial questions affecting the United States as a whole.

Dominant through its control of both houses of the legislature and the state's delegation in Congress was the group coming to be known as the Federalist party. As the Pennsylvania Republicans or Anti-Constitutionalists, this party had gained great prestige by obtaining, through well-organized extra-legal maneuvers, Pennsylvania's ratification of the federal Constitution in 1788 and the revision of the state constitution in 1790. Although it seems clear that they actually represented only a small minority of the people of Pennsylvania, the Republicans possessed certain advantages which gave them a power far out of proportion to their numbers. Their leaders came mostly from the commercial, professional and intellectual groups of the eastern towns and such inland centers of population as Lancaster and Pittsburgh. They were able men, well educated, articulate, accustomed to manage affairs. Prominent among them were James Wilson, the jurist, and Robert Morris and

2 The story of the struggle over the ratification of the federal Constitution is told in John Bach McMaster and Frederick D. Stone, Pennsylvania and the Federal Constitution (Lancaster, 1888), and in Allan Nevins, The American States During and After the Revolution (New York, 1924), 291-294. For an account of the struggle over the Pennsylvania constitution of 1790, see Robert L. Brunhouse, Counter-Revolution in Pennsylvania, 1776-1790 (forthcoming publication of the Pennsylvania Historical Commission, Harrisburg), Chapters 6, 7.
Thomas Fitzsimons, businessmen. They had a strong following among the conservative Quaker and German farmers in the populous southeastern counties. In the agricultural central counties the conservative and politically inexperienced Germans were willing to follow their lead a good portion of the time.³

Vanquished and discredited as a result of their frantic but fumbling efforts to block the new constitutions were the erstwhile state Constitutionalists or Antifederalists. Without important issues to contest or an efficient organization to present them to the voters, their party now hovered perilously on the brink of disintegration. But the Antifederalists did possess assets which promised to become invaluable if their party could survive this period of transition in state and national political life. Since Revolutionary times, when Benjamin Franklin, Joseph Reed and George Bryan had been its leaders, they had directed their appeals to the common man—the farmer, the mechanic, the small tradesman. In Pennsylvania such a policy was most important, for, unlike a number of other states, the Commonwealth permitted every male over twenty-one, with few exceptions, to vote.⁴ Moreover, as Senator William Maclay observed, Pennsylvanians were unique for their democratic spirit and "republican plainness."⁵

Numerically, most of the Antifederalist strength came from the four counties west of the Allegheny Mountains. The pioneering Scots-Irish farmers who inhabited the narrow valleys within a radius of a hundred miles of Pittsburgh were almost solidly Antifederalist; they were politically adept; and, considering the scattered nature of their population, they were extremely well organized. From this district had come a number of the party's political leaders—William Findley, John Smilie, David Redick, Albert Gallatin, and others. All these men were farmers, and all, with the exception of Gallatin, lacked the talents and educational advantages enjoyed by the leaders of the opposition.⁶

⁴ Proceedings Relative to Calling the Conventions of 1776 and 1790, etc. (Harrisburg, 1825), 346.
⁶ Russell J. Ferguson, Early Western Pennsylvania Politics, 1773–1823 (Pittsburgh, 1938), 38 ff.
Antifederalist sentiment grew progressively weaker the farther eastward one looked. Though it was definitely a Federalist stronghold, Philadelphia provided a noteworthy exception to this generalization. In the capital lived a small, tightly knit group which had provided the real leadership of the Antifederalists since the inception of the movement for the state constitution of 1776. Such Philadelphians as Jonathan D. Sergeant, lawyer and former Continental Congressman, Blair McClanahan, Irish-born merchant, and Dr. James Hutchinson, physician and professor of chemistry at the University of Pennsylvania, were men who enjoyed playing the game of Antifederalist politics almost purely for the sport of it.

