

THE FEDERALISTS AND THE WEST 1783-1803

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The emigrants to the frontier lands . . . are the least worthy subjects in the United States. They are little less savage than the Indians; and when possessed of the most fertile spots, for want of Industry, live miserably.—TIMOTHY PICKERING TO RUFUS KING, 1785¹

FOLLOWING the American Revolution, thousands of pioneers poured over the Allegheny and Appalachian mountains into Western Pennsylvania, the Ohio country, Kentucky, and Tennessee. This westward surge of the 1780s was just the beginning of what would become the "Great Migration" of the 1800s. Meanwhile in Congress, the Confederation government began to formulate a policy for the West—to establish territorial government, to provide for sales of the public lands, and to make treaties with the Indians as well as the British and Spanish in the trans-Appalachian West. As the Confederation Congress began to create the first American western policy, it soon became obvious that there was considerable disagreement over just what that policy should be. The division over the West was largely sectional, but it had great political implications. Eastern Nationalists,² those northeasterners who advocated more power for the national government (ultimately via the federal Constitution), were wary of westward expansion. Men like John Jay, Rufus King, Timothy Pickering, Nathan Dane, and Gouverneur Morris feared that new western states

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1 Timothy Pickering to Rufus King, June 4, 1785, in Charles R. King, ed., *The Life and Correspondence of Rufus King . . .*, 6 vols. (New York, 1894-1900), 1: 106-7.

2 The term "eastern Nationalist" denotes those Confederation centralists who went on to form the nucleus of the Federalist party of the 1790s. For the "Eastern" party of the 1780s see Herbert James Henderson, *Party Politics in the Continental Congress* (New York, 1975); for the "Nationalists" of the 1780s see *ibid.*, and Merrill Jensen, *The New Nation, A History of the United States During the Confederation, 1781-1789* (New York, 1950).

would lessen the political and economic supremacy of the Northeast.³ These easterners advocated a slow, nationally-controlled westward advance, strong territorial government, revenue-oriented land sales, humanitarian Indian policy, and temporary surrender to Spain of the American right to navigate the Mississippi River. Opposing these eastern Nationalists was a coalition of southerners and anti-Nationalists. Men like Thomas Jefferson, David Howell, James Monroe, Hugh Williamson, and Charles Pinckney were more optimistic about westward expansion and believed new western states would enhance the South's political and economic power.⁴ In sharp contrast to the Nationalists, they advocated less restricted expansion, democratic territorial government, cheap land, an expansionist Indian policy, and American navigation of the Mississippi River.

During the 1780s, the northeasterners gathered some southern support⁵ and won their fight over the West. The rise of Nationalism and ratification of the federal Constitution in 1788 were paralleled by adoption of the eastern Nationalist policy for the West. The "New England-style" Land Ordinance of 1785 was a revenue measure designed to sell large tracts of land to speculators. The Indian Ordinance of 1786 and Nathan Dane's Indian Affairs Committee reports of 1786 and 1787 condemned frontier expansionists and called for fair treatment of the Indians. In the Jay-Gardoqui negotiations of 1786-1787, Secretary of Foreign Affairs John Jay attempted to surrender to Spain American navigation of the Mississippi for twenty-five years in return for a trade treaty favorable to the commercial Northeast. Most important, in 1787 Congress repealed Thomas Jefferson's plan for democratic territorial government in the trans-Appalachian West (the Ordinance of 1784) and replaced it with the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 — a document which provided for autocratic territorial government and limited the number of potential new western states. Thus the conservatives' victory in the Constitutional Convention was accompanied by a conservative national western policy.⁶

After the new federal government was instituted under the Con-

3 Jensen, *New Nation*, 112-14; Henderson, *Party Politics*, 368-71.

4 Henderson, *Party Politics*, 408-9; Staughton Lynd, "The Compromise of 1787," *Political Science Quarterly* 81 (June 1966): 229-30.

5 For the southern rationale for compromising with the Northeast over western policy see Lynd, "Compromise of 1787," 225-50.

6 Jensen, *New Nation*, 354, 358-59; Francis S. Philbrick, *The Rise of the West, 1754-1830* (New York, 1965), 126-33; Michael Allen, "Creation of the First American Western Policy, 1783-1787" (M.A. thesis, University of Montana, 1977). For the Jay-Gardoqui affair see Michael Allen, "The Mississippi River Debate, 1785-1787," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* (Winter 1977): 447-67.

stitution, most eastern Nationalists of the Confederation era formed the nucleus of the Federalist party of early national America.⁷ Thus the eastern Nationalists' attitudes towards the West can be seen as they carried through in the western policy of the Federalists of the 1790s and early 1800s. In Indian affairs, land policy, and admission of new western states and territories, the Federalists tried to slow the westward advance. Some of the constrictionist northeastern Federalists tried to stop it altogether. During the early 1790s, they enjoyed some success, but as the Jeffersonian Republicans gained in strength, the Federalist western policy fell under increasing attack. The Louisiana Purchase of 1803 marked the final repudiation of Federalist antiexpansionism and was paralleled by the decline of the Federalist party. Although the Federalists' western policy was just one of many factors that led to the demise of the party, it is nevertheless one of the more interesting and relatively unexplored aspects of Federalism. A study of Federalist attitudes towards the West provides a unique view of American party politics during the early national period and leads to a better understanding of the significance of the revolution that was taking place.

