The Democrats’ Loss of Pennsylvania in 1858

Pennsylvania’s importance in antebellum politics is a commonplace to historians. In 1856 it was one of only five free states to be won by the Democratic presidential candidate, James Buchanan. The Democrats chose Buchanan partly because he was an influential Pennsylvanian. The state was vital to the Republicans for 1860, and, reluctantly and in vague terms, they introduced a tariff resolution into their national platform of that year specifically to appeal to protectionist sentiment in the state. As historians have emphasized, the crucial breakthrough for the Republicans occurred in 1858, when the state went dramatically against the Democrats. President Buchanan wrote in October: “We have met the enemy in Pennsylvania and we are theirs. This I have anticipated for three months, and was not taken by surprise except as to the extent of our defeat. . . . It is so great that it is almost absurd.” There were twenty-four Northern congressional districts in which the Democrats’ share of the vote fell by over four percentage points between 1856 and 1858; no fewer than fifteen were in Pennsylvania. In the contest for state offices the Democrats’ percentage fell from 50.1 in 1856 and 52.0 in 1857 to 46.3 in 1858. This was scarcely a cataclysmic

The author would like to thank Professor Michael F. Holt for his advice at an early stage of this research and for a stimulating and encouraging critique of an earlier draft of the present paper.


2 Nevins, Emergence of Lincoln, I, 400; Coleman, Disruption of Pennsylvania Democracy, 117.

3 Throughout this paper, two sources for election returns have been used. Congressional results, with percentages already provided, are found in Congressional Quarterly’s Guide to U.S. Elections (Washington D.C., 1975), 602, 605. For all other results the county returns are taken from the Tribune Almanac and Political Register for 1857 (New York, 1857), 48-9; Tribune Almanac . . . for 1858, 53; Tribune Almanac . . . for 1859, 52-3. The state figures for the 1860s are from Joel H. Silbey, A Respectable Minority: The Democratic Party in the Civil War Era 1860-1868 (New York, 1977), 22, 151, 220.
drop; but it represented a very grave loss in a nationally tight electoral situation where Pennsylvania was a precious state for the Democrats.

Moreover, the election of 1858 marked a longer term shift in party strength in the state. Although the Democrats had been drubbed very badly in Pennsylvania in 1854, they had normally held on to about half the popular vote. In the five presidential ballots from 1840 to 1856 inclusive the Democrats won an average of 49.8 percent of the votes, and only in 1848 did their share deviate sharply from the norm: 49.9 percent in 1840, 50.6 in 1844, 46.8 in 1848, 51.4 in 1852 and 50.1 in 1856. So, too, in the six statewide elections before 1858 the Democrats had averaged 50.6 percent of the vote; those elections included two presidential contests, two gubernatorial contests, and elections to secondary state offices in 1853 and 1855. Yet, after the defeat of 1858, Pennsylvania was truly lost to the Democratic party. Its average percentage of the poll in the three state elections of 1858, 1859, and 1860 was 46.8; and the Democrats' average share in seven statewide competitions in 1862-1868 inclusive was 48.7 percent. The shift in support was not earth-shattering, but in the context of a two-party system it was enough to cut the state's Democrats off from state power and to deny them electoral college votes, senators, and influence in the nation. In both the short and long terms the election of 1858 meant the Democrats' loss of Pennsylvania.

This loss has been frequently analyzed by historians. One explanation was that the electorate was alienated by the proslavery policy pursued in Kansas by President Buchanan's administration. The Le-compton constitution, which would have made Kansas a slave state, was not promulgated and then endorsed until after the state election of October 1857 and so came into play only towards the end of 1857 and during 1858. Once the Buchanan administration announced its support for this document, divisions quickly deepened within the factious Democratic party and new energy was injected into the Republicans' crusade against the "Slave Power" and against slavery extension. One of Buchanan's lieutenants in Pittsburgh reported in January, 1858: "Forty-nine of every fifty Democrats in this region are in favor of Kansas joining the Union as a free state." Despite plentiful advice along the lines indicated by this statement, Buchanan and his principal Pennsylvania lieutenants—Senator William Bigler and U.S. Attorney-General Jeremiah S. Black—pressed ahead to obtain the state party's approval for their policy towards Kansas and
in support of slavery’s further extension. Their efforts simply further divided the Democrats, with the anti-Lecomptonites being led by Governor William Packer and John W. Forney, who had established his own newspaper in Philadelphia in August 1857 and who was even then disaffected from Buchanan.4

The validity of the “antislavery” explanation for the Democrats’ loss of Pennsylvania has been much questioned. In his revisionist study of Pittsburgh, Michael F. Holt gave special attention to the careful building of an anti-Democratic coalition, to the strengthening of ties between Know-Nothings and Republicans, and to the People’s party’s ability in 1858 to counter local Democrats on local matters, most particularly the raising of taxes to pay interest on bonds issued by the county government to railroad companies. While the People’s party outmaneuvered the Democrats trying to counter-attack on local issues in 1857 and 1858, it also, as Holt shows, enjoyed an advantage over Democrats seriously divided by Lecompton and by Buchanan’s support for it. Democrats, who had made much of their claims as the party of the Union and national harmony in 1856, were unable to exploit sectional and slavery issues to their own benefit in 1858.5 The principal newspaper of the People’s party in Pittsburgh in 1858 did not mention sectional questions as frequently as local tax questions. But the party gained readily from the former, whereas it was obliged to counter-balance Democratic initiatives on the latter. Holt also plays down the electoral impact of protectionism in Pittsburgh. He denies that state-wide protectionist sentiment aroused by the economic depression in 1858 swept the essentially low tariff Democrats from office.

John F. Coleman in his history of the state Democratic party in the 1850s concluded, “The People’s party platform gave greatest prominence to economic issues and those views—the depressed state of business, unemployment, and the imperative need for increased

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5 Holt, Forging a Majority, 239-55.
502 BRUCE COLLINS October
tariff protection—remained central to the opposition's appeals in sub-
sequent months." A "workingmen's revolt against the Democratic party . . . overshadowed the Kansas issue" and, together with the
debilitating effects of factionalism, defeated the Democrats.6 For the
cities in particular, it has also been argued that Democratic congres-
sional victories in 1856 were by pluralities, not majorities, and that
the crucial development of 1858 was the creation of effective urban
Republican mergers with the Know-Nothings.7

Clearly, these differences of interpretation call for some further
explanation. This article re-examines the events of 1857-58. It stresses,
first, that those events made it extremely difficult for the Democrats
to exploit state issues as an alternative to their opponents' national
appeals. Secondly, it shows that the Lecompton dispute so divided
the Democrats within the state as to prevent them from deflecting
attention from their opponents' undoubtedly popular anti-Southern
appeal. And, thirdly, it asserts that varieties of historical explanation
for the Democrats' loss of Pennsylvania result from differences of
electoral response in 1858; the turn-out of voters was a key factor
previously ignored in overall assessments of the voting returns.

What must be stressed above all else, however, is the need to see
the interaction of political developments at the national, state, and
local levels. In October 1858, there were elections for Congress, for
the state legislature, and for a state Supreme Court judgeship. While
matters of national policy were given prominent attention in the
campaign, politicians and partisan newspapers were always eager to
use state issues to bolster party support, re-assure the party faithful,
or woo uncertain voters by appealing to particularist interests. To
explain the Democrats' loss of the state in 1858, therefore, it is
appropriate—indeed necessary—to understand why the party, so well
placed at the beginning of the year, found itself discredited on state
as well as federal issues. Traditionally, political historians have used
state studies to illustrate the state impact of national issues, to provide

6 Holt, Forging a Majority, 253-4; Coleman, Disruption of Pennsylvania Democracy, 117-
18. Philip S. Klein and Ari Hoogenboom also maintain that, after July 1858, the People's
party concentrated on the tariff, A History of Pennsylvania, 2nd edn. (University Park, 1980),
176.

7 David E. Meerse, “The Northern Democratic Party and the Congressional Elections
of 1858,” Civil War History XIX (1973), 119-37.
state variations on national themes. Even where some detail concerning state issues is included—as in Coleman's monograph—the focus remains on the national questions, while happenings in the state legislature are ignored. An exploration of state as well as national issues in Pennsylvania from October 1857 to October 1858, convincingly demonstrates the complexity of political life and offers an explanation of the Democrats' defeat.

First, let us examine the divisive issues of state policy—banking and the sale of the remaining publicly-owned canals. These arose partly from the economic problems facing the state following the panic of 1857. Although the financial crash of September-October 1857 resulted in immediate cries for tariff protection, initial reactions focused on the banking collapse which caused the crash rather than the wider crisis in manufacturing that followed it. Rumors that Pennsylvania's banks were about to suspend in late September sent people scurrying to banks to redeem their notes. Even where there was no panic, "there is . . . among those who do not handle much money great distrust; there has been a great demand for Gold," with, unfortunately, none available. By election day in October, country bank notes stood at 4½-5 percent discount at Philadelphia. Affairs in the metropolis caused much alarm.