Most important of the Philadelphia group was Dr. Hutchinson. "Fat enough to act the character of Falstaff without stuffing,"\(^7\) he was like Falstaff in being witty and the cause of political wit in others. For several years the politically astute doctor had been devoting his spare time to the organization of his party for more effective action at the polls. To increase the Antifederalists' strength in Philadelphia, he had given close attention to the great number of immigrants who had been pouring into the city, mostly from Ireland, since the Revolution. For example, about a week before the election of 1786 he and two friends had paid a visit to the Lately Adopted Sons Society of Philadelphia, an organization of Irish immigrants, to solicit their votes.\(^9\) To strengthen the party's position upstate, he was beginning to confer frequently with Antifederalist assemblymen when they were in Philadelphia for the annual sessions of the legislature and to write them occasionally when they were at home.\(^10\)

Recently the Antifederalists had gained a valuable recruit. He was Alexander James Dallas, an able young lawyer whom Governor Thomas Mifflin had named as Secretary of the Commonwealth in 1790. It was not long before the tall, courtly Dallas was able to use his position as confidant of the nominally Federalist Mifflin to further the interests of the Antifederalists in state affairs.

\(^10\) For example, see Maclay, *op. cit.*, 390, 391.
III

What the Pennsylvania Antifederalists needed to rouse the voters to their standard—an issue—was furnished them by the national head of the Federalist party. During 1790 and 1791 Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton presented to Congress a program calling for the assumption by the federal government of the debts of the states, the funding of the national debt, the imposition of an excise on wines and spirits, and the chartering of a national bank.

It did not take the Antifederalist forces long to rally to meet this challenge. Even while the excise measure was under consideration in Congress, the representatives of the western farmers, for whom whiskey served as a circulating medium, pushed through the lower house of the state legislature a resolution condemning the proposed excise.11 Three Philadelphia journalists—Philip Freneau of the National Gazette, Benjamin Franklin Bache of the General Advertiser and John Dunlap of the American Daily Advertiser—opened their columns to critical discussions of the program of the Secretary of the Treasury. By the early spring of 1792 their papers were printing the vigorous attacks of "Sidney," "Brutus" and others.12 In some cases the Philadelphia Antifederalists dispatched copies of the best essays to their allies upstate.13

Undoubtedly these protests were in the minds of a group of Anti-federalist assemblymen and Philadelphia politicians who met in the anatomical room of the University of Pennsylvania in the spring of 1792 to draw up plans for the approaching elections. Pennsylvania's thirteen seats in the federal House of Representatives were to be filled in October. A President and a Vice-President were to be elected in November. The Pennsylvania legislature had recently passed a law providing that the state's congressional and electoral delegations should be voted for on a state-wide basis rather than by districts.14

The prospects for the presidential and vice-presidential canvass were

12 For Freneau's part in the campaign against Hamilton, see Lewis Leary, That Rascal Freneau (New Brunswick, N. J., 1941), 197-208. For Bache's part, see Bernard Fay, The Two Franklins (Boston, 1933), 161 ff.
13 For example, see William Findley to A. J. Dallas, June 18, 1792, in the Miscellaneous Collection of The New-York Historical Society.
so shrouded in doubt that the Antifederalists determined to make no plans for it for the time being. For the congressional election, plans were immediately made to try to elect men opposed to the Hamiltonian program.

In drawing up a ticket, the party leaders followed a policy they had used in 1788—the combination of avowed Antifederalists with Federalists sympathetic with at least some of their principles. Only eleven candidates were named; two places were left vacant to be filled in later with the names of Philadelphians. The assemblymen attending the meeting were to take the list home to circulate among their friends during the coming summer. No public announcement of the ticket was made, and, indeed, a certain air of secrecy surrounded the whole affair.

A party caucus such as this was well rooted in Pennsylvania political tradition. Both parties had used this method of selecting candidates for office from time to time in the past. The Antifederalists preferred it to a convention because so much of their strength lay in the western end of the state and because so many of their leaders were hard-working farmers—important considerations in a day when travel was both hazardous and expensive.

In May, less than a month after the Antifederalist assemblymen had packed off to their homes for the summer recess, the congressional ticket in their pockets, their Philadelphia allies inaugurated an effort to keep party enthusiasm at white heat through frequent correspondence. The brunt of this work was borne by Dr. Hutchinson and Secretary of the Commonwealth Dallas. A letter which Dallas sent to Assemblyman Gallatin offers a fair sample of the fashion in which the Philadelphians courted their upstate colleagues during that spring and summer. Dallas told the western Pennsylvanian that he believed he detected a growing disposition in Philadelphia to displace Fitzsimons as the city's representative in Congress. For this bit of information he asked Gallatin for "a sentimental, philosophical, political, botanical history of your survey of the waters of the Monongahela." More practically, he asked about

15 Nevins, op. cit., 295.
16 General Advertiser, Philadelphia, September 5, 14, 1792.
the dangers of Indian raids in the western counties, about the accept-
ability to Westerners of the rumored impending appointment of
General Arthur St. Clair as Secretary of War of the United States.
He asked Gallatin to give his best wishes to other western politicians,
including Smilie, James Findlay and Alexander Addison.18

In mid-summer the Antifederalists had a chance to challenge the
dominant party in a dramatic manner in the streets of Philadelphia.
By a curious twist of circumstances, this skirmish was fought not
upon the record the Federalists had made while in power, but upon a
side issue—how the candidates for Congress and the electoral college
should be selected.