The trans-Appalachian frontier played an important role during the Federalist administrations of George Washington and John Adams. Since nearly four-fifths of Washington's budget was spent on measures directly or indirectly related to the West, Federalist leaders soon began to formulate a policy for that region. Alexander Hamilton, the secretary of the treasury, saw the West mainly as a source of revenue to fund the national debt and support his fiscal program, and most Federalists shared similar views. For important economic and political reasons they distrusted the "squatters, insolvent emigrants, and demagogues" of the frontier regions.⁸ Their economic motivations were based on a fear that westward expansion would, as one Federalist wrote, "depopulate and ruin the Old states." Easterners, moreover, predicted the westward movement would drain their manpower and labor supply, increase wages, and at the same time reduce the number of consumers for northeastern manu-

7 Henderson, *Party Politics*, 420, wrote: "... party development in the 1790s began as a remarkable continuation of the factionalism in the Continental Congress. The Southern and Eastern nuclei of the Republican and Federalist parties as well as the division of the Middle States were replications of the structure of Confederation politics."

8 For the economic and political motivations of Federalist attitudes towards the West see John C. Miller, *The Federalist Era, 1789-1801* (New York, 1960), 183-84.

factured goods. Paine Wingate, a Federalist senator and congressman from Massachusetts, observed,

It is true the [West] is immensely large, is an excellent soil, and capable of supporting a vast number of inhabitants, but I think they will draw off our most valuable and enterprising young men and will impede the population of our old States and prevent establishment of manufactures. Upon the whole, I doubt whether, in our day, that country will not be a damage to us rather than an advantage. . . .

Politically, the Federalists also had much to fear from expansion and new western states. All Federalists agreed that voters in the trans-Appalachian West would side with the Jeffersonians on national political questions.⁹ Thus new western states would diminish the Federalist majority and possibly lead to extinction of the Federalist party. Federalist Congressman George Clymer of Pennsylvania had warned in 1787 that "the encouragement of the Western Country was suicide on the old States," and Gouverneur Morris "thought the rule of representation ought to be fixed as to secure to the Atlantic States a prevalence in National Councils." "If the Western people get power into their hands," predicted Morris, "they will ruin the Atlantic interest."¹⁰

All these economic and political considerations led to the formation of a distinct Federalist western policy. Although some constrictorist Federalists wanted to halt expansion altogether, most members of the Federalist party took a more pragmatic view. They were still apprehensive about westward expansion, yet they considered expansion to be inevitable. With this in mind, the Federalists determined to control the westward movement with strong national authority. As Massachusetts conservatives wrote:

It has been a question, with the Eastern Delegates especially, whether peopling those new regions with emigrants from the old States, may not, in one point of view, be a disadvantage to them. But it has been found, that these new lands are very inviting to settlers, and that, if not regularly disposed of and governed by the Union, they will in a manner of years, probably be seized upon

⁹ *Ibid.* See also Lynd, "Compromise of 1787," 229-30, and Henderson, *Party Politics*, 408-9.

¹⁰ Alexander Hamilton, "Report on Vacant Lands," July 20, 1790, in Harold C. Syrett et al., eds.; *The Works of Alexander Hamilton*, 10 vols. (New York, 1969), 6: 502-6; Francis S. Philbrick, *The Laws of the Illinois Territory, 1809-1818* (Springfield, Illinois, 1950), 25: cccxxxiii; Richard Henry Lee to George Washington, in James Curtis Ballagh, ed., *The Letters of Richard Henry Lee*, 2 vols. (New York, 1911-1914), 2: 426-27; Paine Wingate to Samuel Lane, June 2, 1788, in Edmund C. Burnett, ed., *The Letters of Members of the Continental Congress*, 8 vols. (Washington, 1921-1936), 8: 746; George Clymer, in Adrienne Koch, ed., *Notes on the Debates in the Federal Convention of 1787 Reported by James Madison* (Athens, Ohio, 1966), 545; Gouverneur Morris, in *ibid.*, 271.

and settled in an irregular manner, and perhaps at no less expense to the Inhabitants of the old States. Considering these circumstances, the advantages of regular settlements, of lessening the public debt and military expences on the frontier, and of keeping, by such settlements, that Country more effectually connected with the Union, Congress have been induced to adopt measures to establish Government, etc., there. . . .

The Federalist western policy thus can be described as one of "reluctant expansionism." The Federalists intended to exert strong governmental pressure to insure a slow and orderly westward advance in the colonial "New England" tradition.¹¹ This theme is evident in all of the Federalists' writings about the West. John Jay suggested that it would "be wiser gradually to extend our settlements as want of room should make it necessary, than to pitch our tents throughout the wilderness . . .," and Timothy Pickering urged Congress to make sure "the settlement of that country may be effected with regularity." And George Washington summed up the Federalist western policy quite succinctly when he wrote,

Compact and progressive seating will give strength to the Union, admit law and good government, and federal aids at an early period. Sparse settlements in several new States, or a large territory for one will have the direct contrary effects. . . . To suffer a wide-extended Country to be overrun with . . . scattered settlers, is in my opinion, inconsistent with that wisdom and policy, which our true interest dictates, or which an enlightened people ought to adopt.¹²

In opposition to the Federalist view stood the Jeffersonian Republicans — most of them southerners and westerners. The Republicans expected great political advantages to accompany admission of new western states.¹³ For this and other reasons they advocated relatively unrestricted westward migration and opposed federal interference in the affairs of the West. The frontiersmen themselves naturally resisted a policy of restraint and governmental regulation. What they wanted from the federal government was protection from the Indians, statehood, cheap or free land, and new territories for future expansion. As the 1790s wore on, it became increasingly obvi-

11 For the New England mode of controlled westward advance and settlement see Payson J. Treat, *The National Land System, 1785-1830* (New York, 1910), 23.

