THE INFLUENCE OF WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA IN THE CAMPAIGN OF 1860

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Western Pennsylvania in 1851 was predominantly Democratic in politics. Out of the twenty-three counties to be considered in this article only seven were found giving a majority vote to the Whig party. With the disintegration of the Whig party from 1852 to 1856, the work of the Abolitionists, the rise of Know-Nothings and Free-Soilers, and the advent of the Republican party in the state in 1854 and 1855, Democratic sentiment began to change. By 1859 the situation was completely reversed leaving but seven counties in the control of the Democratic party.

Many reasons were assigned for this political phenomenon, in fact too many to be considered in detail as an introduction to the campaign of 1860. It must suffice, therefore, merely to list the more important ones. Probably the basic cause was economic, because Pennsylvania was becoming industrialized and the agrarian philosophy of Jefferson and Jackson no longer expressed the political views of those people who had ceased to depend on agriculture for a livelihood. This was quite noticeable after the panic of 1857. Although the state Democratic party demanded protection from foreign competition, the national party offered no cooperation.

Another fundamental cause was the failure of the national government to solve the question of the extension of slavery to the satisfaction of the free workers of Pennsylvania. It must be kept in mind that the vast majority of the voters in the state were interested in the slavery question.

1 Read at a meeting of the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania on April 29, 1841. Dr. Myers, who was then a teacher of history in Jeannette High School, is now dean of men at the State Teachers College in Millersville, Pennsylvania.—Ed.

2 Whig Almanac, 40 (1852); Tribune Almanac, 52 (1860).

only in so far as it affected themselves, their friends, and relatives who wished to move into the western territories. They were not Abolitionists, but they were opposed to the control of the national government by southern politicians, chiefly because the latter ignored the needs of the North. Such other causes as the weakening of Democratic leadership; the reaction caused by the use of national patronage to control the state policy; corruption among some officials; the alertness of opposition leaders to the weaknesses and mistakes of the Democrats; and the growth of factional quarrels in the party’s ranks all contributed to the weakening of the Democratic party in Pennsylvania. Then, too, the opposition editors missed few opportunities to undermine the Democratic influence among the electorate. This was especially true after the election of 1856 when it was believed that corruption made possible a Democratic victory over a fusion ticket of Republicans and Americans or Know-Nothings.  

The first victory of the opposition party in the state occurred in 1858. This party was a fusion of Republicans, Know-Nothings, Whigs, and Anti-Lecompton Democrats who adopted the name of the “People’s” party. Although it was dominated by Republicans, it did not dare to use that name because there were many, especially the “Old Line Whigs,” who disliked the “radical” free-soil platform adopted by the national Republican party in 1856. The victory encouraged the party leaders to increase their effort to the extent that they were again victorious in 1859.  This second victory was significant to the Democratic party because for the first time in its history in Pennsylvania it suffered two successive defeats. The victory was also significant to the People’s party because it proved that the new party had sufficient strength to justify its existence.

Before further consideration is given to political affairs in the state some phases of national politics must be presented because of their influence on the campaign of 1860. The 36th Congress, which met on December 5, 1859, did not succeed in organizing until January 30, 1860, because of the quarrel between the Republicans and Democrats over the election of the speaker of the House of Representatives; neither party

4 Daily Pittsburgh Gazette, October 11, 18, 20, 21, 1856.
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had a majority and the balance of power was held by the Americans. John Brown’s raid on Harper’s Ferry, on October 16, 1859, and the growing popularity of an economic study of southern conditions by Hinton R. Helper of North Carolina, called the *Impending Crisis*, were used as pretexts by the Democrats to keep the Republicans from organizing the House. The real reason, however, appeared to be the growing fear on the part of the southern representatives of losing their dominating power over the government, and the determination of the Republicans to break that control. With the exception of William Montgomery from the 20th District, the seven congressional districts of western Pennsylvania were represented by Republicans. These men voted consistently with their party, and it finally succeeded in electing William Pennington of New Jersey.6

The question of the tariff was of some significance to western Pennsylvania, especially to Allegheny County where the iron and coal industries were developing rapidly. Petitions were sent to United States Senators William Bigler of Clearfield County, a Democrat, and Simon Cameron of Dauphin County, a Republican, by various groups in the state, including the board of trade of Pittsburgh, urging specific duties on foreign imports. The Republican-controlled House had little difficulty in passing the Morrill tariff bill in 1860, as the entire delegation from the Keystone state, Democrats as well as Republicans, were in favor of it, and President James Buchanan had urged a change of duties in his annual message. The bill was referred to a committee in the Senate, however, despite the efforts exerted by both Bigler and Cameron, thereby permitting the Republicans to use the issue in the succeeding campaign.7

6 John Sherman’s *Recollections of Forty Years in the House, Senate and Cabinet: An Autobiography*, 1:169 (Chicago, New York, etc., 1895); *Daily Pittsburgh Gazette*, December 5, 20, 1859, January 27, February 3, 4, 1860; *Franklin Repository*, January 18, 1860; Jesse T. Carpenter, *The South as a Conscious Minority*, 5 (New York, 1930); *Tribune Almanac*, 53 (1859). The Congressmen from the several western Pennsylvania districts were as follows: 19th, John Covode; 20th, William Montgomery; 21st, James K. Moorhead; 22nd, Thomas McKnight; 23rd, William Stewart; 24th, Chapin Hall; 25th, Elijah Babbit.