The question was raised by the inner circle of Federalist politicians
eyearly in July. Meeting at a Philadelphia tavern, they adopted a
plan by which they believed they could capture completely both the
state's congressional and electoral delegations. According to this
scheme, public meetings were to be held in each county under Fed-
eralist auspices to select a committee to correspond about the cam-
paign with political leaders in other parts of the state and to choose
delegates to attend a state-wide convention at Lancaster. The con-
vention would frame congressional and electoral tickets to be voted
on—or, as the Federalists hoped, ratified—by the voters at the
autumn elections.

To get the plan under way, the Federalists called a meeting of
"the citizens of Philadelphia" to discuss "the proper means of form-
ing a congressional ticket" to be held in the assembly chamber of
the State House on the evening of July 19.19 When this enigmatic
announcement appeared in the press, Dr. Hutchinson and Dallas
regarded it with suspicion, and determined to attend. The public
response to the call was disappointing, however, only about seventy-
five persons showing up at the designated time. The Federalists
thereupon adjourned the meeting without attempting to do any busi-
ness, and called another for the evening of July 25.20 This time the
response was better, approximately five hundred persons attending.

Again Dr. Hutchinson and Dallas were present to watch the pro-

18 A. J. Dallas to Albert Gallatin, May 4, 1792, in the Gallatin Papers, IV, New-York His-
torical Society.
19 American Daily Advertiser, Philadelphia, July 18, 1792.
20 American Daily Advertiser, July 20, 1792; Gazette of the United States, Philadelphia,
July 25, 1792.
ceedings for evidences of a Federalist plot. As soon as Judge Wilson, the chairman, had opened the meeting by outlining the plan for a convention, Dallas jumped up to voice general objections to the proposal. This created considerable discussion and delay. Finally John Wilcox, one of the Federalist inner circle, produced a paper from his pocket, and, reading from it, nominated a committee to submit lists of men to serve as convention delegates and members of a committee of correspondence. The suggestion was accepted, and the committee retired. Five minutes later it returned with lists of candidates. Before these could be discussed, men began shouting from the floor that the hour was now too late for further business. To this objection Judge Wilson acceded, and the meeting was adjourned until July 27.21

The two days' interval between the second and third meetings gave the Antifederalists a chance to adopt a policy in regard to the movement for a convention. They saw in the fact that Wilcox had read from a paper convincing evidence that all the details of the meeting had been charted in advance, that the citizens had been summoned merely to sanction a "Federalist plot." Comparing the names Wilcox' committee had proposed with those who had signed a circular calling for the election of Arthur St. Clair as governor of Pennsylvania in 1792, they found so great a similarity that they were convinced the convention movement was the work of the same little band of ultra-Federalist politicians. In Dr. Hutchinson's words, the Antifederalists determined to "rouse the people to support their independence, and to think & act for themselves." They found the public response gratifying. Many men who had been inactive in politics for years resented "this attempt to take from them the right of suffrage" and agreed to join the movement against a convention.

Thanks to the Antifederalists' energetic rounding up of their sympathizers, the crowd that turned out for the meeting of July 27 was too large for the capacities of the assembly chamber. Moreover, the current of opinion expressed ran strongly against the Federalist politicians. As soon as the meeting opened, Dallas took the offensive by moving that all business done at the previous meetings be expunged from the record. This suggestion was volubly resisted by Judge Wilson and William Lewis, a prominent lawyer. After a long

21 American Daily Advertiser, July 27, 1792.
discussion, Samuel Powel, the Federalist speaker of the state senate, who was serving as chairman, put the question to a vote. According to Dr. Hutchinson, who was present as a not disinterested observer, twice as many men voted against the convention plan as voted for it. Nonetheless, Powel declared the sense of the meeting to be in favor of the plan. The vote was taken again, with the same result. A division was called for, which the chairman refused to grant. Hundreds in the crowd began to hiss. Powel abdicated his chair hurriedly, crying out that the meeting was adjourned.