12 Massachusetts Delegation to Governor Hancock, May 27, 1788, in Burnett, *Letters of the Continental Congress*, 8: 740; John Jay to Thomas Jefferson, Apr. 24, 1787, in Henry P. Johnston, ed., *The Correspondence and Public Papers of John Jay*, 4 vols. (New York, 1890-1893), 3: 245; Timothy Pickering to Elbridge Gerry, Mar. 1, 1785, in Timothy Pickering, *The Timothy Pickering Papers* (Boston, 1896), microfilm, reel 5, 347; Washington to Hugh Williamson, Mar. 15, 1785, in Jared Sparks, ed., *The Writings of George Washington* . . . , 12 vols. (Boston, 1833-1837), 9: 105; Washington to James Duane, Sept. 7, 1783, in *ibid.*, 8: 477.

13 See note 9 above.

ous that the Federalist administrations of George Washington and John Adams intended to ignore or only partially to answer these demands.¹⁴

Indian affairs is one of the most interesting and revealing components of the Federalist western policy.¹⁵ The Federalists viewed the Indian hostilities of the late 1780s and 1790s as the direct result of unchecked westward migration. In seeking to control that migration, the Federalists naturally advocated a more just and equitable Indian policy. Indeed, the conservative Federalists espoused some of the most enlightened views toward the American Indian of the early national period. They comprised a large percentage of the small number of early national politicians who made genuine efforts to acknowledge the property rights and sovereignty of the Indians. Their motivations were complex. The relative isolation of New England from the frontier meant that many eastern Federalists had no serious Indian threat within their states' borders. Then, too, their educations and social and religious backgrounds made members of the Federalist party more receptive to humanitarian notions regarding the Indians. Federalists like John Jay, Alexander Hamilton, Noah Webster, Benjamin Rush, Henry Knox, Timothy Pickering, and Rufus King stood at the forefront of the antislavery movement in the United States, and their humanitarianism was expressed in a similar sympathy for the Indians.¹⁶ Secretary of War Henry Knox believed the Indians' claims

14 Homer C. Hockett, "Federalism and the West," in *Essays in American History Dedicated to Frederick Jackson Turner* (New York, 1910), 115, added: "To the extent to which [the Federalist party] was the party of aristocratic tradition and representative of the commercial against the agricultural, it was a party of inherent antagonism to the interests and ideals of the West"; See also Leonard D. White, *The Federalists, A Study in Administrative History* (New York, 1961), 386.

15 For early national Indian policy see Reginald Horsman, *Expansion and American Indian Policy, 1783-1812* (East Lansing, Mich., 1967), and Francis Paul Prucha, *American Indian Policy in the Formative Years: The Indian Trade and Intercourse Acts, 1790-1834* (Lincoln, Neb., 1962). For the intellectual history of American attitudes towards the Indian during the early national period see Bernard Sheehan, *Seeds of Extinction: Jeffersonian Philanthropy and the American Indian* (Chapel Hill, 1973).

16 For humanitarianism see "Humanitarianism and Sentimentality," in Winthrop D. Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812* (Chapel Hill, 1968), 365-72: "... a number of circumstances combined to nurture an especially strong humanitarian movement in America. . . . Ironically, the presence of two more primitive races tended to stimulate humanitarianism." See also Sheehan, *Seeds of Extinction*, 4-6. Sheehan argued that Federalists and Jeffersonians alike were caught up in the humanitarian attitudes toward the Indian. He wrote that "Men so disparate as Timothy Pickering and Thomas Jefferson thought and acted in concert on the question of the Indians." *Ibid.*, 6. I would contend that the Federalists were more inclined toward this position for the various geographic, religious, and philosophical reasons discussed above. For their other motivations see pages 321-22 below.

were supported by "the impartial judgements of the civilized part of the human race . . .," and John Jay called for "exemplary" punishment of those frontiersmen who had "committed several unprovoked acts" against the Indians. Nathan Dane of Massachusetts wrote that "it has long been the opinion of the country, supported by Justice and humanity, that the Indians have just claims to all lands occupied by, and not purchased from them" But perhaps Secretary of War Knox best evinced Federalist humanitarianism when he wrote in 1789, "It is . . . painful to consider that all the Indian tribes, once existing in those states now best cultivated and most populous, have become extinct. If the same causes continue, the effects will happen and, in short period, the idea of an Indian this side of the Mississippi will be found only in the pages of the historian."¹⁷

At the same time, a just Indian policy fit perfectly into the Federalists' plan for gradual and closely regulated westward expansion. The northern and southern Indian tribes thwarted immediate settlement of the trans-Appalachian West more effectively than any force the federal government could possibly muster. As long as the Indians remained on the frontier, the westward movement would, out of necessity, be slow and orderly. But if the Indians were dispossessed, then there would be nothing to hold the westerners back. "Tho numbers in defiance of the authority of the States, cross the Ohio," wrote Timothy Pickering, "yet few would be hardy enough to settle on *Indian* ground." But if all the Indians' lands were taken "to the Mississippi . . . lawless emigrants will spread over the whole of it." And Rufus King asked, "Would not the Indian claims prevent emigration on the Western side of the Ohio?"¹⁸ Thus humanitarianism and a desire to control westward expansion combined to cause Federalists to oppose an aggressive Indian policy and to resist southern and western pressure to go to war with the Indian tribes

¹⁷ Horsman, *Expansion and American Indian Policy*, 50; John Jay to John Adams, Nov. 1, 1786, in Johnston, *Correspondence of John Jay*, 3: 215; John C. Fitzpatrick, ed., *Journals of the Continental Congress*, 34 vols. (Washington, D.C., 1904-1937), 33: 458; Henry Knox, in Walter Mohr, *Federal Indian Relations, 1774-1788* (Philadelphia, 1933), 171. For more examples of the Federalists' humanitarianism toward the Indian see Rufus King to Elbridge Gerry, June 8, 1786, in King, *Correspondence of Rufus King*, 1: 180; Fitzpatrick, *Journals of the Continental Congress*, 33: 455; Johnston, *Correspondence of John Jay*, 3: 249; Alexander Hamilton to George Clinton, Oct. 3, 1783, in Syrett, *Papers of Alexander Hamilton*, 3: 468; Prucha, *American Indian Policy*, 39, 41, 44; White, *The Federalists*, 374-82; Pickering to King, June 4, 1785, in King, *Correspondence of Rufus King*, 1: 107.