Another issue that Congress had an opportunity to eliminate from politics was the Homestead bill sponsored by Galusha A. Grow of Susquehanna County. The purpose of the bill was to encourage the settlement of western lands. It easily passed the House over the opposition of the southern Democrats and Montgomery of western Pennsylvania. A substitute bill was introduced in the Senate which the House accepted, but Buchanan vetoed it on constitutional grounds.\(^8\)

Probably the outstanding political event in Congress during this session was the investigation of the action of the President and any officer of the government to influence congressional action by any means concerning any act “referring to the rights of the States or Territories,” and any other malpractice. The investigating committee, under the chairmanship of John Covode of Westmoreland County, produced numerous witnesses to show that much money and influence had been used to win elections and to aid the passage of some legislation, particularly the laws concerning Kansas. Buchanan protested twice to the House on the unconstitutionality of such action, but the Republican House calmly referred his messages to an unfriendly judiciary committee and gave Covode full cooperation.\(^9\)

There was no doubt that the investigation was prompted and carried through by Republicans because they desired to embarrass the Democratic party before the election of 1860. They did not seem to be interested in bringing action against any member of the government but merely to put the Democrats on the defensive and provide campaign material for themselves. At least it was so considered by the Democrats who aptly called it the “Smelling Committee.”\(^10\) There was also no doubt that much malfeasance and apparent corruption existed but while it was recognized by the party in power nothing was done to bring about reform.

Covode was an excellent man to head such an investigation. He was considered “in the vernacular of politicians as a ‘wire-puller’ of extra-

\(^8\) Daily Pittsburgh Gazette, March 15, 1860; Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 5:608–613.


\(^10\) Lebanon Advertiser, June 20, 1860.
ordinary capacity; could pull more wires, and pull them more persistently and cleverly, than most men. He was fruitful in resources and untiring in whatever he undertook." In addition he had experienced the full effect of attacks by the "patronage gang" in his various campaigns, especially in 1858 when both men and money were sent by the Democratic leaders into his district to defeat him. These attacks were fully repaid by Covode during the first session of the 36th Congress and in the campaign that followed. The bitterness aroused within the Democratic ranks by his chairmanship caused John P. Barr, editor of the Pittsburgh Post, to write that "his practices as a politician probably recommend him to his party... on the principle of 'set a thief to watch a thief.'" 11

The political situation in Pennsylvania assumed unprecedented importance, both in the state and in the nation at large, because it was believed that her electoral vote would again determine the outcome of the presidential election as it frequently had since the beginning of the century, and because the Democratic party had split over the question of the Lecompton constitution and states' rights.

Democratic Governor William F. Packer, in his first annual message, January 4, 1859, expressed his disapproval of the national administration's Kansas policy and of the disregard for the rights and privileges of the state administration. For such a rebuke, the national party, under Buchanan, who had refused to give up his claim to leadership of the party in his native state, began an attempt to break Packer's influence that culminated in the refusal of the state Democratic convention to give him the customary vote of confidence. The chief result of such high-handedness on the part of the federal officeholders was a definite split in the Democratic ranks that helped the People's party to win the October election. In his second annual message, January 4, 1860, Packer appeared satisfied that the causes for the break in the preceding year had been at least partially eliminated and that the Democrats were in a position to heal the schism. 12


12 Pennsylvania Archives, fourth series, 8:114-116, 193 (Harrisburg, 1902); Proceedings of the Democratic State Convention, 1859, 16-26 (Harrisburg, 1859); Pittsburgh Post, October 25, 1859.
The leaders of the People's party in the state legislature were determined to forget their individual differences, of which there were many, in so far as these might interfere with party harmony. They determined that the session would be short, and that all controversial problems would be held over. This appeared to be extremely wise because while the party controlled both branches of the legislature it was not completely organized and the different factions seemed to be bound together only by their common hatred of the Democrats.

One other condition existed that caused irritation among the members of both parties, especially the Democratic, since it had been in power for so many years. This was the tendency of the eastern politicians to ignore the claims of the people living in the western part of the state. In 1857 an impasse was reached when some eight state representatives refused to attend the Democratic caucus held for the purpose of selecting a candidate for United States Senator. They insisted that the west should be considered and supported Henry D. Foster of Greensburg against John W. Forney, the party nominee. For this act they were condemned as undesireables in the party ranks, regardless of the fact that their vote would not have elected Forney, for Cameron had obtained the necessary Democratic votes in a close election to win.