Pennsylvania's banking capital was overwhelmingly concentrated in Philadelphia: $12 millions of the total of $22 millions, according to a legislative report in 1856. On September 25, 1857, the crash

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10 Geo. W. Garrettson to Bell, Sept. 26, 28, 1857, S.H. Smith to Bell, Sept. 28, Oct. 3, 13, 1857, James M. Bell papers, Duke University Library. Bell was a Juniata valley banker, railroad promoter, iron master and state senator; his correspondence described the panic's impact in Huntingdon and Johnstown.
began in the state with the suspension of the Bank of Pennsylvania, a very substantial institution which acted as the banking house for the state government. The suspension spread rapidly in Philadelphia and then throughout the state. What angered country banks (those, that is, outside Philadelphia) was their dependence on the metropolitan banks and the collective attempt by those banks to cajole the country banks into keeping deposits in Philadelphia. A circular went out to country banks in October asking them to deposit sums in Philadelphia banks. These sums would enable the co-operating metropolitan institutions to redeem on demand the country banks’ notes circulating in the city if note-holders wanted them redeemed. The Harrisburg Republican newspaper reacted by lambasting the metropolitan banks for their inefficiency, speculative management, and effort now to squeeze extra, interest-free, deposits out of generally healthy and modest-sized country banks. “Our country banks,” it urged, “must protect their customers at home, and not again attempt to sustain the rickety institutions in Philadelphia.”

Politicians outside Philadelphia blamed the crash on the metropolitan banks that were, after all, responsible for the bulk of the state’s banking business. They forced specie suspension in late September; they were often high-handed in their dealings with the much smaller country banks; and, in some cases, their management was poor. The commissioners investigating the Bank of Pennsylvania reported damningly in February 1858: “The finale of this bank shows there is little utility, and less reliance, to be placed on the bank statements as sworn to by the officers of a bank, and sent to the Auditor General.”

Despite the small-town reaction against Philadelphia, the crash had occurred so quickly that it was difficult to establish a consensus on banking policy in early October. Philadelphia’s legislative representatives were also reluctant to make financial matters worse in the

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12 Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, General Assembly, Legislative Documents for 1858 (Harrisburg, 1858), 417-20, 642-46. The dispute over the redemption of country banks’ notes by the city banks continued in 1858. See, e.g., Daily Telegraph, Sept. 11, 16, Oct. 4, 1858.
metropolis. One young Republican, a former newspaper editor and future congressman, wrote from the city on 21 September:

We are in the midst of a great money panic—one not likely to be less permanent and disastrous than that of 1837. . . . I have never seen such alarm. It is quite a study to go along Chestnut and Third, and watch the countenance of the crowd. Some of the Savings Funds have had a run, and this morning the police (I heard) were called to dismiss and move fifty females who were in vain trying to get into the establishment.\textsuperscript{13}

Under such pressure, the banks suspended specie payments. As their action was illegal, Governor James Pollock, a Whig/Know-Nothing, called the legislature into special session just as the state election campaign reached its climax.\textsuperscript{14}

Knowing that any action they took would create opposition, the legislators procrastinated. One Republican cautioned Senator Simon Cameron:

By all means let not our friends in the Legislature take the lead in any measures to sanction the Banks' suspension. If they can't put the responsibility on the other party let them do nothing—but adjourn as quickly as possible. The masses are against the suspension, and no excuses can remove their prejudices. Besides I think any legislative action now is premature.\textsuperscript{15}

Still, public sentiment had to be placated. The Republican newspaper at Harrisburg, generally favoring Cameron's actions, and Pittsburgh's Republican paper took the convenient course of decrying Philadelphia's banks and praising the country banks' conduct. One of Philadelphia's leading bankers retorted that Senator Cameron was deeply involved with banks in the city as well as with those elsewhere in the state. The Harrisburg \textit{Daily Telegraph} continued to pour quiet scorn on the Democrats' "hard money" ideas and also criticized the metropolitan banks' conduct and standards.\textsuperscript{16} Given the tug of regional

\textsuperscript{13} Edward McPherson to father, Sept. 21, 1857 (also Oct. 1, 1857), Edward McPherson papers, Library of Congress.


\textsuperscript{15} James Veeck to Cameron, Oct. 6, 1857, Simon Cameron papers, Library of Congress.

interests as well as confusions over parties’ previous positions on banking matters, the legislators sensibly postponed their decisions about suspension until election-day itself. They then legalized suspension for a fixed period, until April 1858. But they also limited banks’ dividends during the period of suspension and placed a stay on creditors’ actions against indebted property-owners.  

How did the Democrats with their traditions of hostility towards banks respond to measures indulgent towards those institutions? According to Coleman, the lack of tough action against illegal suspension resulted from “wholesale bribery.” Actually, the legislators’ behavior conformed to more general patterns of partisan response to banking and currency issues. The so-called Opposition legislators (Republicans and Know-Nothings) favored banks and voted overwhelmingly against a Senate amendment to ban small notes and for a more generous period of legalized suspension than the act eventually permitted. On the other hand, Democratic legislators were inclined to ban bank-notes of under $10 in denomination, and they were adamant in limiting the duration of legalized suspension to April, rather than extending it to June. On permitting suspension at all, the Democrats, especially those in the House, were very much divided. Twenty Democratic representatives, of forty-nine voting, supported legalizing suspension. Bribery may have played a part in producing this result, but the charge of bribery was a contemporary Republican journalist’s accusation, unproven then and unsubstantiated since. Twelve of the twenty came from counties with persistent records in the special session of support for legislation favorable to banks. Two others represented a rapidly developing district which needed legislative concessions and which sought to charter a bank. The Democrats may have voted as they did because of constituency pressures rather than pecuniary temptations.  

The absence of Democratic unity on banking issues was not unusual. Even in the hey-day of Democratic anti-banking sentiment during the 1830s and early 1840s, the party had typically split between a

\[^{18}\] Coleman, Disruption of Pennsylvania Democracy, 108. 
\[^{19}\] Journal of the House: Session of 1857, 63, 68. Legislators’ party affiliations are given in Harrisburg, Daily Telegraph, Oct. 25, 1856.
majority critical of or hostile towards banks and a minority reluctant to take up the cudgels against note-issuing institutions. The behavior of the twenty who supported suspension was consistent with more general tendencies in Democratic voting behavior.

These roll-calls also showed that Eric Foner’s explanation for political quiescence on banking issues after the mid-1850s do not apply in Pennsylvania. He argued that the Democrats most hostile to banks in the 1840s were free soilers who in the mid-1850s went over to the new Republican or anti-Nebraska coalition. Their political exodus neutralized financial issues, for the Hunker Democrats remaining in the party had never been strongly anti-bank. The free soil Democrats who became Republicans did not wish to rock the emergent Republican or People’s coalition by raising financial issues that would divide them from ex-Whigs. In October 1857, although relatively few Opposition legislators broke with their Republican colleagues’ generally pro-banking stance, one-third of them did so on the final passage of legalization in the House. Also, a majority of the Democrats opposed this pro-bank indulgence. This divergence of opinion continued in the regular session of 1858. Such divisions reflected the complexities and counter-pulls of local and regional interests that made the formulation of state party policy extremely difficult.

Once the heat of the election cooled and the pressure of the financial panic eased, the Democrats were in an excellent position to reform the banking system. They now occupied the governorship and controlled both houses of the legislature. Philadelphia’s only Republican newspaper exaggerated its complaint about the new legislature: “There is a blind hatred entertained by many against all banking institutions which will cause them to vote for any resolutions or bill which they believe will strike a severe blow at the banks.” Democratic legislators did ponder a number of reform proposals. The legislature considered a resolution authorizing a governors’ convention whose purpose would be to discuss the prohibition of notes under $5, $10 or possibly $20 in denomination. Pennsylvania might stop its own banks from issuing small notes—it already banned those under

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$5—but it could scarcely staunch the flow of paper currency emitted by banks in neighbouring New Jersey or New York. Co-operation between states was essential to the success of any major currency reform. In late March 1858, however, the House voted by 48 to 41 to postpone indefinitely further consideration of the issue. Postponement was brought about by the Republicans acting as a body (31 to 1) in league with 17 of the 57 Democrats actually voting. Although the overwhelming majority of the Democrats (40 to 17) wished to consider currency reform further, they were defeated by their Republican opponents and by a splinter group of Democrats.23

With co-operation between states ruled out, Democrats raised a number of suggestions for unilateral state action. One modest change was to require that all banking capital be paid up before operations began; this was a way of limiting fraudulent banking. Another reform was to establish a post of state bank superintendent.24 More elaborate, if still relatively modest, was one Democratic legislator’s proposal that bank capital be paid in specie, and that upper limits be set upon the proportion of any bank’s paper circulation issued in notes of small denominations.25 The most dramatic test of traditional Democratic thinking on currency matters was the proposal to ban small notes. An influential state senator, P. Schell, introduced a bill to prohibit notes of under $20. This proposal was subsequently modified to ban notes under $10 in denomination, in an effort by the Democratic senate leader, Charles R. Buckalew, to smooth its passage. In April 1858, however, the bill was rejected by 17 to 15 votes in the Senate. All fifteen supporters of the bill were Democrats. Again, the legislature was controlled by the united Republicans (all twelve of them) and a minority (five) of the Democrats.26