¹⁸ Pickering to King, May 30, 1785, in King, *Correspondence of Rufus King*, 1: 103; King to Pickering, June 1, 1785, in *ibid.*, 1: 104-5; see also Pickering to John Jay, in Johnston, *Correspondence of John Jay*, 3: 377.

of the region beyond the Appalachian mountains.

A good example of this Federalist position can be seen in the debate over the Frontier Protection Act of 1792. When Ohio Valley pioneers asked for federal aid in their struggles with the Indians, Congress divided — the Federalists versus the Republicans — over the issue. Six Federalist congressmen denounced the Frontier Protection Act on January 26, 1792, recommending that, "Instead of being ambitious to extend our boundary, it would be wise to check the roving disposition of the frontier settlers and prevent them from too suddenly extending themselves to the Western waters. If kept closer together . . . they would not so frequently involve us in Indian wars; but permitted to rove at pleasure, they will keep the nation embroiled in perpetual warfare" The Frontier Protection Act passed the House with nineteen members voting nay; twelve of these nays were Federalists.¹⁹ The Federalist stance is also evident in a later attempt by Republicans to strike out a section of a bill which called for American forfeiture of some lands in the Indian territory. The Republicans met defeat, thirty-six to forty-seven, and thirty-seven of the nays came from the Federalist side of the floor.²⁰ As Indian hostilities increased in the mid-1790s, the Federalists often found themselves defending the Indian point of view. In 1796, for example, Congressman Theodore Sedgwick of Massachusetts delivered an emotional address in defense of Indian territorial sovereignty, asking,

Were they [the opponents of Indian land rights] to say to the savages in their own country, you have no right to any land? . . . wherever the natives of a country had possession, there they had a right and not because they did not dress like us, were not equally religious, or did not understand the arts of civilized life they were to be deprived of their possessions . . . their rights or their possessions were as sacred as the rights of civilized life.²¹

Unfortunately for the Indians, the political pressure of the South and West proved greater than the northeastern Federalists' sympathy for the plight of the American Indian. President Washington ordered federal troops into the Ohio country and the northern tribes were

19 U.S., Congress, House, *Debates and Proceedings in the Congress of the United States (Annals of Congress)*, 2d Cong., 1st sess., 1792, 338; see also *ibid.*, 338-47; House vote in *ibid.*, 355. The six Federalist speakers were Goodhue, Boudinot, Livermore, Steele, Parker, and Bourn. In analyzing the vote over Indian affairs, as in all of the other congressional votes below, I have determined the Federalists by using David Hackett Fischer, *The Revolution of American Conservatism: The Federalist Party in the Era of Jeffersonian Democracy* (New York, 1965), 227-412, and U.S., Congress, *Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1971* (Washington, 1971).

20 Manning Dauer, *The Adams Federalists* (Baltimore, 1953), 289-92.

21 U.S., Congress, House, *Annals of Congress*, 4th Cong., 1st sess., 1796, 900-1.

routed by General Anthony Wayne at the Battle of Fallen Timbers in 1795. The southern Indians' resistance collapsed after Andrew Jackson's victory at Horseshoe Bend in 1814. These two battles foreshadowed the eventual removal of most of the northern and southern tribes to the "permanent Indian frontier" in the 1830s, the Federalists notwithstanding.

Debates over the statehood applications of Kentucky and Tennessee would seemingly provide an excellent arena in which to view Federalist western policy. The issue of Kentucky, however, is clouded. Most Federalists probably agreed with Fisher Ames's view of the average Kentuckian as "the infuriate . . . wild man of the mountains." But Kentucky applied for statehood simultaneously with Vermont in 1791, and this dual application appears to have facilitated a North-east-South, Federalist-Republican compromise. Alexander Hamilton wrote, "One of the first subjects of deliberation with the new congress will be the Independence of Kentucky, for which the Southern states will be anxious. The North will be glad to send a counterpoise in Vermont. These mutual interests and inclinations will facilitate a proper result." The Federalists apparently thought Vermont would balance the political influence of Kentucky, leaving the Federalist domination in Congress unchallenged.²² Federalist hopes of political dominance in Vermont were soon dispelled, however, because a large Jeffersonian faction emerged in that rural state.

Statehood for Tennessee in 1796 was, however, an entirely different matter. Since there were no new eastern states to balance potentially Republican Tennessee, the eastern Federalists solidly opposed admission. They knew that a shift in the balance of power would occur should this new western state be admitted into the Union. Statehood for Tennessee was, Chauncey Goodrich wrote Oliver Wolcott, "but one twig in the electioneering cabal of Mr. Jefferson." Yet most of the Federalists' arguments against admission did not sound so partisan. They attacked both the proposed constitution and census of Tennessee, insisting they did not comply with the Southwest Ordinance of 1789. Congressman Theodore Sedgwick thought Tennessee's new constitution had been drawn up too hastily, and Rufus King chaired a senate committee that voted to deny admission until a more accurate census could be taken. Twelve of the fifteen senators who voted

²² Fisher Ames to Dwight Foster, Feb. 6, 1803, in Seth Ames, ed., *The Life and Works of Fisher Ames* (Boston, 1854), 1: 317; Hamilton to Nathaniel Chipman, July 22, 1788, in Syrett, *Works of Alexander Hamilton*, 5: 186.