In the legislature of 1860 only one important office was given to western Pennsylvania. Russell Errett, Republican editor of the Pittsburgh Gazette and controller of the city of Pittsburgh, was appointed clerk of the senate. Such action caused some criticism of the methods used by party leaders and kept alive the sectional jealousies. However, the feeling was more prevalent among the Democrats than among their opponents.13

Shortly after the election of 1859 plans were formed by the People's party leaders for the campaign of 1860. About the middle of November the state committee issued a call for the state convention to be held at Harrisburg on February 22, 1860. The leaders expressed the hope that political clubs would be formed and that much of the necessary preliminary work for the campaign would be done before the convention. Two men from western Pennsylvania were given serious consideration by the

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13 McClure, Old Time Notes, 1:138–141; Daily Pittsburgh Gazette, January 15, 1857; Pennsylvania Argus and Westmoreland Democrat (Greensburg), January 22, 1857; Pittsburgh Post, January 6, 1860.
People's party for gubernatorial honors: Thomas H. Howe, a former Congressman from Allegheny County, and John Covode, Congressman from the Westmoreland-Indiana-Armstrong district. Many believed that the former had been encouraged to be a candidate by Senator Cameron in order to counteract the growing strength of Andrew G. Curtin of Center County, the leading candidate for the nomination. Cameron had presidential ambitions at that time, but he had many enemies who hated both his ambition and his methods. John Covode had been able to exert sufficient influence in Democratic Westmoreland County to win in the congressional elections of 1854, 1856, and 1858, and was supposed to have had the support of Cameron for the governorship.\(^\text{14}\)

There were two factions in the People's party convention. One supported Cameron, under the leadership of David Mumma of Dauphin County assisted by Glenni W. Scofield of Warren County, Russell Errett of Pittsburgh, and several eastern leaders. The Curtin forces were headed by Alexander K. McClure of Franklin County assisted by Thomas M. Marshall and Robert P. Nevin of Allegheny County, and others. Cameron and Curtin had been estranged since the notorious contest in which each sought the nomination for United States Senator in 1855. Curtin was particularly bitter over the tactics used by Cameron in his unsuccessful fight for the honor. Except for this distrust and enmity there was little reason why the two men could not have united and forgotten their differences because Cameron sought a full endorsement from the Pennsylvania delegation to the national convention, while Curtin desired the governorship. Both realized the importance of unity, but each feared the other, and neither knew exactly how many votes his opponent controlled.

The Cameron forces made the mistake of attempting to force his endorsement for the presidency by the convention before the nominations for governor were made. The move was checked by McClure, who made a motion that delegates should be selected by each district. This was what the Cameron forces feared and Mumma immediately moved adjournment. That evening the opposing forces agreed to a compromise in

\(^\text{14}\) *Daily Pittsburgh Gazette*, November 17, 1859; McClure, *Old Time Notes*, 1:392; *Biographical Dictionary of the American Congress*, 851 (Washington, 1928); Dodds, "'Honest' John Covode," 25.
which Curtin was assured of the nomination while Cameron was promised his desired endorsement. This left Covode without his main support and caused his followers to denounce Cameron's "perfidy." The convention left the selection of the national delegates to the state delegates of the several districts, most of whom decided to make the selections themselves rather than call district conventions. However, in eleven cases, including the Westmoreland, the Beaver, and the two Allegheny districts, the choice was referred to the people. The convention chose Samuel A. Purviance of Butler County and John H. Ewing of Fayette County as two of the eight delegates-at-large to the Chicago convention and Thomas H. Howe as one of the two electors-at-large. After drawing up a strong address to the people condemning the Democratic party and setting forth such aims as the elimination of corruption, the right of each state over its own institutions, the non-extension of slavery, the protection of industry, the establishment of honesty in elections, the revision of the naturalization laws to eliminate criminals and mental cases, and the upholding of the Constitution, the convention adjourned.\footnote{McClure, \textit{Old Time Notes}, 1:177–199, 394–398; James G. McQuaide to Covode, March 1, 1860, in Covode Papers, Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania; \textit{Daily Pittsburgh Gazette}, February 25, 1860.}

The western part of the Keystone state also played an important role in the Democratic state convention held at Reading on February 29. Since the party ranks had been split because of the blunders committed by the national administration, the state leaders were uncertain as to the possibility of a reunion. However, many of the more prominent Democrats were attempting to heal the existing sores by encouraging their best men to seek the nomination for governor. John W. Geary of Westmoreland County, former governor of Kansas under President Franklin Pierce, was urged to become a candidate for the first office of the state, but he refused. John L. Dawson of Fayette County, a representative of the 20th District in the 32nd and 33rd Congresses and a very loyal friend of the national administration, was reported to have had the support of Jeremiah S. Black of Somerset County, who was attorney general in Buchanan's cabinet. Henry D. Foster of Greensburg was also considered as a possible candidate for the office but the one who appeared to have the best chance was William H. Witte of Philadelphia.
The Buchanan faction did not attempt to run the convention in an arbitrary manner but set out to gain their ends in a more subtle fashion. It appeared that they sought harmony. Their forces were led by Senator Bigler of Clearfield County, while Congressman William Montgomery of Washington County was interested in being a delegate to the national convention. John Cessna of Bedford County, a leader of the state faction, attempted to force a change in convention methods by having decisions formerly made by committees determined by the entire convention. He did not succeed and the convention chairman appointed him head of the committee on resolutions, thus checking his aggressiveness.16