23 Harrisburg, Daily Telegraph, March 12, 19, 24, 1858. Legislators’ party affiliations are given in Idem, Jan. 4, 12, 30, 1858.
24 Part draft of a bill (paper listing sections 10 through 30, with 31, 32, 33, 35 and 38 noted to be struck out) in file 1858-59, Box 1808-1866, Samuel J. Randall papers, University of Pennsylvania library.
25 Philadelphia, North American, Feb. 1, 6, 1858. This proposal was put by a prominent Democrat, Judge James Nill. He later opposed those who attacked the banks outright. The Legislative Record (Harrisburg, 1858), 492-93.
26 Journal of the Senate: 1858 Session (Harrisburg, 1858), 133, 506, 691; The Legislative Record, 427. Schell was described to Attorney-General Black as “one of the soundest men” in the Senate. He was influential in senior Democratic circles in that body. G.W. Bowman
Democratic mutterings about the desirability of bank reform continued. The party's state convention in early March passed a resolution calling for the "revision" of the state's banking system. And in June 1858, the Collector of the Port of Philadelphia asked U.S. Attorney-General Black to draft some resolutions for a Democratic July 4 rally to include a suitable statement of party intent or belief on banking; "perhaps the currency question with that of the Tariff can be so combined as to give us good grounds upon which to fight the opposition." Clearly the disunited Democrats did not find banking reform an alternative to the increasingly politically attractive panacea of protective tariffs. The bank crisis receded as 1858 wore on. In May, George W. Scranton, soon to become a Republican congressman, informed the Democratic Senator Bigler:

> It is now pretty clearly established that the action will not be against the Banks. They have proved themselves sound, with the exception of here and there an isolated case and it is quite certain no new legislation either by the General or State Governments can be brought upon them that will be likely to work any improvement in the Banking system.

State banking issues could not unite the Democrats.

The Democrats fared even worse over the second issue of state policy, the sale of the state's lateral canals. At one level, the sale of the canals resulted from expediency and managerial good sense and won support irrespective of party. The state-owned canal system had been begun in 1825 but came under increasing pressure from railroad competition. An initial attempt to sell the public works was made in 1854. Three years later the Main Line canal was sold to the Pennsylvania railroad, whose route to Pittsburgh it paralleled. The sale

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27 Harrisburg, *Daily Telegraph*, March 5, 1858.

28 J.B. Baker to J.S. Black, June 21, 1858. Black papers.

29 G.W. Scranton to W. Bigler, May 18, 1858, William Bigler papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

caused great anxiety in Pittsburgh as competition between canal and rail might now disappear, leaving the Pennsylvania railroad free to increase freight rates. Thus the whole issue of railroads rates became a lively topic of political debate in 1857-58. The state still owned five hundred miles of lateral canals as 1858 began. These penetrated the rich coal and iron regions of Schuylkill, Lehigh, and Lackawanna counties and provided opportunities in western Pennsylvania for the further development of transport links to the Great Lakes port of Erie. Railroad competition and heavy maintenance costs undermined all canals' viability. The panic of 1857 merely further tightened the fiscal vice. Governor Pollock's farewell message recommended selling the remaining canals: "In any phase of the question this separation is desirable; but in connection with the payment of the public debt, and the reduction of State taxation, it becomes an object of more than ordinary interest." The new Democratic governor, William Packer, a former state auditor, agreed.

Democratic laissez-faire ideology was a recurrent theme to emerge from the financial crash. Pennsylvania shows why this was so frequent a reaction. State government finances were battered in the first six months of 1858. Receipts tumbled downwards; March's income of $117,000 was lower than any monthly total for the calendar years 1855, 1856, and 1857; and a further plummeting meant that May's receipts of $90,000 amounted to only one-third of the average receipts in May during the previous three years. Any measure to reduce the state's debt, and its accompanying interest charges, and to dispose of revenue-consuming ventures obviously made managerial good sense (see Figure 1).

Advocates of selling the canal saw the measure as increasing pros-

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31 Holt, Forging a Majority, 231.
33 Journal of the Senate: 1858 Session, 15.
35 These figures are taken from "Reports of the State Treasurer on the Finances of the State" and published each year in Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, General Assembly, Legislative Documents (Harrisburg); the years used are 1856, 1857, 1858, 1859, 1860, 1861.
FIGURE 1
Pennsylvania State Debt

VALUE IN $000
perity as well as fiscal stability. The Sunbury and Erie railroad would supposedly buy the lateral canals for $3.5 millions. Proponents of sale asserted that the Sunbury and Erie's acquisition of the lines would boost its chances of completing its route through north-western Pennsylvania to the port of Erie. The railroad would thus bring the benefits of improved communications to a region lacking in railroad services, and channel mid-western trade through Pennsylvania to Philadelphia. Philadelphia’s city government had invested $1.4 millions in the Sunbury and Erie, and the majority of Philadelphia’s representatives in the legislature favored a sale that, supposedly, would tip the cornucopia of mid-western trade in their city’s direction. Sale became, according to Alexander K. McClure, a state politician who later became editor-in-chief of the Philadelphia Times, “the great measure of this age.”

On this issue as on banking, the Democrats were far more divided than were their opponents. Direct sale split the Democrats fairly evenly in the House, with more legislators leaning against than towards direct sale, and brought the opposition of two-thirds of Democratic senators. They objected both to selling all the remaining canals in one job-lot to the Sunbury and Erie and to the price. In the House, an amendment stipulated that the public works be split into three divisions, each of which was to be bid for separately. A majority of the Democrats, 36 to 28 favored the amendment, but they were defeated as the amendment was thrown out by 51 to 44 votes.

Regional influences affected this Democratic alignment; of the 28 supporting direct sale, 12 came from Philadelphia city and county, which had financial stakes in the Sunbury and Erie railroad. No representatives from the north-western and north-central counties supported the amendment.

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37 Journal of the House: 1858 Session, 616.
In the Senate, a close fight over the bill, during the first two weeks of April, centered on the price. The Democratic Senate leader, Buckalew, orchestrated opposition to the bill in an effort to hoist the sale price from $3.5 millions to $4.825 millions. He failed; but nearly twice as many Democratic senators opposed the bill’s second reading as endorsed it. Only one Republican senator deviated from his party colleagues’ backing of direct sale, and he came from Pittsburgh’s Allegheny County, a hot-bed of anti-railroad sentiment in 1858.\(^\text{38}\) No wonder two aspiring young Republican politicians—Edward McPherson and McClure—enthusiastically endorsed sale during the summer of 1858 as an act of high statesmanship.

The sale issue graphically illustrated the Democrats’ difficulties in diverting attention to state matters, because their internal divisions brought stalemate in the state legislature. U.S. Attorney-General Black was livid at the passage of the sale bill. As a former Pennsylvania judge and Buchanan’s chief adviser in their home state, Black enjoyed an important position.\(^\text{39}\) In June, he drafted a long letter opposing state senator Samuel J. Randall’s support of the sale. Reminding Randall that “the wisest man may be imposed upon,” Black analyzed the canal profit record and prospects to show that sale went against the public interest; a potential source of income was being jettisoned for a paltry return. Black even instituted an appeal to the state supreme court against the sale act because of the price. The basis for his appeal proved to be a feeble, indeed, naïve, point upon which to assert the unconstitutionality of the sale act; for legislation could not be—and was not —invalidated by the court on the grounds of the price set for the transaction.\(^\text{40}\) Black’s unsuccessful court action not surprisingly

\(^{38}\) The Legislative Record, 471, 497-99, North American, Apr. 15, 1858. Buckalew had earlier worked hard to have the House bill referred to the Senate Finance committee, which he chaired, instead of to the Canal committee, which was reputedly favourable to sale. His effort was heavily defeated in the Senate. Buckalew was accused of entertaining a “chronic hatred” of the Sunbury and Erie railroad. North American, Apr. 2, 3, 15, 1858.


\(^{40}\) Black to S.J. Randall, June 30, 1858, Black papers; Hartz, Economic Policy and Democratic Thought, 179. Hartz notes Buckalew’s appearance as a lawyer contesting the sale without recognizing the political implications of that leading state Democrat’s involvement.
attracted personal criticism from two prominent state Democrats—Randall and Supreme Court Justice George W. Woodward. Randall dismissed the figures used by Black to show how profitable the public works were and told Black that mere rumors about the corruption supposedly involved in passing the sale act required proof rather than ritual repetition. Justice Woodward, who declared himself ineligible to sit on the case, stressed the inadequacy of Black's argument as a constitutional plea, insisted that completion of the Sunbury and Erie would open up the North-West and so generate tax revenues for the state, denied any legislative corruption, and claimed that management of the public works had been "criminal for years." None of these criticisms soothed or persuaded Black, who insulted Woodward and threatened Randall with the publication of their private correspondence.  