to postpone admission belonged to the Federalist party. In the final vote, on May 28, 1796, however, the Federalists lost. Northeastern Republicans, led by William Findley and Albert Gallatin of Pennsylvania,²³ allied with southern Republicans and southern Federalists having large frontier constituencies,²⁴ and the House of Representatives voted forty-eight to thirty in favor of admission. All thirty negative votes were cast by Federalists. And, as the Federalists had feared, one of Tennessee's first acts as a new state was to cast its electoral votes for Thomas Jefferson in 1796.²⁵

The Federalists in Congress seemed unconcerned with political repercussions, however, as they wrote and adopted the Land Act of 1796. This legislation followed Anthony Wayne's victory at Fallen Timbers, which opened up the area north of the Ohio to western settlement. Battle lines were drawn quickly over the proposed legislation. The Federalists were determined to retain the speculator-oriented provisions of the Land Ordinance of 1785 in this new bill, while Republican and frontier elements prepared to fight for a law favoring the yeoman farmer.²⁶ Gallatin, Findley, and Robert Rutherford of Virginia led the profrontier faction in the House. The increased Republican strength was indicative of the changing national political scene and made for a heated debate over the proposed land bill. Gallatin's amendment calling for liberal residency requirements for purchasers met defeat, yet it enjoyed considerable support. So, too, did Republican efforts to reduce the size of minimum purchase. Republican Congressman Baldwin of Georgia charged that "speculation and making money [are] rarely found in more raging extremes and persons we have supposed worthy of our confidence [are] publicly

23 Findley and Gallatin, spokesmen for the frontier settlers of Western Pennsylvania, achieved national prominence for their defense of the westerners during the Whiskey Insurrection of 1794. See Russell J. Ferguson, *Early Western Pennsylvania Politics* (Pittsburgh, 1938), 125-31, and Miller, *Federalist Era*, 155-9, 163.

24 For example, Robert Goodloe Harper of South Carolina and William Smith of the Spartanburg district of South Carolina voted for statehood. See "Robert Goodloe Harper and the West," in Joseph W. Cox, ed., *Champion of Southern Federalism, Robert Goodloe Harper of South Carolina* (Port Washington, New York, 1972).

25 For Tennessee statehood see U.S., Congress, Senate, *Annals of Congress*, 4th Cong., 1st sess., 1796, 92, 1308, 1312, 1322, 1474; see also *ibid.*, 97, 109, 91-94, 1300-4; Dauer, *Adams Federalists*, 289-92; Hockett, "Federalism and the West," 117-18; Thomas P. Abernethy, *From Frontier to Plantation in Tennessee: A Study in Frontier Democracy* (University, Alabama, 1932), 138, 143. Abernethy suggests that Tennessee might well have supported Adams in 1796 had the Federalist party not opposed its statehood.

26 Treat, *National Land System*, 79-89; see also Miller, *Federalist Era*, 184.

practising the meanest and most disgraceful arts of tricks of swindling." William Findley was one of the most persuasive proponents of an agrarian land act. He summed up the Republican argument in March 1796:

Some members thought to obtain money was the grand object. . . . [I do] not. . . . Had gentlemen considered what they were about? Whether they were merchants, only to get money? Surely not; they had men and the happiness of men in their view. . . . The comparison betwixt a merchant selling goods, and a Government selling lands would not hold. It is a sort of transaction which should always be kept in the hands of Government and not in those of speculators. . . .²⁷

The Federalists rejected this view. They believed in Hamilton's system of using land revenues to fund the federal government. Moreover, many of the Federalists were themselves speculating heavily in western lands. Congressman William Cooper of New York²⁸ had amassed a fortune from his land holdings in upstate New York. He maintained "the true cause of land selling was the competition of moneyed men" and argued that poor men would not buy land even if it was offered to them. In opposing Republican efforts to reduce the size of minimum purchases, Cooper remarked that Congress should not put itself into the business of laying out "garden spots" for yeoman farmers! Some of his colleagues were nearly as outspoken. One Federalist did not believe "there were as many families ready to go and settle upon these lands as has been assumed," and he opposed "removing the inhabitants into these back settlements." Federalist Congressman John W. Kittera of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, spoke the sentiments of many constrictorists in March 1796, when he stated that "this kind of bounty, to encourage emigration, was not good policy," while there were "millions of acres" in Pennsylvania "yet to be disposed of."²⁹

Southern and western forces in the House combined to pass a fairly liberal land law, but a Senate committee composed of Federalists James Ross, Rufus King, Humphrey Marshall, and Caleb Strong amended all the liberal features out of the Land Act of 1796. The result was passage on May 18, 1796, of a bill even more unfavorable to the West than the Land Ordinance of 1785. It required a 640-acre

²⁷ Treat, *National Land System*, 82-83; U.S., Congress, House, *Annals of Congress*, 4th Cong., 1st sess., 1796, 403, 413; see also *ibid.*, 328-30, 337, 339, 342, 354, 402, 408-11.

²⁸ Congressman William Cooper was the father of novelist James Fenimore Cooper. See Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (New York, 1950), 67.

²⁹ U.S., Congress, House, *Annals of Congress*, 4th Cong., 1st sess., 1796, 348, 352, 408, 416.

minimum purchase at \$2.00 per acre. Even the one-year credit provision, added as a compromise, required a farmer to produce \$1,280.00 in cash in one year. For the western yeoman of the 1790s, this sort of financial barrier was insurmountable. Some westerners did make purchases from speculators, but the vast majority of frontiersmen ignored the law. They simply continued to squat and trespass onto western lands, awaiting the election of a Republican administration more responsive to their needs.³⁰