The selection of a candidate for gubernatorial honors appeared likely to develop into a protracted fight. The result of the first three ballots showed little change in the voting, with Witte well in the lead. Before the fourth ballot was started, a delegate from Lycoming County made a motion that Foster be nominated by acclamation. The motion was carried unanimously leaving Witte in a rather bitter frame of mind.17

This nomination appeared on the surface to have been the result of a sudden inspiration. Certainly it was good psychology in a convention where unity had to be maintained at all costs. However, according to reports originating in Reading, it was claimed that certain individuals knew of the “plot” ten days before the convention.18 In his letter of January 29 to Bigler, D. M. Moore of Philadelphia, who had just made a trip through the state, wrote that “powerful effort was made . . . to get Foster to say that he would not decline the nomination.” Regardless of what the actual conditions were, it was certain that Foster, as a compromise candidate, was about the strongest man in the party. He had not been involved in the controversies of the preceding years and had the support of both factions.

The convention selected three of the eight delegates-at-large to the national convention from western Pennsylvania: Montgomery, Dawson, and Bigler. The last two were considered Buchanan men, while Montgomery was anxious for the nomination of Stephen A. Douglas as the

17 Pittsburgh Post, March 1, 2, 1860.
18 Evening Bulletin (Philadelphia), March 1, 1860.
presidential candidate. After the nominations had been made and a platform adopted that restated the principles accepted by the party in previous conventions with a few additions condemning the Republicans, Montgomery made a speech urging complete harmony among all factions. This was fully accepted by Bigler and so unity of purpose appeared to have been reestablished.\textsuperscript{19}

The Democrats were the first to hold their national convention, meeting at Charleston, South Carolina, on April 23. Douglas was undoubtedly the first choice of most of the northern delegates, but the national administration and the southern leaders were determined to prevent his nomination because he had refused to be coerced by the latter into accepting their idea that Congress and not the inhabitants alone had the right to decide whether slavery should exist in the territories. Buchanan, true to his promise in 1856, was not a candidate for renomination.\textsuperscript{20}

The relations among the members of the Pennsylvania delegation at Charleston were far from harmonious. They were divided, according to one report, into two factions: twenty-four were national administration men headed by Bigler, and fourteen were of the Douglas faction led by Montgomery. What the latter lacked in numbers they made up in aggressiveness. Bigler was elected chairman of the delegation, but was unable to adjust the differences among his delegates, either on the question of organization or on the demand for a tariff plank.

The convention itself was unable to agree on a platform, because the southerners demanded that the body endorse a plank giving them the right to extend slavery into the territories. Douglas telegraphed his friends that he was willing to accept the Cincinnati platform of 1856 and the Dred Scott decision but could go no farther. Bigler, ever hopeful for party harmony, attempted to solve the difficulty by moving that a compromise platform be adopted, but the motion was defeated. A platform that included full recognition of the Fugitive Slave Act was then accepted by a majority of the delegates.

\textsuperscript{19} Pittsburgh Post, March 3, 1860.

\textsuperscript{20} Alexander K. McClure, Our Presidents and How We Make Them, 166 (New York, 1900); Buchanan to Arnold Plumer, April 14, 1860, in Buchanan Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.
The southern delegates, for the most part, were not satisfied, and those from eight states withdrew. Each delegation before withdrawing presented to the convention its reasons for doing so. Montgomery became tired of listening to these speeches and expressed himself from the floor as follows: “If there are more delegations prepared to leave, let them go; they have made up their minds, and we have made up ours, and we wish to proceed with business."

With the platform adopted, the attempt to nominate the presidential candidate was undertaken. Since the “two-thirds rule” had been accepted by the convention it was necessary for the successful candidate to receive 202 votes. Douglas was able to control 151 1/2 at the most, and after some days of balloting the convention adjourned to meet at Baltimore on June 8. When the western Pennsylvania delegates returned home, some of them, especially those from Allegheny County, were taken to task for their refusal to give their votes to Douglas when they were well aware that the large majority of the Democrats whom they represented desired his nomination.

At the Baltimore convention several other states withdrew. When it was seen that it would be impossible for Douglas to receive the 202 votes, the delegates adopted a motion to nominate by a majority, which they did on the second ballot. Herschel V. Johnson of Georgia was nominated as vice president. The Pennsylvania delegation appeared to have decreased to twenty, of whom Dawson was made chairman. Nine of these refused to vote for Douglas.