Even in November and December 1858, after his failure to win the appeal, Black looked forward to creating a public protest against sale:

Thus far, there has been little or no denunciation either from public meetings, the press, or individuals . . . The politicians, many of them, are in favor of it; none of them like to attack it. All the leaders of the opposition with very few exceptions like it, and many democrats who happen just now to occupy high places, think equally well of it, and not a few of them expect to profit by it.  

The canal sale revealed the Democrats' incapacity to turn state issues to their advantage. As with banks, so with canals—the Democrats' overwhelming state victory in October 1857 offered no basis for agreement or political initiative in the following year. Instead, two federal issues increasingly absorbed politicians' attention during 1858. The Lecompton dispute was especially prominent until May, when the practical threat of slavery's institutionalization in Kansas had receded. And from June onwards the demand for

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41 S.J. Randall to Black, Nov. 8, 1858; George W. Woodward to Black, Oct. 28, Nov. 7, Dec. 1, 1858. Black papers.  
42 Black to S.J. Randall, Nov. 15, 1858, Black papers. As late as December 21, an applicant for office mentioned direct sale as an issue that had contributed to the Democrats' electoral losses in the Lackawanna region. D.S. Koone (?) to Black, Dec. 21, 1858, Black papers.
federal tariff protection became more widespread, more urgent. Both issues left Pennsylvania's Democrats on the defensive.

From December 1857 to March 1858, the advantage on the Lecompton question swung between the anti-Lecompton and administration Democrats. The state central committee decided in December to hold the state convention in March, a time of greatest inconvenience to the party's management because the legislature would be in session. Loyalists to the Buchanan Administration failed to persuade the state central committee to hold the convention at a safely distant day in June. When Governor Packer appointed his cabinet in January, he ignored Attorney-General Black's advice and selected men of known anti-Lecompton opinions. By mid-February, Packer and his cabinet openly opposed Buchanan's recommendation for the immediate admission of Kansas. By the time the Democrats held their state convention in early March, the lines were drawn for confrontation between the Lecomptonites and the anti-Lecomptonites, with Packer accused in private of working vigorously against the administration.43

Naturally enough, the federal administration's friends regarded the Lecompton constitution's swift passage as the easiest way of avoiding internal contention and electoral humiliation; it would "falsify all the predictions of renewed strife, civil war, etc., made by the Republicans and their anti-Lecompton co-operators." They claimed to detect a pronounced swing of popular opinion towards the administration's policy in February and March 1858. Attorney-General Black in Washington received evidence—impressionistic, but no more so than that provided by anti-Lecompton newspapers—that ordinary Democrats loyally supported Buchanan's line.44 One anti-Lecompton newspaper asserted that the leading loyalist in the state senate, Buckalew, "absolutely shrinks from meeting the main point of the case;" even if the Lecompton constitution were procedurally legal it flouted majority opinion in Kansas. Moreover, defending such a constitution

43 Coleman, Disruption of Pennsylvania Democracy, 113-14.

44 N. Strickland to Bigler, March 31, 1858, Bigler papers. Jonas R. McClintock to J.S. Black, Jan. 8, 1858, L.S. Hough et al. to Black, Jan. 11, 1858, Levi G. Clover to Black, Feb. 3, 1858, W.F. Boone to Black, Feb. 8, 1858, Geo. W. Miller to Black, Apr. 30, 1858, Black papers. The last correspondent noted of the congressional district in western Pennsylvania where he lived: "A great revolution has taken place in public sentiment & in our favour within the last month."
and its imposition on Kansas would, according to its Democratic opponents, defeat the party in October's congressional and state elections. The Lecomptonites responded to such objections in early February simply by postponing consideration of resolutions concerning Kansas's admission; the state House of Representatives shelved such resolutions until March 10, after the state party convention of March 4. Of the 68 Democratic representatives only 11 resisted postponement and so identified themselves very strongly with opposition to Lecompton.

The state convention witnessed another Lecomptonite success. A set of eight anti-Lecompton (and therefore free soil) resolutions was crushingly defeated by 109 votes to 21. Allan Nevins contended that only "heroic" patronage efforts saved the administration's friends from rebuff. But his assertion overlooks the fact that the victors also made concessions to the defeated minority. The convention selected William A. Porter as their candidate for the principal state office at stake in October. Porter's nomination for the Supreme Court justiceship won 105 votes to 24; among the majority were 17 of the 21 anti-Lecompton delegates. Porter was an ally of Packer's and an opponent to Kansas's admission as a slave state. However ruthless the Lecomptonites may have been in obtaining the resolutions they desired, they compromised on other matters.

Governor Packer worked to hold the convention together. Among anti-Lecompton delegates there had been talk of a walk-out. According to a later report, the Governor dissuaded his friends from that extremity. Senator Bigler learned on March 7, just as the convention ended:

I had yesterday a most agreeable interview with Atty. Genl. Knox and Gov. Packer. They both seem quite disposed to come in and make a unanimous support of the platform. Gov. P. told Judge Jones (so the

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47 Pennsylvania Daily Telegraph, March 5, 6, 1858; Coleman, Disruption of Pennsylvania Democracy, 114; Nevins, Emergence of Lincoln, 1, 272. Attorney-General Black wrote eloquently to Porter before the convention in an effort to persuade Porter to oppose the President immediately or to back down from his opposition to Lecompton. J.S. Black to William A. Porter, Feb. 9, 1858, Black papers.
latter requested me to say to you) that he wanted to fraternize with the President and that the President should make the overture. Let me ask you to urge this on the President, for he can afford to waive all questions of office and personal dignity, and all other questions and make the overture. Packer has made a great mistake, but for the sake of our party let us get him righted and this the President can do by a kind communication. I hope he will make it and at once, before bad counsels might ripen into force and boldness.

A few weeks later Bigler received a similar report from Harrisburg: "Governor Packer and Cabinet have become very lukewarm on the Kansas question—because I suppose they find it an uphill business."

One anti-Lecompton newspaper at Harrisburg markedly played down internecine disputes over Kansas after the state convention. In mid-April it loyally endorsed a scheme concocted by state senator Buckalew, and opposed by 29 of the 52 Democrats voting in the House, to oust David Wilmot, the Republican gubernatorial candidate of 1857, from his state district judgeship.48

A lasting rapprochement among Democratic factions was not effected, partly because some anti-Lecomptonites were not really interested in one. John W. Forney had determined to go his own way in early 1857. During the spring of 1858 he negotiated with the Republicans over co-operating in making nominations for state offices.49 Although Republican state leaders seriously considered a closer alliance with anti-Lecompton Democrats, there were strong objections to such a course. Too many concessions to the anti-Lecomptonites, especially in nominations for office, would "demoralize our own party." Anti-Lecomptonites had no organization and merely ill-defined numbers of supporters to offer. Finally, the anti-Lecomptonites opposed the process, not the morality, of making Kansas a slave state. As one Republican wrote, "No majority has any right to fasten Slavery upon the people of Kansas. No more Slave States’ is my motto, and—Popular Sovereignty is a humbug."50

48 F.W. Hughes to Bigler, March 7, 1858, (Hughes had been a member of the committee on resolutions at the state convention: Daily Telegraph, March 5, 1858), Thomas C. MacDowell to Bigler, March 23, 1858, Bigler papers; Harrisburg, Daily Herald, Apr. 16, 1858, Daily Telegraph, Apr. 22, 1858.

49 Coleman, Disruption of Pennsylvania Democracy, 105, 113-14; J.W. Forney to Cameron, May 25, 1858, Simon Cameron papers, L.C.

50 A.H. Reeder to Cameron, Apr. 30, 1858, Cameron papers, L.C.; W.W. Brown to Cameron, May 21, 1858, Cameron papers, Dauphin County Collection (microfilm).
Republican coolness to the anti-Lecomptonites may have encouraged those less strident and determined than Forney to seek an understanding with the administration's friends. Henry L. Dieffenbach, a member of Packer's cabinet, wrote to Senator Bigler on 30 August:

I know Gov. Packer's views were honestly entertained, as expressed in the Inaugural, and that these indicated no hostility to the policy of President Buchanan, and scarcely more than a shade of difference between him and the doctrine avowed by the after action of Congress and the President. I suspect that the sycophants and flatterers who always dangle about the heels of every man in power, have been the principal cause of estrangement . . . .

. . . I see nothing to prevent the re-establishment of perfect cordiality between the parties and the full resumption of their former friendly and confidential relations.