The election of John Adams of Massachusetts as Washington's successor in 1796 meant a continuation of the Federalist western policy. Adams entertained many apprehensions about the trans-Appalachian West and believed "the country is explored and thinly planted much too fast."³¹ During the Adams administration, Federalists acted on several measures which reflected their attitudes toward the frontier. On January 25, 1799, the House of Representatives voted to exempt the Mississippi River from restrictions on commercial intercourse. All of the thirty-four congressmen who opposed this pro-western measure were Federalists. On April 24, 1800, a bill to grant Ohio territorial governor Arthur St. Clair the right to dissolve the Ohio territorial legislature met defeat, forty-two to forty-nine. Each of those who favored the motion was a Federalist.³² These two measures not only demonstrate Federalist animosity towards the West, but also show a decline in the power of the Federalist party's restrictionist element. Tennessee's admission in 1796 was an early indication of this development. Another important step was the Harrison Land Law of 1800,³³ passed by a coalition of Republicans and southern Federalists. This bill provided for a 320-acre minimum purchase at \$2.00 per acre with four years credit. Although the Harrison act was not as radical as the Jeffersonian Land Act of 1804 (160-acre minimum at \$1.64 per acre, but no credit), it was the most liberal land law ever passed by Congress. The conservatives still had bargaining power in 1800, but it was on the decline. After twenty years, the American yeoman was now able to purchase good land in the West at a reasonable price from the federal government. Federalist efforts to slow westward migration through a restrictive land policy had worked

30 Treat, *National Land System*, 85, 372-73, 390; Roy Robbins, *Our Landed Heritage: The Public Domain, 1776-1936* (Princeton, 1942), 15-17.

31 Linda K. Kerber, *Federalists in Dissent: Imagery and Ideology in Jeffersonian America* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1970), 93.

32 Daur, *Adams Federalists*, 311-20.

33 Albert Gallatin played an instrumental role in the drafting of the Harrison land bill.

only temporarily and had only postponed the inevitable.³⁴

Payson Treat is correct in his observation that all westward expansion during the 1789-1800 period occurred despite the efforts of the federal government to slow it down. The reluctant expansionism of the Federalist party and the constrictorist sentiments of many of its eastern members showed no consideration for the people of the trans-Appalachian frontier. Yet settlers continued to migrate west — pioneers squatted on land they could not afford to buy and stole from the Indians the lands which were not for sale. The Federalists' efforts to restrict expansion through a liberal Indian policy, slow admission of western states, and a speculator-oriented land policy proved ineffective.³⁵ Eventually, the anachronistic nature of Federalist western policy became as apparent as the intent of frontier settlers to ignore that policy. The unpopularity of the Federalists' attitudes towards the West was one of many factors that led to Jefferson's victory over Adams in 1800. But Thomas Jefferson's victory did not mean the Federalist antiexpansionists had surrendered; it simply marked the beginning of the end. The phenomenal westward push during the "Great Migration" of the 1800s greatly worried conservatives throughout Jefferson's first administration. The aborted Federalist attempts to block the statehood of Ohio in 1802 and the purchase of the Louisiana Territory in 1803 demonstrated that the eastern Federalists were not willing to change their views — even though their inflexibility was causing severe political repercussions.

Congress debated the Ohio statehood question during the spring of 1802. By this time the people of Ohio were clamoring for admission into the Union. They had met the requirements of the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 and had sent petitions to Congress asking for statehood. But Federalist territorial governor Arthur St. Clair vigorously opposed this statehood movement. He and other Ohio Federalists believed it would produce "nothing but misfortune." The Ohioans, according to St. Clair, were too poor and ignorant "to employ their

34 Marshall Smelser, *The Democratic Republic, 1801-1815* (New York, 1968), 36, 134-35; Philbrick, *Rise of the West*, 295; Treat, *National Land System*, 101, 141. Reviewing the four land ordinances passed from 1785 through 1804, one can see a definite liberal evolution. The Land Ordinance of 1785 provided for a 640-acre minimum purchase at \$1 per acre with no credit. The Land Act of 1796 also specified a 640-acre minimum purchase, but at \$2 per acre and one year credit. The Harrison Land Act of 1800 provided for a 320-acre minimum purchase at \$2 per acre, and with four years credit. The 1804 law called for a 160-acre minimum purchase at \$1.64 per acre — the price was higher with credit. Thus after twenty years purchasers could buy directly from the government, saving the expense of dealing through land speculators.

35 Treat, *National Land System*, 377.

thoughts on abstruse questions of Government and policy." "Fixed political principles they have none," he declared. "Their government would most probably be democratic in form and oligarchic in execution, and more troublesome and more opposed to the measures of the United States than even Kentucky." St. Clair and his allies in Congress used every political device available to prevent statehood,³⁶ but the Republican Congress voted to admit Ohio into the Union in March 1802. Of the twenty-nine members of the House who opposed admission, twenty-three were Federalists. The six senators who opposed admitting Ohio into the Union were all members of the Federalist party.³⁷

The constrictionist Federalists waged their final great battle over the Louisiana Purchase. Jefferson's proposed purchase of the Louisiana Territory from France was in every sense an ideal issue for the Federalists, since it lay at the very heart of the expansion question. If the United States purchased Louisiana, there could be no turning back — the American republic would become an empire, and expansion would play an increasingly important role in the American experience. Inevitably, the political party which had opposed the West would suffer. Fully realizing this, a small band of eastern Federalists in Congress prepared to fight this "purchase of a trackless world." The *Hartford Courant* sounded the Federalist battle cry: "Fifteen million dollars for bogs, mountains, and Indians! Fifteen million dollars for uninhabited wasteland and refuge for criminals! And for what purposes? To enhance the power of Virginia's politicians. To pour millions into the coffers of Napoleon on the eve of war with England." ³⁸

The Federalists pursued several avenues of attack. Fisher Ames of Massachusetts protested the expense of the Louisiana Territory and

³⁶ In Congress the Federalists produced petitions from Ohioans who opposed statehood. When this failed, Federalists Griswold, Henderson, Goddard, and Bayard tried to gerrymander the borders of the proposed state. This gerrymander would, according to St. Clair, divide the inhabitants "in such a manner as to make the upper or Eastern division surely Federal, and form a counterpoise . . . to those who are unfriendly to the General Government." Prior to the congressional vote, President Jefferson dismissed St. Clair from the governorship of the territory. For Ohio statehood see U.S., Congress, House, *Annals of Congress*, 7th Cong., 1st sess., 1802, 297, 465-66, 469, 1104-5, 1107-10, 1120, 1123, 1162; Reginald Horsman, *The Frontier in the Formative Years, 1783-1815* (New York, 1970), 88-89; Hockett, "Federalism and the West," 123-27.