Buoyed by this triumph, the Antifederalists determined to hold a meeting of their own to scotch the convention project completely. In announcing through the press that it would be held on July 30, they appealed particularly to the mechanics and tradesmen of the city to attend. More than two thousand persons crowded into the yard of the State House on the appointed evening, making it, according to Dr. Hutchinson, the largest public meeting held in Philadelphia since 1779.

The Antifederalist leaders had drawn their plans shrewdly, and the meeting remained under their control from the start to the end. Chief Justice Thomas McKean of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, who had been a Whig during the Revolution but a Federalist in more recent years, had been prevailed upon to act as chairman of the meeting. His presence on the platform gave the proceedings a tone of high respectability, and even suggested that they had no partisan purpose. Dr. Hutchinson addressed the meeting on "the various attempts that had been made to dupe the people." In place of the convention plan, he proposed that a non-partisan committee be appointed to send a circular letter to political leaders in every county soliciting suggestions as to what men were qualified to serve as congressmen and presidential electors. The idea was accepted and a committee of seven appointed, including Dr. 'Hutchinson, Dallas, McKean and Wilson. Wilson disapproved heartily of this Antifederalist device to sidetrack his convention plan, and declined to serve.

The Federalists decided that it would be best to regard this meeting as an "unauthorized" affair and to call another meeting to discuss the convention plan in the State House Yard at three o'clock on the afternoon of July 31. To the Antifederalist leaders this ap-

22 General Advertiser, July 30, 1792.
23 American Daily Advertiser, July 31, 1792.
peared a deliberate plot to exclude the bulk of their following from participation in the proceedings, for that hour was an extremely inconvenient one for mechanics and tradesmen. Nevertheless, they exhorted their followers to attend. Through the city they distributed a handbill calling upon “the enlightened Freemen of Philadelphia” to disappoint the “ready made plans” of the Federalists to delude and overawe them “in the exercise of their rights, which the glorious revolution has conferred.” To answer Federalist charges that the meeting on the previous evening had been conducted by enemies of the state and federal constitutions, the circular protested that “no man who attended but was warmly attached to the support and prosperity of the Constitutions of the United States and of Pennsylvania, which are both happily founded upon the principles of representation, and to which every insidious attempt to new model and destroy the right of suffrage, is both hostile and injurious.” The result was a meeting almost as large as the one the night before. At the start, the assemblage was almost equally divided between the parties, but, as the affair proceeded, the Antifederalist ranks increased constantly.

The two parties began a contest for control of the meeting with the selection of a chairman. The Federalists proposed Powel for the position; the Antifederalists countered with the name of McKean. After several divisions had been taken without reaching a decision, both men withdrew their names. Thereupon the Federalists proposed Robert Morris, the Antifederalists John Barclay. Again there were numerous divisions without result.

By this time the Federalists were growing apprehensive that the droves of Antifederalists continuing to flock into the Yard would soon outnumber them hopelessly. A group of them retired to the west part of the Yard and attempted to install Morris in the chair intended for the presiding officer. Seeing this, some Antifederalists rushed forward, seized the chair and table and tore them to pieces. In the words of Dr. Hutchinson, “it was with difficulty violences of a more serious nature were prevented.”

24 General Advertiser, August 1, 1792.
25 Unless otherwise noted, this account of the five Philadelphia meetings is based upon James Hutchinson to Albert Gallatin, August 19, 1792, in the Gallatin Papers, IV. Compare this with the Federalist committee’s official description of the meetings published in the American Daily Advertiser, August 14, 1792.
The Federalists, despairing of obtaining an endorsement of their convention plan at a town meeting in Philadelphia, now contented themselves with a series of conferences to which only trusted partisans were invited. At these affairs, held at Epple's Tavern on August 2 and 4, a committee of nine Philadelphia Federalists was appointed to correspond with county leaders about plans for a convention and to request their opinions as to the best way "to produce a wise and virtuous representation for the Congress of the United States, and a proper choice of electors for the President of the United States."\(^{26}\)