Although I am alone responsible for this reply, I have not written at random, or unadvisedly, and I trust it may speedily result in a meeting between the President and the Governor, which I am sure would result favorably to them both, and to the party.51

Yet, again, nothing happened. Whether Buchanan or his advisers were to blame is difficult to decide. The probability is that Buchanan lacked the energy and good sense to try conciliation. And Black, who was prickly and sometimes offensive, added a dimension to the Lecompton dispute by campaigning vigorously against canal sale. It is not clear which came first—deep hostility to sale or anger at Governor Packer's opposition to the Lecompton policy. But the two issues certainly interacted. The Democratic Canal Board commissioners resented the loss of considerable patronage that would follow from the sale of the remaining canals. Since the Canal Board commissioners were also party loyalists, they had even more to fear in the removal of such patronage. With the Board's demise, the Governor would become the principal source of state patronage. Packer held back on state appointments in the early months of 1858, giving himself more "leverage," while he pressed for the Canal Board's abolition. The commissioners retaliated by denouncing the sale of substantial public works to a faltering corporation. The federal administration's friends spread the rumor that Packer, a stockholder in and former director

51 Henry L. Dieffenbach to Bigler, Aug. 30, 1858, Bigler papers.
of the Sunbury and Erie, was engaged in a major "swindle" by selling the public works directly to that railroad and at a low price.\textsuperscript{52} Whether principles came before patronage and self-interest or whether state policy before federal policy is difficult to say. The outcome, however, was clear. Disputes over Lecompton intermingled with differences over state issues to reduce the scope for new Democratic political initiatives.\textsuperscript{53}

While the Lecompton dispute continued to divide the Democrats, tariff protectionism attained growing prominence during June and July. In late May, Cameron's organ in the state capital, the Harrisburg \textit{Daily Telegraph}, called upon all opponents of the federal administration's "despotic policy" to attend the opposition state convention on 8 July: "The question—and the only one—involved in the approaching canvass, is, shall Pennsylvania endorse the series of outrages which have been perpetrated by the Administration, at the bidding of the Slave oligarchy, upon the people of Kansas?" When the People's party held its convention in early July, it drew up a far more wide-ranging program deploring excessive federal spending and calling for tighter controls on naturalization and immigration.\textsuperscript{54} The key emphasis was upon tariff protection.

Pressure for higher protective duties came from a varied constituency. One politician informed Senator Cameron:

I am a protectionist of the old school, and will not support any candidate who deviates from that doctrine, for all the negroes on earth!—Give us protection to American labor, and every other question in the country will settle itself \textit{in spite of politicians}.\textsuperscript{55}

\textsuperscript{52} J.M. Cooper to J.S. Black, Feb. 14, 1858, Black papers; N. Strickland to W. Bigler, March 13, 1858, Bigler papers. Both men referred to direct sale as a "swindle." Packer's interests in the Sunbury and Erie had been publicized at the time of the gubernatorial election, Pittsburgh, \textit{Daily Gazette}, Oct. 13, 1857.

\textsuperscript{53} It does not seem that anti-Lecomptonism and voting on sale were connected in the state senate. Of the five Democratic senators regarded by the Republicans as being Douglasite or doubtful in their loyalty to the federal Administration, three voted with Buckalew and the party's majority against sale; and two voted for direct sale. According to a list in Black's papers, there were only three anti-Lecompton Democratic senators, at least in February; all of them voted with Buckalew, the Administration's leader in the senate. Harrisburg, \textit{Daily Telegraph}, Feb. 4, 1858; list dated February 1858, Black papers.

\textsuperscript{54} Harrisburg, \textit{Daily Telegraph}, May 25, June 1, July 15, 1858.

\textsuperscript{55} W.D. Lewis to Cameron, May 22, 1858, Cameron papers, D.C.C.
Cameron’s correspondents from Schuylkill County and other mining districts repeatedly told the senator that economic distress was biting so sharply as to give protectionism a new and attractive allure in the mining and industrial counties of Berks, Carbon, Columbia, Dauphin, Lancaster, Montour, Northumberland, Schuylkill, and Snyder.\textsuperscript{56} An industrialist wrote in June:

> Things are growing worse and worse and if something be not done to revive and stimulate the drooping business of our state no one can foresee what thousands of hungry men may be driven to next winter. . . . Literally hundreds of hearty willing men are crowding to the furnace begging for work. Many say they will work for enough to keep their families in bread; amount of wages is no consideration, they would be well content with fifty or forty cents per day. Up till now many have been subsisting upon what they had saved during prosperous times; but their resources are exhausted; there is no work to be had and all are dreading that the coming autumn and winter may find them still unemployed; should there be no speedy relief God knows what may follow.\textsuperscript{57}

Cameron estimated in a speech to the Senate that some 300,000 people were directly and indirectly involved in or affected by the iron and coal business along the Schuylkill valley.\textsuperscript{58} Even if this figure were exaggerated, the spin-off effects of severe recession in coal and iron mining and in iron and steel production were widely felt in eastern Pennsylvania.

Nativists supported protectionism because of the anti-foreign connotations of succoring American labor. Old Whigs no doubt found it heartening to have this issue revived from the 1840s. Cameron hoped to ride to the presidency in 1860 on the tariff issue. The Senator had long identified himself—even during his Democratic past—as a protectionist. Throughout the spring and summer of 1858, Cameron’s correspondence was full of maneuverings, half-hints, pledges, and analyses of opinion which went into any bid for a

\textsuperscript{56} Letters to Cameron from: Charles Frailey, June 25, 1858, E.H. Rauch, July 20, 1858, Hugh Lindsay, Sept. 10, 1858, Israel Gutelius, Sept. 14, 1858, John N. Purviance, Sept. 18, 1858, William H. Van Nortwick, Oct. 9, 1858, Cameron papers, D.C.C.

\textsuperscript{57} Original emphasis. Henry McCormick to Cameron, June 5, 1858, Cameron papers, L.C.

\textsuperscript{58} Harrisburg, \textit{Daily Telegraph}, June 11, 1858.
presidential nomination. What worried the Senator were the dangers of announcing his candidacy too early rather than doubts of his ability and qualifications to win. The editor of the Pittsburgh Daily Gazette, after discussing the presidency in 1860s, wrote that the tariff would be as important as slavery, that Pennsylvania would be vital to Republican victory, and that the lesson was “Keep the tariff excitement up.” The Democrats in Washington and in Pennsylvania offered nothing to stem the protectionist tide.

The opposition campaign of 1858 thus looked very different from that of the two preceding years. In 1856 Republicans and Know-Nothings had kept apart. In 1857 the Republican gubernatorial candidate, David Wilmot, had seemed too radical and too preoccupied with national issues for the purpose of building a state opposition coalition. A powerful Know-Nothing movement remained in Philadelphia. In 1858, the Democrats’ divisions and lack of any state policies helped the Republicans to dispel their earlier image of single-minded devotion to antislavery; financial and protectionist issues made Republicans appear more conservative and helped to establish rapport with the Know-Nothings on an anti-foreign protectionist stance.

Divided on state issues, split by the Lecompton dispute, and hamstrung over tariff protection, the Democrats experienced defeat in October 1858. How, though, may we reconcile strikingly different explanations of that electoral reversal discussed earlier? First, let us consider the impact of protectionism.

Some politicians who won election in 1858 laid great emphasis upon the tariff. A large meeting held on June 15, 1858 in Philadelphia drew together a Union coalition of Republicans and former Know-Nothings. Senators Collamer and Foot of Vermont, Simmons of Rhode Island, and Pennsylvania’s Senator Cameron and Congressman John Covode, pressed the need for a home industry (to maintain

59 Sam Shock to Cameron, June 24, 1858, J.K. Moorhead to Cameron, July 2, 1858, Cameron papers, L.C. Israel Gutelius to E. Slifer, July 17, 1858, Slifer-Dill collection, Dickinson College.

60 D.F. Williams to Cameron, June 14, 1858, Cameron papers, L.C.

61 In 1857, 51% of the Know-Nothings’ gubernatorial vote was in Philadelphia. Coleman, Disruption of Pennsylvania Democracy, 108. Dusinberre stresses the importance of protectionist rhetoric in 1858 in drawing Philadelphia’s Know-Nothings into the People’s party, Civil War Issues in Philadelphia, 79.
American independence of Britain), supported high market prices (so keeping up wages), denounced the erroneous idea that the crisis arose from excessive issuing of banks’ paper currency, and demanded the emancipation of the North from an administration subordinate to Southern politicians. The meeting concluded with the passing of eleven resolutions. These established a genealogy for protectionism that made ancestors, very oddly, of Jefferson, Madison, and Jackson and, more legitimately, Clay, Webster and Clayton. The meeting appealed to supporters of all parties to vote for candidates who would advance “measures looking to securing to the American laborer a market for his labor.”

William H. Keim, briefly the congressman from the 8th District (Berks County), described the attitudes of voters who inflicted the most spectacular defeat of the 1858 congressional elections upon the Democrats:

They are for protection that will at least put our labor on fair terms with that of other countries. They hate negroes, and have no affection for slavery; they would leave it alone where it is, and not prevent its going where the people really wish to have it. They are for letting the people govern themselves.