³⁷ U.S., Congress, Senate, *Annals of Congress*, 7th Cong., 1st sess., 1802, 297, 1162; Hockett, "Federalism and the West," 127. The six Federalist senators were Ogden, Foster, Howard, Morris, Tracy, and Olcott.

³⁸ Smelser, *Democratic Republic*, 98; James Eugene Smith, *One Hundred Years of Hartford's Courant* (New York, 1949), 82.

deplored wasting the "many millions it costs." Roger Griswold of Connecticut questioned the validity of the French title to Louisiana, while Senator Timothy Pickering warned of Spanish objections to the purchase. Ironically, the Federalists used a "strict construction" of the Constitution argument and termed the Louisiana Purchase "unconstitutional."³⁹ But the Federalist arguments against the expense, diplomatic consequences, and constitutionality of the Louisiana Purchase convinced few. The House voted ninety to twenty-five in favor of the purchase. Twenty of the twenty-five opponents were members of the Federalist party. In the Senate, the vote was twenty-six to five, with all five nays coming from eastern Federalists.⁴⁰ Thus the United States incorporated into its boundaries a territory populated by what one Federalist termed a "Gallo-Hispano-Indian omnium gatherum of savages and adventurers." With finalization of the purchase, Fisher Ames wrote gloomily, "Now by adding an unmeasured world beyond that river [the Mississippi] we rush like a comet into infinite space. In our wild career we may jostle some other world out of its orbit, but we shall, in every event, quench the light of our own."⁴¹

The Federalists' fear of the West was no charade. Many members of the Federalist party honestly believed that westward expansion would result in disaster for the American people. As has been shown, the Federalists had many tangible economic and political reasons for their reluctant expansionism. But at the heart of the Federalist view of the West was their basic conservatism. Linda Kerber has explored the Federalist psyche in an attempt to explain their suspicions and wariness of the unknown West. She writes that the Federalists had not the least desire to venture into the "Land of Marvels" beyond the Appalachians, feeling that such preposterous notions could be entertained only by Jeffersonians and other fools!⁴²

³⁹ Fisher Ames to Christopher Gore, Oct. 3, 1803, in Ames, *Works of Fisher Ames*, 1: 323-24; Timothy Pickering to Rufus King, Mar. 3, 1804, in King, *Correspondence of Rufus King*, 3: 361; Smelser, *Democratic Republic*, 97-101. The only Republican who expressed any doubts over the constitutionality of the purchase was Jefferson himself. Both parties had performed a flip-flop in regard to their 1790s views of the Constitution — at least as far as purchasing new territories was concerned. For congressional debate over the Louisiana Purchase see U.S., Congress, Senate, *Annals of Congress*, 8th Cong., 1st sess., 1803, 34, 44, 46, 73, 386, 432, 441, 445, 454, 472, 488-89.

⁴⁰ U.S., Congress, Senate, *Annals of Congress*, 8th Cong., 1st sess., 1803, 73; *ibid.*, House, 488-89; Smelser, *Democratic Republic*, 97-101. Smelser notes that several prominent Federalists did support the purchase: Rufus King, John Adams, Alexander Hamilton, and John Marshall.

⁴¹ Fisher Ames to Christopher Gore, Oct. 3, 1803, in Ames, *Works of Fisher Ames*, 1: 323-24.

⁴² Kerber, *Federalists in Dissent*, 93, 213.

The Federalists simply could not comprehend why Americans would want to leave the comfort and security of the Atlantic seaboard and venture into the wild frontier. In the final analysis, the Federalists attributed the western impulse to ignorance and ill-breeding. Thus in nearly all the Federalists' writings one finds references to the westerners as "lawless Banditti," "savages," and "demagogues." James Kent of New York traveled west in 1800 and complained of people who "looked rude in their manners and dress and gave me an unfavorable opinion of the Country" Samuel Holden Parsons of Massachusetts described the Ohio frontiersmen as "our own *white* Indians of no character, who have their Private Views without Regard to the public benefits to serve." And Dr. David Ramsay wrote, "Our back country people are as much savage as the Cherokees. I believe . . . that were it not for the commercial cities on the sea coast even the use of the plough would far to the westward be forgotten."⁴³

The Federalists refused to embrace the westerners, and they paid the political price. After Kentucky and Tennessee allied with the southern and middle states to elect Jefferson in 1800, the Federalist party died a quick death. Their strength declined steadily while the Republicans gained additional support in Kentucky, Tennessee, Western Pennsylvania, and upstate New York.⁴⁴ Admission of Ohio into the Union and the Louisiana Purchase promised further to reduce the Federalists' political power. At the same time, the Federalist party suffered an intraparty sectional split. According to Manning Dauer, the decline of Federalism was due largely to the defection of the agrarian and southern factions of the party — the same men who had frequently supported the Republicans in the statehood and land policy questions. These "Half-Federalists" started leaving the party during the late 1800s, leaving only the "arch-Federalists" of New England — those men who had always formed the ideological and numerical nucleus of Federalism. Thus the arch-Federalists changed their party from one with an Atlantic seaboard and river valley following to one with only a northeastern seaboard following. The South

⁴³ Philbrick, *Laws of the Illinois Territory*, 25: cccxxiii-cccxlvi, wrote: "There have existed . . . from colonial times onward, misapprehensions regarding border communities which were the basis of strong social prejudices against them"; Samuel Holden Parsons, in Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., "Jefferson, the Ordinance of 1784, and the Origins of the American Territorial System," *William and Mary Quarterly* 29 (Apr. 1972): 231-62; David Ramsay to Thomas Jefferson, in Julian P. Boyd, ed., *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, 18 vols. (Princeton, 1950-1971), 9: 441.