During the next six weeks this appeal met a fair response from Federalists in other parts of the state. Public meetings to select delegates to attend the convention were held in at least eight counties.\(^{27}\) In Montgomery County the Philadelphia struggle was repeated on a small scale, with the Antifederalists holding a rival meeting to endorse the correspondence plan.\(^{28}\) In Carlisle, members of both parties agreed the convention movement was a failure. Federalists said this was because "the Antis hung back," Antifederalists because "a select few" had attempted to prevent the majority from expressing its will by holding the meeting at a tavern at night, rather than at the customary place and time for political action, the courthouse in the daytime.\(^{29}\)

The Federalists held their convention at Lancaster, according to plan, on September 20. Thirty-three delegates, representing but ten of Pennsylvania's twenty counties, appeared. Two tickets were drawn up—a congressional ticket headed by Fitzsimons and an electoral ticket headed by James Ross of Washington County. Seven of the thirteen names on the congressional ticket were those which the Antifederalists had nominated for the same office at their caucus the preceding spring.\(^{30}\)

Meanwhile, the committee appointed at the Antifederalist-dominated Philadelphia meeting of July 30 proceeded with its task of gathering the names of men who would make likely congressional

\(^{26}\) General Advertiser, August 14, 1792.

\(^{27}\) General Advertiser, August 9, 27, September 6, 12, 15, 21, 22, 24, 1792.

\(^{28}\) General Advertiser, September 4, 12, 1792.


\(^{30}\) General Advertiser, September 25, 1792.
and electoral candidates. On August 3 it dispatched 520 copies of a circular letter to political leaders and to the foremen of grand juries in every county of the state. It emphasized that the names of able persons in the recipients’ own neighborhood were particularly desired. “We are not delegated to deliberate upon the subject of the election”; the committeemen wrote, “to admit or to reject the names of candidates; to declare the sense of the people; or to frame a ticket. All that we are authorized to do . . . is, to obtain a list of the various characters whom the citizens, of every denomination and in every part of the state, deem to be qualified . . . ; and to submit this list, without the influence of a selection, or a comment, to the deliberate consideration, and the unbiassed suffrages of the people.”

The results of the canvass were published in the Philadelphia press late in September. Replies had been received from seventeen of the twenty counties. The names of forty-four men had been suggested as congressional candidates; ninety-one men were proposed for presidential electors. The documents accumulated during the survey, it was announced, were open to public inspection at the office of Robert Henry Dunkin, a Philadelphia lawyer. The committee’s assertion that the canvass was non-partisan is supported by the fact that both Federalist and Antifederalist names were included on its lists.

But at the very time the committee was soliciting names for this non-partisan purpose, two of its members—Dr. Hutchinson and Dallas—were quietly organizing the Antifederalists for the coming elections. Along with three other members of the inner circle of the party—Colonel Jacob Morgan, Colonel William Coats and Dr. Samuel Jackson—they were writing their allies throughout the state urging that they keep up their exertions in behalf of the congressional ticket chosen by the party caucus. In his confidential letters to Anti-federalists, Dr. Hutchinson made clear the difference between the committee for the non-partisan canvass and the party campaign committee. The former, he pointed out, “is composed of various Characters.” When writing confidentially about party activities and prospects, he told his fellow workers, letters should be addressed to

31 General Advertiser, August 4, 1792. One of the letters, addressed to John Irvine of Cumberland County, is in the Broadsides Collection of The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.
32 General Advertiser, September 26, 27, 1792.
one of the members of the party committee. And, he warned, "be
careful by whom you write, for recollect neither Honour, the Laws of
Society, or Moral Rectitude, are sufficient to render seals sacred with
our enemies."\(^{33}\)

Dr. Hutchinson's correspondence revealed the fluctuating hopes
and fears of the party leaders in Philadelphia as the campaign pro-
gressed. In mid-August they were quite sanguine about the prospects
for their congressional slate, and they believed they could even carry
the City and County of Philadelphia. They were finding it quite
difficult, however, to fill the two places the caucus had left vacant
for men from Philadelphia. "Those whose principles can be de-
pended on, and will do honour to the station," Dr. Hutchinson com-
plained, "will not serve." The party leaders were also discussing
changing one of the names on the ticket so as to preserve a balance
between the eastern and western sections of the state.\(^{34}\)