Keim himself was described as a “Tariff and anti-Lecompton” man, and the views he attributed to the people of Berks County clearly fell far short of the Republicanism expressed in Lincoln’s “House Divided” or Seward’s “Irrepressible Conflict” speeches. In the 6th District, where an anti-Lecompton Democrat, John Hickman, beat a Union candidate and an administration Democrat, the tariff also appeared to touch deeper feelings than the policy in Kansas:

The tariff question is really paramount to all others in the minds of the masses of the people of this [Chester] and Delaware counties. Mr. Hickman is advocating it strongly, and the leading Republicans support him. He is gaining rapidly, and it is believed that his election is certain,

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63 J. Glancy Jones was defeated for re-election as the Democratic congressman from the district formed by Berks county. He was then appointed American minister to Austria. Keim was elected at a special election to fill the rest of Jones' unexpired term, until March 1859. U.S. Government Printing Office, Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1961 (Washington, D.C., 1961), Appendix to the Congressional Globe, 35th Congress, 2nd Session (Washington D.C., 1859), 100-102.
unless there should be a union between the Broomall party and Lecomptonites, which is thought can scarcely take place.\textsuperscript{64}

Earlier in the year, in May 1858, Senator Bigler received a warning from Pottsville of the dangers administration Democrats faced. Pottsville was a town of 9,400 people in 1860 and the principal centre of the coal and iron county of Schuylkill. The county in turn was part of the 11th District, captured in October by a Union candidate fighting two Democrats. Four months earlier, Bigler received a petition from Pottsville residents asking for a change in the tariff. He was told that the petitioners' organizers could have got "nearly every voter in the county to sign such a petition." And he was urged to act:

The opposition to the Democracy are doing their best to make an impression on the people of Pa. that the hard times and general depression of business in the community is all caused by the present tariff, and you may depend it will have its effect at the next fall election, if a change in the tariff is not made or the matter satisfactorily explained. Our leading men here I think neglect too frequently to explain the cause of the hard times, etc. and leave all to the coal and iron men to indoctrinate their men as they please, and you are well aware that they have a majority of democrats [sic] in their employ, who would all be right if they were not led astray on this tariff question . . . .

I do not think that the Lecompton question will hurt us one way or the other, but I am sure that the present state of things, actual suffering, etc., among the people of the coal region and iron works will operate desperately against us.\textsuperscript{65}

Similarly, Bigler was advised in May by George W. Scranton of Luzerne county:

I believe, Sir, if the Democratic party would take up the subject of a revision of the Tariff, with a view to revenue and fair and reasonable discrimination for protection, that confidence and prosperity would return and every interest be fairly started within 60 days after the passage [of] such a bill. The idle men would find employment and cease to talk or encourage an opposing party.

\textsuperscript{64} John A. Norton to Henry A. Carey, Sept. 17, 1858, Henry Carey papers, Edward Carey Gardiner Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

\textsuperscript{65} Louis Reeser (?) to Bigler, May 10, 1858, Bigler papers.
Economic conditions were deplorable: "labor cheap, and limited employment only attainable at the lowest rates, farm products promise to be very low. Manufacturing interests generally suspended or at half work, the iron and coal trade exceedingly depressed and prices ruinously low." Only changes in the tariff laws would produce a "return to an active and prosperous business for our country." Now that the Kansas agitation had died down, economic adversity might well mean that "political parties will be reorganized." The administration could dispel this widespread discontent:

The business men, the farmers and laboring men of our country do not trouble themselves much with politics, or care so much who manages the affairs of Government, so long as they are profitably employed, but when the Opposite is the case, as it now is, they have nothing else to do but to aid and assist in planning schemes for the overthrow of parties in power with the hope of building up on their downfall!66

This advice was perhaps not surprising, for Scranton was a pioneer of Luzerne county, had founded the Lackawanna Iron and Coal Company, was president of two railroads, and enjoyed broad respect as a prominent, successful booster. Scranton, having been a Whig, then a Democrat from 1854, only months before the election in 1858 accepted the Union party's nomination for the 12th District. He turned a handsome Democratic majority of 1856 into an overwhelming vote against the party.67 Clearly Scranton's conversion had little to do with Lecompton.

Equally clearly, his warnings to Bigler had little effect upon the Democratic leadership. In September 1858 some Democratic newspapers and, evidently, the state central committee depicted the Republican (or Union, or People's Party) candidate for the state supreme court judgeship—the highest statewide office at stake in October—as a supporter of the low, Walker tariff of 1846. And, close to election-day, Bigler spoke publicly of possible discrimination against luxuries and incidental aid to home industries. That was an exceedingly modest recognition of the strength of protectionist sentiment. There is evidence of Democratic county-level dissatisfaction with this stand-pat complacency. For example, when the Dauphin County Convention

66 Geo. W. Scranton to Bigler, May 18, 1858, Bigler papers.
in August called for tariff revision, it gave far more attention to praising Buchanan's efforts to hold the Union together and to the use of the proceeds from the canal sale than to the tariff.\footnote{Daily Telegraph, Aug. 24, Sept. 29, Oct. 5, 6, 1858. Dauphin County, of course, was the location of Harrisburg.}

William Montgomery and John Hickman were the only anti-Lecompton Democrats to win re-election, from the western 20th District and the 6th District respectively. Montgomery was careful to limit the extent of his rebellion. He asserted in his district that his opposition to Lecompton would enhance his usefulness to his constituents, since the administration would conciliate him by offers of patronage and so forth. And he led many people to believe that he was on "the most friendly terms" with the President. Montgomery also advocated higher tariffs, and later complained that the free importation of coarse wools undercut the small farmers and poorer wool-producers among his constituents, especially those of Washington county, "the greatest wool-growing county in the United States."\footnote{John L. Dawson to Black, May 12, 31, Apr. 11, 1858, Black papers; Appendix to the Congressional Globe, 35:2, 179-83.}

John Hickman also derided the policies pursued by the Buchanan administration after the panic and called for a revision in the tariff to help eastern Pennsylvania and to promote a national harmony of interests.\footnote{Congressional Globe, 35:2 (Washington, D.C., 1859), 435-39.} Both anti-Lecompton Democrats who survived the electoral debacle in 1858 portrayed the result as endorsing moderate anti-slavery, strong distaste for the Lecompton policy, and powerful pro-tariff sentiment.

The congressional elections bore out the hypothesis that men of business not normally involved deeply in politics would come to the fore after the panic. The winning coalition not only called itself the Union or People's party, but selected a large number of businessmen as candidates for Congress. Of the twenty-one non-Democratic congressman chosen in 1858, eight were businessmen rather than lawyers by profession; more significantly, six of the eleven congressmen elected in districts formerly held by the Democrats were businessmen, four of them in iron and steel. (See Table 1.) The proportion of businessmen was abnormally high. In 1854 only five among the nineteen Republican and Know-Nothing congressmen elected were
TABLE 1
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICTS WON FROM THE DEMOCRATS IN 1858

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>People's Party Candidate</th>
<th>Profession</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>John P. Verree</td>
<td>Iron manufacturer and dealer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th</td>
<td>William Millward</td>
<td>Leather manufacturer; former Whig congressman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th</td>
<td>John Wood</td>
<td>Iron and steel miller</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th</td>
<td>Henry C. Longnecker</td>
<td>Lawyer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th</td>
<td>John Schwartz</td>
<td>Businessman and iron manufacturer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11th</td>
<td>James H. Campbell</td>
<td>Lawyer; former Whig congressman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12th</td>
<td>George W. Scranton</td>
<td>Businessman and iron manufacturer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15th</td>
<td>James T. Hale</td>
<td>Lawyer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16th</td>
<td>Benjamin F. Junkin</td>
<td>Lawyer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17th</td>
<td>Edward McPherson</td>
<td>Editor and lawyer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24th</td>
<td>Chapin Hall</td>
<td>Lumber trader and banker</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Biographical Directory of the American Congress

in business, and lawyers typically predominated in Congress.71 The emergence of these local notables reinforces both the analysis offered by Scranton before the election and the thesis that the tariff agitation was the principal issue in defeating incumbent Democrats.

Yet historians should be wary of monocausal explanations and remember that the election reflected various factors. First, though, something should be said of the results. The Democrats lost fifteen congressional districts in Pennsylvania, and their share of the vote for state office fell from 50.1% in 1856 and 52.0% (for the governorship) in 1857 to 46.3% in 1858 for the Supreme Court judgeship. Finally, the party lost control of the state legislature, the distribution of seats being:72

71 During the decade 1851-60, 66% of all members entering the U.S. House of Representatives had previous experience of the law as their profession; only 16% had been engaged in "business." Allan G. Bogue, Jerome M. Clubb, Carroll R. McKibbin, Santa A. Traugott, "Members of the House of Representatives and the Process of Modernization, 1789-1960," Journal of American History, LXIII (1976), 275-302.

72 The non-Democrats are lumped together for convenience. Tribune Almanac and Political Register. 1857, 49; ibid. 1858, 53; ibid. 1859, 53. These totals are not the same as those reported elsewhere. For instance, Coleman (Disruption of the Pennsylvania Democracy, 109) gives 37 Opposition and only 63 Democrats for the House in 1857.
Any analysis of the election of 1858 must recognize that there were several contests at stake. What follows compares the county figures for the election of the state Supreme Court judge with the votes given in the presidential contest of 1856. Only the state ticket provided a single Democratic vote. In the Congressional elections the grand total turnout was the same as that for the state judgeship: 369,919 votes to 369,247. In the Congressional races the Democratic vote was divided: 155,768 votes went to straight Democrats; 12,674, to anti-Lecompton Democrats; and 3,903 votes to an Anti-Tax candidate who led an essentially Democratic movement in Pittsburgh's twenty-second District. The total for these candidates was 172,345—46.6% of all votes cast in the congressional elections. On the state ticket, the Democrats won 171,130 votes—46.3% of all the ballots. As the elections were held at the same time and the pattern of support was so similar, it seems more sensible to take the state ticket as the single measure of Democratic support. This choice does, however, somewhat deflate the impact of Lecompton, because it disguises the extent of the anti-Lecompton Democrats' defection in some congressional races.