The seceders held a meeting at Richmond on June 12 and adjourned. They reconvened at Baltimore on June 25 when they nominated John C. Breckinridge of Kentucky as their choice for the presidency, with Joseph Lane of Oregon as his running mate. Twelve delegates from Pennsylvania attended this convention, of whom only Arnold Plumer of Venango County, a Buchanan man of long standing, was from western Pennsylvania. With the Democrats split so widely the Republicans were

21 Robert Tyler to Buchanan, April 19, 1860, W. M. Browne to Buchanan, April 22, in Buchanan Papers; Daily Pittsburgh Gazette, April 28, May 2, 1860; Public Ledger (Philadelphia), April 27, 1860; McClure, Our Presidents, 167; H. Greeley and J. T. Cleveland, comps., Political Textbook, 32 (New York, 1860).
22 Political Textbook, 41; Pittsburgh Post, May 18, 1860.
in a position to achieve their goal if they could select a candidate who would unite all groups.\textsuperscript{23}

Soon after the People’s party state convention, Russell Errett, editor of the \textit{Pittsburgh Gazette}, addressed a letter to the delegates of all states that were to be represented in the Republican national convention at Chicago, on May 16, urging them to make Cameron their first choice for the presidential nomination. Errett explained that since the People’s party in Pennsylvania was a fusion party, a man must be selected who was able to unite all factions. Failure to consider this factor was certain to cause defeat for the Republicans. He believed that the only man capable of uniting Republicans, Whigs, Americans, and Anti-Lecompton Democrats was Simon Cameron.\textsuperscript{24}

The importance of the Pennsylvania electoral vote was not forgotten by the politicians. In order to exert as much influence as possible to insure a victory for himself in October, Curtin, with the state chairman, McClure, attended the Chicago meeting. In the meantime he entered into correspondence with Henry S. Lane, the gubernatorial candidate of Indiana, relative to what action they should take at Chicago, since the party formation in both states was similar and both Pennsylvania and Indiana were in the doubtful class. There was no doubt that the influence which they exerted was considerable and that it was not in favor of Pennsylvania’s “favorite son,” Cameron.

According to McClure, the Pennsylvania delegation was divided in its loyalty between Curtin and Cameron. About one-fourth of the delegates were strongly in favor of the latter, one-fourth willing that he be nominated, and the other half willing to give him a complimentary vote on the first ballot providing he could not be nominated. After several meetings the delegation decided to give Cameron the vote on the first ballot and then change to Abraham Lincoln of Illinois. This was done, but even then six refused to vote for Cameron. Lincoln was nominated on the third ballot, and Hannibal Hamlin of Maine was chosen as the vice-presidential candidate.\textsuperscript{25}

The platform, while very general in its language, had a particular

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\item \textsuperscript{24} A copy of this circular letter, dated April 17, 1860, is in the Cameron Papers, Library of Congress.
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appeal to the people of western Pennsylvania, because it included a protective tariff plank. Most of the planks, however, dealt with the evils of the southern-dominated national administration and the extension of slavery, but denied any intention of interfering with domestic institutions in the various states. A plank was included guaranteeing that laws restricting naturalized citizens, as the Know-Nothings or American adherents of the Republican party demanded, would not be passed should the Republicans gain a victory at the polls.

For various reasons naturalized citizens tended to affiliate themselves with the Democratic party rather than with the opposition. The latter, therefore, felt compelled to calm any fears that the Germans, Irish, and others might have regarding their welcome into the party ranks. This was especially true in the western counties where more than thirteen per cent of the population were foreign-born.

The abnormal political conditions of the entire country caused many conservative men to seek some way to insure stability. Such a move was undertaken when a convention was scheduled at Baltimore, May 9, by a group calling themselves the Constitutional Union party. The self-appointed delegates were for the most part older men, and according to one newspaper item, it was "a sort of political tea-party . . . which pleased everybody; the delegates because it gave them a day's importance; the audience because it ministered to their amusement; and the 'fossils' because it reminded them of times when they were of the quick and not of the dead." They accepted a platform based on the Constitution of the United States and nominated John Bell of Tennessee for president and Edward Everett of Massachusetts for vice president. It was their hope that as a conservative party they could save the nation from the disaster they foresaw. Its political importance in western Pennsylvania was due more to its nuisance value than to any actual threat contained in it, as will be explained later.

With the platforms of the four parties established and the nominations made, the issues of the campaign in western Pennsylvania and elsewhere tended to center around one principal point, the question who should con-
trol the government of the United States. Should this government be directed toward the good of all the people or should the minority group in the agrarian South continue to check the demands of the industrial and commercial North? The other issues may well be considered pretexts, for they were means to an end. The tariff, extension of slavery, free or slave labor, states’ rights, union or disunion, corruption, and malfeasance were the issues presented to the electorate as the problems that they must solve. The Republicans contended that the Democrats had permitted such evils to exist and hence were incapable of making the correct adjustments. The Democrats insisted that any change in the national government would cause a dismemberment of the federal union.

Having been unsuccessful in getting Congress to pass a tariff bill that would take the issue out of Pennsylvania politics, when he visited Washington early in the campaign, Foster made a valiant stand on this issue by attacking the record of the Republican leaders. However, the panic of 1857 and the succeeding depression were still fresh in the minds of the people, especially the workers in industry who had suffered most.