In mid-September the outlook remained just as bright. By this
time the Antifederalist chieftans had completed their ticket: Jona-
than D. Sergeant and John Barclay were to be the candidates from
Philadelphia. Dr. Hutchinson still regretted that the most popular
men in their group had not permitted their names to be run; but "on
the whole," he felt, "we have done tolerably well, and the ticket . . .
will meet with an Active support in this part of the state. The Whig
spirit is up and we are feelingly alive." From the reports reaching
him, he believed the Antifederalists were certain of making a good
showing in Philadelphia and might possibly carry it. Montgomery,
Northampton, Berks and Dauphin counties seemed certain to be in
the Antifederalist column. Delaware, Bucks, Chester, Lancaster and
York, on the other hand, seemed irredeemably Federalist, the last
named, hopelessly so.\(^{35}\)

In spite of this general optimism, the Antifederalist committee of
correspondence redoubled its efforts as election day approached.
Dr. Hutchinson was indefatigable, writing personal letters to Ga-
llatin, William Findley, Smilie, Redick, James Marshel, Thomas
Stokely, John McDowell, James Edgar, Alexander Wright and James
Allison among the western group alone.\(^{36}\) In such letters the polit-

33 James Hutchinson to Albert Gallatin, September 14, 1792, in the Gallatin Papers, IV
34 James Hutchinson to Albert Gallatin, August 19, 1792, in the Gallatin Papers, IV
35 James Hutchinson to Albert Gallatin, September 14, 1792, in the Gallatin Papers, IV
36 James Hutchinson to Albert Gallatin, September 25, 1792, in the Gallatin Papers, IV
ically-minded doctor and his helpmate, Secretary Dallas, laid down the party line in respect to the Federalists' convention at Lancaster. Antifederalists from Berks County who attended the convention had told Dallas that only five of the county delegations had been chosen by legitimately conducted public meetings; the persons present from the other five counties were "unauthorized individuals." Therefore, the Secretary told the party workers, the convention was "self-created. . . . Let it be well understood that they not only assembled without any legitimate authority, but when they met were involved in disputes, and, finally, separated dissatisfied and despondent."37

Along with such advice about political strategy, the committee sent handbills and addresses to the voters which described the virtues of the Antifederalist candidates. The National Gazette, General Advertiser and American Daily Advertiser in Philadelphia and sympathetic journals in other towns also gave wide circulation to their point of view.

In their campaign literature the Antifederalists branded their opponents "the Gentlemen" and "the Aristocrats of 1792" who had been "the Tories of 1776." "They have failed, it is true, in their efforts to keep us slaves of Britain," one of their handbills conceded, "but beware! that they do not make us slaves to themselves." Hamilton's funding system was declared to be similar to the one which was the basis of British monarchy and aristocracy. In their literature the Antifederalists gave themselves no party name; but some of their handbills, with a nod toward Thomas Paine, pamphleteer of the Revolution, referred to their candidates as the "Friends of the Rights of Man."38

The Federalists did not permit such challenges to their supremacy to go unanswered. A typical piece of their campaign literature described the Antifederalists as men who, "having in vain opposed the ratification of the federal constitution, are now aiming a deadly blow at its administration, and attempting to bring a government into discredit."39

Late in the congressional campaign several Federalist penmen undertook to "expose" the Antifederalist caucus of the preceding

37 A. J. Dallas to Albert Gallatin, September 25, 1792, in the Gallatin Papers, IV.
38 Two campaign broadsides in the collection of The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.
39 Handbill in the Broadsides Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.
spring. One, styling himself "Cerberus," wrote several newspaper articles describing the meeting in the University of Pennsylvania's anatomical hall in terms which made it sound like an arch-conspiracy. To document his charges, he published a copy of a letter an upstate Antifederalist party worker had written a friend about the conduct of the campaign. The Antifederalists made no effort to deny the basic truth of the story, although some of them did demand "proof." The strongest defense they offered was one printed in the journals over the name of "Russell." This maintained that the people had a perfect right to meet "peacefully and privately" to discuss tickets, but the Federalists were acting outrageously in pretending that their Lancaster convention was a public body which duly represented the counties of the state.

The most damaging blow to the Antifederalists' prospects, however, was administered not by the opposition but by a section of their own party. On August 21 a mass meeting at Pittsburgh passed resolutions condemning the federal excise law. A number of Antifederalist leaders, including Smilie, one of the party's congressional candidates, took prominent roles in the affair. On September 15, President Washington issued a proclamation condemning the proceedings as "violent and unwarrantable."