A curious feature of the Democratic loss of Pennsylvania was the wide variation in electoral support won by the Democrats. The Democrats experienced three differing types of result. In 27 of the 63 counties, they performed perfectly adequately. Their share of the vote increased, suffered no change, or declined only by up to one percentage point. These counties were mixed: eleven gave the Democrats majorities, some quite substantial ones; another seven gave the Democrats fewer than 40% of their ballots; but they all shared one factor in common—remoteness from the main centers of concentrated industry and agriculture in eastern Pennsylvania. At the other extreme, in terms both of Democratic performance and of economic character,
were 14 counties in which the Democrats' share of the vote fell by over seven percentage points. These "heavy loss" counties—rather than the 27 "reasonable performance" ones or the 22 counties in between—most markedly reveal the growing popularity of the Republicans' appeal.\textsuperscript{74}

The fourteen "heavy loss" counties do not lend themselves to any simple generalizations. As Table 2 shows, they were geographically dispersed. Half of them revealed, as we would expect, an unusually large stake in "manufacturing;" they had 7\% or more of their populations engaged in manufacturing, and four of those seven had coal and iron production. These were counties where the recession bit most sharply and where the People's party's protectionist promises held the greatest attraction. Five of the fourteen "heavy loss" counties were not atypically dependent upon manufacturing; they had 4\% of their populations engaged in manufacturing, as did 41 counties in the state as a whole.\textsuperscript{75}

These five "non-manufacturing" but "heavy loss" counties illustrate the broader problems of generalizing about electoral behavior. For, based upon data available in the printed census, these counties shared no obvious characteristics shaping their political responses in 1858. It is possible that nativism and evangelicalism were important in three of these counties. Centre, Huntingdon, and Mifflin were among the twelve counties in 1856 which gave over 30\% of their presidential votes to the Know-Nothings. Democratic support may have suffered in the face of a united and less militantly nativist

\textsuperscript{74} The county figures upon which my calculations are made are in *Tribune Almanac and Political Register for 1859*, 52-3. The comparison is made in the following paragraphs with turn-out and support in 1856 rather than with the gubernatorial election of 1857 because the latter contest was far less vigorously fought than the former and because turn-out was lower; a truer indication of each side's potential vote for 1858 may be obtained by looking at the 1856 totals.

\textsuperscript{75} Figures for population and for employment in manufacturing are derived from: Joseph C.G. Kennedy, *Population of the United States: Compiled from the Original Returns of the Eighth Census* (Washington, D.C., 1864), 412; Department of the Interior, *Manufactures of the United States in 1860: Compiled from the Original Returns of the Eighth Census* (Washington, D.C., 1865), 537. The ratio of people employed in manufacturing to total population is a crude one; but it offers a ready point of comparison. In an age when child labour was not unknown, it is difficult at this level of generalization to take figures for employment in manufacturing and express them as a percentage of particular age-groups in the total population.
<table>
<thead>
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<th>A</th>
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<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Central Group</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambria</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>61.9(l)</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>19.9</td>
<td>49.1(c)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centre</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>30.4(1)</td>
<td>53.4(P&amp;M)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Huntingdon</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>22.1</td>
<td>20.1(M)</td>
<td>35.5(P)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mifflin</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>36.1</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>20.4(M&amp;P)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Central Group</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Montour</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>31.3(l)</td>
<td>44.3</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>53.3(G)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbia</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>30.4(1)</td>
<td>53.4(G)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schuylkill</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>36.1</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>30.4(1)</td>
<td>53.4(G)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>20.4(M&amp;P)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carbon</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>17.6(1)</td>
<td>40.4</td>
<td>40.4(G)</td>
<td>55.5(M&amp;P)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monroe</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>24.2</td>
<td>42(1)</td>
<td>55.5(G)</td>
<td>55.5(M&amp;P)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Eastern Group</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>35.5(F)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delaware</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>21.9</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>35.5(F)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chester</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montgomery</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>42.2</td>
<td>34.7(G)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1) The denominations are: German churches (G), Catholic (C), Methodist (M), Presbyterian (P), Friends (F). German and Catholic percentages are included in the previous column.
opposition in 1858. These three counties also had clear concentrations of two religious denominations, with Methodists and Presbyterians together accounting for 54.9%, 61.6% and 66.1% respectively of all church seats. Such a religious concentration, especially if the Methodists locally were evangelical in inclination, could have led to an infusion into politics of moralistic nativism and anti-slavery. Yet such a relationship—if one existed—was clearly of local provenance and importance.

Local factors were presumably decisive in Lebanon and Monroe, the last two of the “heavy loss” counties. The Democrats’ share of the vote in Lebanon county dropped by 10.6 percentage points to a mere 36.2% in 1856. This drop was not apparently related to any congressional issues, for no other county in the 10th congressional district (that is, Dauphin, Northumberland, Snyder and Union) gave the Democrats over four percentage points less of their vote in 1858 than in 1856. Since a majority of the county’s church seats belonged to German denominations, Democratic defeat may have resulted from abstention among the German population. Certainly abstention rather than conversion turned the Democrats’ position in Lebanon. Whereas the combined Republican and Know-Nothing presidential vote of 1856 was 2,851, the People’s party vote in 1858 amounted to 2,657; but Democrats stayed home in far larger numbers, since the Democratic vote slumped from 2,511 in 1856 to a derisory 1,508 votes two years later. Similarly turn-out fell in such a way as to make Monroe a “heavy loss” county. Industrial discontent was irrelevant, since only 1.5% of the population in 1860 was employed in manufacturing. Alienation from the Democracy among people of German extraction may have been decisive, for 42% of all church seats in Monroe were accounted for by German denominations. And Democratic turn-out plummeted from 2,272 in 1856 to 1,424 in 1858. The People’s party failed to gather in the disaffected Democrats; while 560 men voted for Fremont and 69 supported Fillmore in 1856, only 599 backed the united opposition in 1858. If the German

76 The number of church seats is the only readily available measure of religious affiliation. Data on county denominational strengths may be found in: Department of the Interior, Statistics of the United States, (Including Mortality, Property, etc.) in 1860: Compiled from the Original Returns and Being the Final Exhibit of the Eighth Census (Washington, D.C., 1866), 454-58.
ethnic groups of Monroe were indeed repelled by the Democrats' Lecompton policy, they were evidently not yet prepared to inflate dissent into rebellion.

Abstention was locally decisive in accounting for big swings. Was it more generally significant? To stress the relative importance of turn-out in elections seems an obvious thing to do. But turn-out is very frequently forgotten in the analysis of election returns, especially by those who more commonly regard voters as impassioned, enthusiastic legions rather than as often sullen, occasionally confused, and sometimes alienated citizens.77

The Democrats' failure in 1858 simply resulted from their relative inability to attract their normal supporters to the polls. In only two counties did as many Democrats vote in 1858 as had voted in 1856 and one of those, McKean, had a tiny electorate; at the other extreme, two counties yielded a Democratic vote under half that won two years earlier. Over the entire state, the Democratic vote on the state ticket was 74.1% of that of 1856; but the People's party secured 86.1% of the total ballots given to Republicans and Know-Nothings in the presidential contest. It was relative turn-out and no apparent ethnic or economic factor that marked off the "heavy loss" counties. Democrats lost most heavily where the opposition vote held up best; for 13 of the 14 "heavy loss" counties were among the 19 counties where the actual opposition vote was over 93% of the opposition vote of 1856; and 8 "heavy loss" counties were among only 10 counties in which the actual opposition vote increased between 1856 and 1858. The conclusion seems irresistible that the People's party humiliated the Democrats most in 1856 where they kept up or just increased the opposition vote of 1856. Yet in only 19 counties did the newly united and freshly aggressive opposition draw over 93% of their predecessors' supporters to the polls; and in only 10 counties did they increase the actual number of those supporters.

By the standards of similar elections in the period 1843-62, the Democratic drop-off in 1858 was high. If one takes the mid-term elections of 1843 (there were no congressional elections in 1842),

77 Little attention is given to differential turn-out in even the most sophisticated recent studies of mid-nineteenth-century voting behavior. There is also a tendency in such studies to look at general trends rather than at party fortunes in the counties. One exception is Meerse, "The Northern Democratic Party and the Congressional Elections of 1858," 121.
the mid-term voting of 1850 (the election returns of 1846 are not usable for this purpose), the gubernatorial vote of 1854 (two Democratic congressional candidates were returned unopposed thus distorting those totals) and the congressional ballots of 1858 and 1862, the Democratic vote amounted to the following proportions of the Democratic vote in the preceding presidential contests:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1843</td>
<td>75.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1850</td>
<td>81.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1854</td>
<td>84.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1858</td>
<td>74.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1862</td>
<td>111.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are many difficulties in making comparisons between contests. Clearly, the Democratic vote was deflated in the presidential election of 1860 by the divisions between John C. Breckinridge and Stephen A. Douglas; the total vote given to the two Democratic tickets in 1860 (which is used here as the Democratic base vote) was substantially lower than the popular vote won by Buchanan in 1856 and slightly lower than Franklin Pierce's support of 1852, despite a big increase in population during the 1850s. That Democratic support rose in 1862 is not, therefore, surprising. (In 1848, the presidential base vote is obtained by combining the support given to Lewis Cass (172,186) and to the Free Soiler Martin Van Buren (11,176); this procedure was adopted because the Free Soilers emerged from and returned to, if temporarily, the Democratic fold.) Allowing for difficulties created by the fluidity of party politics in these years, it can still be said that the Democrats' loss of Pennsylvania in 1858 occurred because the party failed to an unusual extent to lure its supporters to the polls.