⁴⁴ See, for example, Ferguson, *Party Politics in Western Pennsylvania*, 172; Hockett, "Federalism and the West," 119-23, 129-30.

and West turned solidly to the Republicans. Some historians contend that the Federalists could have successfully courted the western vote. Robert Goodloe Harper and William Smith of South Carolina certainly did. But the constrictorist Federalists seemed bent on self-destruction and their withdrawal into New England insured it.⁴⁵

The irony of the whole affair is that the Federalists' political heirs, the Whigs and Republicans (GOP) of the 1830-1860 period came to be great political allies of the West. The hero of Tippecanoe and "Harry of the West"⁴⁶ were Whigs, not Jacksonian Democrats. Obviously, much happened during the intervening years. The Northeast was tempered by democracy while the Industrial Revolution shifted that section's livelihood from commerce to manufacturing. In the meantime the Old Northwest was settled largely by transplanted northeasterners. These developments combined with completion of the Erie Canal in 1825 to create a new partnership between the Northeast and West as westerners furnished raw materials, foodstuffs, and a consumer market for eastern manufacturers. The old South-West alliance was superseded by a Northeast-West alliance that lasted through the Civil War and much of the nineteenth century. Industrial capitalism thus forged a partnership between two sections the arch-Federalists thought to be inherently at odds with each other.⁴⁷

But the Federalists of the 1783-1803 period were no prophets. They feared and distrusted the West and believed westward expansion boded ill for the republic. In Indian policy, land legislation, and admission of new states and territories they tried to discourage migration to the trans-Appalachian West. They tried, in vain, to thwart the growth of a segment of the population which they considered to be a "wild, ungovernable race, little less savage than their tawny neighbors."⁴⁸ Most Americans, of course, disagreed. During the debate over the Louisiana Purchase, a young senator from Tennessee named

45 Dauer, *Adams Federalists*, 7, 18. As Dauer shows, the "Half-Federalists" were not frontiersmen. They resided in the exporting agricultural regions, not on self-sufficient homesteads. Yet on many western issues they sided with the westerners and Republicans. For Federalist repudiation of the West at the Hartford Convention see James M. Banner, Jr., *To The Hartford Convention: The Federalists and the Origins of Party Politics in Massachusetts, 1789-1815* (New York, 1970), 113; see also Hockett, "Federalism and the West," 130-32, and Smelser, *Democratic Republic*, 76.

46 William Henry Harrison of Indiana (Whig presidential candidate in 1840) and Henry Clay of Kentucky (Whig candidate in 1832, 1836, and 1844). And one should note also Abraham Lincoln, a transplanted Kentuckian in Illinois who ran for president on the Republican ticket in 1860.

47 Hockett, "Federalism and the West," 134-35.

48 Timothy Pickering, in Henry Tatter, "State and Federal Land Policy During the Confederation," *Agricultural History* 9 (Oct. 1935): 182.

Andrew Jackson insisted that "the frontier people . . . will listen to reason and respect the laws of their country." And in 1809, the pioneer settlers of Shawneetown in southern Illinois referred to the Federalists' prejudices against westerners when they wrote, "We must beg leave to make mention with diffidence lest a misconception be prepossessed from misrepresentations, that there are amongst our number both Moral and Relidgeous [*sic*] as well as many enterprising and industrious people." But perhaps Robert P. Letcher of Kentucky provided the most articulate rebuttal to the Federalist stereotype of the westerner in a speech before Congress in the early 1800s:

With the utmost frankness, I admit their personal appearance is not the most fashionable and elegant kind; they are not decorated in all the style, the gaiety, and the taste of a dandy of the first water. Their means are too limited and their discretion too great, I trust, for the indulgence of such foppery and extravagance. . . . Sir, these are the very constituents of whom the nation ought to be proud. They constitute the bone sinew and strength of your government.⁴⁹

Despite these arguments, and after more than twenty years of debate, Federalist attitudes towards the West remained virtually unchanged. The political party which had harnessed the energy of the new republic seemed now unable to control it. The conservatism which made the Federalist party a sturdy base on which to build a new nation prevented it from changing and growing with that nation. Although the debate over the West is only one window through which one may view the growing obsolescence of the Federalist party, it is one of the clearest. The westward movement was, in many ways, representative of the spirit of the American people in 1800. The "Great Migration" had just begun, and tens of thousands of Americans were making their way west towards new homes in the Mississippi Valley. Nineteenth-century Americans were determined to be a nation of expansionists, and they were not about to tolerate a political party that tried to restrain them in their pursuits. In their attitudes towards the West, as in so many other ways, the Federalists had become anachronistic. Their attempts to restrain and dominate the West during the early national period proved futile. Eastern domination of the West did not occur until American conservatism evolved from Federalism into the Whig and Republican parties of the middle and late nineteenth centuries. Only then did economic and cultural penetrations combine with political centralism to fuse two differing regional societies.

⁴⁹ U.S., Congress, Senate, *Annals of Congress*, 8th Cong., 1st sess., 1803, 41; Philbrick, *Laws of the Illinois Territory*, 25: cccxlv; Karl F. Geiser, "New England and the Western Reserve," *Proceedings of the Mississippi Valley Historical Association* (1912-1913), 6: 62.