The Democrats attempted to frighten the industrial and commercial interests of western Pennsylvania by warning them of southern retribution if they supported the Republican party. This threat failed to have the desired effect, because, although considerable river trade was carried on with the South, western trade was becoming increasingly important. Then, too, southern trade dealt mostly with products such as iron and coal that depended on price, rather than goodwill. Another factor that probably interfered with the use of this argument by the Democrats was the loss of their principal organ, the Pittsburgh Post, when its editor, John P. Barr, gave his support to Douglas, who, in turn, was interested in getting the support of the industrial and commercial leaders.

The economic phase of the campaign was presented in yet another way. The Democrats were reported to have compared the status of the industrial worker to that of the slave. Herschel V. Johnson was reported by the People’s party press to have said: “Look at the slaves in your own work-shop! They are driven to the polls at the beck of their masters under the penalty of being discharged.” The speech, as reported in the Post, did not include such a statement, but regardless of its correctness it was effective propaganda against the Democrats. There was much addi-
tional evidence that southern leaders were using such arguments all too frequently for the good of their party. 28

Although the state party was united in its fight for Foster, the division among the national Democrats placed him on the defensive and forced him to evade the various issues. This was particularly true concerning the interpretation of the principle of popular sovereignty. The Douglas faction believed that the people of the territory had the final authority. The Breckinridge group, on the other hand, contended that Congress had the final decision. Foster was reported to have favored the Douglas interpretation in a speech at Somerset on August 27, but when he was taken to task for such a remark, he denied that he had made the statement. The opposition, in turn, insisted that the integrity of its reporter was beyond question and that Foster changed his mind only after consultation with the national administration leaders. He was indeed in a difficult position. He had been a very good friend of Douglas and was related to Breckinridge. Had he taken either side it would have alienated the other so that the best he could do was to be as ambiguous as possible and yet try to be convincing.

This was a rather difficult thing to do because his opponent was an experienced campaigner, having been the state chairman for the Whig party in its last successful gubernatorial campaign in 1854. Curtin was vulnerable to the extent that he had joined the notorious Know-Nothing party of that year. The Democrats attacked his record on this ground and attempted to arouse the Catholics and foreign-born against him. When this apparently failed to produce the desired effect he was accused by some die-hard Know-Nothings of being an Irish Catholic. McClure, sensing the possible consequence, quickly produced an affidavit from the Presbyterian minister who had baptized Curtin and who was still living. Aside from this, the religious question—that is Protestantism vs. Catholicism—lacked the appeal it had had in state politics from 1854 to 1856. 29

28 Daily Pittsburgh Gazette, June 4, August 10, September 7, 22, 25, 26, October 2, 1860; Pittsburgh Post, January 1, 2, 10, March 15, June 28, 30, 1860; McClure, Our Presidents, 175.

29 J. B. Baker to Buchanan, September 7, 1860, Buchanan to Baker (draft), September 9, in Buchanan Papers; Albert, Westmoreland County, 326; Pittsburgh Post, April 24, 1860; McClure, Old Time Notes, 1:421.
The opponents of the People's party included the Constitutional Union group. In western Pennsylvania they attempted to undermine the influence of the party, especially in Allegheny and Westmoreland counties. They seemed to have been well supplied with money but lacked leadership, speakers, and above all, they presented no electoral ticket. Their so-called state committee, however, had agreed to unite with the Douglas faction and form one ticket for the presidential election if Foster were successful in the October election, but without organization and a good press their influence was very limited.30

The congressional campaign in the western districts did not create very much interest; the Republican incumbents were renominated with the exception of Chapin Hall of Warren, who declined to run again, and William Stewart of Mercer, who had served the customary two terms. This custom, so long in vogue, was being wisely ignored in many instances. In only one district was there a special effort made by the Democrats to defeat the Republican candidate. As in three previous campaigns, this was in the Covode territory. The Democrats failed to select a candidate. "They concede their inability to defeat Mr. Covode, without aid from other sources." They therefore supported Darwin Phelps of Armstrong County, who had received four votes to Covode's five from the conferees appointed by the People's conventions in the three counties comprising the 19th District. Phelps within a short time announced his candidacy as a volunteer. In addition to such tactics, the Democrats attacked Covode's character, vilified him, brought speakers into the district, and used all means at their command to defeat him.

In the 20th District, Montgomery was not a candidate for renomination as he had served his two terms in Congress. In his place the Democrats selected Jesse Lazear of Greene County. The overwhelming majority that this county had usually given to the Democratic party made the nomination tantamount to election. In Bigler's home district, called the "Wild Cat" or 24th District, the Democrats cast eighty-one ballots before selecting their candidate. The choice was not the candidate supported by the Senator.

From the standpoint of practical politics, the campaign of 1860 had

particular interest. It marked the culmination of four years of constant education on the part of the Republicans through their newspapers, speeches, public documents, and individual workers for the cause. Clubs were organized in most centers of population before 1860 and these continued their disseminating work. The state committee made plans to send out a million documents in August that the “truth” might be placed in the hand of every man.