The action of the meeting shocked and frightened the eastern Antifederalists. Even before the President's proclamation, Bache demanded in his General Advertiser what excuse could be offered for any one who asked for the obstruction of the operation of a constitutional law passed by the legal representatives of the people. A Philadelphia Antifederalist, writing to one of the party's congressional candidates from the western part of the state, declared that he was "right sorry" to read the resolutions, and so were "all your other friends; for things were going right enough without it, and you might have been safe in Congress, clean as a whistle, if you could only have had patience to let your friends play the game, and only looked on. But by one of your resolves against the laws and the Excise officers, you have given the other party a handle, and the people now

40 General Advertiser, September 5, 7, 14, 1792; American Daily Advertiser, October 1, 1792.
41 General Advertiser, September 12, 15, 1792; Federal Gazette, September 29, 1792.
42 Pennsylvania Archives, Second Series, IV, 32, 33.
43 General Advertiser, September 1, 1792.
say, that you want no laws at all, and that such men will not do for
them. . . . Neither the Doctor [Hutchinson] nor the Secretary
[Dallas] can say a word in favour of your proceedings, or give any
kind of colouring ever so slight." 44

The correspondent did not exaggerate Dr. Hutchinson's distress.
"Tis impossible to conceive what mischief your Pittsburg meeting
about the excise has done us," he wrote Gallatin on September 25.
"It will injure Mr. Smiley exceedingly and hurt our whole ticket.
Untill the event of that meeting was published our opponents were
prostrate. That has served for their resurrection." 45

The Federalists did their utmost to capitalize on the distrust the
westerners' resolutions had created. Their handbills emphasized the
prominent part Smilie had taken at the meeting. 46 "To see public
characters, and candidates for seats in Congress, joining in resolu-
tions calculated to encourage an opposition to the law of their coun-
try . . ." a Federalist wrote in a typical screed in his party's press,
"is a melancholy proof of the depravity of our nature. . . . These
things are contrary to the moral duties enjoined by the precepts of
christianity." 47

Despite the issue raised by the excise resolution, the results of the
congressional election, held on October 9, were most heartening for
the Antifederalist cause. True, they did not provide a clear-cut
comparison of strength between the parties, inasmuch as seven of
the thirteen candidates had been nominated by both Federalists and
Antifederalists. But the Antifederalists, ill-organized as they still
were, were able to elect three of their six candidates whom the Fed-
eralists did not support, and the Federalists elected three the Anti-
federalists did not list. The successful candidates who were unques-
tionably Antifederalist partisans were Smilie, William Montgomery
and Andrew Gregg, all westerners. 48

On the whole, the Antifederalist leaders were well satisfied with
the results they had achieved. Looking over the election returns,
Dr. Hutchinson was convinced that it was largely ticket-splitting
in several counties that had prevented the party from achieving a

44 Mail, Philadelphia, October 2, 1792.
45 James Hutchinson to Albert Gallatin, September 25, 1792, in the Gallatin Papers, IV.
46 Handbill in the Broadsides Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.
47 Federal Gazette, October 6, 1792.
clean sweep. The Pittsburgh excise resolutions, he told Gallatin, "lost us the Majority in the Counties of Berks and Dauphin. For the most of our ticket, the Arts of our opponents, together with the President’s proclamation, and other circumstances too tedious to detail, attached many of our honest but credulous friends in those Counties. . . . Notwithstanding however the strong opposition we had a majority in Philadelphia County for the whole, and were close on the heels of our Opponents in the City." 49

To Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson, who was already on strained terms with his cabinet colleague Hamilton, the results of the Pennsylvania election augured well for the cause whose national leader he was to become a few years later. "The vote of this state," he noted with satisfaction, "can generally turn the balance." 50

As soon as the congressional elections were out of the way, the Pennsylvania Antifederalists made the November poll for presidential electors their primary concern. Since late spring it had generally been understood that Washington would run for reelection as President. The Chief Executive’s decision had been influenced in part by Secretary Jefferson’s urging that the nation was so distraught by argument over the Hamiltonian system that the federal government required the services of the Revolutionary hero to surmount the "crisis." 51 Throughout the country the scattered political groups opposed to Hamilton’s measures followed Jefferson’s cue and agreed to support the President for reelection. But many of them determined to do their utmost to replace John Adams in the Vice-Presidency with a man whose point of view was closer to their own.