Where the Democrats' actual vote fell most between 1856 and 1858, the People's party did not consistently pick up large numbers of extra voters, even if in some of these counties its attractiveness was more marked than in the state as a whole. (See Table 3.) Those counties with high proportions of their work forces employed in coal

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78 Based on figures in *Guide to U.S. Elections*, 267-71, 427,577-611. The anti-Tax candidate in the 22nd District in 1858 has been included as a Democrat.
TABLE 3
COUNTRIES WHERE THE DEMOCRATS' ACTUAL SUPPORT FELL MOST MARKEDLY, 1856-58

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Actual A</th>
<th>People's Party B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bradford</td>
<td>47.4</td>
<td>65.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawrence</td>
<td>49.3</td>
<td>60.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pike</td>
<td>57.6</td>
<td>61.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northampton</td>
<td>57.8</td>
<td>74.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>60.0</td>
<td>93.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huntingdon</td>
<td>60.1</td>
<td>80.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beaver</td>
<td>60.5</td>
<td>62.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montour</td>
<td>60.6</td>
<td>99.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crawford</td>
<td>62.3</td>
<td>56.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monroe</td>
<td>62.6</td>
<td>95.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbia</td>
<td>65.8</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>York</td>
<td>65.9</td>
<td>81.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luzerne</td>
<td>66.2</td>
<td>83.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carbon</td>
<td>67.7</td>
<td>126.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union</td>
<td>68.5</td>
<td>79.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lycoming</td>
<td>69.2</td>
<td>82.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lancaster</td>
<td>69.5</td>
<td>86.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

and iron varied widely in their turn-out. Although the Democratic turn-out was generally lower in these coal and iron counties than that for Pennsylvania as a whole, and although the People’s party’s support was in some instances very dramatically higher than their state-wide level of support, no consistently distinctive pattern of behavior emerged from these most concentratedly industrial counties (Table 4).

* * * * *

Now let us return to the larger question of the Democrats’ loss of Pennsylvania. In the congressional elections, the Democrats’ tally sank from fifteen to four. Yet in five districts, the Democrats only
TABLE 4
COAL AND IRON COUNTIES AND PARTY PERFORMANCE, 1856-1858

A = Percentage of employed men engaged in iron or coal.
B = Democrats' actual vote in 1858 as a percentage of their actual vote in 1856.
C = People's party's actual vote in 1858 as a percentage of the actual vote given to Republicans and Know-Nothings in 1856.
(Votes were for the same offices as in Table 3.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Montour</td>
<td>91.1</td>
<td>60.6</td>
<td>99.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schuylkill</td>
<td>86.3</td>
<td>78.1</td>
<td>117.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armstrong</td>
<td>76.8</td>
<td>74.7</td>
<td>75.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luzerne</td>
<td>72.8</td>
<td>66.2</td>
<td>83.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carbon</td>
<td>69.3</td>
<td>67.7</td>
<td>126.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northumberland</td>
<td>67.5</td>
<td>80.1</td>
<td>85.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambria</td>
<td>61.9</td>
<td>70.3</td>
<td>94.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lehigh</td>
<td>50.4</td>
<td>70.1</td>
<td>86.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Average: 71.0  |
Percentage for State: 74.1  |

just lost; they won over 49 percent of the vote in four districts, indeed 49.9 percent in two of them. One Republican entered Congress with 47.2 percent of his district's votes because the Democrats ran both anti-Lecompton and Administration candidates. In the state election, the voters' response was far from uniform. The Democrats' share of the vote increased, held up, or declined by a tiny percentage in 27 of the 63 counties; it fell noticeably in 22 counties; and it plunged by over 7 percentage points in 14 others. Even in these "heavy loss" counties, it is not clear that "Hard times had . . . precipitated a workingman's revolt against the Democratic party." While half the "heavy loss" counties were strongly involved in industrial or mining

80 Coleman, Disruption of Pennsylvania Democracy, 118. It has also been contended that the difficulties in the coal and iron regions greatly overshadowed the importance of the Kansas dispute in the late 1850s generally. Earl R. Curry, "Pennsylvania and the Republican Convention of 1860: A Critique of McClure's Thesis", Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography, XCVII (1973), 183-98.
activities, half were not. More generally, the "heavy loss" counties yield little obvious evidence of mass defections by former Democratic voters. Relative levels of abstention were the key to the result. Compared with the votes obtained in 1856, the Democratic turn-out fell by a quarter throughout the state, whereas opposition turn-out dropped by just over one eighth.\footnote{This emphasis squares with interpretations of recent election results. Although political scientists continue to debate the determinants of voting behavior, there are good grounds for arguing that negative voting against an incumbent president, or because of economic down-turns, is very important. Surveys of national opinion for the period 1946-66 show that voters disapproving of an incumbent president are more likely to vote in a midterm election than those who approve, and that the party of the incumbent president suffers a larger share of party defections in midterm elections than does the opposing party. The impact of economic events in alienating voters at midterm elections from the incumbent president's party has also been stressed. One could argue that the loss was especially severe in Pennsylvania in 1858 because Buchanan's vote of 1856 was an especially vulnerable or "soft" one in his home-state, the outcome of an especially vigorous campaign. Howard S. Bloom and H. Douglas Price, "Voter Response to Short-Run Economic Conditions: the Asymmetric Effect of Prosperity and Recession," American Political Science Review, LXIX (1975), 1240-54; Samuel Kernell, "Presidential Popularity and Negative Voting: An Alternative Explanation of the Midterm Congressional Decline of the President's Party," ibid. LXXI (1977), 44-66. I am very grateful to Michael Holt for drawing my attention to this literature.}

This fact about the election explains why historians have differed in their explanations of the result. Where turn-out varied, and where the movement of support away from the Democrats also varied appreciably, then local issues may well have played a role. The tariff was clearly important; the politicians knew this and the People's party played up its enthusiasm for protection and pushed businessmen to the fore. The tariff was not universally canvassed, so that Holt is right to stress more local economic questions, over railroad taxes, in Pittsburgh. In emphasizing the tariff we should not forget that pro-tariff men usually also objected to the Lecompton constitution, sometimes very strongly indeed. Moreover, the factional dispute between the Buchanan administration and the state government of William Packer, with Forney in Philadelphia acting as the anti-Lecompton Democrats' most conspicuous spokesman, weakened the party within the state. Although the two sides did not hold separate conventions until the spring of 1859,\footnote{Coleman, Disruption of Pennsylvania Democracy, 118. Buchanan himself distinguished between the powerful anti-administration swing in Philadelphia (the result of Kansas wrongs) and the swing in the interior of the state, where the tariff was decisive. Buchanan to Harriet Lane, Oct. 15, 1858, James Buchanan papers, Library of Congress.} they were clearly suspicious of each other.
and indeed fighting each other in the summer and autumn of 1858. Dieffenbach’s letter of August urging a conciliatory initiative from the President and Attorney-General Black’s legal war upon the sale of the remaining canals showed their continuing animosity. Where much hinged on the effectiveness of party workers in drawing voters to the polls, these factional squabbings and suspicions reduced Democratic strength. Whether the Lecompton issue deterred Democratic voters from trudging to the polls is unknown and probably unknowable. But the evidence points to numerous political issues and a creaking Democratic machine resulting in a drooping Democratic turn-out.

The Democrats lost Pennsylvania in 1858 because they were reasonably faithful to their party’s general principles and because they were embarrassed by the panic of 1857. Their insistence on condoning slavery extension as a necessary step to preserving the Union led them into the contest over Lecompton. Their reluctance to move beyond a modest national tariff exposed them to increasingly powerful attacks, even from their political friends, as the economic depression, especially in eastern Pennsylvania, deepened during 1858. The fiscal crisis in the state government’s finances also encouraged Packer to proceed with a canal sale which served to fuel still further Attorney-General Black’s animosity towards the state administration. In addition, the panic exposed traditional differences between soft-money and hard-money Democrats; in contrast their opponents remained united in maintaining existing banking and currency regulations. The loss of Pennsylvania in 1858 was related to specific Democratic embarrassments over local railroad matters, repeated divisions on state issues, and intense disputes over federal policy which variously or together depressed Democratic turn-out rather than destroyed the bases of Democratic popular support.