Both parties used these methods of keeping the people informed. The People’s party, however, appears to have had the advantage in that more enthusiasm was to be found among its followers. The newspaper accounts of this propaganda indicated that the campaign was being carried forward by songs, pictures, biographies, and public documents. The Democrats, on the other hand, placed most of their emphasis on documents.31

Early in 1860 an innovation was introduced into campaigning through crowd psychology. This was the organization of marching clubs called the Wide-Awakes. The idea originated in Connecticut where a group of young men joined a torchlight parade to act as an escort to a visiting speaker. To protect their clothing they made capes out of cambric (later oilcloth), which with the glazed caps worn at that time made an impressive sight.

The idea spread quickly until practically every community in the North had its club. In Allegheny, Butler, Beaver, Washington, and Fayette counties alone there were thirty-seven. The members acted not only as escorts but also aided in helping to carry out arrangements for meetings, do police duty, and make themselves generally useful. Their youthfulness—some were under voting age—and willingness to serve gave the People’s party an enthusiasm that the Democrats were unable to match. As the editor of the Lancaster Examiner wrote: “They gave a picturesque beauty and interest to all the public displays of the campaign which relieved them from much of the harshness and irksomeness heretofore experienced. And they imparted a cheerful enthusiasm . . . for who ever saw the processions’ variegated lights and banners, dancing above the serried columns of youth and manly vigor, and the strains of martial

31 Daily Pittsburgh Gazette, August 29, September 28, October 2, 1860; Pittsburgh Post, August 4, 13, 1860; McClure to Cameron, August 2, 1860, in Cameron Papers.
melody, filing through the streets, without being stirred to new hope, new resolves and new endeavors.”

These marching clubs with their semi-military manner caused a cry of protest not only in the South but also among the Democrats of western Pennsylvania who questioned the objective of organizing youth under age into “military organizations.” The Democrats were evidently of the opinion that the clubs were valuable because they countered with the “Ever-Readys,” the “Little Giants,” and the “Invincibles.”

The principal difficulty encountered by the People’s party was financial. Money was raised by small contributions and anyone who could and was willing to speak was accepted. These men paid their own expenses and went wherever the committees indicated. McClure insisted that only Carl Schurz, a naturalized citizen from Wisconsin, received pay for his speeches. His work was worth the five hundred dollars paid him because of the great amount of influence he exerted among the German voters. He made a number of speeches in Allegheny County and other parts of western Pennsylvania.

It was customary for each party to hold a number of rallies during each campaign, and that of 1860 was no exception. Notices of ratification meetings began to appear in the local papers immediately after the selection of the candidates in each party. The People’s party had been in the process of organization for several years and that phase of the work required less effort on the part of the state chairman. He did succeed, however, in perfecting the machinery. McClure also had the advantage of putting his plans into action before the Democrats ended their conventions and was therefore able to determine the methods of attack. This placed the Democratic state chairman, William H. Welch of York County on the defensive, and of course, added very little to the strength of the Democratic appeal.

Both gubernatorial candidates took the fight directly to the people. Curtin was first in the field and although the outcome in western Pennsylvania was almost certain he did not neglect this section. He attended

32 Daily Pittsburgh Gazette, May 30, September 27, 1860; Francis Curtis, The Republican Party, 343 (New York, 1914); Fite, Presidential Campaign of 1860, 228; Pittsburgh Post, August 8, 30, 1860.

numerous rallies, giving at times several speeches a day. According to all reports, he was a most inspiring and convincing speaker with a full grasp of the economic and political needs of the commonwealth. Foster was forced to follow Curtin’s methods. He did not have as much dramatic appeal as his opponent but his ability was well recognized. As previously mentioned, he was somewhat handicapped by the schism in the national party. Each candidate refrained from personal attack on his opponent and this phase of political effort was kept on a much higher plane than usual.\textsuperscript{34}

In addition to local rallies, large mass meetings were held in certain towns in western Pennsylvania. They were widely advertised and the railroads usually offered special rates to those attending. The Democrats held one in Greensburg to honor Foster; Erie and Somerset were also scenes of their meetings. Newspaper accounts from partisan papers indicated that they were well attended. But the People’s party meetings seem to have evoked more enthusiasm, as might be expected, since the majority of voters in this section of the state were opposed to the “Democracy.”

The two largest rallies of the People’s party were held at Erie and Pittsburgh. The former, on September 12, included all northwestern Pennsylvania. It was estimated that 25,000 people attended the program, with 3,500 in the torchlight parade. The western Pennsylvania rally in Pittsburgh on September 27, in spite of inclement weather, produced a crowd of “many thousands,” and a procession more than five miles in length. The speakers included such men as Cassius M. Clay of Kentucky, Curtin and Cameron of Pennsylvania, Thomas Corwin and Benjamin F. Wade of Ohio, and a number of others.\textsuperscript{35}

The division within the ranks of the Democratic party created much unrest not only among the leaders but also among the rank and file. The party had not regained its strength in the state after the disruption caused by the Kansas question in 1858 and 1859. Now confronted with the division in the national party the difficulties facing the leaders were extremely great. It was feared that unless some agreement could be reached before the state election in October the possibility of a victory would be

\textsuperscript{34} \textit{Pittsburgh Post}, October 13, 1860.