Apparently the Philadelphia Antifederalist group had first given serious consideration to the national election early in September. It was then that Dallas made a journey to New York City and spent much time in the circle of George Clinton, the Livingstons, Commodore James Nicholson and Aaron Burr. These practical politicians of the Empire State were opposed to Hamilton, not merely as the promoter of a national economic and political system, but as the head of a state party with which they had fought regularly since the

49 James Hutchinson to Albert Gallatin, October 24, 1792, in the Gallatin Papers, IV.
50 Thomas Jefferson to Thomas Mann Randolph, November 16, 1792, in Paul L. Ford, editor, the Writings of Jefferson (New York, 1892-1899), VI, 134.
Revolutionary period. They shared the views of the Pennsylvania Antifederalists on the practical and philosophical aspects of politics.

Dallas discovered that Clinton and his party were then inclining toward Senator Burr as their candidate for Vice-President. According to a report that ran through political circles at the time, Dallas assured the New Yorkers that Burr would receive the support of the Pennsylvania Antifederalists.\(^52\) Subsequently the New Yorkers returned to their first choice for the Vice-Presidency—Clinton, who had just been reelected governor of the state in a bitterly contested election.

In spite of the informal agreement Dallas seems to have reached with the Clintonians, the Pennsylvania Antifederalists could summon up little enthusiasm for the November election. As Dr. Hutchinson saw it in early October, “we owe it to our friends in the other States to make an effort” to displace Adams, inasmuch “as the Southern States will certainly attempt a change” and “will receive some Assistance from New York, Vermont, Rhode Island, and perhaps New Jersey.” But he was not sanguine about the prospects in Pennsylvania, because “it will be difficult to induce the people to come out for an Object they in general think of so little importance.”

This half-hearted spirit characterized the whole 1792 presidential campaign in Pennsylvania. Not until late October was an electoral ticket to oppose that nominated by the Federalist convention published in the press and dispatched to the party workers. On it appeared the names of such Antifederalist stalwarts as Dallas, Colonel Morgan and Dr. Jackson. In conducting their campaign, the Antifederalists were, as Dr. Hutchinson himself phrased it, “silent and secret.”\(^53\)

The Antifederalist leaders’ suspicion that Pennsylvanians considered the question of Adams’ displacement of little moment was confirmed on election day, November 6. Relatively few voters bothered to go to the polls. “The choice of an intermediate body appeared” to Bache, of the *General Advertiser*, “to remove from their attention the ultimate and important result of the election.”

As a result, the Antifederalist cause fared very badly. Not a single

---

52 Rufus King to Alexander Hamilton, September 17, 1792, J. C. Hamilton, editor, the *Works of Hamilton* (New York, 1850-1851), V, 526.

53 James Hutchinson to Albert Gallatin, October 2, 1792, in the Gallatin Papers, IV.
candidate on the "friends of the rights of man" electoral ticket who had not also been nominated by the Federalists was elected. Adams won fourteen of Pennsylvania's electoral votes, while Clinton received one.64

IV

Yet on the whole the Antifederalists had good reason to feel encouraged by the results of their first challenge to the domination of the Federalist party. During the years that followed they continued to battle spiritedly in every state and national election. The passage of time brought them new members, a new name, a more tightly knit organization, and ever greater success. The yellow fever carried away three of their stalwarts—Dr. Hutchinson, Sergeant and Bache; but their leadership gained some important acquisitions, including two former Federalists, Thomas McKean and Tench Coxe, and two able newcomers to politics, William Duane and Dr. Michael Leib. After the arrival of Edmond Genet, first minister of democratic-republican France in 1793, they gradually adopted the name Democratic-Republican for their party. After Jefferson left Washington's cabinet early in 1794, they came to regard him as the actual as well as the spiritual leader of their cause. In the presidential election of 1796, thanks to the work of John Beckley, clerk of the federal House of Representatives, in coordinating their efforts with those of Democratic-Republicans in other states, they carried Pennsylvania for Jefferson. Their unflagging uphill fight was climaxed by the election of McKean as governor in 1799 and Jefferson as president in 1800. The triumph of these latter years was built upon the foundation they had laid during the election of 1792.

Columbia University

Raymond Walters, Jr.

64 General Advertiser, November 5, 6, 8, 23, 1792.