\textsuperscript{35} \textit{Daily Pittsburgh Gazette}, September 14, 22, 28, 29, 1860.
diminished regardless of the fact that both factions supported Foster. Unfortunately the national administration was determined not to compromise with Douglas.

After several unsuccessful attempts to solve the problem the state committee met at Cresson on August 9. Since the Breckinridge faction had control of the party machinery they had the largest attendance. It was finally decided by a majority vote that they would have one electoral ticket with the names of Douglas and Breckinridge as delegates-at-large. The candidate receiving the largest vote would be given the electoral vote of the state should the fusion ticket win. It was a full victory for Breckinridge, and Bigler rejoiced that it was no compromise or fusion. The Douglas faction was not satisfied and the leaders, for the most part, refused to acquiesce.

The Democratic difficulties were yet unsolved when election day arrived, October 9. Of the 492,708 votes cast, Curtin received 262,396 to Foster's 230,312, or a majority of 32,084. This was a larger majority than any party had ever received in the ten years preceding 1860 with the exception of the year 1854 when the Know-Nothings upset all calculations. More than 20,000 of this majority was given in western Pennsylvania, where over 135,000 votes were cast. Only seven counties—Cambria, Clarion, Clearfield, Elk, Fayette, Greene, and Westmoreland—remained Democratic, and these by majorities that totaled a little more than 3,000. As in 1858, all congressional districts elected Republicans except the 20th. There, the Democratic majority in Greene County was sufficient to elect over the Republican majorities in Fayette and Washington counties.36

The October election increased the confidence of the Republicans, so much so that warnings were issued by the press against relaxing their efforts. The Democrats, having been unsuccessful with their ordinary campaign tactics, then renewed with increased vigor the method that had been effectively used in the presidential campaign of 1856. This was the cry of sectionalism and the threat of disunion. They hoped to frighten

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36 *Pittsburgh Post*, August 9, 10, 13, 18, 1860; Bigler to Buchanan, August 13, 1860, in Buchanan Papers; *Daily Pittsburgh Gazette*, August 17, October 22, 1860; *Tribune Almanac*, 47 (1861).
the northern voters into rejecting the Republican candidates. They also were reported to have attempted to create a financial panic through the cooperation of the secretary of the treasury, but the attempt was unsuccessful, although there was a mild reaction after the November election when some banks closed in several eastern cities, including Philadelphia, as a precautionary measure. Western Pennsylvania was not affected.

The business men of western Pennsylvania were again warned that the South would surely refuse to buy their products if Lincoln were elected. The fact that business was "prostrate" in such places as New Orleans was used to support the contention.

But the cry of disunion and the threat of economic disaster failed to arouse the fear of the people (except the Democrats). They had been uttered too often! The Republicans ridiculed this southern menace and explained: "No dynasty, oligarchy or party long in power ever yielded its hold upon the government with a good grace; and the longer the time it has retained that hold, the more desperate will be exertions to hold on."

The Democratic leaders continued their efforts to bring full cooperation between party factions but the hatred held by a few of the leaders of the Douglas group was too deeply imbedded. Although the fusion ticket was generally accepted, such leaders as John W. Forney, editor of the Philadelphia Press, continued their agitation for a straight Douglas ticket.37

The results of the election on November 9 were foreshadowed by that of October. Out of a total of 476,387 votes in the state Lincoln received 268,030, the fusion ticket 178,871, Douglas "non-conformists" 16,677, and Bell 12,809. Lincoln therefore received an unprecedented majority of over 59,000. There were some 13,000 fewer votes cast in western Pennsylvania in this than in the state election, the decrease being about equally divided between the Republican and fusion tickets. The Constitutional Union party was given but 1,054 votes, over half of which were cast in Allegheny County. In no county was this party able to poll sufficient votes to create a plurality. Of the seven Democratic counties in the state election only four remained: Clarion, Clearfield, Elk, and Greene.

37 Daily Pittsburgh Gazette, October 22, 23, November 1, 2, 24, 1860; Pittsburgh Post, October 29, November 1, 1860.
These counties showed a decrease in their majorities, except Greene, which actually produced an increase.\footnote{Pittsburgh Post, November 28, 1860.}

Various reasons were given for these defeats in 1860 but the utter disregard of the rights of states and of individuals by a party so long in power created an atmosphere of distrust which other ambitious men were able to capitalize to their own advantage. The Republican, or People's party, as it continued to be called for some years, being young and untried had the advantage of being able to attack the evils and weaknesses of the party which had controlled the government for so many years that its leaders could no longer sense the needs of the people. For this inability, the penalty was defeat.